

Ts'ai Yung and the Protagonist in the *P'i-P'a Chi* *

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Introduction

Two different stories concerning the life of Ts'ai Yung (蔡邕, A.D. 133-192) are found in Chinese history and literature. The divergent presentations exhibited in these two categories of writing give contradictory information about his moral conduct and personality. While Ts'ai Yung is represented as a perfect gentleman in history, he is depicted as an unfaithful hypocrite in a Southern drama, a folktale, a number of literary essays, and a poetic play entitled *P'i-p'a chi* (琵琶記, The Story of a Lute). In regard to these contradictory representations, Chinese scholars have waged an academic dispute that has continued through several centuries. Yet, no one has rendered an authoritative conclusion as to which one of these two different representations is the fair interpretation of his real personality. The present article joins this controversy with the purpose of resolving it in the process. Since the controversy has invariably focused on the personality of the historical Ts'ai Yung and its complication with the identity of the protagonist in the *P'i-p'a chi*,¹ this article falls into two parts accordingly. The first part is an analytical study of Ts'ai Yung's life based on the Han history, his own writings, and other reliable source books. The second part searches for the origin of the legend and traces various sources of the play. In the final analysis, the identities of both figures in history and literature will be

* This article is an abbreviated version of a paper which I completed in 1977 at the California State University of Fresno in the United States. Acknowledgement is due to Professor Chauncey S. Goodrich and Miss Mary Landolt for their critical comments and suggestions for revision; both of them were my colleagues at the University of California in Santa Barbara.

revealed.

It is the belief of the present author that a thorough understanding of Ts'ai Yung's personality is certainly necessary for full appreciation of his writings, and this understanding can best be attained by clarifying the confusion between the historical Ts'ai Yung and the Ts'ai Yung of romance.²

I. The Ts'ai Yung in History

The historical Ts'ai Yung, better known by his courtesy name Po-chieh (伯喈), was a native of Yü District (鬲縣) and a descendent of a rich aristocratic family of academic distinction.³ He stands out among the eminent scholars of the Eastern Han Dynasty (A.D. 25-220) by virtue of his broad learning and accomplishment in various fields. He was equally well-versed in prose, poetry, classics, music, painting, astronomy, historiography, and calligraphy.⁴

Ts'ai Yung had very amiable relations with his whole family; he not only served his own parents dutifully, but was also a devoted nephew to his uncle.⁵ According to the evidence found in the collection of his own writing, his wife was from the family of a distinguished scholar whose name was Yang Chih (羊陟).⁶ But no evidence whatsoever shows that he had a second wife.

Ts'ai Yung was not interested in civil service. When he was twenty-seven years old, a powerful eunuch recommended him to become a court official because of his musical talent.⁷ Though a court order compelled him to go to the capital, he declined the appointment with the excuse of illness. At the age of thirty-eight, he was again appointed as a court official by the Grand Ministry of Functionaries (司空, *Ssu-k'un*).⁸ In a later memorial to the emperor, he said that due to the summons of his uncle Ts'ai Chih (蔡質) who was then a Secretary-general (尚書, *Shang-shu*) in the imperial court, he had accepted the appointment and thus started his political career.⁹ Since he had been so devoted to his uncle and friendly to his cousins, his main purpose in going to the capital might have been the pleasure of reunion with his family. After he had served in the imperial government for eight years, he offended the eunuchs and their associated power-clique at the imperial court. Thereupon, both Ts'ai Yung and his uncle Ts'ai Chih were arrested and banished with their families to the An-yang (安陽)

District of Wu-yüan (五原) Prefecture on the northern frontier along the Great Wall for nine months.¹⁰ After he was pardoned, instead of returning to his home town, he went to live as an exile to the south of the Yangtze. In the sixty year of Chung-p'ing (中平, 189), the imperial government summoned him back to the court and appointed him to be a *Shang-shu*. In the following year, he was promoted to the position of *Tso-chung-lang-chiang* (左中郎將, General of the Gentlemen of the Household on the Left).¹¹

In the third year of Ch'u-p'ing (初平, 192), a political coup occurred in the Han court and the leader of the political conspiracy erroneously implicated Ts'ai Yung in the case. Consequently he died in jail at the age of sixty.¹² He was survived by his two daughters: Ts'ai Yen (蔡琰, T. Wen-chi [文姬])¹³ and Ts'ai Chao-chi (蔡昭姬), who was the mother of the distinguished general Yang Hu (羊祜, 221-278) and of Yang Hui-yü (羊徽瑜, 213-278), the Empress of Chin-hsien (景獻皇后) of the Chin Dynasty (265-313).¹⁴ He had no son. We do not know whether or not his wife was alive at this time (see Figure 1 on p. 144).

