

The Drunken Demon Queller: Chung K'uei in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Painting

Ginger Cheng-chi Hsü

University of California, Riverside

The legendary figure of Chung K'uei, described in myth and folklore as a demon queller and a popular door god, appears in Chinese pictorial art long before the eighteenth century. The elaboration of his image can be traced back historically, beginning with the standard interpretations in which Chung K'uei, having attained the high scholarly status of *chin-shih* ("presented scholar") in a T'ang dynasty military examination, is given the privilege of sitting for the final palace examination. After reportedly failing the examination because of his physical appearance, which the emperor considered inappropriate for a high court official, Chung K'uei, in frustration and indignation, immediately committed suicide.¹

His story was developed by Sung writers who described T'ang Emperor Ming-huang's (r. AD 712–56) dream of Chung K'uei during an illness. In this dream the scholar had metamorphosed into a grotesque ghost who instantly slew the demons plaguing the emperor, thus symbolizing the emperor's cure. Once recovered, Ming-huang deified Chung K'uei and had his image painted by the

Earlier versions of this paper were read in the symposium on "Issues in Ming and Qing Painting" at Yale University, New Haven, April 23, 1994 and at the seminar "Images and Imagination: Perspectives on Chinese and Japanese Art of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," held at the University of California at Berkeley on May 7, 1994 honoring Professor James Cahill on the occasion of his retirement. I am indebted to Professors Richard Barnhart, James Cahill, Suzanne Cahill, Benjamin Elman, and Regina Stefaniak for their comments. Final versions of this paper were completed while I was supported by a pre-tenure released time grant from the University of California at Riverside.

1. For a treatment of the development of Chung K'uei legends and their origins, see Hu Wan-ch'uan, *Chung K'uei shen-hua yu hsiao-shuo chih yen-chiu* (*On the Myth and Novel of Chung K'uei*) (Taipei: Wen-shih-che, 1980), pp. 11–50. Also Chia Chi Jason Wang, *The Iconography of Zhong Kui in Chinese Painting*, (M.A. thesis, Asian Studies, U.C. Berkeley, 1991), pp. 17–35. Chung K'uei's function as an exorcist and protector may have been derived from the ritual of *ta-muo*, according to Hu Wan-ch'uan. Hu, *supra* note 1, at 61–126.

most celebrated court artist of the day, Wu Tao-tzu.² In Northern Sung times, printed images of Chung K'uei, along with almanacs, were sent to court officials by the emperor at the end of the year. Dramatic performances of Chung K'uei exorcising demons were enacted in the palace on New Year's Eve.³ In the Southern Sung dynasty, the audience shifted away from the court as single-sheet woodblock prints of Chung K'uei were sold in public marketplaces at New Year's.⁴ The earliest such example may be an anonymous painting dated to the Yüan dynasty entitled, *Knick-Knack Peddler*, which includes among the peddler's inventory a single-sheet woodblock print of an exorcist in military attire (Fig. 1). In the Ch'ien-lung (1736-1795) period, pictures of the demon queller produced at various woodblock print centers, such as Yang-liu-ch'ing of T'ien-chin (Fig. 2) and T'ao-hua-wu of Suchow (Fig. 3), survive till this day.

In the woodblock print from Yang-liu-ch'ing, Chung K'uei is depicted as a heavily bearded warrior in military attire, with open skirt, crested draperies, and flying sleeves. Standing on one foot, he turns his head toward a flying bat and stares at it fiercely,⁵ pointing with his sword, perhaps in the act of slaying the demon. The elegance of the posture reminds one of choreographic movements seen in theatrical performances. The hand gesture, in particular—two fingers pointing as the palm turns outward while the other hand holds the sword—is a trademark pose used by military characters in Chinese opera. One can also relate the pose to exorcist dances which are performed on New Year's eve during the Sung dynasty and which are still performed by followers of a modern cult of Chung K'uei in Taiwan.⁶

The function of the Yang-liu-ch'ing woodblock print (Fig. 2) is clearly indicated in the four characters relegated to a square block which looks like a spell: "Eradicating evil; exorcising demons" (*ch'ü-hsieh chu-mo*). In addition to offering protection, Chung K'uei also brings good fortune. This is indicated by the addition of a flying bat (*fu*), a pun on the word "fortune" or "luck (*fu*)" in Chinese. A visual pun is thus created as Chung K'uei grasps his sword, observing the approach of the flying bat with his rolling eyes, *chih chien fu lai*, which again puns with "[one] sees only the coming of fortune," *chih-chien fu-lai*. The expression of good fortune is further reinforced by the use of red, an auspicious color used on ceramics in sacrificial ritual during the Ch'ing dynasty and on such occasions as New Year's and weddings in China.⁷ Reportedly, this kind of mass-produced woodblock print was posted on the doors of Chinese households for many centuries.⁸

The presentation of Chung K'uei in a theatrical posture with a touch of heroism added became a standard image of Chung K'uei in the hands of craftsmen. This is evident in other woodblock prints, such as those from T'ao-hua-wu (Fig. 3) and Wei-hsien (Shantung). However, in the hands of Chinese painters from the Ming-Ch'ing period, a different genre seems to have been developed. Chung K'uei was transformed from a heroic figure charged with mythical powers to a gentle person of culture.⁹ Frequently he engaged in activities that were associated with the literati, such as reading, contemplating, fishing, and listening to music. Even more noteworthy, painters of the eighteenth century created a new genre of Chung K'uei drunk, and dwelled on the unidealized description of the image.

2. For a standard rendering of Chung K'uei lore see Sung and Ming texts, including Shen Kua (1029-1093), *Meng-hsi pu pi-t'an in Pai-pu ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng* (Taipei: I-wen, 1965), pp. 38a-b, Kao Ch'eng (act. 1078-1085), *Shih-wu chi-yüan in Pai-pu ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng* (Taipei: I-wen, 1967), chüan 8, pp. 20b-21a, and Ch'en Yao-wen, *T'ien-chung chi*, in *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1983), chüan 4, pp. 33a-34a. For Ming-huang's role in the formation of Chung K'uei lore and iconography, see Hu, *supra* note 1, at 51-60.
3. Meng Yüan-lao, *Tung-ching meng-hua lu* (1147), (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1971) chüan 10, pp. 205-6.
4. Jacques Gernet, *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion 1250-1276*, (New York: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 186-187. Similar descriptions can be found in Chou Mi, *Wu-lin chiu-shih* (1280), Meng Yüan-lao, *Tung-ching meng-hua lu*, and Wu Tzu-mu, *Meng-liang lu* quoted by Hu, *supra* note 1, at 141-15.
5. According to an eighteenth-century painting manual, an angry or fierce gaze (*nu-shih*) is supposed to be created when the pupils of the eyes are entirely exposed, Chiang I, *Ch'uan-shen mi-yao* (ca. 1700), in *Chung-kuo hua-lun lei-pien*, ed. Yü Chien-hua (Taipei: Ho-lo, 1975), p. 500.
6. For a treatment of written documents about Chung K'uei dances performed at the year's end in the Sung and Ch'ing dynasties see Hu, *supra* note 1, at 14-16. For a description of exorcism rituals in contemporary Taiwan see Chiu Kuen-liang, "Dance of Chung Kuei," in *Echo of Things Chinese: Special Issue on the Demon Slayer, Chung Kuei*, v. 6 no.7 (1976), pp. 17-24.

