Myth and Ritual Patterns in *King Wu's Campaign Against King Chou*

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King Wu's Campaign Against King Chou (Wu Wang Fa Chou P'ing-hua),[1] describes the punishment visited upon King Chou for his act of hybris toward the Jade Goddess, a manifestation of the Moon.

The prologue story about King T'ang, founder of the Yin Dynasty, emphasizes the cyclical and lunar character of the story to follow. "T'ang" 湯, the posthumous title of the founder of Yin, is interpreted by the narrator as the title "given to those who end cruelties." The lunar implications of the title can be deduced from the graph with which it is written, and from the character of King T'ang. We are not told anything in the prologue story about King T'ang's minister Yi-yin, but since I think it will help us in our understanding of the king's title, I will summarize the circumstances surrounding his birth from James Legge's footnote to his translation of the *Book of Documents*: when Yi-yin was in his mother's womb, she dreamed that she saw water flowing from the sun and that she was commanded by a voice to leave her native village early the next morning. She did as she was told, and saw that water was indeed flowing from the sun. Looking back at her old village, she saw it inundated by the flood. She was turned into a hollow mulberry tree, where the child was found by its future foster parents.

King T'ang was truly a "Yin" 陰 "Yang" 陽. The "old village" which is replaced by "water" is Radical Number 170 阝, for which is substituted Radical Number 85 氵.

King Wen plays a role in the main story analogous to that of King T'ang. The graph for "Wen" 文 suggests the graph "min" 旻, one

1. Translated by Liu Ts'un-yan in *Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Novels*, Vol. I: "The Authorship of the *Feng Shen Yen I*" (Wiesbaden: Kommissionsverlag, Otto Harrassowitz, 1962).

A convenient Chinese edition of *Wu-wang Fa-chou P'inghua* 武王伐紂平話 is the Chung-hua Shu-chü edition, published in Peking in 1958.

meaning for which is "autumn sky." Both King T'ang and King Wen are associated with rain-bringing and the beneficent effects of this function on agriculture. King T'ang immolates or tries to immolate himself in a mulberry wood, which brings rain to end a seven-year drought. King Wen's magical powers of weather prediction are especially evident in regard to the thunder, lightning, and rain. For example, when he is proceeding to his first audience in the story with King Chou, he predicts that a storm will begin about 9 a.m. and end at noon. Just as he predicted, a violent rain storm occurs, after which plants begin to grow. And, during his seven-year imprisonment at Yu-li, he "divined for himself every day the fortunes of the people, the harvest of agricultural products, the weather, day by day, and month by month."

The main story describes the nature of King Chou's offense, the instruments to be used by the Moon Goddess to punish him, and his death.

We are not told explicitly that the Jade Maiden is a manifestation of the Moon, but this seems very likely in view of the timing of Queen Chiang's visits to the temple, on the First and Fifteenth of each month: that is, on the nights of the "new moon" and "full moon."

After failing to seduce the Jade Maiden, King Chou receives a sash from her as a pledge that she will visit him in his palace in 100 days. She does not come, but after another 100 days pass, the king comes under the baleful influence of the witch Ta-chi. Ta-chi claims to be the sister of the Moon Goddess. The king compounds his offense against the Moon Goddess by following Ta-chi's suggestion and destroying the Temple of the Jade Maiden and her image. The machinery is already being set in motion by the gods to punish King Chou for his arrogance. When he is just about 60 years old, his wife Queen Chiang, who has already been associated with worship of the Moon Goddess, gives birth to Prince Yin. The child is an incarnation of the God of the Cycle. This fact has special significance since his father has just come to the end of the Sixty-year Cycle.

The crowning insult to the Moon Goddess by King Chou and Ta-chi begins when Ta-chi claims to be her sister, and climaxes when King Chou builds the Moon Playing Terrace and Star Plucking Tower. With these he creates a "negative" moon, and the sacrifices which would have been offered in the Temple of the Jade Maiden, which he has destroyed, will not be offered on the Fifteenth Night of each month at his terrace. The negative qualities of his Moon Playing Terrace and Star Plucking Tower will attract the negative qualities of their celestial counterparts.

Prince Yin, born at the end of his father's sixty-year cycle, is the chief protagonist in the myth complex which underlies the whole story.

With the exception of one strikingly displaced motif, Prince Yin is described in terms of the archetypal hero. The unusual circumstances which one would normally expect to surround his birth seem to be missing. We are told by the narrator that he is a god incarnate. Logically, however, the description of the birth of Son-of-thunder-shock would appear to have been more appropriate to the Prince. Indeed, in the long novel version of the story, the *Enfeoffment of the Gods* (*Feng-shen Yen-yi*), Prince Yin is replaced by No-ch'a, a character who is assigned all the criteria proper to an archetype.