II. The Ts'ai Yung in Literature

The story of Ts'ai Yung in literature began to appear in various forms during the Sung Dynasty and developed into an attractive poetic play, the *P'i-p'a chi*, in the middle of fourteenth century. Since this play has damaged the reputation of the historical Ts'ai Yung, it is pertinent to have a brief summary of its contents here before making inquiries about its sources.

The P'i-p'a Chi

The *P'i-p'a chi* was written by Kao Ming (高明, 1345 *Chin-shih* [進士]) in the late years of the Yüan Dynasty (1260-1368). The play focuses on the protagonist Ts'ai Yung's first marriage and the tribulations of his estranged wife. He is characterized as a bright and well educated young man. The only son of a poor couple in Ch'en-liu Prefecture, he marries at the age of twenty-three. Just two months after his wedding, his father urges him to leave for the capital to take the civil service examination. His wife Chao Wu-niang (趙五娘) remains at home to take care of her elderly

parents-in-law. In the capital, Ts'ai Yung passes the examination with supreme honors as the first scholar of the nation (狀元 , *Chuang-yüan*). His brilliant record attracts the attention of the emperor himself, who orders that the daughter of Minister Niu (牛太師) should be given to him. Niu is overjoyed to receive as a son-in-law the candidate accorded the highest honors. As a consequence of the emperor's insistence, Ts'ai Yung marries Niu shih (牛氏) and accepts a position of high rank in the imperial court.

In the meantime, no news of Ts'ai Yung's success reaches his home town, where the people are suffering a famine following a drought of three years' duration. The difficult situation impells Chao Wu-niang to assume the duty of supporting the whole family; she shows filial piety to the last in conformity with the traditional precept of serving her husband's parents as her own. In spite of Wu-niang's self-sacrificing efforts to save them, Ts'ai Yung's parents die of hunger and anguish. She buries her parents-in-law and then goes to the capital to look for her husband, playing the lute and begging for food all the way. After numerous difficulties, she finds his residence and goes to his mansion as a mendicant nun. When she meets Niu shih, she gradually tells her story, and reveals her identity. Niu shih is touched by Chao Wu-niang's miserable fate, and asks her to live with them. And by the arrangement of Niu shih, Wu-niang eventually presents herself to Ts'ai Yung and tells him of his family's misfortune. On hearing her report, he feels deep shame because an ironic fate has led him to neglect his parents and desert his wife.

When the emperor hears of Chao Wu-niang's filial piety and love for her husband, he is deeply moved, and sends Ts'ai Yung back to his home town to rebury his parents in the proper manner; in the meantime the emperor bestows honors on them.¹⁵

As represented above, the difference between the characterization of the protagonist in the play and in the biographical data of the historical figure resides in his second marriage and unfaithful conduct to his parents and first wife. But the protagonist in the play does bear the name of the historical figure. While the origin of this story is not yet clear and its protagonist has not been definitely linked with the historical figure, the drama has popularized the story to the extent that almost all who have ever heard this story are inclined to condemn the Ts'ai Yung of Han times as a hypocrite for his supposedly ungrateful misbehavior. This single fact has caused a protracted controversy resulting in confusion rather than the resolu-

tion of important questions of the academic dispute. In order to clarify the link between the protagonist in the drama and the historical figure, I will in the following section search for the sources of the legend on which the *P'i-p'a chi* was based.

The Sources of the P'i-p'a Chi

A number of scholars have rendered their controversial opinions regarding the protagonist and the sources of the play in diaries, poems, and literary essays; I will discuss contents of these versions in a sequence according to the dates of their publication, and append my own comments on them under appropriate passages.

1. Ts'ai Chung-lang in a Folktale

Among the folktales of Sung times is the story of *Ts'ai Chung-lang* (蔡中郎), written by an anonymous author. Although the text was lost a long time ago, the contents were occasionally summarized by writers who happened to have read or heard of it. The first person who mentioned the folktale was Lu Yu (陸游, 1125-1210), a patriotic poet of the Sung Dynasty. The information crucial to this study is given in the form of a poem, which reads:

When the setting sun is still shining on the old willow tree,

The blind old storyteller is setting up the stage with a drum
in the village of the Chao families.