7. According to Sung records, Chung K'uei wore a blue robe. Kuo Juo-hsü *T'u-hua chien-wen chih, Lun hua jen-wu* (Treatise on Drawing Figures), quoted in *Chung kuo hua-lun lei-pien*, *supra* note 5, at 453. Monochrome red was also one of the major colors for Ch'ing ceramic vessels used in sacrificial rituals representing the sun. See Louise Allison Cort, "Color," in *Joined Colors: Decoration and Meaning in Chinese Porcelain, Ceramics from Collectors in the Min Chiu Society, Hong Kong*, ed. Louise Allison Cort and Jan Stuart, (Washington, D.C./Hong Kong, 1993), p. 23. Red was worn by brides on their wedding days. *Hung-lou meng*, hui 97.
8. Po Sung-nien, *Chung kuo nien-hua shih*, (Shen-yang: Liao-ning mei-shu, 1986), p. 9. A painting by the Southern Sung painter Li Sung, entitled "New Year Visitation," now in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, shows painted or printed images of door gods in both military and civil attire posted on the front gate and inner door of a household, serving as a pictorial documentation of the custom of posting images of door gods during the New Year season. Mary H. Fong "Wu Daozi's Legacy in the Popular Door Gods (Menshen) Qin Shubao and Yuchi Gong," *Archives of Asian Art* XLII (1989), Fig. 1, pp. 7-8.
9. For a treatment of the theme of Chung K'uei in Chinese art, see Stephen Little, "The Demon Queller and the Art of Qiu Ying," *Artibus Asiae*, v. XLVI, 1/2, (1985), pp. 22-41, also Chunmei Tschiersch, *Die Ikonographie des Zhong Kui*, Ph.D. Dissertation, (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität in Heidelberg, 1988), Wang Chen-te & Li T'ien-hsiu, *Li-tai Chung K'uei hua yen-chiu*, (T'ien-chin: Jen-min mei-shu, 1985), and Wang Lan-hsi & Wang Shu-ts'un, *Chung K'uei pai-t'u (A Hundred Paintings Concerning Zhong Kui)*, (Kuang-chou: Ling-nan mei-shu, 1990).

The sharing of subject matter between anonymous craftsmen who produced seasonal or festive woodblock prints and educated painters, including nobility at the court, can be interpreted in the context of the fluid interaction between popular and elite cultures in late imperial China. It provides a good case study of the manipulation of a popular cult image by members of the elite class.¹⁰ In this paper I take a closer look at the presentation of drunken Chung K'uei in eighteenth-century Yangchow painting and read it in the light of its social and political backdrop, putting forth the notion that the picture of drunken Chung K'uei in the eighteenth century represents a new visual genre of social satire in Chinese painting.

I. The Drunken Demon Queller

Among extant pictures of Chung K'uei there are two distinguished types: the iconic presentation, such as the standing frontal view of Chung K'uei in military attire in woodblock prints, and the narrative presentation, such as Kung K'ai's most famous handscroll *Chung K'uei Traveling* (Fig. 4) and Hua Yen's *Chung K'uei Marrying off His Sister* (Fig. 5).¹¹ In the hands of eighteenth-century artists, both modes of presentation were perpetuated. Nonetheless, a painting by one of the most popular eighteenth-century artists, Chin Nung (1687–1763), depicting a full front view of Chung K'uei seems to have crossed the boundaries of these two genres, moving the door god beyond his designated role as a demon queller (Fig. 6). Standing with his two feet parted against an empty background, Chung K'uei has his eyes closed, lips pursed, and head slightly tilted. With both of his hands hidden under the ample sleeves of his official robe, one arm rests on his left thigh while the other swings slightly to the back. The figure suggests very little movement with economical trailing drapery and a vertical orientation of the lines. A minimal sense of agitation is suggested by the angularity of the brushwork around the sleeves and at the bottom of the robe. And a sharp object projects upward from around his right boot as if a knife were hidden and yet penetrating from under his robe. Chung K'uei otherwise appears languid and relaxed in this picture, a quality further emphasized by the neutral tone of the robe, which harmonizes with the color of the background. He seems to be strolling or contemplating, as if he were a poet or a scholar, typical of many Chinese paintings. Compared to the energy-charged Chung K'uei image in the Yang-liu-ch'ing woodblock print, Chin Nung's Chung K'uei seems to be mellow, or even

10. Cheng-chi Hsü, *Patronage and Economic Life of the Artist in Eighteenth-Century Yangchow Painting*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of California, Berkeley, 1987), pp. 272–279.

11. Chunmei Tschiersch also divided the pictorial presentation of Chung K'uei into two categories: religious representation and profane narratives. Chunmei Tschiersch, *supra* note 9, at 175.

static. It makes one wonder whether this image could have been a demon slayer, and whether that was, in fact, the painted image's function.

Chin Nung himself answers these questions in his inscription located on the left-hand side of the painting:

Wu Tao-tzu of the T'ang dynasty painted a picture of *Chung K'uei Rushing through the Palace*, Chang Wo painted *Chung K'uei Holding an Official's Tablet (hu)*. Mo Yüan-te of the Five Dynasties painted *Chung K'uei Slaying Demons*. Shih K'e of the Sung dynasty painted a picture of *Chung K'uei's Younger Sister*. Liang K'ai painted *Chung K'uei Searching for the Blossoming Plum on a Horse*, Ma Ho-chih painted *Chung K'uei Reading under a Pine Tree*. In the Yüan dynasty, Wang Meng painted *Chung K'uei in a Wintry Grove*. In the Ming dynasty, Ch'ien Ku painted *Old Chung K'uei Moving His Family*, Kuo Hsü painted *Chung K'uei in Variety Shows*. Ch'en Hung-shou painted *Chung K'uei's Night Excursion during the Lantern Festival*.

However, no one ever painted a drunken Chung K'uei. I therefore ground ink stone with leftover rice soup from the Ch'an Buddhist temple and painted this drunken Chung K'uei. It is most effective in warding off the evil spirits and eradicating demons. In addition, looking at his charming drunken continence, one can imagine that this *chin-shih* from Chung-nan [Mountain] is wandering in a prosperous era and celebrating peace.

People in the past painted portraits of Chung K'uei and dedicated them to the official households in order to exorcise them of the inauspicious. Now [the custom] is applied especially on the Double Fifth Day.¹²

After listing a group of past painters, ranging from the T'ang to the Ming dynasties, and a variety of Chung K'uei themes portrayed by them, Chin claims that he is the first one to paint a drunken Chung K'uei. The languid person depicted here actually was a drunken Chung K'uei who, according to Chin, lightheartedly wanders through the land enjoying the prosperity of the time. The demon queller could be relieved of his assigned duty because the realm was devoid of any evil in a resplendent age, as suggested by Chin Nung. However, such an image of Chung K'uei would still function in the same manner, perhaps even more effectively, because the painting was executed in a Buddhist temple

12. The inscription is recorded in *Tung-hsin hsien-sheng tsa-hua t'i-chi*, in *Mei-shu ts'ung-shu*, ed. Teng Shih & Huang Pin-hung, (Taipei: I-wen, 1975), v. 11, p. 186. The same inscription also appears on another painting of drunken Chung K'uei by Chin Nung dated to 1761 and dedicated to Chiang Ch'un. See Wang and Li, *supra* note 9, at pl. 30.

and Chin indicated that he had used the leftover rice soup from the temple.¹³ The connection to a higher religious order through the material used, in this case the liquid to grind ink, seems to suggest that the painted image was thus endorsed with some religious or magical power. Chin also displayed his sense of history and order of time in the inscription as he did in many of his paintings. After recounting themes of Chung K'uei paintings in the past, Chin switched to the present time in which the painting was made and indicated the new function of the painting. At the end he pointed out that the painting was to be hung during the Double Fifth Day festival (fifth day of the fifth lunar month) instead of the New Year's according to the new fashion, a shift which might have been initiated during the seventeenth century.¹⁴ In this time sequence, the resplendent time (*tai-p'ing sheng-shih*) that Chin referred to could well be his own time, the middle of the eighteenth century.

Produced in 1759, this painting of Chung K'uei with the written language of auspices could be viewed as a piece of art work praising the government. During the eighteenth century, the Ch'ing dynasty had completed the consolidation of their political power, and was enjoying economic success in all areas, including agriculture, craft industries, and commerce.¹⁵ The population was rising to nearly double that of 1700 at the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁶ Military victories were celebrated at the frontier, and most importantly, the bitterness of the conquest by a foreign regime seems to have ceased. The Han Chinese literati had responded to their Manchu rulers by participating in government after a century of struggle, learning to adjust and survive under the Ch'ing government's dual policies of

