

From Chu Pang-liang to Yen Yüan: A Psychohistorical Interpretation of Yen Yüan's Violent Rebellion against Chu Hsi*

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Abstract

Yen Yüan (1635-1704) has long been a controversial figure in the study of Chinese intellectual and cultural history. Marginalized in his own time largely due to his radical attack on Chu Hsi (1130-1200), Yen became elevated as a great thinker during the early twentieth century because of the drastic changes of modern Chinese intellectual climate under the impact of Western culture. However, his intellectual significance has remained controversial and his radical attack on Chu Hsi has never been critically analyzed.

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teaching. Yen, however, was famous or, maybe we should say, notorious for his extremely radical charges against Chu's teaching and, more seriously, Chu's personality as well. With a vehemently resentful rhetoric permeating his works, Yen bitterly charged that the whole of Chu Hsi's teaching was nothing but pseudo-Confucian learning. As well, he proclaimed that Chu Hsi, as a well-disguised bogus Confucian, surreptitiously yet viciously deceived all the Confucian followers, who were innocently victimized by Chu's false learning, becoming useless, bookish, feminized literati.

Ever since I began my research on Yen Yüan, I have been constantly intrigued by Yen Yüan's sudden rebellion against Chu Hsi when he was thirty-four. In particular, I was puzzled by the emotion and vehemence embedded in his attack. Indeed, it is almost impossible to critically analyze his ideas without a proper understanding of his "hatred" of Chu Hsi, because most of his ideas were juxtaposed to, or contextualized by, his bitter censure of Chu Hsi. Unlike previous interpretations, which mostly employed ahistorical approaches and essentialist conceptual frameworks to interpret Yen Yüan, my study aims to present Yen Yüan as a figure of his own time, a figure that represents "real people in history, with real passions and real conflicts," in Peter Gay's words. Instead of trivializing the emotional side of Yen Yüan, I problematize it and demonstrate that it constitutes the proper context for understanding the ideas and behavior of Yen Yüan, especially his attack on Chu Hsi.

I have demonstrated that the complexity of Yen's ideas and his hatred for Chu Hsi in particular need be interpreted in light of his traumatic life experiences, his frustration over the fall of the Ming dynasty, and anxiety caused by the civil service examination system. Moreover, instead of portraying Yen Yüan merely as a Confucian philosopher, I have argued that he would be better understood as a cultural critic of the lifestyle of educated elites of late imperial China. I

have evaluated the cultural significance of his emphasis on bodily learning and his contempt of literary learning in the context of the educated elite culture of late imperial China. By redirecting our attention on Yen' s emotional and dramatic life experience, my study will shed new light on our understanding of this controversial figure and late imperial Chinese cultural history as well.

“Too much of history is still written as though men had no feeling, no childhood, and no bodily senses. What is needed is a new kind of history, a history that tells us how men responded to and felt about the great political and economic events that shaped their lives, a history that gives due place to the irrational, the unconscious, and the emotions not only of men but also of the child in the man.”¹

1. The Problem

Ever since I began my research work on Yen Yüan 顏元 (1635-1704), I have been constantly intrigued by Yen Yüan' s sudden rebellion against Chu Hsi 朱熹 when he was thirty-four. In particular, I was puzzled by the emotion and vehemence embedded in his attack.² Indeed, it is almost impossible to critically analyze his ideas without a proper understanding of his “hatred” of Chu Hsi because most of his ideas were juxtaposed to, or contextualized by, his bitter censure of Chu Hsi.

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1 Peter Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 242.

2 For Yen' s most acrimonious charges against Chu Hsi, see his “Chu Tzü yü-lei p' ing” 朱子語類評 (Comments on the Conversations of Master Chu) in *Yen Yüan chi* 顏元集 (The Complete Work of Yen Yüan) 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1987), 1: pp. 249-315. In this work, Yen Yüan randomly selected Chu Hsi' s statements and criticized them very harshly.

teaching. Yen, however, was either famous or notorious for his extremely radical charges against Chu's teaching and particularly against Chu's personality as well. With a vehemently resentful rhetoric permeating his works, Yen bitterly charged that the whole of Chu Hsi's teaching was nothing but pseudo-Confucian learning. Furthermore, he proclaimed that Chu Hsi, as a well-disguised bogus Confucian, surreptitiously yet viciously deceived all the Confucian followers, who were innocently victimized by Chu's false learning and thus became useless, bookish, feminized literati.

Although Yen's violent attack on Chu Hsi was later praised by his modern promoters, such as Liang Ch' i-ch' ao 梁啟超 and Hu Shih 胡適, Yen's severe accusation of Chu Hsi and his teaching was outrageous and even preposterous for the majority of Confucian literati of his time. For them, Chu Hsi was not only widely regarded as the orthodox transmitter of the Confucian teaching but also respected as a great Confucian himself. As a result, for the majority who were unwilling to forgive Yen for his slandering of a Confucian sage, Yen Yüan's charges against Chu Hsi were totally unacceptable blasphemies.

Fang Pao 方苞 (1668-1749), a famous Confucian literati, renowned not only for his literary achievement but also as a staunch defender of Chu Hsi, serves as a good example in attacking Yen's accusation. In criticizing Yen, Fang wrote, "The teaching of Hsi-chai 習齋 (Yen Yüan's sobriquet) differs from the one of Chu Tzu 朱子 (Chu Hsi) only in some trivial issues concerning commentaries on Confucian Classics and teaching methods. As for the important issues regarding the essence of lives and the origin of ethics, the two teachings are all the same It is quite natural for the followers of Confucius to hold different opinions on certain issues. But what is the purpose of slandering each other?.... After Confucius and Mencius, only the mind of Ch' eng Tzu 程子 (Ch' eng I 程頤, 1033-1107) and Chu-tzu were similar to the Mind of Heaven and Earth.

To destroy their teaching is equal to collapsing the Mind of Heaven and Earth. This is certainly not allowed by Heaven.”³ To express his anger more explicitly, Fang even asserted that the premature death of Yen’s son was a retribution from Heaven for Yen’s sacrilegious statements about Chu Hsi.⁴

Even those who partially agreed with some of Yen’s criticism on Chu Hsi’s teaching, such as the editors of the *Ssu-ku chüan-shu* 四庫全書 (Complete Collection of the Four Treasuries), also felt that Yen’s personal accusation of Chu was simply going too far. They contended, “He [Yen Yüan] resembles someone who, having been burned by hot soup, must blow on cold vegetables before he eats them; he is unaware that in straightening the bent part he has gone too far in the other direction.”⁵ At most, they tried to give a sympathetic understanding of Yen’s anger, “It appears that [Yen] Yüan, born at the beginning of the present dynasty, had witnessed the failings of Ming Confucians: their worship of ‘studies of the mind,’ and their lack of restraint in words and behavior. He therefore energetically challenged their errors by making practical application the foundation [of his teaching]. Nevertheless, his arguments were so immoderate that he struck out against our [true] Confucian predecessors (referring to Chu Hsi and other Ch’eng-Chu 程朱 Confucians).”⁶

The *Ssu-ku chüan-shu* editors’ opinion was one of the two most popular explanations of Yen’s attack on Chu Hsi, and it became widely accepted. According to it, Yen’s rage against Chu Hsi largely stemmed

3 See this in Fang Pao chi 方苞集 (The Complete Works of Fang Pao) 2 vol. (Shanghai: Kuchich’u-pan-she, 1983), 1: pp. 139-141.

4 Ibid.

5 Chi Yün 紀昀 et al., eds., *Ssu-k’u ch’üan-shu tsung-mu t’i-yao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Concise Annotated Catalogue of the Complete Collection of the Four Treasuries) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1933), p. 2004. See this translation in Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 51.

6 Ibid.

from his deep sorrow for the fall of the Ming. In other words, Chu Hsi was more like an innocent bystander victimized by a stray bullet from a barrage that Yen aimed at the late Ming educated elites, whom he thought were responsible for the demise of the Ming dynasty. However, overlooking an important fact flawed this explanation. Only two months before launching his polemic on Chu Hsi (1669, almost a quarter of century after the fall of Ming dynasty), Yen Yüan had been a devout follower of Chu Hsi's teaching for more than eight years! If the fall of the Ming was the reason for his hatred against Chu Hsi, why did he become a devoted Chu Hsi's believer in the first place, long after he witnessed the fall of the Ming?

Yen Yüan himself offered us another explanation. He claimed that he followed Chu Hsi's rituals punctiliously in performing funeral and mourning ceremonies for his grandmother. Yen, nevertheless, felt that Chu Hsi's rituals were too rigid to express true human feeling. Soon after that, he found out that many of Chu Hsi's ritual codes were different from the ancient ones. Therefore, he came to realize that Chu had distorted Confucian teaching, which prompted him to rebel.⁷

Yen's own interpretation will be under close scrutiny later in my discussion. Suffice to it to say that although it was more convincing than the first explanation, it did not truly reveal the fundamental reason for his violent attack. In addition, his accusation of Chu Hsi's rigidity cannot be taken at face value. My investigation will show that it was Yen's own punctilious ritual practice that made Chu Hsi's rituals as rigid as Yen proclaimed. In short, both explanations did not truly explain Yen's motive to launch a radical rebellion against Chu Hsi.

Unsatisfied with these explanations, I began to examine carefully Yen's early life experience to reconstruct an adequate historical context

7 See Yen's own explanation in *Yen Yüan chi*, 2: p. 574, 2: p. 726.

to account for his violent action in 1699. The effort is to search for a proper interpretative framework in order to get a deeper understanding of the sudden transformation of Yen's thought, and the real motive behind his wrath. By following the perspective of the "new kind of history," suggested by Peter Loewenberg, I will demonstrate that a critical as well as sympathetic understanding of Yen's early life experience in the early Ch'ing political and cultural milieu, and his ascetic way of ritualizing daily behavior to realize Confucianism, constitutes an indispensable dimension for a proper evaluation of his "incomprehensibly" violent attack on Chu Hsi.

2. Crises

Before fully examining Yen Yüan's life experience, some explanations of our materials are in order. Yen-Li ts'ung-shu 顏李叢書 (The Complete Works of Yen Yüan and Li Kung), a modern complete edition of the materials detailing Yen Yüan's and Li Kung's lives and ideas, became available in 1923 as the standard edition for scholarship on both Yen and Li. In this anthology, the information concerning Yen's life was basically recorded in Yen's Nien-p'u 年譜 (Chronological Biography), which was compiled by Yen's two major disciples, Li Kung and Wang Yüan soon after Yen died. According to their explanations in the preface, the materials about Yen's life before age twenty-nine came from two sources: Yen's own recollection written at the age of fifty-three and stories that Li Kung had heard about Yen's early life. The descriptions of Yen's later years were totally based on Yen Yüan's own diary, which he began writing at the age of twenty-nine.⁸

Regarding the descriptions about Yen before he was twenty-nine, we cannot exactly distinguish Yen Yüan's own recollection from Li's hearsay.