Who would care to argue the truth of one's scandals after
one has died,

Let the people of the whole village just listen to the chanting
of Ts'ai Chung-lang's story.¹⁶

斜陽古柳趙家莊，
負鼓盲翁正作場。
死後是非誰管得，
滿村聽說蔡中郎。

According to Huang P'u-yen (黃溥言) and other scholars like Liu K'o-chuang (劉克莊) and Yao Fu-ch'ing (姚福清), the poem implies that the story of *Ts'ai Chung-lang* has stirred up Lu Yu's emotion, because his poem laments that the personality of the main hero in the folktale has been misinterpreted. They took this poem as evidence to affirm that Ts'ai Chung-lang in the folktale was a reference to Ts'ai Yung of Han times. They further asserted that when Kao Ming happened to read the poem, he sighed and decided to write the *P'i-p'a chi* to clear Ts'ai Yung from the disgrace transmitted by the legend.¹⁷ Thus, he changed the protagonist, an unfaithful fellow in the folktale, into an honest character in a poetic play.

But since neither Lu Yu nor Kao Ming mentioned anything about the contents of the folktale of *Ts'ai Chung-lang*, it is difficult to find grounds to correlate the story with the plot of Kao Ming's play. It is even more difficult to determine whether or not Kao Ming was inspired by Lu Yu's poem. Nevertheless, a crucial point worth noticing is that the protagonist's name in the folktale coincides with one of Ts'ai Yung's official titles. The pertinence of this fact will be disclosed later in this study.

2. Chao Chen-nü Ts'ai Erh-lang in a Southern Drama

Several scholars have considered the plot of the *P'i-p'a chi* to be a variant of a *Nan-hsi* (南戲, Southern drama) entitled *Chao Chen-nü Ts'ai Erh-lang* (趙貞女蔡二郎), which was extant in Kao Ming's time. Both Chu Yün-ming (祝允明, 1461-1526) and Hsü Wei (徐渭, 1521-1593) maintained that this play made its first appearance in the twelfth century in the area of Chekiang. As to its contents, Hsü Wei, a drama critic, declared that the main hero is Ts'ai Erh-lang who deserts his parents and wife after he marries the daughter of a prime minister. The play ends with the hero being struck by lightning; his death being the result of divine retribution.¹⁸ It is important to note that, in his interpretation, Hsü Wei used the name Po-chieh instead of Erh-lang for the hero. As Po-chieh was a well-known courtesy name of Ts'ai Yung of Han times, some later scholars were convinced that this play was his life story and the main source of the *P'i-p'a chi*.¹⁹

However, the *Nan-hsi* of *Chao Chen-nü Ts'ai Erh-lang*, as Hsü Wei remarked in his book *Nan-tz'u hsü lu* (南詞絃錄, An Account of Southern

Drama), is a fictitious story of rude style; unlike Ts'ai Yung, its protagonist dies in his early twenties. Moreover, neither Chen-nü Erh-lang is a real name. In Chinese usage, Chao Chen-nü means a chaste girl of a Chao family, and Ts'ai Erh-lang means the second boy or youth of a Ts'ai family. This indicates that the story was a random creation without any real background. But there must have been a reason for Hsü Wei to use Po-chieh for the hero's name. It is most likely that this name, in order to attract and arouse the curiosity of the audience, was attached to the protagonist by the writer or revisers of the prompt-book. As the text of the play was lost a long time ago, there is no immediate evidence to prove the point of my inference.

3. The Story of Mu-yung Chieh

One of the prefaces to the *P'i-p'a chi* says that its plot was based on the story of the second marriage of Mu-yung Chieh (慕容喈), who was an unidentified courtier of the Eastern Chin Dynasty. The motive of his second marriage is convenience; his second wife's father Niu Chin (牛金) being a prime minister. While Mu-yung Chieh lives in luxury with his second wife Niu shih in the capital, his parents die of hunger and cold in his home town Ch'en-liu. It is his first wife Chao shih (趙氏) who takes over the filial duty of serving his parents while they are alive and then of fulfilling mourning rites following their death. Pai-yün san-hsien (白雲散仙) provided this information in his preface to the Ming edition of the *P'i-p'a chi*, and he further asserted that Kao Ming based his play on this story.²⁰

The story of Mu-yung Chieh seems also to be a fictitious work fabricated by the commentators on the *P'i-p'a chi*. No evidence in the official history of the Chin Dynasty substantiates the existence of either a Mu-yung Chieh or of a prime minister named Niu Chin. It is even doubtful whether this story existed during Kao Ming's time. Pai-yün san-hsien, who presented this information, said that he had acquired the story in a dream. It has been justly criticized as unreliable.²¹