13. Chin Nung is reported to have stayed in an old Buddhist temple, Hsi-fang Ssu (Western Temple), in the old city district of Yangchow, during his years of retirement. Tsai Ch'i, "Hung-chun Chin Nung yü Yang-chou Hsi-fang Ssu," in *Yang-chou pa-kuai p'ing-lun chi*, ed. Zheng Qi & Huang Jiaocheng, (Chiang-su mei-shu, 1989), pp. 274-277.
14. A painting of Chung K'uei by the famous late Ming artist Ch'en Hung-shou dated to 1648 was executed for the Double Fifth Day, while another Chung K'uei painting by another Ming artist, Chang Ch'ung, dated to 1641 was painted for New Year's. See *Chung K'uei pai-t'u*, *supra* note 9, at pls. 6 & 7. Another painting of Chung K'uei dated to 1645 by Ch'en Hung-shou in the collection of the Suchow Museum was also painted for the Double Fifth. See Ch'en Yü-yin, "Chieh-ch'ao Lang Ying, Ch'en Hung-shou te liang fu hua," *Wen-wu* (1984:9), p. 69. The discrepancy may suggest that in the middle of the seventeenth century the use of Chung K'uei painting was undergoing a shift. In Wen Chen-heng's *Ch'ang-wu chih* (*Treatise on Superfluous Things*, dated to about 1615-1620), Chung K'uei paintings are said to be suitable for decorating the halls during the month of December, while dragon boats, tigers, and five poisonous insects are for the Double Fifth Day. Wen Cheng-heng, *Ch'ang-wu chih*, in *Mei-shu ts'ung-shu*, *supra* note 12, at v. 15, p. 184.
15. For a discussion of the wealth and power of the eighteenth century, see Albert Feuerwerker, *State and Society in Eighteenth-Century China: The Ch'ing Empire in Its Glory* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1976), pp. 77-115.
16. Ping-ti Ho, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368-1953*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 170.

intimidation and enticement. Chin Nung painted his drunken Chung K'uei two years after the Ch'ien-lung emperor had made his second presence in the Chiang-nan area, the stronghold of local gentry, and the most prosperous region in the empire. In this painting Chin Nung seems to have been influenced by the resplendence that was created and celebrated, especially by the salt merchants in the city of Yangchow where he had retired from the early 1750s. In this respect, one can take this painting at its surface value and view it in the context of auspicious works such as the painting entitled *Scenes of Burgeoning Life in a Resplendent Age* (*Sheng-shih chi-sheng t'u*), or dramatic plays written and performed on festive occasions such as emperors' visits.¹⁷

Reading the quatrains used by Chin "wandering in a prosperous era and celebrating peace," one is reminded of the *sung-sheng* ("sing praise to the sage-ruler"), a formality required of all courtiers in the Ch'ien-lung reign. The need for this type of fawning can be observed in writings during the same period. Frequently, such praises were adopted at the beginnings or the ends of essays or poems to observe or help hide anti-Manchu or anti-government sentiments expressed in the writings—a strategy used to avoid a literary inquisition.¹⁸ A good example can be cited in an essay written by Chin's contemporary, Ch'üan Tsu-wang (1705-1755), dedicated to the two Ma brothers of Yangchow. The essay, which served as a preface for a painting entitled *Chiu-jih hsieh-an wen-yen t'u* (*Literary Gathering at the Temporary Retreat on the Double Ninth Day*), related the gathering of a poetry society presided over by the Mas at their garden retreat in 1743. Despite Ch'üan's own disillusion with the Ch'ing regime, as well as the detachment and cynicism shared among the members of the poetry society with which he associated, he maintained at the end of his essay that they were fortunate to be born in a time of peace and great prosperity so that they could fully devote themselves to literature and learning.¹⁹ Ch'üan's conformity to the formality of *sung-sheng* can be read, on the other hand, as a cynical gesture. Presenting an image of drunken Chung K'uei, Chin seems to have been following

17. For instance, *Pai-ling hsiao-ju*, is an auspicious drama compiled by Chin Nung's contemporary, Li E, for the occasion of welcoming Emperor Ch'ien-lung during his visit in 1751. Fu Hsi-hua, *Ch'ing-tai isa-chü ch'üan-mu*, (Beijing: Jen-min, 1981), pp. 355-356.
18. For a discussion of *sung-sheng* and the literary inquisition of the Ch'ien-lung period, see Yü Ying-shih, *Hung-lou meng te liang-ke shih-chieh* (*The Two Worlds in The Dream of the Red Chamber*), (Taipei: Lien-ching, 1978), p. 202.
19. Ch'üan Tsu-wang, *Chieh-ch'i t'ing chi*, wai-pien (Shanghai: Han-fen lou, 1922), chüan 5, pp. 29a-39b. For a translation of Ch'üan Tsu-wang's colophon see Ju-hsi Chou and Claudia Brown, *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor, 1736-1795*, (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1985), pp. 137-138. See F. Mote's discussion about Ch'üan's attitude. "The Intellectual Climate in Eighteenth-Century China: Glimpses of Beijing, Suzhou and Yangzhou in the Qianlong Period," *Phoebus* 6, no.1 (1988), pp. 39-51.

the convention of *sung-sheng*, and instilling a festive, auspicious mood in the painting. He also chose a subject matter which suited the taste of both the general populace and a more sophisticated audience, such as his fellow intellectuals. Reading Chin Nung's inscription and viewing his painted image of Chung K'uei, one cannot but wonder whether one can take this painting at its surface value.

On closer inspection of Chin's pictorial presentation, one seems to be struck by a certain air of reluctance clinging to the image of Chung K'uei, which betrays the festive mood described in Chin's colophon and the celebration associated with the Chung K'uei subject. Instead of closing his eyes in enjoyment of his temporary relief, Chung K'uei seems to be frowning, with his eyebrows slightly raised. The downturned mustache, downcast eyes, and wrinkles around the nose all seem to contribute to an overall expression of resignation and detachment. Especially, Chung K'uei's retrieving hands in his ample sleeves remind one of the idiom *hsiu-shou p'an-kuan* ("watch with folded arms"). Moreover, the placement of his arms, with one swinging to the back, suggests yet another theatrical movement, *fu-hsou erh-ch'ü* ("to leave in displeasure or anger"). Chin Nung seems to have articulated an image of Chung K'uei distancing himself from his contemporary affairs in the name of drunkenness.

While Chin Nung might have gotten his inspiration for painting drunken Chung K'uei from one of the episodes in a contemporary fictional rendering of Chung K'uei lore, such as *Chan-kuei chuan* (*Accounts of Exorcising the Ghosts*) published around the 1720s,²⁰ one cannot overlook the possible influence from the culture of wine and drinking in Chinese literature and history. The most famous illustrated example is the *Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove*. The eccentric behavior of the Worthies, including wine drinking and pure conversation, was accepted as an expression of nonconformity and withdrawal from society.²¹ They also establish a pattern for intellectuals of later generations in times of political turmoil. Instead of fulfilling their social responsibility by serving the government, which would entail conforming to Confucian ritualism, they exerted individualism as an alternative.²² One of the Worthies, Liu Ling (ca. 221-300), even left us with a short essay entitled, "In praise of the Virtue of

20. Yen-chia san-jen, *Chan-kuei chüan* (Taipei: Ho-lo, 1980), chüan 7, pp. 78-79. According to Hu Wan-ch'üan, the novel was finished in 1701 by Liu Chang, a *chu-jen* degree holder and low-ranking official, and published around 1720. Hu, *supra* note 1, at pp. 159-161.

21. See the *Jen-tan* chapter of *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* for examples of their drinking and eccentric behavior. Hsü Chen-o, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü chiao-chien* (Pei-ching: Chung-hua, 1984), p. 390-410.

22. Yü Ying-shih, "Individualism and the Neo-Taoist Movement in Wei-Chin China," in *Individualism and Holism Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values*, ed. Donald Munro. (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1985), pp. 121-155.

Wine" (*Chiu-te Sung*), in which he denounced the ritualistic function of wine drinking and greatly elaborated on its anti-social message.²³ Wine drinking apparently had been associated with the ideal of withdrawal from society early in Chinese history. This temporary withdrawal, instead of total denunciation of involvement in public life, became associated with the aloof, high-minded man of culture.

Wine drinking was also a tool of self-fashioning and a source of inspiration, especially for the literati. The great hermit, T'ao Yüan-ming (375-427), reportedly would not bow for "five *tau* of rice," yet would welcome someone who brought "a *hu* of wine in haste."²⁴ Li Po may not have produced so many poems were it not for his alleged habit of composing poetry after drinking.²⁵ Many Chinese painters and calligraphers drank, instead of purifying or sobering themselves with water before their artistic endeavors, as can be witnessed in other cultures. The expression of *tsui-mo* ("drunken ink"), and *tsui-pi* ("drunken brush") came to be associated with untrammelled spontaneity and the random results of artistic creation, along with the personality of the artist, becoming qualities that were valued and advocated in Chinese art theory. Chinese artists who painted for the purpose of "exchanging for wine" instead of "for rice" further displays a rather romantic idea for the commercialized transaction of paintings in later times.