8 See the preface in Yen Yüan chi, 2: pp. 697-700.

We can assume, however, that many issues, such as those concerning Yen's own feelings at certain points of time, must be from Yen's own memory. Besides, when alluding to Yen's teaching principle of honesty and sincerity, Li Kung also assured the readers in the preface that he truthfully recorded the information without any coloration. Therefore, the descriptions in this text about Yen Yüan, including his emotional expressions as revealed in this text may be taken as reliable evidence revealing his thought as well as his feeling.

A. The Beginning

Yen was born in a chaotic age. When Yen was born in 1635, the Ming dynasty was already in the last phase of struggling against her final demise. Though many resources had been thrown into the long confrontation with the Manchu tribes, in the northeastern frontier the growing power of the Manchu tribes unified under a dynastic ruler proved to be irresistible. Ming territory was lost step by step. To make matters worse, in this year, 1635, the Manchu troops also conquered one powerful Mongol kingdom in southern Mongolia. This important victory not only enriched Manchu's military resources by providing a great number of horses, but also provided many new routes for the Manchu troops to cross the Great Wall. They penetrated directly into the Chih-li 直隸 area from the northern frontier, where Ming's defense was very weak. In fact, the Manchus sent four large-scale expeditions through these new routes, plundering wherever they marched without encountering any strong defense.⁹

Despite these ominous developments, the Ming government still managed to survive and maintained, though very desperately, the most

9 See Frederic Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1: pp. 157-224.

important defense line the northeastern frontier to resist the main Manchu battle force. However, the disintegrating government was entangled with severe problems, such as growing threats of peasant rebellions and many famines during the 1630s and '40s.¹⁰ These domestic issues were so devastating that the last blow to the Mandate of Ming was actually accomplished by peasant rebels. On April 25, 1644, the most powerful rebel group, led by Li Tzu-ch' eng 李自成 (1605-1645), marched into the capital of Peking with the help of many surrendered officials and eunuchs.

The Ch' ung-chen 崇禎 Emperor (r. 1627-1644) soon committed suicide, and so did twenty-one high ranking officials. Some officials were killed by Li Tzu-ch' eng for disobedience. Three thousands officials, however, including the top three palace examination candidates from the previous year, chose to serve the new regime, which, unfortunately, only lasted for forty-two days. The Manchu troops, invited by the powerful Ming general, Wu San-kuei 吳三桂 (1612-1678), who defended the northeastern frontier, crossed the Great Wall under the slogan of "protecting the Ming people from the brutal rebels," defeated Li' s troops and finally established the Manchu sovereignty over China in June. In less than two months, Peking served as the capital for three dynasties.

Nevertheless, Ming officials who had chosen to try their luck with the second dynasty lost no time in pledging their allegiance to the new Ch'ing dynasty; no loyalist committed suicide this time.¹¹ And, despite a series of resistance efforts and various disorders, especially in southern China, the Ch' ing empire grasped the Mandate and held it until 1911.

For historians, these events are histories to be studied, whereas for Yen Yüan, such drastic historical changes constituted the world of his

10 See Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 1: pp. 225-227.

11 *Ibid.*, 1: pp. 225-318; pp. 415-417.

early childhood. Yen was born in Li-hsien 蠡縣 of the Pao-ting 保定 Prefecture, located in the Chih-li area. His hometown was only about 450 li 里 (about 150 miles) away from Peking. The political turmoil and social disorder certainly was part of life for people living there. In Yen's biography, a disaster was recorded under the 1640-year heading, "This year a severe famine happened; people ate each other."¹² This particular disaster was actually only one example of the terrible catastrophes that Yen had endured. According to the gazetteer of Li-hsien, in 1632, three years before Yen was born, there was a serious flood followed by a cyclone and then an earthquake in 1634. In 1635, shocked by rumors about riots, the Li-hsien people fled in panic despite a big storm. In the winter of 1638, Manchu troops from the northern frontier plundered the whole area; the capital of Li-hsien was temporarily occupied by Manchu troops. In the following three years, Li-hsien was seriously ravaged by severe droughts.¹³

Yen Yüan likely witnessed or experienced these natural disasters and social disorders descending upon his hometown. He also remembered that his family moved into the capital of Li-hsien when he was four (1639), because his grandfather, Chu Sheng-hsüan 朱盛軒 (d. 1673), had been recruited by the local government as a low ranking official in charge of local security.¹⁴ During this chaotic period, Yen's grandfather was the person who maintained the family. In 1638, after Yen's hometown had been pillaged by the aforementioned Manchu expedition, his grandfather relentlessly petitioned the local government to mobilize local elites to organize a self-defense force. The local bureaucrat admired the idea, but did nothing at all. In 1644, after Peking had fallen into the

12 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 708.

13 See Li-hsien chih 蠡縣志 (The Gazetteer of Li District) (Taipei: Ch'eng-wen ch' u-pan-she, 1976), vol.2, pp. 500-501, pp. 588-589.

14 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 708.

hands of the peasant rebels, Li-hsien sank into anarchy. This time, the grandfather, cooperating with several local elites, organized some platoons and successfully restored order for a while.¹⁵

Soon the Ch'ing Local government was peacefully established in Li-hsien. Yen's grandfather became a police chief under the new regime. However, in 1647, two years later, when Yen was 12, a local elite named Chiang Erh-Hsün 蔣爾恂 and his followers, in an effort to overthrow the Ch'ing Local government, killed the district magistrate of Li-hsien. Hence there was chaos again. Yen's grandfather tried to restore order, but in vain. Finally he took Yen Yüan with him, seeking refuge in the neighboring district of Po-yeh 博野 until the rebellion was suppressed.¹⁶

Enduring disasters caused by wars, famines, disorders, and becoming refugees were all part of Yen's childhood life experience. Without any doubt, the demise of the Ming dynasty was certainly the worst of all these disasters. During the catastrophic period of natural disorders, people suffered physically. Added to their distress were a series of political crises, such as dynastic revolution. People were confused by the bankruptcy of values and norms. Certainly, a young child like Yen Yüan had no control over the misery happening around him. However, because of his age he was not forced to make any political decision as Ming officials in Peking and his grandfather were. It was a tough decision to be a martyr or a resistant loyalist or a collaborator. But to say that he only innocently experienced the catastrophe is not quite correct, either.

Under the 1644 year heading of the biography, the compiler, Li Kung, mentions that Yen Yüan had told him that during that year he was once intentionally dressed in the blue robe and "square" hat of the Ming dress style.¹⁷ This information deserves further analysis because it

15 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 583.

16 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 709.

17 Ibid.

conveys an unusual symbolic meaning. The Manchu dress style, regarded by the Han Chinese as a barbaric style, was quite different from the Ming style. Unlike Ming people, who were dressed in loose robes and wore a high square shaped hat with their long hair, the Manchus, for convenience while riding horses and fighting, shaved their foreheads and plaited their hair in a tribal queue and dressed in tightly fixed riding jackets.¹⁸

Even before the Ch'ing dynasty established itself in Peking, the Manchu authority had ordered all surrendered Han Chinese to shave their heads and dress in accordance with the Manchu style. Not surprisingly, the same policy was announced the day after the Manchu troops took over Peking in 1644. This policy engendered strong reactions, including a peasant revolt in Pao-ting, the prefecture of Yen Yüan's hometown. The Ch'ing regime was forced to suspend this new policy. However, a year later in June 1645, when Ch'ing power was much more consolidated, the policy was again renewed and the Ch'ing government was determined to enforce it at any cost. It should be noted, as Frederic Wakeman points out, many Han Chinese regarded following this policy as a betrayal of Han masculinity.¹⁹

In October, K'ung Wen-piao 孔聞諜, a former Ming official and a descendent of Confucius, made a petition to the Ch'ing emperor. He pleaded that his family should be exempted from the new policy, although he confessed that some members had already shaved their heads. K'ung petitioned that since all the previous dynasties had not forced this privileged family to change dress styles, the new policy therefore might impair the emperor's effort in promoting Confucianism. The reply from

18 See Tai Ch'ing 戴晴, *Chung-kuo ku-tai fu-shih chien-shih* 中國古代服飾史 (The Chinese Age-old History of Dress and Personal Adornment) (Peking: Light Industry Press, 1988), pp. 174-224.

19 See Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 1: pp. 420-421; pp. 646-650.

the emperor was succinct: K' ung' s petition was totally outrageous and unforgiven. K' ung was exempted from a capital sentence because of his special blood identity but was dismissed forever. The emperor even cited Mencius' comment on Confucius — Confucius was the sage whose actions were timely — to accuse K' ung of violating the “true” spirit of Confucius.²⁰

However, anyone who had read the Analects can hardly agree with the emperor' s interpretation of the “true” spirit of Confucius. In a very famous passage complimenting the contribution of the powerful statesman Kuan Chung 管仲 (d. 645 B.C.), Confucius exclaimed that if it had not been for Kuan' s great effort in defending against the barbarians, all the Chinese would have been dressed in barbarian clothing with barbarian hair style.²¹ The symbolic meaning of Chinese dress and hairstyle, which represented the supremacy of Chinese culture, had long been considered an important message from Confucius.

No other Ch' ing policy humiliated the dignity of Han Chinese more than this “hair-cutting and clothing-changing” policy.²² Indeed, as a little child, Yen was not affected by this policy as the Han male adults were. Nevertheless, given the complex political and cultural ramifications of the dressing and hair-cutting policy, Yen' s behavior surely reflected the political impact of the dynastic change on his young mind. We might wonder what he had in mind when he decided to dress himself in the Ming style. Was he simply expressing a last homage to the fallen dynasty? Or was he protesting the “barbarian” policy ruthlessly imposed

20 Ch' ing shih-lu 清實錄 (Veritable Record of the Ch' ing) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1985), 21: pp. 6-7.

21 See *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 126.

22 See Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 1: pp. 646-650; also his “Localism and Loyalism During the Ch' ing Conquest of Kiangnan: the Tragedy of Chiang-yin” in *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 43-85.

on his seniors? Or did he also sense, as Wakeman has pointed out, the loss of Han-Chinese masculinity? Or was he doing so without self-consciousness?

Regardless of his true motive, judging from what he had endured, it can be at least certain that this was a child traumatized by great political upheavals. Like many other children, or even adults, Yen bitterly experienced many disasters and was confused by all these traumatic events. For most people who survived this catastrophe, the harsh experience was a nightmare that should be left behind. But for some people, such as Yen Yüan, this was a terrible nightmare that haunted them for the rest of their lives and caused them to keep asking many “whys.”²³

Why did the civilized and glorious Ming dynasty end in such a disgraceful way? Why did this empire become impotent against rebels and barbarians? Why were those in charge, those Ming officials, incapable of doing anything to relieve the suffering of the powerless people, who were ruthlessly tormented by bandits, natural disasters and barbarians? And why did so many Confucian scholar-officials, except for a few committing suicide out of guilt, shamelessly and swiftly become turncoats?