Prince Yin is born of an aged father, his mother is murdered by his father when the child is still an infant, and he is raised by a kind nurse. She informs the Prince of the circumstances surrounding his mother's death, and his reaction leads him to be condemned to death. At the age of 12–13 then, the boy escapes execution through the intervention of the incarnate God of Wandering Souls, Hu Sung, receives a vision which guarantees him protection against his enemies, and is given a magic ax for killing King Chou. The pattern is familiar around the world in stories connected with such figures as Osiris, Oedipus, Dionysus, and Moses.

Logically, we expect Prince Yin to succeed to his father's throne. But the myth has been historicized to accord with the events and personalities involved in the overthrow of the Yin Dynasty by the Chou dynasty. When Prince Yin meets Chiang Tzu-ya after both have successfully fled to the West, he is rejected as the future king.

The pattern of movements from East to West, across a great river, strongly suggests the movements of the moon and stars in relation to the Milky Way. When all the heroes are assembled in the West, they begin their triumphal campaign back to and across the Yellow River to the East. T'ung Pass is used as a metaphor for T'ien Pass, which is itself a metaphor for the Milky Way. And at the beginning of the campaign, Chiang Tzu-ya announces that it will be conducted like a stellar progression:

> "How many men do you need?" Chiang Shang said: "33,333 men." King Wu said, "How can we defeat the enormous armies of King Chou with our small forces?" Chiang Shang said: "There are the Stars of the Three Terraces. There are thirty thousand stars in the sky. And there are 300 orbits of the constellations between night and day. Now we can stop every thirty *li* so that we shall not feel tired, then we can defeat King Chou [p. 60].

The numbers, counting the 30,000 stars, the 300 orbits of the constellations, 30 *li* per day, and the Stars of the Three Terraces, add up to exactly the number of troops, 33,333.

The correlations between other aspects of the campaign and stellar

phenomena are consistent with Chiang Tzu-ya's speech. The battle formations are described in terms of planets and stars:

> Knowing the Marshall had pitched five camps, Ch'ung Hou-hu also pitched five star camps, with Fei Lien in charge of the Jupiter Camp, Shen T'u-pao in charge of the Mercury Camp, Hsüeh Yen-t'o in charge of the Mars Camp, Yü-ch'ih Huan in charge of the Venus Camp, and P'eng Chü in charge of the Saturn Camp [p. 69].

The negative world created by King Chou is slowly set to rights again, as the stars return to their proper orbits, and the center of the wicked king's universe is beseiged by the heroes from the fiefdom in the West. The leader of the beseigers, King Wu, says: "I wish a rain of blood would soak the city for three days and that thunder would rock it." This comes to pass. The language is metaphorical, but clear nevertheless: it refers to the redness of the full moon at dawn, which lasts three days. The rain is an additional good omen at this time.

Ritual Patterns in the Story

Prince Yin and his father provide the story with a cyclical and durative aspect: they represent happenings on a supramundane level. King Wen, the Western Earl, and Chiang Tzu-ya serve as points around which the mundane and ritual aspects of the story develop. Professor Theodor H. Gaster provides a convenient frame for discussing ritual features in his work *Thespis*.[2] He notes four elements common to all seasonal rituals:

> First come rites of Mortification, symbolizing the state of suspended animation which ensues at the end of the year, when one lease of life has drawn to a close and the next is not yet assured [p. 27].

As King Chou nears the age of sixty, he ceases to function as king, and comes under the baneful influence of Ta-chi. The Western Earl, a descendant of the God of Agriculture, attempts to revive the king's sense of duty by remonstration, but fails. He demonstrates his power to predict the weather and to bring rain, and prophesies that the seeds of new life will be born from death: the Son-of-thunder-shock is born as predicted from the womb of a dead woman.

Included in Gaster's first phase are ceremonial fasts and abstinence. The Western Earl spends seven years in prison, during which he takes

2. Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis* (A Doubleday Anchor Book, New and Revised Edition [paperback]; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961).

only cold food and attires himself in poor clothes; he is attended by the God of Mourning. Like the larger community of which he is a part, the Western Earl is in a state of suspended animation. The fast is part of an initiation ritual. The purpose is two-fold: to obtain a vision, which comes in the form of the phoenix, and to prepare to rejoin the community through a communal meal—he eats the flesh of his son. Both the phoenix and the son metamorphosed into a hare are emblems of the Moon, which is the Earl's special patroness.

Gaster relates ritual weeping with ceremonies of mortification. The purpose of weeping is not simply to express grief, but is closely connected with encouragement of fertility. He points out that "the shedding of tears is believed to be an homeopathic method of producing rain . . ." (p. 33). The Western Earl makes a prediction just before he is released, and before eating the flesh of his son, in which he says that he has both cause to be happy and cause to be sad. The ambiguity fits Gaster's description very well.