The anti-social message and the romanticization of drinking seems to have been directed to a different channel by Chin Nung in his second inscription on the right side of the painting. In the beginning of his inscription Chin connects drinking and drunkenness with the state and society by using administrative units such as the *kuo* ("state"), *ch'eng* ("city"), and *hsiang* ("country village"):

I have heard that those who are good at making wine own the state (*kuo*), those who store [wine] own the city (*ch'eng*), those who indulge [in wine] own the country village (*hsiang*). [Part 1]

Those who are ignorant possess this world [of drunkenness], and misbehave for many years, intoxicated without awakening. [Part 2]

However, somebody like the old [Chung] K'uei, with his beard and mustache flying, intimidates the demons with his unrestrained heroic spirit. He can only get drunk when he knows that there is no one [around] as he looks askance. [Part 3]

23. Wang Li, *Ku-tai han-yü* (Pei-ching: Chung-hua, 1962-64), pp. 1198-1201. See also the quotation in Audrey Spiro, *Contemplating the Ancients: Aesthetic and Social Issues in Early Chinese Portraiture* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 82-3.

24. T'ao Yüan-ming's poems on drinking quoted in Wang Li, *supra* note 24, at p. 1326.

25. Li Po actually was associated with the wine star in medieval literature. Edward Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 124.

Now I picture his [drunken] manner: floating, intoxicated, with his hat and robe reversed, with his sword and jade pendant missing. It is worthy of drunkenness! [Part 4]²⁶

The inscription can be read in four parts. In the first part, which reads like a proverb, Chin Nung actually is establishing a political reading of wine drinking. In the first line of this part, Chin refers to the traditional ritualistic use of wine in Chinese culture from ancient times. It is recorded in *Li Chi (Book of Ritual)* that wine was a necessary part in accomplishing rituals (*ch'eng li*).²⁷ In the *Han Shu (Book of Han)*, the symbolic and practical functions of wine are further elaborated:

The so-called wine is a sumptuous official offering under the heavens. It is what emperors and kings use to nourish their countries, whether to offer sacrifices during ancestor worship or to pray for blessings, whether to assist the weakened or to heal the sickened. All ritualistic gatherings can not proceed without wine.²⁸

In addition to its ritualistic use, wine was also apparently used practically as a form of reward, specifically from a commander to his army after a military victory (*k'ao-chün*). Chin Nung adopted the idiom *shan-niang* ("good at making wine"), derived from an anecdote about Juan Chi (210–263). According to Juan Chi's biographer, Juan volunteered for a military commander's position as soon as he learned that one of the subordinates was good at making wine and that the district had in storage three hundred *hu* (one half of a bushel) of wine.²⁹ Despite the notion of eccentricity and iconoclasm that had always been associated with the Seven Worthies, the symbolic and practical function of wine seems to have played an important role in Juan's decision to take the official position. In other words, despite the anti-ritualistic aspect of wine drinking associated with Juan and his fellow Worthies, the social and political function of wine could not be overlooked. The commander who had control over large quantities of wine was bestowed with symbolic power and authority, as well as practical resources to command a city, like the emperor who presided over state ceremonies obtaining the power to rule. It was in his first two lines that Chin directed the viewer to these social and political functions of wine.

26. The same inscription is included in *Tung-hsin hsien-sheng tsa-hua t'i-chi*, in *Mei-shu ts'ung-shu*, v. 11, p. 195.

27. Quoted by Ho Man-tzu in his *Tsui-hua chiu wen hua* (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1991), p. 41.

28. *Han Shu* (Pei-ching: Chung-hua, 1975), chüan 24, shih-huo chih, p. 1132.

29. *Chin Shu* (Taipei: I-wen, 1956), lieh-chuan 19, chüan 49, pp. 3b.

Juan's anecdote suggests that wine served as a legitimate course for choosing a public service career, while at the same time functioning as a skillful disguise for their reluctance to give up their deliberate aloofness from public life. But as the Seven Worthies all at one point or another in their lives held office, one realizes that their denunciation of public life in the name of drunkenness was actually temporary. Even in their drunken retreat from the ritual order, they did not forget the outside world and their designated social role, or more precisely, their responsibility to serve. It is in this blurry realm in which responsibility and denunciation intermingle that Chin plays with the concept of drinking and drunkenness.

In the third line of his colophon, after subtly insinuating that among those who possess wine and thus the power to rule or to recruit worthy talent, and among those who imbibe, with the country's welfare still in mind, Chin offers yet another possible interpretation of wine consumption. The most individualistic way of using wine would be indulging oneself in the unconscious world of drunkenness (*tsui-hsiang*). However, those who use wine in this way run the risk of resembling the ignorant who lose themselves in a world of drunkenness without restraint, resulting in misconduct and irresponsibility. Chin brings forward the contrast of positive and negative wine drinking in the second part of his inscription. And in the third part he maintains that it is only someone as conscientious as Chung K'uei who would drink only with no *man* around.

With Chung K'uei as the central image of the painting, however, it is also possible that Chin was referring not to people in Chung K'uei's presence, but to ghosts. The interchangeable character between man and ghost is evident from the earliest Chung K'uei lore. The standard account of Chung K'uei, dated to the Sung dynasty, depicted the sickened emperor Ming-huang of T'ang being disturbed by a small ghost or two ghosts, who were actually the personifications of sickness, *Hsü* ("wastefulness") and *Hao* ("procrastination").³⁰ In Ming-Ch'ing fiction, the ghosts that Chung K'uei encountered and destroyed were not ghosts of the underworld nor humans charged with criminal acts; rather they were the personifications of human weakness and sins, such as obsessiveness, greed, procrastination, excessiveness, and wastefulness.³¹

In the pictorial tradition, demons or ghosts metamorphosed in human form have been interpreted as manifestations of evils. Lo P'ing's famous painting of *Ghost Amusement (Kuei-ch'ü t'u)* dwells on not only the evil in humans but also

30. See the description of the ghost[s] that plagued Ming-huang in his dream in Kao Ch'eng, *supra* note 2, at 20b. Note also the images of scent bag and jade flute possibly alluding to male sex organs.

31. Hu Wan-ch'uan's summary of the interchangeable character of humans and evil/ghosts in *Chan kuei chuan*, *supra* note 21. Hu, *supra* note 1, at pp. 169–170.

the interchangeability of humans and ghosts.³² In Chin's own paintings, ghosts appeared in human form. In the narrative scenes of Chung K'uei, for instance, the demonic entourage in Kung K'ai's (1222- ca.1304) *Chung K'uei Traveling* (Fig. 4), one of the most discussed paintings of Chung K'uei in Chinese art history, was consistently viewed by later generations as the T'ang imperial consort Yang Kuei-fei and her family, or the riot An Lu-shan. And the procession of Chung K'uei and his sister was seen as an allusion to T'ang Ming-huang and Yang Kuei-fei's fleeing journey to Shu in 756. The demons therefore were blamed for the downfall of the great T'ang dynasty. In a different vein, the demons were also sometimes interpreted as a symbol of the foreign rule of Yüan. Kung's painting of Chung K'uei thus was regarded by art historians as a painting full of political messages.³³

The multi-layered nature of the Chung K'uei lore and the demonic qualities in humans are best summarized in one of the inscriptions following Kung K'ai's painting by the seventeenth-century official and collector Kao Shih-ch'i (1645-1704): "Since Wu Tao-tzu painted the subject of Chung K'uei traveling, many painters have improvised on the same theme. However strange or obscure the [pictorial] presentation is, each [artist] lodges in his own mind (*ke you so chi*). When asked "What is there, then, to be appreciated or learned from this full procession of ghosts?" Kao replied, "In this world, there are numerous people who maintain a human configuration yet behave as demons. How do you know these people with grotesque appearances do not have hearts that are most sincere?"³⁴ When Chin Nung describes Chung K'uei as seeing no "one" around, he is most likely referring to humans and ghosts, as well as the evil in humans. And the references could be even more complex, considering the demons' previous political overtones.