For some, like Huang Tsung-hsi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695), a famous Confucian and historian, the problem was rooted in the first Ming emperor's grave mistake abolishing the post of the prime minister.²⁴ For others, like Ku Yen-wu 顧炎武 (1613-1682), a leading Confucian in the early Ch'ing renowned for his classical scholarship, it was the morale bankruptcy among the literati elite that terminated the Mandate of Ming.²⁵

23 For an excellent collection of various reactions toward the chaos resulting from the Ming-Ch'ing transition see, Lynn A. Struve ed. and trans., *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1993).

24 See Huang Tsung-hsi 黃宗羲, “Chih-hsiang” 置相 (The Establishment of the Prime Minister) In Huang Tsung-hsi ch'üan-chi 黃宗羲全集 (The Complete Work of Huang Tsung-hsi) (Taipei: Li-jen shu-chü, 1987), 1: p. 8.

25 Ku Yen-wu, *Jih-chih lu* 日知錄 (Record of Knowledge Gained Day by Day) (Taipei: P'ing-

As for Yen Yüan, unfortunately, before he could seriously and gradually figure out an answer for himself, more miserable experiences were already awaiting him, which further confused his understanding of himself and the world around him. To understand this new phase of Yen' s life, another important issue, the impact of the civil service examinations system, has to be discussed. However, before discussion of this issue, some important issues concerning Yen' s relationship with his father and his identity have to be clarified first.

According to the chronological biography of Yen and the brief biography of Yen' s father, Yen Ch' ang 顏昶 (d. 1672) written by Yen, Yen' s father had not gotten along with his grandfather for quite a long time. In 1638, the year when Manchu troops looted Li-hsien, Yen' s father, twenty-one years old at that time, abandoned his family and followed the intruding Manchu troops on their way back to Manchuria.²⁶ At that time, Yen was only three; Yen' s one-year-old brother soon died after their father left. Yen never saw his father again. His father just "disappeared" without sending home any message thereafter. As for Yen' s mother, nothing about her was recorded except for a short sentence under the heading of the year 1646, when Yen was eleven, "[Yen' s] mother, Maiden Wang, remarried."²⁷

Undoubtedly, the "disappearance" of his father was a terrible blow, especially in such a desperate situation. It' s not clear to us how Yen Yüan

p' ing ch' u-pan-she, 1974), chüan 13. Also it should be noted that Struve has done a good study on the post-conquest generation of Han elite, people who reached maturity after the conquest. She observes that generally they expressed ambivalent feelings towards public service, scholarship and so on. Unfortunately, she did not give us a detailed analysis on Yen Yüan. See her "Ambivalence and Action: Some Frustrated Scholars of the K' ang-hsi Period," in Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills eds., *From Ming to Ch' ing* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 321-368.

26 Yen Yüan chi, 2: pp. 584-585, 708.

27 Ibid., 2: p. 709.

was told about his father's sudden disappearance or how he himself perceived it as a little boy. Nevertheless, it is important to see how Yen was influenced by this tragic event for the issue discussed here.

In Loewenberg's study of the impact of the First World War on German youth, Loewenberg pointed out the phenomenon that children, especially during war time, tend to idealize their absent father. The deprived drive for paternal affection also provides strong stimulus for idealistic, wish-fulfilling fantasies.²⁸ This psychoanalytical interpretation can be applied to Yen Yüan because of his similar situation.

Yen's feelings for his missing father grew stronger and stronger even though he later learned that his father had intentionally abandoned the family. This emotional attachment to his father culminated in a long journey to Manchuria seeking his father when Yen was forty-nine. Deprived of a natural father to emulate, Yen gradually developed a "father complex," which not only caused him to idealize his father and but also imprinted him with a strong urge to search for fatherly love. This search was further complicated by the secret of his true identity.

If Yen had not been separated from his parents at such a young age, he might have known his true blood relationship much earlier. Yen's father, Yen Ch'ang, had been adopted by the Chu family and renamed Chu Ch'ang 朱昶. Therefore, Yen Yüan was actually not "Yen Yüan" when he was young, but rather, Chu Pang-liang. While all these details are part of historical record now, Pang-Liang was not told of his real biological identity then.²⁹

28 Peter Loewenberg, "The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort," in *Decoding the Past*, pp. 240-283.

29 We don't have direct information as to why Yen Yüan's real identity was covered up, but it is very possible that the Chu family kept this secret because the adoption of Yen's father by the Chu family was illegal. Although very popular, adoption across surname lines was indeed prohibited by law in late imperial China. The persons involved in this kind of adoption would be punished and the adoption annulled. For details about the adoption

B. The Young Man Chu Pang-liang

After Pang-liang was separated from his own parents, it was his grandparents or, more particularly, his odious grandfather, Chu Shen-hsüan, who took parental responsibility for Pang-liang. Having dual roles as grandfather and father-surrogate, Chu Shen-hsüan was doubtless in a position that would enormously influence the parentless child. Unfortunately, instead of being a kind “father” that could be identified with, Chu Shen-hsüan indeed became a “negative identity” for Pang-liang.

Chu was definitely neither a “benevolent” father that would sanction any fantasy of Pang-liang, nor a father who could respond to Yen’ s longing for an idealized father. Chu had a bad temper, but more importantly, was a petit local elite and a realist, a trait that had been demonstrated clearly by Chu’ s activities during the chaotic dynastic transition. For Chu, survival and prosperity were most important; there was no time to be wasted on emotional affairs. How to quickly adjust oneself to the existing system was his primary concern. Being a Ming official or a Ch’ ing official was not a difficult switch for him as long as he could maintain his family’ s security and his own interests. Thus, not surprisingly, obsessed with the desire for wealth and power, Chu was determined to make Pang-liang succeed in the newly restored civil service examinations under the new regime. As early as Pang-liang’ s seventh birthday, Chu Shen-hsüan began to hire tutors for Pang-liang to prepare for the examinations. When Pang-liang was fifteen, Chu tried to use bribery to get him elementary status for taking the examinations.³⁰

law, see Ann Waltner, *Getting an Heir: Adoption and the Construction of Kinship in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), pp. 48-81.

30 See Yen Yüan chi, 2: pp. 708-709. When Pang-liang heard about the bribery plan, he refused to eat and angrily said, “I would rather be an authentic illiterate than a fake degree-holder.” This time his grandfather gave up, but the original plan did not change:

Since the impact of the civil service examination system played a no less important role than the war experience in shaping Yen's intellectual orientation, a brief explanation of its cultural impact on the Ch'ing is in order. While the hair-cutting policy symbolically displayed the Ch'ing regime's attempt to show that a totally new era had begun, the quick restoration of the civil service examinations clearly showed that the Ch'ing authority knew how to appease the Han Chinese, especially the literati elites.

As Benjamin Elman has observed, in late imperial China the civil service examination system in effect "became a powerful 'educational gyroscope' whose intense, self-centered motion was the sine qua non for gentry officials and aristocratic rulers to maintain their proper balance and direction vis-à-vis society at large."³¹ While the Manchu people enjoyed several privileges and quotas in this restored Han Chinese institution, many Han Chinese definitely felt relieved by the revival of this literary form of competition. Unlike on the battlefields, the Han educated elites certainly had the upper hand in the examinations. A familiar competition was once again reinstated for achieving success whoever succeeded in the examinations could legitimately and gloriously share the wealth and power of the new ruling Manchus.

Arguably, this "ladder of success" was almost a closed system. Only a very limited number of people whose families could afford to invest in education, training in classical literacy, were able to try the first steps on the ladder.³² Moreover, the competition was fierce. For those who merely

Pang-liang was to be an official.

31 Benjamin A. Elman, "Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China," in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50, no. 1 (1991), p. 8.

32 For a brief discussion on different views about the system in the Sung period, see John W. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 9-13.

passed the qualifying exam, earning the title sheng-yüan 生員 (government student), the social status garnered was not well recognized, since they were still not eligible for official entitlement, having to compete again in the provincial examination to earn it.³³

From a social-psychological perspective, the life process for competing in the examination system became a new form of “rite of passage,” which for many people in late imperial China, replaced the traditional kuan-li 冠禮 (capping ceremony) performed at the age of twenty. As Chaffee points out, many elderly people, who repeatedly failed and yet still participated in the examination, regarded themselves, and were regarded by society, as not yet having achieving true “adulthood.”³⁴

Although the civil service examination system has conventionally been identified as a “Confucian system,” how Confucian this system truly was is questionable. It is true that the Confucian canonical texts, Ssu-shu 四書 (Four Books) based on Chu Hsi’s commentaries and Wu-ching 五經 (Five Classics), constituted the most important part of the content of the examination. The problem is that the form of the test probably subverted the essence of the content. The candidates were required to use a very rigorous prose form (popularly known as “eight-legged essays”) to write essays on the meaning of the Confucian Classics. As a result,

33 Ping-ti Ho, *The Ladder of Success in Late Imperial China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 33-46.

34 John W. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 171-177. A vivid example of this phenomenon is the famous story of “Fan Chin chung-chü” 范進中舉 (Fan Chin passed the provincial exam) in *Ju-li wai-shih* (The Scholars), a famous satire of the “examination culture.” In the story, Fan’s butcher father-in-law, dismayed by his repeated failures in the provincial examinations, treated Fang almost as a non-person, the fact that Fan was already a sheng-yüan notwithstanding. Nevertheless, no sooner had Fan finally passed the provincial exam than his father-in-law changed his attitude completely. Fan’s social status was thus solidly established. See also Ping-ti Ho’s explanation of the significance of this story in *The Ladder of Success in Late Imperial China*, p. 43.

people who were good at producing, or memorizing, organized prose were more likely to be successful in the exams.