4. Ts'ai Sheng in Shuo-fu

In the *I-yüan chih-yen* (藝苑卮言, Poetry-critiques of the I-yüan

Studio), the author Wang Shih-chen (王世貞, 1526-1590) said that he had once found a story about Ts'ai sheng (蔡生, young Ts'ai) in the collection entitled *Shuo-fu* (說郛, Excerpts of Various Unusual Books). In the story, Niu Fan (牛繁), son of the distinguished scholar and prime minister Niu Seng-ju (牛僧孺, 779-847) of the T'ang Dynasty, meets Ts'ai sheng somewhere in the capital. Because Ts'ai sheng is a talented young man and from the same prefecture as the Niu family, Niu Fan regards him as a close friend and treats him favorably. Both young men soon pass the civil service examination and acquire their *Chin-shih* degrees simultaneously. Niu Fan then proposes to marry his younger sister to Ts'ai sheng, who complies, even though he is already married to Chao shih. Eventually both wives live with him in peace and happiness. In Wang Shih-chen's opinion, this was the real source of the *P'i-p'a chi*; Ts'ai Yung was merely the altered name of Ts'ai sheng.²²

While Wang Shih-chen summarized the story of Ts'ai sheng from the collection of *Shuo-fu* and asserted that it was the source of the *P'i-p'a chi*, he misdated the publication years of these two works. When Kao Ming completed his *P'i-p'a chi* in the years between 1356 and 1368,²³ T'ao Tsung-i (陶宗儀, fl. 1360) had not yet published his compilation of *Shuo-fu*. It was impossible for Kao Ming to base his play on the contents of a book which was published later than his own. Moreover, this story version of Ts'ai sheng is the work of Chou Ta-kuan (周達觀), a minor writer and a junior contemporary of Kao Ming. The completion of his story seems to have been much later than that of Kao Ming's play, because not until its enlarged edition was published in the late Ming period did this story appear in the collection of *Shuo-fu*. And it was not included in its first edition printed during the Hung-wu (洪武, 1368-1398) years,²⁴ a fact that almost nullifies Wang Shih-chen's argument. Even if this story did exist in the Yüan times and Kao Ming employed the anecdote of such a T'ang figure for the plot of his play, why did he use the name Ts'ai Yung for the hero? He had no reason to conceal the real name of Ts'ai sheng, who lived during another dynasty.

5. A T'ang Fiction about Teng Ch'ang

Hu Ying-lin (胡應麟, 1551-1602) and Shen Te-fu (沈德符, 1578-1642) found a story written by an anonymous T'ang author in the *T'ai-p'ing*

kuang chi (太平廣記, A Comprehensive Collection of Fictions),²⁵ which in some ways resembled the plot of *P'i-p'a chi*. It is one of eighteen stories under the common title of *Yü-ch'üan-tzu* (玉泉子, The Jade Spring). The protagonist is Teng Ch'ang (鄧廠), a real and disreputable figure of T'ang times. Teng Ch'ang fails to pass the civil service examination because of poverty. However, he meets Niu Wei (牛蔚) and his brother, sons of the prime minister Niu Seng-ju; this proves to be the turning point of his life. Niu Wei promises to help him on the stipulation that he marries his younger sister. Teng Ch'ang is already married to Li shih (李氏), but because he wants to ally himself with the wealthy and politically influential Niu family, he submits himself to all of the Niu brothers' demands. Consequently, he obtains his *Chin-shih* degree and marries Niu shih without the consent of his first wife. His avaricious conduct acquires for him a bad reputation in later years. Although both Hu Ying-lin and Shen Te-fu conceded that the *P'i-p'a chi* might have been based on this story, they had some doubts.²⁶

In this story Niu Wei, Niu Seng-ju's son, is portrayed as a corrupt magnate who is willing to help the ignoble Teng Ch'ang to buy a degree; such a representation is not only entirely contrary to the facts recorded in the T'ang history,²⁷ but also completely different from the personality of Ts'ai Yung presented in the *P'i-p'a chi*. Hence it is impossible to say that one story is based on the other. My argument against Wang Shih-chen applies here too: Why did Kao Ming use the name Ts'ai Yung instead of the real name of a disreputable person such as Teng Ch'ang?