In the fourth part of the inscription in Chin Nung's painting, Chin describes the image of Chung K'uei in drunkenness. He was intoxicated, slowly moving weightlessly as if he were floating on top of a cloud, not even wearing the sword or the jade pendant of a properly dressed official. In addition to the exclusion of any official attributes, either military (sword) or civil (pendant), his hat as well as his clothes are all reversed, as if they were thrown on in haste. The phrase that Chin Nung uses, *kuan-shang tien-tao*, reminds one of T'ao Yüan-ming's wine-drinking poems. According to one of the poems, T'ao once greeted a visitor to his country dwelling during his retirement, and went about in such a rush that his clothes were put on backwards (*tao-shang*). The idiom therefore could imply a

state of retirement, a situation in which one can ignore social norms. This quality is most expressive in Chin's casual delineation of Chung K'uei's official hat (*wu-sha mao*). The top of the hat seems to be made out of a bundle of loose hair protruding while the ends are shaped like two pieces of old leaves barely hanging on to the thin and twisted wire. Chung K'uei seems to be at ease without the constraint of rites.

Throughout his life, Chin did not secure any academic degree or official title. The opportunity that placed him closest to obtaining an official career was when he was nominated to sit for the special *po-hsüeh hung-tz'u* examination of 1736. Whether he declined voluntarily or was disqualified, Chin was not one of the final candidates in the examination. Nevertheless, the nomination was considered such a great honor that in his later years Chin repeatedly signed his name on his paintings with the title "formerly nominated to the *po-hsüeh hung-tz'u*." Expressing a sense of envy for those who were relieved of their social responsibility, and admiring the state of retiring from public ritual, Chin seems to have found peace with himself. Meanwhile, alluding to T'ao Yüan-ming, the great paragon of reclusion, Chin thus styled himself in public.

In a different vein, *tao-shang* could also relate to another idiom, *p'i-fa tso-jen*, or "disheveled hair and left lapels (on top)," an expression derived from the Confucian Analects indicating the customs and the distinctive dressing code under a barbaric rule. Living under the foreign rule of Manchu, was Chin referring to the Manchu court which both Chung K'uei and himself were reluctant to serve? Or was he complaining subtly as a man of talent who had been deprived of his central role in society due to injustices toward the Han Chinese or the purging of a man of letters under the new government? Painting and writing in the Ch'ien-lung era when literary inquisition was still one of the means of government control over intellectuals, Chin addresses his discontent in a discreet manner, like many of his contemporaries had.

In fact, harboring complaints or criticism in the guise of complimentary language was a device adopted by generations of Chinese intellectuals who attempted to correct the wrongdoings of rulers or to instill personal values for the betterment of society. Chinese literary critics also recognized that some later annotated versions of literary works, such as *Wen-hsüan*, were offered to the throne in hopes of advising the rulers without risking the lives of the authors for being defiant. *Mei-tz'u*, or "to encase the barb in an outwardly pleasing form," was thus used to describe this indirect means of expression.³⁵ Looking at Chin's

32. Lo P'ing, *Lo P'ing kwei-ch'ü t'u chuan*. (Chiu-lung: Ka'i-fa, 1970).

33. Stephen Little, *supra* note 9, at 32-34. Thomas Lawton, *Chinese Figure Painting*. (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1973), p. 145.

34. P'ang Yüan-chi, *Hsü-chai ming hua lu* (Taipei: Han-hua, 1971), chüan 2, p. 8a.

35. David Rolston, "Sources of Traditional Chinese Fiction Criticism," in *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, ed. David Rolston, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 10-11. The term has been used by eighteenth-century writers such as Ch'eng T'ing-tsa. For the use and definition of *mei-tz'u*, see Chen Mei-lin, "Lun 'Ju-lin wai-shih' te feng-tz'u i-shu," in *Wu Ching-tzu yen-chiu*, ed. Chen Mei-lin (Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1984), pp. 205.

adaptation of the conventionally festive icon of Chung K'uei, reading his inscription written in the *sung-sheng* pattern, and noting the erupting sharpened angles in his painting, one cannot help but notice that Chin is actually expressing moral judgement and political criticism in the mode of *mei-tz'u*, which pleases and needles (tz'u) at the same time. In another version of drunken Chung K'uei attributed to Chin Nung, this "encased barb" or disguised criticism seems to have been deliberately acknowledged in the sword-like object hidden behind Chung K'uei's ample official robe, yet distinctively sticking out from around Chung K'uei's waist (Fig. 7).

By using the term "looking askance" or "watching from the corners of one's eyes," *pi-ni*, Chin already insinuates the notion of an indirect attack. The expression is often used in describing a devious, concealed gaze, tinged with an air of distrust, and even mockery and sneering. Furthermore, as *pi-ni* can also be used to describe a conceited or envious glance, Chin seems to comment on yet another dimension of Chung K'uei's retreat to drunkenness. The gallant demon queller looks around, seeing no respectable people in this world—acknowledging no one within his sight. He sees not only no evil, no humans, but also no rule, no ritual order. Chung K'uei turns his back on the world and drinks.

For Chin, the issue of public service had pressed and nagged at him throughout his life, as was the case with a large number of Chinese literati in late imperial China. Many aspects of his situation rose to the surface and converged in this issue. He had to determine, for instance, how to position himself in a rapidly changing society, such as when confronted with the increasingly dominant role of the merchant-official, especially in Yangchow where he retired. He also had to negotiate not only his literary position as a man embracing the archaic style of diction and advocating Sung style poetry, but also his scholarly position in the discourse of Han versus Sung learning. Most importantly, in his later years Chin had to deal with the historical positioning of a man of his stature.

Hsien-chai Lao-jen, the commentator of the novel *Ju-lin wai-shih* (*An Unofficial History of the Scholars*), pointed out that civil service examinations were so crucially associated with worldly success, namely *kung* (success), *ming* (fame), *fu* (riches), and *kuei* (rank),³⁶ that many generations of men could not help but quiver and stumble in front of such an institution. In drunkenness, one could find temporary relief from the frustrations of being a mere commoner in old age, and failing to achieve the ultimate goal of a Confucian scholar. Chin found a powerful pictorial means to express himself through Chung K'uei, whose suffering, due to injustice, was finally rectified through the cleansing process of eradicating evil in humans. With a touch of self-mockery and self-deprecation, the drunken Chung K'uei became Chin's altered self.

II. The Demise of Chung K'uei and the Frustrated Scholar

While Chin Nung's image of Chung K'uei provokes various readings and multiple layers of interpretation, the theme of drunken Chung K'uei was quite popular among painters of the eighteenth century. Several extant paintings with the theme of drunken Chung K'uei push the genre further beyond the realm of self-fashioning toward social criticism, and dwell on even more dramatic presentations of satire.

A painting by Hua Yen, entitled *Chung K'uei on the Double Fifth Day* seems to dwell on the critical assessment of drunken Chung K'uei (Fig. 8). In this painting, Chung K'uei is sitting quietly under an umbrella as a scholar-official enjoying himself in a literary gathering with a group of attendants. According to the inscription, Chung K'uei was so tipsy that his cap fell off and his drunken eyes followed only the bees and butterflies in the garden.³⁷ In this quiet moment, Chung K'uei in his drunkenness was not aware that one of the little demonic attendants was actually stealing food from a plate, while another attendant was trying to draw attention to this action without success. Chung K'uei in drunkenness could therefore be a metaphor for Chung K'uei's negligence in regard to his assigned duties. Is this a metaphor of the political or social scene? The demon queller, the personification of justice, is blind due to drunkenness.³⁸

The presentation of Chung K'uei in official garb instead of military attire or as a literatus enjoying leisure time activities can be viewed as part of the growing trend of secularization of popular gods, including the Three Stars (*san-hsing*), in the Ming-Ch'ing pictorial tradition.³⁹ On the other hand, a new development of Chung K'uei lore may have contributed to this process of transforming Chung K'uei into a literatus, or more precisely, to gradually restore Chung K'uei to his original role as the scholar from Chung nan. In the Ming-Ch'ing era, a new interest in the legend of Chung K'uei was evident in a variety of literary forms, including fiction and dramatic plays. Novels such as *Chung K'uei ch'üan-chuan* (*A Complete Biography of Chung K'uei*) and *Chan Kuei chuan* developed full-

37. Recorded in *Ku-kung shu-hua lu*, revised edition, ed. National Palace Museum (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1965), 3, p. 556. For a translation of the inscription, see Yin Teng-kuo, "Scrolls and Prints of Chung K'uei," *Echo of Things Chinese*, *supra* note 6, at 54.