Apparently, one serious problem resulting from this situation was that people came to care much less about what the Classics really meant than writing a good composition, and did not make any effort to internalize the values in the Classics. Indeed, Fang I-chih 方以智 (1611-1671), a successful candidate of the examination, and renowned as one of the *ssu-ta kung-tzu* 四大公子 (four charming gentleman) in Nanking 南京 for his literary achievements, later confessed that the examination all but failed to indoctrinate people with Confucian values and ethics. Judging from Fang's own indulgent life style in Nanking when he was young and famous, we might take Fang's comment on the examination system as a personal testimony from a regretful victor of the system.³⁵

Fang's confession corresponds to Weber's observation, "the examinations of China tested whether or not the candidate's mind was thoroughly steeped in literature and whether or not he possessed the ways of thought suitable to a cultured man and resulting from cultivation in literature(...) This education was on the one hand purely secular in nature, but on the other, was bound to the fixed norm of the orthodox interpretation of the classic authors. It was a highly exclusive and bookish education."³⁶

How did this "highly bookish education" influence Pang-liang's life? Clearly, Pang-liang was not as realistic or career-minded as his grandfather. From the age of thirteen to fifteen, he was obsessed with practicing Taoist self-cultivation. Because of that, he even kept his newly wed wife at a distance for a long period. Moreover, he also refused to cooperate with Chu Shen-hsüan in carrying out the aforementioned

35 See the discussion of the effect of the eight-legged essay on the examinations and Fang I-chih's ideas in Willard J. Peterson, *Bitter Gourd: Fang I-chih and the Impetus for Intellectual Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 45-63.

36 Max Weber, *The Religion of China* (New York: Free Press, 1951), p. 121.

bribery. From fifteen to seventeen, he still did not engage himself in preparing for the examinations, but indulged himself in drinking and pleasure seeking. Not until eighteen, under the influence of a good tutor, did he abandon all these bad habits and pass the elementary exam, becoming a sheng-yüan.³⁷

In the same year, the Chu family was involved in a lawsuit. The grandfather Chu, instead of taking care of the lawsuit, hid himself from law officers. Pang-liang therefore was imprisoned in his place for a while. According to the biography, after the case was resolved, Pang-liang thought of his father and cried bitterly.³⁸ This is the first time on record Pang-liang had shown his longing for his father. This account seems to indicate that the jail experience made him feel the misery of his fatherless situation.

After the lawsuit, the financial situation of the Chu family greatly deteriorated. In order to avoid the expense of social activities, they moved to the suburban area where Pang-liang himself cultivated farmland to support the family. In spite of the difficult situation, he decided against any further attempts to enter government service, and began to learn medicine to make a living. He became very fond of some texts about military strategies and began to learn the art of fencing. Nevertheless, he still took the examinations to obey his grandfather's.³⁹ Three years later, Pang-liang expressed more clearly the reason he refused to further engage in the examinations in his treatise Wang-tao lun 王道論 (On the Kingly Way).

In this work, he bitterly declared that the whole complex procedure of the examinations was nothing but a humiliating way to degrade the dignity of intellectuals. He angrily portrayed the demeaning manner in

37 Yen Yüan chi, 2: pp. 710-711.

38 Ibid., 2: p. 712.

39 Ibid.

which the candidates were treated: they had to pass a complicated identification check procedure, and be searched thoroughly in order to prevent any illegal smuggling of books or papers; candidates were even required to undress and go barefoot. He contended that through this procedure intellectuals had almost become shameless slaves.

Besides, referring to the problem rooted in the rigid form of the “eight-legged essays,” Pang-liang angrily pointed out that the candidates only devoted themselves to memorizing model essays and totally ignored the true meanings of the Classics. He concluded that this whole system was nothing but a cheating game demoralizing the whole society. In the end, he sighed with despair, “when [I] think about [the fortunes of] the Sung and Ming dynasties from this perspective, I feel deeply sorrow.”⁴⁰

It appears that Pang-liang had begun to probe the causes for the turmoil of his early childhood. His suffering led him to associate the examination system with the fate of the Ming dynasty. Dignity and honesty, the two important principles that Pang-liang insisted on, were violated by the examination system. Moreover, at this time, many legends and tales about the fall of Peking in the last year of the Ming were already widely circulated. The different political choices of the Ming officials, colored by the writers, were certainly made clearer to the public. Given the fact that so many officials (including the three top candidates of the 1643 palace exam) had become turncoats in such a disgraceful way, Pang-liang’s association of success in the examinations with the decay of morality and dignity was quite understandable.

Other critics of this system, such as Ku Yen-wu, acknowledged that this system created opportunities for the poor and humble to advance. Fang I-chih thought that the examination system combined with the recommendation system would be a practical reform. Pang-liang, however,

40 Yen Yüan chi, 1: p. 109.

did not make any compromise.⁴¹ In a manner similar to Peterson's description of Confucian feudal utopianism,⁴² Pang-liang urged for a complete return to the ancient recommendation system. As may be expected, Wang-tao lun romantically described the wonderful social institutions and harmonious life style of ancient times.

In Tu Wei-ming's study of Yen Yüan, he suggested that Wang-tao lun should be regarded as an idealistic young man's intellectual exercise in the realm of state affairs. Tu argued that this immature work should not be regarded and analyzed as an expression of Yen Yüan's proposal for social reforms.⁴³ Tu was certainly correct in pointing out that this is a very romantic and idealistic vision of society. However, with a careful examination of the work, we can discern that many thoughts later proposed by Pang-liang after he rebelled against Chu Hsi were rooted in this work.

For example, one significant part of this work was Pang-liang's discussion about the problems regarding education and Confucian learning. He proclaimed that in ancient times the school system not only provided care for aged people, but also had genuine didactic functions. People were taught the proper way of interpersonal interactions, of regulating the family and the state, as well as fighting skills, such as archery. He bitterly lamented that none of these programs were available in the current system. The school became only a preparatory locale for taking examinations; neither the teacher nor the students cared to study anything except wen-tzu 文字 (words, indicating composing the eight-legged essays). In a very distressing tone, he described the government of his

41 For Ku's view, see Lung-ch' ang Young, "Ku Yen-wu's View on the Ming Examination System," *Ming Studies* 23 (1987), pp. 48-63. For Fang I-chih's, see Peterson, *Bitter Gourd*, pp. 60-63.

42 Peterson, *Bitter Gourd*, p. 60.

43 Tu Wei-ming, "Yen Yüan: From Inner Experience to Lived Concreteness," in *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, p. 516.

day that chose officials only in terms of wen-tzu, teachers who taught only wen-tzu, fathers and brothers who advised their juniors on nothing but wen-tzu, and conversations between friends that focused on the same.

He then concluded that in this corrupt environment, though every household studied the Confucian Classics, morality was getting worse and worse; on the surface Confucianism was worshipped but no person of high caliber emerged. The only solution, he argued, was to restore the ancient school system based on a passage from Chou-li (the Rites of Chou), which decreed that a ruler should use san-wu 三物 (the three things) to teach people and choose officials. The three things were liu-te 六德 (six virtues), liu-hsing 六行 (six practices) and liu-i 六藝 (six arts).⁴⁴

“Immature” as it seemed to be, this caustic attack on the condition of education was not groundless. Many studies have pointed out that the state school system in Yen’s time had ceased to function educationally,⁴⁵ and the portrait of the profound impact of the examinations was not far from fact. Several decades later, the outcry of the enormous impact of the examinations was echoed by a satirical remark in Ju-lin wai-shih 儒林外史 (The Scholars): “Even Confucius, if he were alive today, would be studying eight-legged essays and preparing for the examinations.”⁴⁶

Pang-liang’s critique of the collapse of Confucian learning, the corruption of wen-tzu, and his solution, the return to the ancient system, was almost a blueprint for Yen Yüan’s accusation of Chu Hsi. Later on we will see how Chu Hsi was inserted into this corrupted phenomenon of Confucian learning.

However, the wonderful utopia of ancient times, like Yen’s imagined

44 See his ideas about education articulated in Yen Yüan chi, 1: pp. 109-110.

45 See John Meskill, *Academies in Ming China* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982).

46 Wu Ching-tzu 吳敬梓, *Ju-lin wai-shih 儒林外史* (The Scholars) trans. Yang Hsien-yan and Gladys Yang (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1983), p. 150.

father, was remote and inaccessible, whereas the pressing reality of his grandfather's command regarding the examinations was unbearable and unavoidable. With all his deep nostalgia and hatred toward the current system, Pang-liang still had to abide by his grandfather's wish for him to take the examinations, going repeatedly through the humiliating process that disgusted him so vehemently. His alienation from the main course of social advancement can be gleaned from his self-chosen sobriquet: Ssu-ku jen 思古人 (nostalgic man).⁴⁷

The tension between his ideal and reality led him to have a very pessimistic outlook on the meaning of life in his own time. When he was twenty-four, he named his new born baby, Fu-k' ao 赴考 (literally, going to take the examinations).⁴⁸ This ironic name seemed to indicate Pang-liang's despair that, born into this age, his son was doomed to follow the same miserable path as he.

C. Conversion: Embodying the Confucian Way

It is under these circumstances that Chu Hsi's teaching came as a significant spiritual revelation to Pang-liang. At the age of twenty-five, he encountered the Hsing-li ta-ch' üan 性理大全 (An Anthology of Works on Human Nature and the Universal Principle) that gave him a new vision of life. Pang-liang seemed to be enormously enchanted with this anthology of Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism compiled in the early Ming. For the next eight years he sincerely followed the teachings and rituals espoused by Chu Hsi.⁴⁹

Although Pang-liang did not specify clearly which tenet of Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism particularly attracted him, it seems that the Ch' eng-

47 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 712.

48 Ibid.

49 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 713.

Chu Confucian outlook on the meaning of life was the crucial attraction. It is well known that the ideal life goal of Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism learning for one's self and learning to become a sage stressed that a true Confucian should cultivate and realize the Heaven-endowed nature in himself and become a moral paragon for others. For Pang-liang, this new vision not only justified his detestation of the examination system but, most importantly, endowed him with the positive and optimistic attitude necessary to lead a meaningful life in his own time. His pessimistic attitude towards life was totally transformed. His new confidence was revealed succinctly in a dialogue with a monk in that same year.⁵⁰

His religious conversion to Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism was also expressed by his establishment of an altar of Tao-t' ung 道統 (orthodox transmission), where he daily worshipped all the Confucian sages from ancient times down to Chu Hsi. Pang-liang firmly believed that Chu Hsi was the authentic inheritor of Confucius' teaching. The essence of the Tao 道 of the ancient sage-kings was now transformed into the teachings of Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism.⁵¹ What he treasured (the wonderful past as he described in his Wang-tao lun) and what he believed now (Chu Hsi's teaching) became inseparable.

50 The monk told Pang-liang, "The monk who reads the Classics and begs for food in Buddhism is equivalent to the literatus who seeks profit in Confucianism; the monk who practices Zen and becomes enlightened in Buddhism is equivalent to the literatus who succeeds in the exam system in Confucianism." Pang-liang responded: "That is not true. The literatus who succeeds in the examinations is equivalent to the monk who reads the Classics and begs for food. In Confucianism, there certainly exists a different kind of literatus who cultivates his mind and nurtures his nature." See this dialogue in Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 713. Obviously, for the monk, the greatest achievement of a Confucian was passing the examinations. And this view reflected a prevalent value shared by many people, including Chu Shen-hsüan. But Pang-liang's reply clearly indicated that in his mind, a "true" Confucian is not defined by this secular criterion.