6. A Satire Referring to Ts'ai Pien

In the *Liang-pan-ch'iu-yü-an ch'ü-t'an* (兩般秋雨菴曲談, Drama-discussions of the Liang-pan-ch'iu-yü Studio), Liang Shao-jen (梁紹壬, b. 1792) recorded his friend's unsupported opinion to the effect that the *P'i-p'a chi* was written to satirize Ts'ai Pien (蔡卞), a favorite courtier of the Emperor Sung Hui-tsung (宋徽宗, 1100-1125), because Ts'ai Pien deserted his first wife to marry the daughter of Wang An-shih (王安石, 1021-1086). Wang An-shih had served the Emperor Sung Shen-tsung (宋神宗, 1062-1084) as prime minister; his name was changed to Niu²⁸ T'ai-shih to symbolize his stubborn disposition.²⁹

Ts'ai Pien was a real figure of the Sung Dynasty known for his evil

dealings.³⁰ If Kao Ming, who lived in the Yüan Dynasty, wanted to satirize Ts'ai Pien, why did he not write more forcefully, using Ts'ai Pien's own name and treating the true facts of his own life? According to Liang Shao- jen's statement, this was only an hypothesis of his friend, not a conclusion resulting from findings in related sources.

7. A Riddle-story Ridiculing Wang Ssu

T'ien I-heng (田藝衡, fl. 1570) said in his *Liu-ch'ing jih-cha chai-ch'ao* (留青日札摘抄, The Study Notes of the Liu-ch'ing Studio) that Kao Ming had a friend named Wang Ssu (王四). He was well-versed in *tz'u* (詞) and *ch'ü* (曲), but unscrupulously ambitious; he married his second wife because her father Niu T'ai-shih was a Mongol and a dignitary in the imperial court. Niu is a translated version of the Mongol surname Pu-hua (不花), so this Mongol dignitary was often called Niu T'ai-shih. Because Wang Ssu was hired as a vegetable-grower (菜傭, *ts'ai-yung* for awhile when he was poor, Kao Ming used the name Ts'ai Yung, homonyms of "hired vegetable-grower," to satirize him. And the *p'i-p'a* (琵琶), which bears four characters of *wang* (王), was used as a riddle-title referring to Wang Ssu—Wang the Fourth.³¹

If the *P'i-p'a chi* is really a riddle-story of Kao Ming's friend Wang Ssu, the key to the riddle would certainly have been revealed by Kao Ming himself. However, no such explanation appears in any of Kao Ming's writings. Moreover, he tried to portray the protagonist in the *P'i-p'a chi* as a highly educated and sincere man, contradicting the assumption that he intended to ridicule an unscrupulous and dishonest vegetable-grower. This speculation seems to have been developed by T'ien I-heng without any real grounds of support. Accordingly, some scholars have rejected his argument as incredible.³²

8. A Play Entitled Ts'ai Po-chieh in Cho Keng Lu

In addition to the above opinions, final mention should be made of T'ao Tsung-i's *Cho keng lu* (輟耕錄, A Private Account of Ceasing Farm Labors). In this book, the title *Ts'ai Po-chieh* appears in a list of six hundred

and ninety titles of Northern plays³³ which existed in the Chin Dynasty (1115-1234). Because T'ao Tsung-i did not give any information about the plot of *Ts'ai Po-chieh*, there is no way to relate it to the *P'i-p'a chi* in our discussion here, though some people speculate that it is another story of Ts'ai Yung.

The Association of Ts'ai Yung's Official Title with the Legendary Figure

While none of these stories can be considered the direct source of Kao Ming's play, they serve the purpose of presenting suggestive clues as to how and when the name Ts'ai Yung became mixed up with a legend that is entirely irrelevant to his biographical fact. Obviously, both the *Nan-hsi* and the folktale are products of spontaneous growth among various types of folk literature; *Ts'ai Chung-lang* and *Chao Chen-nü Ts'ai Erh-lang* are apparently random creations with imaginary heroes. As to the time sequence, the *Chao Chen-nü Ts'ai Erh-lang* must have appeared earlier than the folktale *Ts'ai Chung-lang*, because both Chu Yün-ming and Hsü Wei, after investigating the original text, agreed that the *Nan-hsi* made its appearance in the Hsüan-ho (宣和, 1119-1126) years,³⁴ which preceded Lu Yu's time for several decades. In the course of development, it was adapted to a typical folktale.