38. Chunmei Tschiersch suggests that the domesticated space inside of the eastern fence and the yellow chrysanthemum in the picture allude to the poet T'ao Yüan-ming. See Chunmei Tschiersch's discussion of this painting, *supra* note 9, at 141-2. Also her discussion of the theme of drunken Chung K'uei, *ibid.* p. 172.

39. See paintings of the Three Stars by eighteenth-century painters such as Hua Yen and Cheng Tai. *New Interpretations of Ming and Qing Paintings* (Shanghai: Shang-hai shu-hua, 1994) pls. 43 & 44.

36. Quoted and translated in Rolston, *supra* note 36, at 252-4.

pledged narrative accounts of Chung K'uei.⁴⁰ Anecdotes and episodes of his life, such as Chung K'uei marrying off his younger sister (*Chung K'uei chia-mei*), became themes of popular *k'uan-ch'ü* performances. Chung K'uei's sister became so well-known in the theatrical world that she was unmistakably included in the procession of twenty-eight figures, including Buddhist, Taoist, emperors, and demons, in a very popular village drama for the Lantern Festival in the seventeenth century.⁴¹ A popular *tsa-chü* entitled *Celebrating the Prosperous Harvest Year, Five Ghosts Brawling Chung K'uei* (*Ch'ing feng-nien wu-kuei nao Chung K'uei*), was among the auspicious plays appropriate for the New Year season. Amid this new body of literature about Chung K'uei, there is an interesting twist. Chung K'uei's identification as a *chin-shih* from the civil rather than military examination was emphasized and fully developed. His role as an aspiring scholar before his tragic suicide was elaborated. Chung K'uei's frustration and indignation due to injustice related to the civil service examination system was greatly expatiated on in his portrayal as a frustrated scholar. This is most evident in the names given by writers to Chung K'uei's attendant and assistant exorcists, Han-yüan (Carrying Grievance) and Fu-ch'ü (Bearing Injustice), which imply Chung K'uei's other incarnations, or altered personae.⁴² Most interestingly, all the military qualities were attributed to Fu-ch'ü while Chung K'uei remained upright, elegant, and sometimes as innocent as a stereotyped bookish scholar.

Frustration due to unfulfilled political ambition has been a subject for Chinese writers since ancient times. For example, Ch'ü Yüan, in his famous prose *Li-sao* (*Encountering Sorrow*) uses disfavored women and their relationships with men as a metaphor for unappreciated talent. In the Han dynasty, writers of "prose-poems," or *fu*, focused mainly on political issues specifically concerning the position of scholars in society and their relationship with the rulers on whom their positions depend.⁴³ Complaints saturated these writings.

While in ancient times individual rulers were responsible for the selection of talented men for government positions, new examinations for public services implemented in T'ang-Sung times institutionalized the process of selection. As office-holding came to be considered the most prestigious career for the educated in China, the civil service examination system became the orthodox path to success.

In late imperial China highly educated men found it increasingly difficult to obtain careers in public service. Population increases and restrictive quotas on the number of candidates advanced in the civil service examination system made it impossible for generations of men to pursue the ultimate goal of social responsibility defined by Confucian classics. The road to officialdom became narrower, and a vast body of unemployed, yet highly literate, talent was created. Increasing numbers diverted their talents away from governmental service and into careers in literature, art, scholarship, and mercantile activities, turning to private patronage for their livelihoods. Dissatisfaction and frustration were expressed in various ways. The theme of unappreciated and disenfranchised scholars, for instance, appears in all literary genres, especially in fiction and plays. Wu Ching-tzu's famous novel, *Ju-lin wai-shih*, written in the 1730s and 1740s, for example, is a social satire focusing on the lives of contemporary scholars, with a special regard to those lower-level degree holders who were frustrated with the civil examinations and public service. Wu Ching-tzu himself attained only a low position in the examination system and never succeeded in securing an official title. His novel thus, not surprisingly, was also permeated with self-mockery and self-lamenting. Reading such vivid narratives, imagining similar theatrical performances, one wonders whether there might not exist pictures of the ridiculed scholar? And how was this frustration portrayed?

In Chinese painting, the image of the scholar assumes many forms. He appears in the portraits of poets, officials, and recluses, and often can be found in landscapes where he occupies himself with elegant activities such as drinking tea or meeting with friends. Symbolic presentations of the scholar can be found in landscape paintings as well. A variety of plants came to represent the scholar, namely the bamboo, pine, and plum blossom, the so-called "Three Friends of the Cold Season" or the "Four Gentlemen." Although Chung K'uei had earlier been adopted by painters to represent the frustrated scholar, it was not until the Ming-Ch'ing period that his image became remarkably popular among literati painters. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it became customary for literati painters—even those who did not ordinarily paint figures—to celebrate the New Year by painting images of Chung K'uei.⁴⁴ Even Shun-chih, emperor of the Manchu court, painted images of Chung K'uei for his court official.⁴⁵ Art historians and researchers have also argued that the genre of "Chung K'uei in a Wintry Grove" (*Han-lin Chung K'uei*) flourished in the hands of sixteenth-century Suchow painters, serving as a pictorial image to express their political

40. See Hu Wan-ch'uan's discussion of these two novels. Hu, *supra* note 1, at 127-181.

41. Tanaka Issei, "The Social and Historical Context of Ming-Ch'ing Local Drama," in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. David Johnson, et al., (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 147-148.

42. *Chan-kuei chuan* (Taipei: Ho-lo, 1980), p. 10.

43. Hellmut Wilhelm, "The Scholar's Frustration: Notes on a Type of 'Fu'," in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), pp. 310-319.

44. See Wen Cheng-ming's painting of "Chung K'uei in a Wintry Grove" in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

45. Mary Fong, "A Probable Second 'Chung K'uei' by Emperor Shun-chih of the Ch'ing Dynasty," *Oriental Art*, n.s. XXIII/4 (Winter, 1977), pp. 424, figs. 1 & 2.

frustration. For instance, a painting bearing the same title by the renowned Ming scholar-official painter Wen Cheng-ming (1470-1559), has been viewed as a powerful visual image to delineate his haunting experience at the court.⁴⁶ His dissatisfaction with a corrupt government, disappointment with faction struggles, and disillusionment with public service seem to have been voiced in this painting which also celebrates the coming of a new year, a new start.⁴⁷

In the seventeenth century, art critics had already concluded that Chung K'uei was a suitable subject matter for generations of painters to express their own political frustration and to lament their own inopportune situations. For instance, Kao Shih-ch'i commented that while horses were widely adopted by painters and writers as images of talent as well as lamentation for the unappreciated, Chung K'uei was an even more suitable subject for artists to express their own minds and to arouse or soothe the moods of the viewers.⁴⁸

In the eighteenth century, when the political scene changed under Manchu rule, Chung K'uei seems to have been adopted by the literati once again to express a multitude of emotions. In his *Portrait of Chung K'uei*, Huang Shen delineates a pensive, contemplating gentleman who gazes afar (Fig. 9). A joyful Chung K'uei was presented as a literatus in his private garden enjoying music played by a female companion in *Hua Yen's Chung K'uei Listening to the Music*.⁴⁹ Chin Nung's painting of Chung K'uei in the Shanghai collection portrays an angry figure against an empty background staring with roaring eyes while blowing his beard, with his hand shaking on the side, a theatrical gesture of anger (Fig. 10). Similar to Chung K'uei in the novel *Chan-kuei chuan*, he is a full-fledged life-sized person, instead of a supernatural being, endowed with all the emotions, merits, and faults of human beings.

A painting by Lo P'ing portraying the intoxicated Chung K'uei supported by two attendants further brings forward the critical eyes of the painter (Fig. 11). While a third attendant holds his cap and robe, Chung K'uei limps with his eyes closed. The group of three with hair flying, rush out of the woods in haste.⁵⁰ In contrast, a pale rubbing-like wash applied to the ground and uncertain strokes to

the rocks seem to suggest an uninterrupted serenity in the pictorial surface. The brushwork reminds one of the pale and squibbing uncertainty that was applied in his ghost paintings which might have come from *wang-liang hua* (ghost painting style) allegedly initiated by the Southern Sung monk painter Chih-yung (1114-1192).⁵¹ However, a few harsh and angular strokes define Chung K'uei's hanging robe. And there are vivid outbursts of red here and there, also tinging the hair and eyes of the attendants. Together the brush strokes and colors suggest a certain discord and agitation in this otherwise unconscious world of drunkenness. Most noteworthy, Chung K'uei is depicted as such a mundane, if not vulgar person, with his one foot bare, belly grotesquely sagging and protruding.