51 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 714.

Contrary to the popular view that Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism was chiefly a philosophical school and its followers were mainly interested in philosophical discussion, Pang-liang's way of following Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism was somehow different. Besides practicing "ching-tso" 靜坐 (quiet-sitting), and reading Classics, the two most distinct methods of Ch' eng-Chu Confucian self-cultivation, Pang-liang was especially attracted by the ritual aspect of Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism. Two texts compiled by Chu Hsi became the most important books to him: *Chu Tzu chia-li* 朱子家禮 (Chu Hsi's Family Rituals), and *Hsiao-hsueh* 小學 (Elementary Learning).

Patricia Ebrey has pointed out that Chu Hsi's Family Rituals (hereafter referred to as Family Rituals) "is a manual for the private performance for the standard Chinese family rituals. Initiations, weddings, funerals, and sacrifices to ancestral spirit," and "the overall scheme of the rites in the Family Rituals can be described in terms of the shifting relations of the living and the dead." In general, many elite families in late imperial China used this text as an important reference. The emergence of many editions with different glossaries of this book also testified to its popularity.⁵²

The Elementary Learning, as its title suggested, was an education primer. By giving concrete modes of behavior, illustrated by specific rules

52 See Patricia B. Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. xiii-xxxi, and her *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 145-229. It should be noted that Chu Hsi's authorship of the Family Rituals has been questioned by some scholars, such as Wang Mao-hung (1668-1741) since the eighteenth century. But many other scholars, such as Ch' ien Mu, Ueyama Shumpei and Kao Ming, think the evidence is strong enough to believe that Chu Hsi did compile the major part of the book. For our purposes here, we should bear in mind that Yen Yüan himself never questioned Chu's authorship of this book, regardless of his changing attitude toward Chu's status in the Confucian tradition. For a detailed survey of the scholarly discussion of Chu's authorship of the Family Rituals, see Ebrey's *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China*. pp. 188-201.

or certain model examples, Chu Hsi tried to teach people how to act in an appropriate Confucian way. In a very authoritative tone, the rules in the text, which come from different sources including the *Li-chi* 禮記 (Record of Rites) and *Lun-yü* 論語 (the Analects), not only define proper etiquette for interactions between people with various social roles and status but also advocate a watchful attitude toward personal comportment. In her detailed analysis of this book, Theresa Kelleher concludes that Chu Hsi, by using this work, consciously or unconsciously tried to imbue the Confucian household with some of the spirit of the monastery, a model for community as well as for personal discipline.⁵³

Unlike Chu Hsi's other works on philosophical principles, these two books provide specific rules to define what and how a true Confucian should and should not do either in a specific situation or in an unspecified occasion ("unspecified," because certain rules are very succinct, such as "sit upright" without defining any situational context). For a believer like Pang-liang, who felt alienated from the world around him, we can imagine why he was so obsessed with them. As Renato Rosaldo has noted in his study of the ritualistic behavior of the Hongots, "For Calvinists and Hongots alike, the problem of meaning resides in practice, not theory. The dilemma for both groups involves the practical matter of how to live with one's beliefs rather than the logical puzzlement produced by abstruse doctrine."⁵⁴

"To live with one's belief" was obviously a serious concern for the young Yen Yüan, who was eager to distinguish himself from those who still led an "immoral" and "humiliating" way of life preparing for the

53 M. Theresa Kelleher, "Back to Basics: Chu Hsi's Elementary Learning (Hsiao-hsueh)" in Wm. Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee eds., *Neo-Confucian Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 219-251.

54 Renato Rosaldo, "Introduction: Grief and a Headhunter's Rage," in his *Culture & Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), p. 6.

examinations. In other words, the concreteness of the two ritual texts by Chu Hsi satisfied the psychological needs of Pang-liang. Indeed, he sincerely transcribed and annotated the whole text of the Family Rituals with his own hands. Moreover, he exclaimed that Chu Hsi was truly a sage after he read the Elementary Learning.⁵⁵

If Chu Hsi was a rigorous teacher who tried eagerly to convince his readers to believe and practice what he preached in these two texts, then Pang-liang was certainly more than a passive follower who tried to learn and emulate the Confucian style expressed in the texts. Pang-liang eagerly ritualized his daily behavior as much as possible. For example, although Chu Hsi's Family Rituals was generally used a manual for important ceremonies, such as funerals and weddings, one short section in the Family Rituals called "miscellaneous etiquette for family life by Mr. Ssu-ma [Kuang] 司馬光 (1019-1086)," was certainly no less important to Pang-liang. This section described many detailed rules about interpersonal interactions in ordinary family life.

In order to make his life correspond with the Family Rituals in every detail, Pang-liang constantly consulted the Family Rituals to the point of setting rules for daily behavior. These detailed rules regulated the way he walked, dressed, and talked, and the time to bow, and even the frequency of these actions on various occasions. Indeed, we can discern that Pang-liang was deeply drawn to what Kelleher had observed—the spirit of the monastery. To be constantly aware of any mistakes he might make, Pang-liang began writing a diary to record his daily behavior, using pictographic remarks in a very mechanical way to record the positive and negative deeds of his everyday life.⁵⁶

He eagerly practiced the ritual codes in the Family Rituals, such as

55 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 397, p. 718.

56 See these activities in Yen Yüan chi, 2: pp. 713-717.

greeting his grandparents every morning and night, bowing to them at certain dates, cleaning the rooms by himself and, humbly and carefully, serving grandparents. A description of his activity of can help us visualize his practices:

On the first and fifteenth day of each month I go with grandfather to the ancestral shrine and kowtow four times. Then I kowtow four times to my grandparents and finally, facing the east, I kowtow four times to my father in Manchuria. On New Year' s day and on the winter solstice I perform these kowtows six times. I also kowtow four times to both Confucius and to Shen-nung 神農 and Huang-ti 黃帝 (Two ancient kings conventionally regarded as masters of medicine). I rise very early in the morning, sweep the room where tablets of the old sages are displayed, and salute them; then I sweep out the bedrooms of both grandparents. I bow to my grandparents when I inquire about their health in the morning, and I arrange their comforters and pillows in the evening. Before I go out and after I come home, I also bow to them during the performance of the greeting ritual.... One morning, after practicing the daily rituals, I practiced quiet-sitting; "seeing" the state before the feeling of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused. I feel that my mind is filled with the Tao of self-cultivation, family-regulating, state-ordering, and world-pacifying.⁵⁷

All these activities, in Pang-liang' s eyes, were the embodiments of the Confucian Way, full of cultural implication. In this period, when he still believed in Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism, we can see how he greatly enjoyed the "oceanic feeling" in his practice of quiet-sitting. In fact, since he converted to Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism, quiet-sitting had become his favorite form of cultivation. Even when he worked on the family farm, he

57 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 717.

still practiced this contemplative cultivation during breaks in spite of the mockery of bystanders.⁵⁸ The combination of these two activities working on the farm, quiet-sitting vividly illustrates that in Pang-liang's vision, it is not contradictory to perform productive activity and "unproductive" activity alternatively, "sacred" behavior in a mundane life context. By this effort, he believed that he was on the "sacred" path, which was beyond the comprehension of vulgar people.

These ritualized activities, however, formed just a fraction of his ritualistic actions. Starting from age thirty, on the diary of the first day of each year, Pang-liang would stipulate several routine "behavior codes" to regulate his activities in that year. At the new beginning of each year, he would refine and revise them according to the effects of practice in the previous year. In general, these rules covered many things: how and when to perform sacrificial rites, how he should fast prior to different kinds of sacrifices; how much food and drink he could use during a sacrifice; what kind of graves and shrines he should salute when he passed by, how many bows he should perform when receiving friends at different times, and so on.⁵⁹

After Pang-liang converted to Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism, his fastidious attitude toward ritual performance and a disciplined life through constant watchfulness never changed for all his life, even after he rebelled against Chu Hsi. As a strict disciplinarian, he was zealous in trying to regulate his life with methods or rules that even Chu Hsi had not advocated, for example, diary writing and using pictographic remarks for surveillance on his own quotidian behavior.

Although the technique of calculating negative and positive deeds in a quantitative way seems to be very similar to a popular method in

58 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 713.

59 See all these behavior codes under the heading of each year after 30-year-old heading.

popular religion, *Kung-kuo ko* 功過格 (Ledgers of Merit and Demerit), Pang-liang's way of using it was quite different. As Brokaw points out, people used the ledger to calculate their score to surmise whether good or bad fortune from the gods would fall on them. For Pang-liang, the remarks had no such popular religious function, but were purely a way of self-criticism. Pang-liang was setting his own criteria to judge his own behavior, while users of *Kung-kuo ko* simply followed the provided criteria.⁶⁰

As for the more rigid rules not required by Chu Hsi, a vivid case in point was Pang-liang's concern about his own sexual life. He decreed that husband and wife should have sex only for the sake of procreation; otherwise it should be regarded as a transgression. The significant point is that after he was thirty-one, he designed a way to "monitor" his transgressions by writing down the words *yin-kuo* 隱過 (secret transgression) in his diary every time he felt he had violated his own rule about copulation.

Five years later, his wife, after accidentally finding out about this practice, suggested he should not record the two words. He flatly objected and contended that it would be dishonest not to record it, and furthermore that she should assist him in getting rid of this transgression rather than covering it up. This, however, did not imply that he worshipped chastity, because later on he told a friend that after he and his wife did not get close in bed (indicating they had no sex) for a period of three months when he unexpectedly found out that his personal cultivation

60 See discussion of the social and cultural significance of *Kung-kuo ko* 功過格 in Cynthia L. Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). It should be noted that Pang-liang's purpose of using this technique was more similar to the one practiced by Liu Tsung-chou 劉宗周 (1578-1645), a famous Ming Lu-Wang School Confucian. See her analysis of Liu in pp. 129-138.

was degenerating!⁶¹

It was not unusual for a Confucian to privilege the procreative aspect of sexual conduct over the erotic one between husband and wife,⁶² but rarely was there a view as ascetic as Pang-liang's in the Confucian discourse. What is more unusual was that he really put into practice his decree and used a "mechanical" way to constantly monitor his own desires and behavior. Given the fact that Pang-liang was a physician himself, we cannot dismiss his decree as something drawn out of ignorance. Instead, it shows an ascetic tendency that will translate into the general principle: "The purpose of marriage is procreation" in an extreme way. He would make the most out of the smallest thing.

Therefore, Pang-liang was not and could not be a dogmatist in the strict sense, due to the fact that he constantly "experimented," applying any general principle to any condition that was not specified in the original teaching, and usually choosing the most difficult way to practice it.