Merged with the mortification aspects in our story are aspects belonging to what Gaster terms a "vacant period" during which "the customary order of society is reversed" (p. 61). Chiang Tzu-ya is reviled by Shen T'u-pao as a former butcher and sauce vendor. Here we have a strong suggestion of the reversal of roles as exemplified in the carnival times of seasonal festivals the world over.

Chiang Tzu-ya is to become the earthly manifestation of the Western Earl's "familiar spirit." He enters the story when word of his recognition of the planet Venus is brought to the attention of King Chou. The planet is considered a representative of the Moon. Chiang Tzu-ya is a manifestation of Venus and a servant of the Moon.

When all the protagonists are assembled in the West, and Chiang fishes at P'an Stream, a new phase begins:

> Second come rites of Purgation, whereby the community seeks to rid itself of all noxiousness and contagion, both physical and moral, and of all evil influences which might impair the prosperity of the coming year and thereby threaten the desired renewal of vitality.

This phase usually begins with the expulsion of a scapegoat. Wu Chi functions as a human scapegoat. He is forced to flee for his life after he is blamed for the murder of the gatekeeper, who apparently just fell and died. His treatment by the Western Earl is purely ritual: his separation from the community is accomplished by drawing a circle on the ground to indicate confinement. He is given money to provide for his mother, and told to return for execution of his sentence after seven days.

Again in this phase we expect to find rites of fast, abstinence, and

purification. An added feature is confession of sins. Before he succeeds in getting the help of Chiang Tzu-ya, the Western Earl must pass a test, and acknowledge that "he himself was in the wrong" when Chiang refuses to heed his supplications. Next, he must abstain from meat for three days, and purify himself on the third day by taking a bath. Usually, the aspects of purgation described in this paragraph are performed by the king. From the commencement of Chiang Tzu-ya's acceptance of the Western Earl's pleas, the latter is referred to as "King Wen." Henceforth, he acts as the representative of the community, as does his successor King Wu.

The negative phases of the ritual pattern end when Chiang Tzu-ya agrees to be King Wen's advisor. The passages which immediately follow describe the new king's just government and his death. King Wu continues the task begun by his father, but there is a three-year pause for mourning. At the conclusion of the mourning period, the campaign which will overthrow King Chou is begun.

> Third come rites of Invigoration, whereby the community attempts, by its own concerted and regimented effort, to galvanize its moribund condition and to procure that new lease on life which is imperative for the continuance of the topocosm.

The main feature of this phase is the "ritual combat." The campaign to defeat King Chou, with its sharp divisions between protagonists and antagonists, and their symmetrically patterned movements, leaves little doubt of its ritual form. In the battles of the Star Gods the forces of blight and death are defeated, and a new red dawn breaks over the city of Chao-ko ("Morning Song").

> Last come rites of Jubilation, which bespeak men's sense of relief when the new year has indeed begun and the continuance of their own lives and that of the topocosm is thereby assured.

Gaster points out that a feast of the dead is frequently concomitant with seasonal ceremonies. All parts of the community, both living and dead, are called together at times of seasonal crisis. After the defeat of King Chou, King Wu and his men perform rituals to console the spirits of the dead: "We should pour a libation for their souls." "Then they sprinkled dainty food and broth over the floor. The day was gloomy and they heard the bitter souls eating the food. They finished the food in a short time."

Conclusion

The story relies very heavily upon myth and ritual pattern as

form-giving elements. It moves from order to chaos and back to order again. The struggle of the protagonists in our story is directed toward reasserting the natural order, which had been upset when King Chou and Ta-chi established a false locus for the Moon and Stars on earth.

In our story, the characters are not polar opposites in the sense of being distinct entities. They represent the positive and negative qualities of the same entities. Ta-chi and the Moon Goddess both represent aspects of the Moon. Ta-chi is representative of the frightful aspects of the Moon. She is Jung's "terrible mother" and Medusa (notice in this connection the parallels between her execution—the executioners cannot look on her face—and that of the Gorgon Medusa). The protagonists, King Wen, Chiang Tzu-ya, Prince Yin, the Prince's mother, and his nurse, represent the good aspects of family figures.

The patterns of myth and ritual evident in the story clearly antedate the work itself; they are archetypal. This makes it unprofitable to look for influences of our story as such on later works, except in the case of the long novel, the *Enfeoffment of the Gods*, which clearly represents a development from our story, and probably the novel *All Men are Brothers*, which uses the motif of the "baleful stars" as a framing device for the whole story—they are concomitant with the beginning of chaos, and when they return to their proper places in the firmament we may suppose that order is restored. The patterns themselves, however, we can expect to play a very important role in the form of Chinese fiction.