Noteworthy also was his association with and his dependence on the demonic attendants which seems to indicate yet another persona of Chung K'uei—one who was not only oblivious of his duty but who thereby empowered the undeserving ghosts around him. This aspect of drunken Chung K'uei has been greatly improvised by painters of later generations, including contemporary artists. For instance, in Ting Ts'ung's (1916-) cartoon "The Aged Chung K'uei" (Fig. 12), Chung K'uei fell asleep as he leaned on a toppled wine jar, surrounded by "five ghosts": a seductive woman and four men in Mao uniforms. While the bewitching woman kneels whispering to him, three men try to perform his duties, struggling to fit into his official cap and boots, and holding his sword. The last man crawls to worship the old hero, the semi-god, while lapping up the overflowing liquor. The theatrical exaggeration is best summarized in the caricaturizing of the figures, especially in the use of lead white masks (*pai-lien*) which are the trademarks for the role of *ch'ou* ("clown") in traditional Chinese theater. Reading this cartoon against the personal background of Ting Ts'ung⁵² and the political climate of the late 1970s, the message seems to be quite clear: the drunken old Chung K'uei in the picture alludes to the political leader of Communist China while the demons, including the woman and the four clowns, represent the Gang of Four.⁵³ The fossilized Chung K'uei is condemned for political turmoil and cultural destruction, and his trust of the Gang of Four is harshly criticized.

46. Ying Teng-kuo, "Scrolls and Prints of Chung K'uei," p. 35. For a treatment of the genre of Chung K'uei in a Wintry Grove see Little, *supra* note 34, at 27, 40. Chia-chi Jason Wang, *supra* note 1, at 34.

47. For a discussion of Wen's brief career in court from 1523 to 1526 and his pictorial depiction of frustration, see Shih Shou-ch'ien, "New Hopes on the Early Chia-ching Politics and the Change of Wen Cheng-ming's Painting Style," *Study of the Arts*, vol. 2 (March, 1988), pp. 111-140.

48. Pang Yüan-chi, *Hsi-chai min-hua lu*, chüan 2, p. 8a.

49. In the collection of a Hong Kong private collector.

50. Another painting with the same composition is in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art. See *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), Fig. 273.

51. See scenes from Lo P'ing's painting entitled *Kuei ch'ü-t'u* (*Ghost Amusement*). For the ghost painting style see James Cahill, *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1980), p. 77.

52. For a brief account of Ting Ts'ung as a rightist, see Ellen J. Laing, *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), pp. 63-64, and Julia Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 456, note 214.

53. I am indebted to Professor Ellen Laing for her suggestion to view this cartoon in the political context of late 1970, after the fall of the Gang of Four.

III. A New Genre of Social Satire

In eighteenth-century China the unidealized depiction of Chung K'uei, the demon queller, was carried to yet another level when Lo P'ing presented a painting entitled *Ghosts Brawling with Chung K'uei (Kuei hsi Chung K'uei)* (Fig. 13). In this painting dated to 1793 the grotesqueness of the attendants is blatantly configured not only by their physical appearance, but also by their mischievous activities. While Chung K'uei reclines drunk in a chair, the attendants climb on top of him, pulling on one of his arms and legs, chewing his fingers, putting a poisonous insect into his boot, and forcing more wine on him. Chung K'uei is left with only one arm free, unable to bring himself together. His eyes open wide, with pupils rolling to the side, seem to cry out for help in dismay. The frolicking demons may have come from an episode of *Chan-kuei chuan*, "Offering Gourmet Wine, Five Ghosts Brawling with Chung K'uei (*Hsien mei-chiu wu-kuei nao Chung K'uei*)"⁵⁴ or the popular drama *tsa-chü* "Celebrating the New Year Five Ghosts Brawling with Chung K'uei." The irony of this episode is that despite his mythical powers to dispel the evils reportedly bestowed on him by the Jade Emperor (*yü huang ta-ti*), the superior ruler of the cosmos, Chung K'uei cannot avoid being victimized by the demons. In the eyes of eighteenth-century writers and painters he is just another human being with all of their weaknesses, including the inability to resist obsequiousness and the temptation of wine.

The image of Chung K'uei is depicted with crudity. The brushwork, especially, reminds one of the presentation of low-life figures in the Chinese painting tradition, such as Chou Ch'en's beggar or Chou Chi-ch'ang's low-life in his Arhat series. There is no apparent distinction made to delineate Chung K'uei from the demons. With a touch of exaggeration, Chung K'uei is presented as a vulnerable, helpless, even laughable low life. Comparing this image of Chung K'uei to that of Chung K'uei as literati, he is not only an object of attack by the ghosts but, most importantly, by the painter. The tragic downfall of Chung K'uei is pointed out and turned into a farce. While the pictorial presentation may illustrate a play suitable for the New Year's season, serving the function of eradicating impurities at the end of the year, it seems to exude a sense of horror. The overall subdued color tone with occasional outbursts of rustic red, such as Chung K'uei's mouth, the wine cup, and the lining of his boot, the repeated use of jagged brush strokes, the twisted line of the chair, and the grotesque yet unpleasant physiognomy of the ghosts seem to aim at instilling fear in the viewers.

54. *Chan-kuei chuan*, hui 7.

In Lo P'in's painting of ghosts brawling with Chung K'uei, the demise of a hero and the triumph of evil are personified and deliberated with exaggeration. The subtle satire (*wei-tz'u*)⁵⁵ that one observes in the previous drunken Chung K'uei paintings turns here into biting, stabbing, acidic jokes. Such theatrical presentations of attacks on contemporary society and politics can be traced to yet another mode of satire in Chinese history and literature, namely *k'e-hun* or *ch'a-k'e ta-hun*, jesting and buffoonery, or comic relief.⁵⁶ Like jesters or clown narrators in theatrical performances, or the writers of humorous stories (*p'ai-hsieh*), Lo P'in brings forth his critical value judgements and moral condemnation in a comic mode. Lo P'in criticizes the wrongs of Chung K'uei with a sense of humor.

In the eighteenth century such sarcastic and jesting gestures seemed to be rather common among writers. For instance, in a letter rejecting Chin Nung's request for help in selling Chin's own handicraft products in Nanking, Yüan Mei (1716-1797) made the ignorance and vulgarity of his fellow townsmen in Nanking an excuse for his refusal. In a sarcastic tone, he teased Chin about his unappreciated talent and his futile attempts to market a refined taste to vulgar urban residents.⁵⁷ Cheng Hsieh, in his price list mocked the hypocritical literati who painstakingly maintained a facade of aloofness while dealing with commercial activities and the commoditization of their literary products.⁵⁸ For Lo P'in, the indirect moral judgement is carried out in his choice of a dispirited Chung K'uei, used as an image for the dysfunction of justice and the downfall of his fellow literati in late eighteenth-century society. By using a popular cult image, Lo asserts his own values in regard to social wrongs. He touches the hearts of various levels of viewers and satisfies the need to berate the shortcomings of their society.

Just as Wu Ching-tzu criticized scholars in his novel *Ju-lin wai-shih*, eighteenth-century artists producing pictorial counterparts, ridiculed the literati

55. The term *wei-tz'u* ("subtle satire") has been used by critics of *Ju-lin wai-shih* to describe one of the modes that was adopted by Wu Ching-tzu. Rolston, *supra* note 36, at 255.

56. The same term was used by the commentator of *Hung-lou Meng* specifically about the incident of Liu Lao-lao. Rolston, *supra* note 36, at 335. Lu Hsüan also considered *ta-hun* one form of satire in Chinese literature. Lu Hsüan, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih-lüeh* (Taipei: Ming-lun, 1969), p. 230.

57. The letter is quoted and translated in Cheng-chi Hsü, *Patronage and Economic Life of the Artist in Eighteenth Century Yangzhou Painting*, p. 171.

58. Cheng Hsieh's price list is quoted and translated in Ginger Cheng-chi Hsü "Zheng Xie's Price List: Painting as a Source of Income in Yangzhou," *Phoebus* 6, no. 2 (1991), pp. 261.