61 On the surface, we only know that "secret transgression" indicated a "misdemeanor" committed in the bedroom; Yen did not spell out the actual content. But Yen Yüan did openly teach his students with his decree about copulation, which was recorded under the 40-year-old heading. And under 54-year-old heading, Yen Yüan used the violation of this decree as an example of vicious desires that should be recorded in a pictographic mark. Most importantly, his wife's "protest" was interesting because she seemed to be very cooperative in practicing the other rules set by Yen. For example, when Yen Yüan was away from home, if the date was a new or full moon day, at certain moments, she would bow four times toward Yen's direction, and Yen would reply the bow as if they were facing each other. Therefore, there must be something "unusual" about the "secret transgression" that caused his otherwise cooperative wife to protest against Yen's recording. Given all the information, we might well identify what Yen's "secret transgression" really was. See in *Yen Yüan chi*, 2: p. 723, p. 732, p. 742, p. 763.

62 Charlotte Furth has argued that the Confucian valorization of sex for reproduction appears to support social respect for women as wives in the family, unlike the Daoist construction of eros where the female was exploited as a sexual object to be conquered. See her "Rethinking van Gulik: Sexuality and Reproduction in Traditional Chinese Medicine," in Christina K. Gilmartin et al., eds., *Engendering China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 125-146.

The difficulty and challenge of practicing these principles appeared to make him feel that he was truly living Confucianism every minute.

The fact that he was struggling to maintain his “Confucian style” could also be revealed in other cases. For example, one day when he was twenty-nine, as he rode with a high load of cotton on horseback to another town, he passed by the ancestral graveyard of the Chu family. He was afraid that once he dismounted (as a way of showing respect) he would be unable to climb back because of the high load. But he also felt nervous about not dismounting. Finally he dismounted and completed the journey on foot. In his diary, he wrote that he felt comfortable after doing so.⁶³ In another case, we are told, “On the way to the village, Peissu 北泗, the cold wind stung my face, therefore, I rode on one side of my donkey. Suddenly, I realized, ‘How can I derail my body only because of the cold wind.’ I corrected my position immediately.”⁶⁴ Here, we can see the control of his body was imbued with a moral connotation.

Another more interesting example, which is in the section of age thirty-five, vividly displays Yen’s fastidious attitude about his behavior, “One night I was going out to urinate. Grandfather Chu said, ‘Put my coat on, you don’t need to put your trousers on.’ I replied, ‘Whenever you go outdoors, you act as if you are welcoming a great guest (citing a famous sentence in the Analects, also listed in the Elementary Learning). If I take off my coat without my trousers on, how can I welcome the guest? Whenever I went out at night, I have my hat and dress on.’”⁶⁵

The watchful mentality combined with many minute behavior rules constructed a disciplinarian life style that regulated Pang-liang and Yen Yüan. Anyone patient enough to read several pages of his biography

63 Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 719.

64 Ibid., 2: p. 720.

65 Ibid., 2: p. 732.

cannot but get the impression that he is reading a ritualistic autobiography. Indeed, Yen's "obsession" with ritual enactment also reflected his insistence in constantly exercising the capping ceremony and visiting ceremony. On one occasion, Wang Fa-ch' ien 王法乾 (d. 1699), his good friend, suggested that he and Yen Yüan might simply watch while the younger men rehearse the sacrificial rite. Yen Yüan insisted that no benefit, either physical or mental, could be derived without personal participation.⁶⁶ On another occasion, even without the presence of his disciples, he performed the rituals alone as if the ceremony had been going on.⁶⁷

Pang-liang's extremely ritualized life, however, was constantly under pressure from reality. His grandfather kept forcing him to take the examinations and ordered him to give up the majority of the family farmland to Chu Huang, the grandfather's son born by a concubine.⁶⁸ When Pang-liang was twenty-eight, his grandfather further alienated him by commanding Yen and his wife to live with the grandmother in the east wing of the house, while he himself lived with his concubine and Chu Huang in the west wing.⁶⁹

In 1644, when Pang-liang was thirty, his only son, the five-year-old Fu-k' ao, died of smallpox. The fatherless child, Pang-liang, thus became a childless father as he did not have another son for the rest of his life.

66 Ibid., 2: p. 739.

67 Ibid., There are two records of this kind of behavior, see 2: p. 735, p. 782.

68 There is a vivid record of Chu Shen-hsüan's obsessive insistence on forcing Pang-liang to take the examinations. One day when Pang-liang was twenty-five, Chu Shen-hsüan heard the neighbor's gossip that Pang-liang decided not to take the exam this year. Out of rage, Chu Shen-hsüan refused to eat and talk. When Pang-liang hastily came to beg his pardon, the grandfather furiously scolded him: "Do you intend to abandon yourself and the whole family?" Pang-liang was greatly shocked and promised that he would go to take the exam immediately. See Yen Yüan chi 2: p. 713.

69 Ibid., 2: p. 715.

This event was perhaps the most tragic episode in Pang-liang's early life. In a very touching funeral address, besides bitterly crying over the early death of his son, he explicitly expressed his deep sorrow for his own early separation from his parents.⁷⁰ However, no one, least of all Pang-liang himself, could anticipate that a much more dramatic and tragic event was going to destroy the equilibrium which he had tried so hard to maintain and achieve through his Ch'eng-Chu Confucian ritual practice.

D. The Crisis

In 1668, when Pang-liang was thirty-three, his grandmother died on the fourteenth day of the second month. He was extremely sad and decided to assume the responsibility of the principle mourner in place of his absent father. That is to say, he performed the dual role of an "unfilial" son (due to his father's absence) and of a grateful grandson.

The importance of this funeral and mourning ritual to Pang-liang cannot be stressed enough. As Confucius said, "when parents are alive, serve them according to ritual. When they die, bury them according to the ritual, and sacrifice to them according to ritual."⁷¹ Pang-liang's seriousness about this funeral ceremony could well be understood as his sincere effort to reveal his lasting filial piety to his grandmother. On the other hand, this funeral, and particularly the enactment of ritual, provided an opportunity to display tangibly his commitment to the Confucian way of life, with which he had been so concerned for many years.

From the first day of the funeral, he followed the funeral rituals rigidly. He ate nothing for the first three days. He resisted the conven-

70 Ibid., 2: pp. 551-552.

71 The Analects, 2:5. The translation is based on Wing-tsit Chan, tr. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 23. However, I have changed the phrase "rules of propriety" to "ritual" in order to be consistent with my translation elsewhere in this article.

tion of inviting a monk or a Taoist to perform rituals, which was specifically disapproved of by Chu Hsi' s Family Rituals. He wailed so profusely that the tears he shed were mixed with nasal blood.

From the fourth day on, the principle mourner was allowed to eat gruel. This regulation deserves special attention because it later became a main issue in Yen Yüan' s attack on Chu Hsi. According to the Family Rituals as well as the Li-chi, on the fourth day after the death, the principle mourner could begin to eat gruel only. However, in the Family Rituals, the amount of rice and the timing of eating were not specified, whereas in the Li-chi there were specific rules about these items. According to them, gruel should be prepared every morning and evening using 1/24 pint of rice each time.⁷²

Pang-liang seemed to have some trouble with this ritual. Instead of following the rules in the Li-chi, he only used 1/24 pint of rice every three days. In his letter during the funeral to his good friend, Wang Fa-ch' ien, Pang-liang explained that, even after he prepared the rice of 1/24 pint every three days, the amount of gruel was still too much for him to finish. He further guessed that ancient men were physically bigger, and therefore needed to eat two 1/24 pints of rice each day to sustain themselves.⁷³

This kind of adjustment of ritual, in effect a more rigid enactment, was not unusual in light of Pang-liang' s tendency of adopting a more ascetic and rigid way in practicing rituals. But his seriousness in performing the ritual was not shared by his grandfather at all. According to the Family Rituals, the burial ceremony should be performed three months after the death. However, Chu Shen-hsüan insisted on proceed-

72 For the original text concerning this item in English translation see Patricia B. Ebrey, *Chu Hsi' s Family Rituals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 96. Also see James Legge, trans., *Li-chi (Records of Ritual)* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc. 1991), 2: p.183. It should be noticed that Legge simply translates 1/24 pint of rice as "a handful of rice."

73 See *Yen Yüan chi*, 2: p. 594.

ing with the burial ceremony on the twenty-fourth day of that month, only nine days after Yen's grandmother had died. Again, his grandfather's will prevailed. During the burial ceremony, Pang-liang almost lost control. He bumped his head on the coffin and wailed to the extent that he suffocated and lost consciousness.

After returning from the graveyard, Pang-liang began to perform the following rituals for the mourning period. He wore the untrimmed sackcloth day and night and built a small hut near the funeral reception room, where he slept on a straw mat with a wood pillow. He ceased to engage in any social activity except for farming and practicing medicine; without these two, as Pang-liang confessed, family life could not be maintained.

He continued to eat only gruel and wailed according to the exact timing specified in the Family Rituals. However, from the fifth month on, his arms and legs became swollen with lumps. A month later, although he had taken off the untrimmed garment, he was already ill. In the following month, he heard that his wife also had become ill, but he still insisted on fulfilling the three-year mourning ritual. By the tenth month, he was critically ill. At this juncture, this "torturing" ceremony culminated in a dramatic scene.

An old relative of the Chu family, who could no longer bear seeing Pang-liang in such a miserable condition, came to reveal a shocking secret to him: "If you keep torturing yourself in such an extreme way, you will die meaninglessly. Your grandmother was sterile. How could she give birth to your father? Your father was an adopted son from another family." Pang-liang was completely stunned by this unexpected revelation. Chu Pang-liang was in fact not "Chu Pang-liang." He immediately went to his remarried mother to verify this news. After his mother confirmed the information, we are told that Pang-liang ceased to feel the same sorrow for the deceased grandmother as he had before.⁷⁴

Two months later, in the first month of 1669, Pang-liang launched his first attack on Chu Hsi's teachings in a treatise entitled Ts' un-hsing pien 存性編 (Preservation of Human Nature), with the second treatise Ts' un-hsüeh pien 存學編 (Preservation of Learning) following ten months later. In these two treatises, the manifestos of his accusations and his denunciation of Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism, the previously worshipped sage Chu Hsi was portrayed as a pseudo-Confucian sage, the source of all disasters, and the obscurer of true Confucianism's development.

E. The Interpretations

Because Yen used his interpretation of the funeral event to explain why he rebelled against Chu Hsi, his own view of this event will be presented first. According to his own recollection, during the funeral he followed Chu Hsi's rituals punctiliously. After a while, he felt that Chu Hsi's rituals were beyond any true human feeling. During the mourning period, he compared the Family Rituals with the Li-chi and found that there were many differences between them.

He especially accused Chu Hsi of omitting the passage concerning the amount and timing of gruel preparation. Yen Yüan complained that he could not eat a sufficient amount of gruel and almost died due to this omission. Finally, after he learned his true biological identity, he suddenly realized that Chu Hsi's Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism was merely a form of pseudo-Confucianism and that only ancient Confucianism was the authentic Confucianism.

The above explanation of the event seems very logical. But sometimes an explanation is too logical to be believable. Particularly, if we juxtapose his recollection with his diary records, which inform us about

74 For this dramatic and harsh funeral experience, see Yen Yüan chi, 2: pp. 725-726.

the process of the funeral and, more importantly, his letter to his friend, Wang Fa-ch' ien, we will soon find some contradictory statements.

The funeral process did not really proceed step by step according to the Family Rituals, as Yen Yüan claimed. First of all, his grandmother was buried nine days later, not three months later. This discrepancy, which was not expected in the Family Ritual, disrupted the schedule of the following rituals. Second, with regard to the rule for gruel preparation, although it is true that the Family Rituals did not provide detailed rules of the amount and schedule, which is different from the Li-chi, Yen Yüan himself did not follow the ancient ritual exactly either.

Most importantly, his complaint about suffering from eating too little gruel was contradictory to his statement found in the letter to his friend that the amount of gruel was too much for him. As for the other rituals such as wearing untrimmed sackcloth or wailing routinely, there was no difference between the Family Rituals and the Li-chi. Given the lack of great difference between the two ritual forms, why should Chu Hsi' s teaching be blamed for its "unreasonableness" and difference from ancient ritual? Isn' t it possible that his accusation of Chu Hsi' s ritual was merely a justification rather than a true cause for his rebellion against Chu?

In order to answer this important question, some key aspects of Yen' s life should be reconsidered critically. Chu Hsi' s teaching came as a spiritual revelation to the nostalgic as well as pessimistic young man Chu Pang-liang. The importance of this belief to Chu Pang-liang was clearly illustrated by his eight years of sincere devotion to it. In one of Yen' s recollections, he even confessed that during his "Ch' eng-Chu Confucian" period, whenever he heard any word doubting the validity of the Ch' eng-Chu Confucian teaching, he would refute it ruthlessly as if it was an evil slander against his own parents.⁷⁵

It could be argued that up to the time of his grandmother' s funeral,

Yen Yüan/Chu Pang-liang's "web of meaning" was totally woven upon his firm and unreserved belief in Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism and, especially in Chu Hsi. To a great extent, Yen Yüan projected his longing for fatherly love onto Chu Hsi. This transference process was also enhanced by the "negative model" played by his grandfather, Chu Shen-hsüan.⁷⁶ Judging from Yen Yüan's mentality in light of all these elements, it is hardly believable that he would be able or come to rebel against his beloved "parent" Chu Hsi. Therefore, what really made this devout believer into a radical apostate?

I will argue that what Yen really faced through the "ordeal" of the funeral was a two tiered "identity crisis." The biological identity crisis, resulting from the revelation of his true biological identity, totally destroyed the integrity of the "sacredness" of that funeral process. This, in turn, made his serious performance of the rituals nothing more than a ridiculous "sham," even in his own eyes. He had been deceived about his own identity for more than thirty years!

It was this enormous anxiety that led to a spiritual crisis, calling into question Yen's very carefully constructed and nurtured spiritual identity. It was possible that Yen did find some discrepancies between Chu Hsi's rituals and the ancient rituals during the process. To be sure, he had already known some of Chu Hsi's ideas were different from the ancient ones when he transcribed and commented on the Family Ritual at the age of twenty-nine.⁷⁷ But he insisted on fully practicing these rituals in spite

75 See this statement in Yen Yüan chi, 2: p. 497.

76 Most generally, "transference" means the passing on, displacing or "transferring" of an emotion or affective attitude from one person onto another person or object. See Arthurs S. Reber, *Dictionary of Psychology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 785-786.

77 For example, with regard to the issue of performing the sacrifice ritual for the ancestral shrine during the three-year mourning period (which was prohibited according to the ancient ritual), Chu Hsi thought that it could be performed because people in his day had already engaged in other social activities during the so-called three year mourning

of his physical suffering. The trauma, the sudden revelation of his biological identity, came as a fatal blow that shattered what he had believed. Suddenly, everything—the deceased grandmother and the awful grandfather, Chu Shen-hsuan—was not true, and even the deeply worshipped Chu Hsi became uncertain to him. Some explanation had to be found for this terrible dissonance.

F. Against “Chu”

When Yen exclaimed that he suddenly realized that Chu Hsi’s Ch’eng-Chu Confucianism was pseudo-Confucianism, he seemed to discover the “hidden cause” of all his suffering. A possible transference was involved here. After the sudden revelation of his true identity, Yen dared not confront Chu Shen-hsüan to verify it because he never dared to challenge his grandfather. Actually if anyone should be held responsible for covering up the secret of Yen’s identity, it was probably Chu Shen-hsüan; the “pseudo” grandfather. He replaced Yen’s “kind” father and treated him cruelly. Chu Shen-hsüan, therefore, should also be responsible for all Yen’s mental and physical suffering. While the rebellion against Chu Shen-hsüan was forbidden to a filial grandson, the revolt against Chu Hsi (another “pseudo-father” now) provided a possible alternative.

Unable to blame his grandfather, Yen Yüan unconsciously deter-

period. Therefore, Chu Hsi saw no reason for not performing the sacrifice ritual during that period. However, in Yen Yüan’s opinion, the integrity of the three-year mourning ritual, which he thought was designed totally in accordance with the true human feeling, should not be compromised by the degenerating custom. Though he was disappointed by Chu Hsi’s “compromise” on this issue, at this stage, his faith on Chu Hsi was not changed. Yen’s uncompromising and rigid insistence also revealed his determination to be a “true” Confucian, not to be corrupted by any vulgar custom. See Yen’s and Chu’s opinions on this issue in Yen’s *Li-wen shou-ch’ao* 禮文手抄 (The Handwriting Family Rituals) ch’üan 4, in Yen Yüan chi, 1: pp. 377-378.

mined that Chu Hsi was probably the real “hidden hand” behind all his suffering. Chu Hsi’s commentaries on the Classics were the main materials for the despicable civil examinations he detested, but had had to endure. Chu Hsi’s way of cultivation—reading the Classics—was also indeed an aid for taking the examinations. And his quiet-sitting method was precisely a form of Ch’an 禪 meditation in disguise.

What Yen Yüan suddenly came to realize was that Chu Hsi treacherously usurped the position of Confucius. Chu Hsi “shamelessly” occupied the position of the “true” father as Chu Shen-hsüan had done. Chu Hsi wickedly hid some true message of Confucianism from him—omitting the passages concerning the exact amount and timing for gruel preparation. Chu Hsi, as Yen perceived, distorted the true Confucian teaching. The revolt against Chu Hsi thus became Yen’s way of managing the crisis resulting from his traumatic experience.

The inextricable intertwining of Yen’s dramatic life experience and the radical change of his spiritual orientation reminds us of a similar figure, Martin Luther. The inseparability of the psychodynamics of Luther and his religious feeling has been well argued in Erik Erikson’s in-depth study.⁷⁸

In analyzing Luther’s acrimonious remarks about his monastic life experience, something that Luther had been as equally devoted to as Yen had been to Ch’eng-Chu Confucianism, Erikson has insightfully explained: “Whatever ends in divorce, however, loses all retrospective clarity because a divorce breaks the Gestalt of one love into the Gestalten of two hates. After divorce the vow ‘until death us do part’ must be explained as a commitment made on wrong premises. Every item which once spelled love must now be pronounced hate. It is impossible to say how good or how bad either party really was; one can only say that

78 See Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York: Norton, 1962).

they were bad for each other.”⁷⁹

Erikson further observes that Luther “historified into the old conditions whatever they had subjectively become for him, and in his historicifications shows all the flippancy, plaintiveness, and vulgarity of an undisciplined divorce. Among his statements is his assertion that his superiors had encouraged his self-torment by suggesting continuous waking, praying, and reading, so that his health had been systematically undermined.”⁸⁰ In other words, he used the distorted memories of a past experience to justify the hatred of the current experience.

The striking similarity between Luther and Yen Yüan in their scapegoating of the old “love” needs to be stressed. In his accusations of Chu Hsi, Yen repeatedly emphasized that his physical condition was seriously damaged because he had innocently followed Chu Hsi’s advice of protracted reading and ritual practice. Beloved acts or voluntary deeds had all become coercive tasks from the “evil” advisor.

This hatred of the “past love” also contrasted sharply with the affection toward a “new love.” As indicated before, Yen’s charges against Chu Hsi were based on a fundamentalist zeal. The ancient Confucianism again became for him the only perfect paradigm to follow, but this time, his feeling toward this utopia was no longer pessimistic, because the reason for its degeneration had been found. It was Chu Hsi’s vicious distortion that was solely responsible for the fall of the sacred Confucianism.

But Yen’s anger against Chu Hsi should not blind us to the complicated “relationship” between himself and Chu Hsi. After all, it was Chu Hsi who had rescued him from his original pessimistic mentality. It was Chu Hsi’s noble vision of the meaning of life that had inspired him. Behind his “patricide” was Yen’s deep love for Chu Hsi. To a great extent,

79 Ibid., p. 146.

80 Ibid., pp. 146-147.

the vehement attack on Chu Hsi revealed the deep wound of the filial “son.” He had to justify his rebellious deed by bitterly declaring to the world “This is not my true father! This is a fake!” It is from this perspective that we come closer to realizing the complicated relationship between Yen Yüan and Chu Hsi.

G. Epilogue

After his identity crisis, Yen Yüan followed a more rigidly ritualized life. While Chu Shen-hsüan was alive, Yen Yüan still had to endure many personal disasters. Chu Huang, the son born by Chu Shen-hsüan’s concubine, kept inciting Chu Shen-hsüan to torture and even expel Yen Yüan. When Yen was thirty-five, Chu Hsiang even tried to murder him. After Yen Yüan resumed his original family name, Chu Huang tried to seize the farmland earned by Yen through his work as a doctor, in spite of the fact that Yen had already given up his right as heir to the Chu family farmland.

After Chu Shen-hsüan died in 1673, Chu Pang-liang reverted to the original family name; historically, “Yen Yüan” existed from this time on. Significantly, according to Yen’s own explanation, he took the name “Yüan” because it was a homophone of his infant name, whose sound his father should be familiar with (Yen was expecting to meet his father again in the future). “Yüan” also means “original,” although Yen did not elaborate on this point.