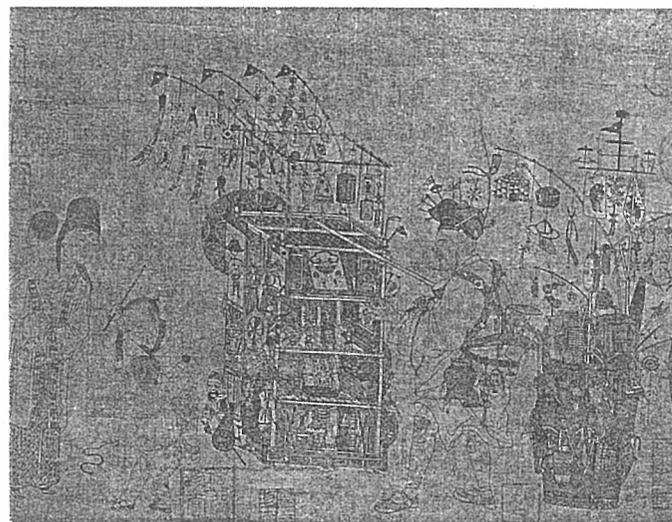
59. Lo P'in summarizes the vulgar, worldly, and absurd aspects of Chung K'uei in a painting depicting Chung K'uei sitting on a toilet with his naked buttock facing the viewer. The painting is in Cheng Shih-fa's collection, Shanghai.

marginal class of under-privileged scholars who depended on an alternative career in art for their livelihoods. In other words, eighteenth-century literati found yet another medium, the pictorial arts, to express their view of themselves, their agony over the examination system, their discontent toward a world filled with their fellow literati and their pitiful behavior, and their frustration over social injustices and political corruption. Manipulating layers of allusion and association, Chin Nung and his fellow artists found drunken Chung K'uei a powerful image to express their critical outlook.

In the hands of eighteenth-century painters, Chung K'uei is no longer the elegant scholar, nor is he the invincible protector. He is simply an ordinary human being, so common, in fact, that he is even portrayed in the act of using a toilet in a painting entitled *Chung K'uei ju-ts'e t'u* (*Chung K'uei on a Toilet*) by the same artist.⁵⁹ Chinese literati, including painters and writers, who had once viewed themselves the conscience of society and the voice of justice in the human world, had previously used Chung K'uei as a means of self-representation. In the eighteenth century, the literati could no longer identify themselves with the aloofness, the unworldliness of a super-human being. After all, the educated were, like Chung K'uei, no more than human beings. The paintings of Chung K'uei drunk were probably closer to life portraits of themselves, rather down-to-earth self-images. The literati's high hopes and expectations had faded away, replaced instead, with a rather realistic, and sometimes cynical, even caricatured, view of themselves. It is in their painted images of drunken Chung K'uei that we can identify a new genre of social satire in the history of Chinese visual arts.

59. Lo P'ing summarizes the vulgar, worldly, and absurd aspects of Chung K'uei in a painting depicting Chung K'uei sitting on a toilet with his naked buttock facing the viewer. The painting is in Cheng Shih-fa's collection, Shanghai.

Illustrations:



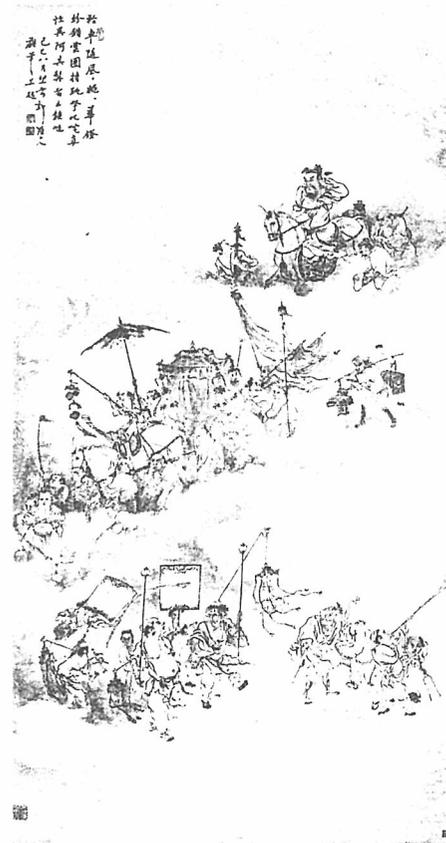
1. Anonymous
14th century
The Knick-knack Peddler
Album leaf, ink on silk
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.
Publication: Thomas Lawton *Chinese Figure Painting* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1973), no. 55



2. **Chung K'uei**
18th century
Single sheet woodblock print
Yang-liu-ch'ing, Tientsin
Publication: Wang & Wang, *Chung K'uei Pai-t'u*, pl. 90

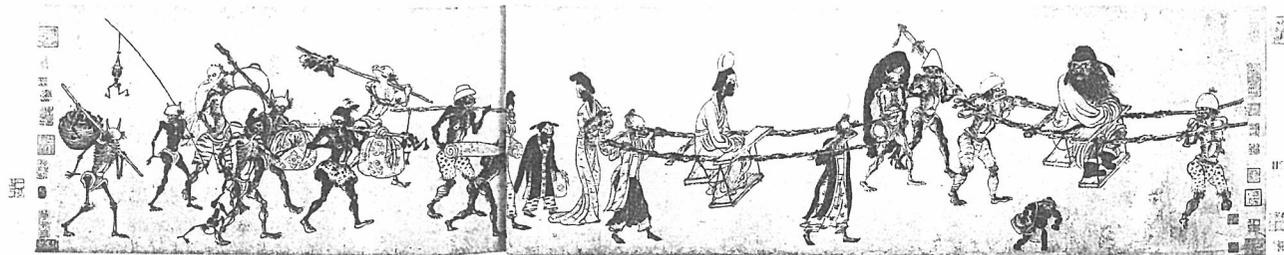


3. Chung K'uei
Single sheet woodblock print
T'ao-hua wu, Suchow
Publication: *Chung K'uei Pai-t'u*, pl. 94



5. Hua Yen (1682-1756)
Chung K'uei Marrying off His Sister (Chung K'uei chia mei)
Dated 1749
Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk
Publication: *I-yüan tuo-ying* (Shanghai: Jen-min mei-shu), no. 8 (1980), p. 27

4. Kung K'ai (1222-ca. 1304)
Chung K'uei Traveling
Handscroll, ink on paper
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institute,
Washington D.C.
Publication: *Chinese Figure Painting*, no. 35





6. Chin Nung (1687-1763)
 Drunken Chung K'uei
 Dated 1759
 Ink and light color on paper
 Collection: Chung-kuo mei-shu kuan,
 Beijing
 Publication: *Chung K'uei pai-t'u*, pl. 12



7. Chin Nung
 Drunken Chung K'uei
 Dated 1761
 Ink and color on paper
 Collection: Unknown
 Publication: *Christie's: Fine Chinese Painting and
 Calligraphy* (New York, December,
 1993), p. 177



8. Hua Yen
 Chung K'uei on the Double Fifth Day
 Hanging scroll
 Ink and light colors on paper
 Collection: National Palace Museum, Taipei



9. Huang Shen (1687-1772)
 Portrait of Chung K'uei
 Dated 1731
 Hanging scroll. Ink and color on paper
 Publication: *I-yüan tuo-ying*, no. 8, p. 21



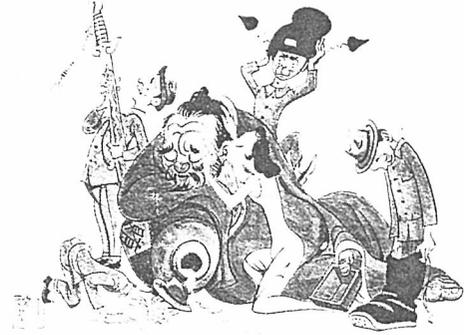
10. Chin Nung
Chung K'uei

Publication: *Yang-chou pa-kwai shu-hua chi*, ed. Chang Wan-li & Hu Jen-mao. (Hong Kong: K'ai-fa, 1970), v. 1, pl. 31



11. Lo P'ing (1733-1799)
Drunken Chung K'uei

Publication: *Chung K'uei pai-t'u*, pl. 15



12. Ting Ts'ung (1916-)
The Aged Chung K'uei

Publication: *Chung K'uei pai-t'u*, pl. 74



13. Lo P'ing

Ghosts Brawling with Chung K'uei (Kuei hsi Chung K'uei)

Dated: 1793

Publication: *Chung K'uei pai-t'u*, pl. 16