On the other hand, his feelings toward his estranged father were growing stronger day after day. His search for his father was finally realized when he was forty-nine (1684). Despite the fact that he was blind in his left eye and his physical condition had deteriorated, he went to Manchuria and spent more than a year there seeking his father. At last, when he finally located his father’s whereabouts, he learned that tragically his father had already died thirteen years earlier.

3. Conclusion

In this study, I have tried to put Yen Yüan's violent attack on Chu Hsi in the context of his early life experiences in order to identify the complex factors that contributed to his dramatic rebellion against Chu Hsi. I have examined in detail how he was troubled by the Ming-Ch'ing political transition and frustrated by the civil service examination system. More significantly, his relentless efforts at finding a different meaning to life were compounded by his unusual family background, especially his longing for fatherly love.

In light of these new investigations of his early life experience, I have reinterpreted the real motivation behind Yen Yüan's violent attack on Chu Hsi. By critically looking into the emotional sides of Yen's life experience, I have suggested that Yen's attack on Chu, triggered by the revelation of his biological identity, would be better understood as the dramatic climax of his search for meaning and value. Likewise, his complicated love/hate relationship with Chu Hsi needs to be put in the perspective that I have suggested in order to understand why his rebellion was so full of emotion and intensity.

Another factor that played an important role in Yen Yüan's dramatic identity crisis is definitely his rigid ritual practice, which almost took his life during grandmother's funeral and mourning ceremonies. Instead of taking Yen's charge that he was an innocent victim following Chu Hsi's rigid rituals at face value, I have examined show in detail that Yen Yüan suffered from his tendency to practice rituals over rigorously, an ascetic tendency that I have carefully documented in this chapter.

Yen's rigid way of ritual practice was largely ignored in previous scholarship on him. On the one hand, given Yen's fundamentalist zeal toward the ancient san-tai 三代 (the Three Dynasties) when, he believed, Confucian rituals were integral to the harmonious social order, his rig-

orous performances of rituals, at least for him, could be conceived as an effort to bring the sacred past into the secular present.⁸¹

On the other hand, Yen's rigid and obsessive way of ritualizing his life keeps reminding us of Freud's discussion about the symptoms of neurotic disorder. Yen's "repression" of his own sexual desire and behavior appears to be pathological in the Freudian sense. Should we then conclude that Yen Yüan was actually neither a modern scientist nor a Neo-Confucian nor an anti-intellectual radical, but a psychopath?⁸² If we did, it would be anachronistic.

From Yen's own perspective, his discipline was meant to be a cure for the Confucian elite culture of his time, which, in his eyes, was corrupted by success as defined by the civil service examination system and polluted by the teaching of Chu Hsi. Although his contemporaries were indifferent to his "cure," Yen was not regarded as a psychopath for his rigid ritual practice in his time. And when Yen Yüan was elevated by

81 This function of practicing ritual has been by Mircea Eliade. For Eliade's ideas, see Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1974); *The Sacred & the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, Trans. Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987).

82 For Freud's idea see his "Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices," in Philip Rieff ed., *Character and Culture* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), pp. 17-26. As indicated earlier, studying Yen Yüan is in fact a huge project because not only do we have to clarify many misunderstandings of him by reconstructing a proper interpretative framework, but the investigation process has opened up a new problems which include many interesting issues concerning the study of Chinese culture. The question about the criterion of "health" in traditional Chinese culture is exactly a case in point. If we take Freud's view as universally valid, we might conclude that Yen Yüan was really a sick person. However, if we take the position that sees illness, especially mental illness, as largely social and culturally defined, as suggested by Michel Foucault in his *Madness & Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), then the question becomes much more complicated. On this issue, see also Thomas S. Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness* (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 1961). The topic deserves to be further explored, especially in the field of Chinese cultural history.

modern Chinese intellectuals to being a modern hero, his grave concern with ritual practice did not draw much interest or concern. In their enthusiasm for constructing Yen as a modern pragmatist, ritual practice was simply dismissed as trivial and obsolete. For example, Liang dismissed the significance of Yen's ritual practice in his otherwise high evaluation of Yen. Hu Shih tried to explain it away by suggesting that it was simply a means for Yen to train people to be active.⁸³

Ironically, if establishing a strong China was the major concern of modern Chinese intellectuals, they seemed to underestimate Yen's ritual practice and its modern relevance. In his study of Tokugawa Ideology, Herman Ooms has identified an extreme asceticism concerning the discipline of body as well as mind in the teaching of Yamazaki Ansai (1618-

83 In their enthusiastic portrayal of Yen Yüan as a modern pragmatist, both Liang Ch' i-ch' ao and Hu Shih tried to downplay or explain away the significance of Yen's ritual practice. After praising Yen's emphasis on practice, Liang Ch' i-ch' ao confessed: "We cannot but feel a little disappointed at Yen's teaching. Yen's theory on practice and the modern experimental school were from the same origin; his theory was originally very similar to the scientific spirit. To our chagrin, however, he got entangled with the 'fixed rules by ancient sages.' That he wanted people to learn the affairs of the Three Dynasties is all but anachronistic.... For instance, as regards rituals Yen asked people to learn the rituals specified in the I-li 儀禮 (Etiquette and Ritual) about the wedding ceremony, capping ceremony, the encountering ceremony between two gentlemen and so on. Isn't this like acting in an absurd comedy?" See this in Liang Ch' i-ch' ao, *Chung-kuo chin san-pai nien hsüeh-shu shih 中國近三百年學術史* (Intellectual History of China During the Last 300 Years) (Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983), p. 123. Contrary to Liang's total depreciation of Yen's activities about ritual, Hu Shih was willing to give some credit to it. Hu argued: "The greatest contribution that Yen's thought offered is his advocacy of 'active' education and his opposition against the quiescent li-hsüeh 理學 (Ch' eng-Chu Confucianism). He asked people to be active; he wanted people to do things with their hands. In the Yen-Li school, they learned to perform rituals because Yen Yüan wanted people to move their hands and feet to actually do things and practice." See Hu's idea of Yen Yüan in his "Chih fan-li-hsüeh te ssu-hsiang-chia" 幾個反理學的思想家 (Several Anti-Li-hsueh Thinkers) in *Chih-hsüeh te fang-fa yü ts' ai-liao 治學的方法與材料* (The Methods and Materials for Doing Research) (Taipei: Yüan-liu ch' u-pan-she, 1986), pp. 85-141.

1682), an important Japanese Confucian and a devotee of Chu Hsi's teaching. Ooms has argued, "Ansai's ideology thus came to inform ethical and political ideals whereby the rulers, and later all subjects, were enjoined to cultivate a militant, vigilant, ever-abiding self-watchfulness against all signs of selfishness," and "The result of teachings such as Ansai's was to instill in the Japanese what strikes outsiders even today as an overzealous, undivided commitment of body and soul to routine quotidian tasks and details."⁸⁴

Many studies have been devoted to the investigation of Yen Yüan's phenomenal status in the development of Confucianism. For those who detest Confucianism, Yen Yüan's violent charge against Chu Hsi are highly praised (though they are also puzzled as to why Yen still followed a rigid ritualized life and insisted on the perfection of Confucianism after his critical denunciation of Chu Hsi). For those who admire Cheng-Chu Confucianism and Chu Hsi, Yen Yuan is more like a hysterical radical who wantonly defamed a great Confucian. In my study, I've presented Yen Yüan as a figure of his own time, a figure that represented "real people in history, with real passions and real conflicts," in Peter Gay's words.⁸⁵ In the alternative perspective I have proposed, he remains a melancholy figure, whose life struggle reveals a universal longing to belong, born out of the bitter childhood circumstances of the young man, Chu Pang-liang, and fully realized in the controversial figure, Yen Yüan.

84 Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 275-286. Many studies devoted to the modernization processes of Japan have pointed out that the element of "discipline" in the Japanese educational program played an important role in its rapid success. It is not my purpose here to reassert Yen Yüan's potential importance for modernization in terms of his emphasis on discipline. Nevertheless, it remains an interesting question deserving further inquiry.

85 Peter Gay, "Psychoanalysis in History," in William McKinley Runyan ed., *Psychology & Historical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 107-120.

從朱邦良到顏元：

對顏元激烈反叛朱熹的心理學詮釋

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摘 要

顏元（1635-1704）在中國思想史的研究上，是一位充滿爭議性的人物。顏元論學的一大特色，在於他對於朱熹的強烈攻訐。他以罕見的嚴厲字眼和情緒化的措詞，對朱熹和其學說大加鞭撻。在有關顏元的研究討論上，論者對於顏元思想上的此項特色，往往因研究者本身對於朱熹和朱學好惡的差異，而顯現出兩極化的反應。然而也正因為如此，坊間對於顏元為何用如此情緒化的方式，視朱熹為罪大惡極之「偽儒」，必欲強力批判以昭告於世的現象，並沒有深入的探討。

本文的研究動機乃是以問題化顏元對於朱熹的攻擊為起點，主要以心理史學的研究取向，分析他和朱子與朱子學之間的複雜關係。不同於傳統的思想史研究取向專注於思想本身的分析，本文著重於探索顏元的生命經驗和其學問思想轉變的關係。對於他生命中的重要情感經驗——父子之情的曲折發展和對朱子的虔誠信仰，以及遭受明清改朝換代之痛和長期為科舉制度所迫等心理因素——加以深入的分析，來研討顏元何以從一虔誠的朱學信徒轉而為史上罕見的激烈的攻朱思想家。文中將以身份認同危機等概念，來解釋顏元如何在意外得知自己的真正血緣身份的情況下（從朱邦良到顏元），激發其產生思想信仰上的危機。

終其一生，顏元以日記和嚴格的行為規範來反省約束日常生活上的言行舉止，他的年譜記錄提供了豐富的資料以研討其思想和生命進展的關

關鍵詞：顏元、朱熹、儒家、心理史學、禮

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係。以往有關顏元研究和評價的盲點，正在於漠視其心理變化層面，過於「理性」地了解其思想特色。這項盲點尤其展現在對於其激烈反朱思想的理解上。如果不從顏元生命經驗上，正視信仰朱子和朱子學原先對於顏元生命的重大意義，而僅從學者之間論學的爭議的層次上，來討究顏元和朱學的「愛恨」關係，實在無法理解問題的真正核心。本論文從對於其心理感情變化的歷程切入研究，不僅是對於其思想深入了解的一重要取徑，更企圖藉此研究強調情感因素，在歷史研究理解過程中可能扮演的重要角色。

誠如美國史學家 Peter Gay 所言，歷史的研究在對於人物的探討中，應呈現其真正的情感和所遭受的挫敗矛盾。長久以來，大思想家顏元的公共面貌引發各種不同的爭議與評價，本文從其幼年（朱邦良）的曲折生命經驗入手，側重其私與情面相的探討，從「情」的脈絡分析其生命和思想的轉變，從而對於顏元和其思想有一新的同情的理解。