As mentioned earlier, Ts'ai Erh-lang means the second youth of a Ts'ai family; with the adaptation from the *Nan-hsi* to a type of folktale, the title was changed to *Ts'ai Chung-lang*, because the word "chung" (中) also means "second" in Chinese.³⁵ As the result of a series of variations, Ts'ai Yung's name was mistakenly mixed up with the title; this being mainly due to the fact that one of Ts'ai Yung's official titles was *Tso-chung-lang-chiang*, always abbreviated to Ts'ai Chung-lang and then used as a title for his writings since the times of the T'ang and the Sung.³⁶ This may have been an important factor in producing the mistaken impression that Ts'ai Yung is the protagonist of the story. It seems that this erroneous perception had already taken root in the minds of people by the time of Lu Yu.

Distinctions between the Historical Ts'ai Yung and the Legendary Ts'ai Yung

The texts of the various folk versions, which were examined by Chu Yün-ming and Hsü Wei in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, must have existed in Kao Ming's time, and hence the erroneous infusion of Ts'ai Yung into the legend must have been perceptible to him. Kao Ming's motivation appears to have been multiple. In his "Introductory *Ch'ü*,"—a prologue to the *P'i-p'a chi*—he remarked that he was dissatisfied with the existence of so many love and fairy stories. His main concern was to improve the morality of society.³⁷ With this intention in mind, he selected Ts'ai Yung as a model of loyalty and filial piety. Equally important, he portrayed the heroine Chao Wu-niang in such a way as to represent the brave, pure, virtuous, and oppressed women under the moral teachings of the Sung Dynasty. Moreover, his selection of the names Ts'ai Yung and Chao Wu-niang seems to indicate an intent to correct the misconceptions propagated by the *Nan-hsi* and the folktale. This is suggested by the facts that he not only adopted the surnames "Ts'ai" and "Chao" from the legend, but also absorbed some episodes from it into his play. For example, the episode in which the protagonist's parents die of hunger and Chao Wu-niang carries soil to build their tombs previously appeared in a Yüan play,³⁸ almost seventy years before the publication of the *P'i-p'a chi*; apparently it was not created by Kao Ming himself. In the meantime, he intended to expose the harmful effects caused by the civil service examination, especially its impact on the integrity of intellectuals and on family unity. Accordingly, his play embodies a panoramic portrayal of T'ang, Sung, and Yüan society. The dramatic arrangement is not limited to the related facts about Ts'ai Yung. The inclusion of various personages, ideas, and institutions of different eras is significant in representing Kao ming's all-embracing intention. It would certainly appear inappropriate to interpret the plot of *P'i-p'a chi* as being exclusively the story of Ts'ai Yung himself. A comparison of the Ts'ai Yung in history and the Ts'ai Yung in the *P'i-p'a chi* brings out a clear perception of the differences as shown in Figure 2 (see p.154).

Conclusion

A close scrutiny of the forementioned stories reveals clearly that the folk legend to which most of them contributed did in fact influence the playwright. The legendary story was developed in several stages, and its

Comparison of Ts'ai Yung's Life in History and Ts'ai
Yung's Life in the *P'i-p'a chi*

EVENTS AND FACTS	TS'AI YUNG IN HISTORY	TS'AI YUNG IN P'I-P'A CHI
Name	Ts'ai Yung	Ts'ai Yung
Courtesy name	Po-chieh	Po-chieh
Age when he was married	No information	23
His wife's name	Yang shih	Chao Wu-niang
His second wife's name	No information	Niu shih
His father's name	Ts'ai Leng	Ts'ai Ts'ung-chien (蔡從簡)
His mother's name	Yüan shih	Ch'in shih (秦氏)
His home town	Yü hsien	Ch'en-liu
Financial condition of his family	Rich	Very poor
His parents' age when he was married	No information	80
His father's age of death	53	83
His mother's age of death	No information	83
Causes of his parents' death	Natural death	Died of hunger and cold
Where he was when his parents died	In his home town with his parents	In the capital while his parents were in their home town
His education and qualification	Distinguished scholar - Han	<i>Chuang-yüan</i> in civil service examination
His highest political position	<i>Tso-chung-lang-chiang</i>	<i>I-lang</i>
His first daughter	Ts'ai Yen	No information
His second daughter	Ts'ai Chao-chi	No information
His age when he died	60	No information

entanglement with Ts'ai Yung's official title happened only incidentally, not because of significant similarities between his life and that of the legendary personage. Although Kao Ming completed the identification of the historical Ts'ai Yung with the legendary figure, he had no intention of depicting the protagonist in his play as an unfaithful fellow. This distorted view was derived from the legend of *Chao Chen-nü Ts'ai Erh-lang* and left an indelible misconception in the minds of the masses and scholars alike. Some of them have attempted to expel this false view; but it seems that the more they tried, the more they complicated the issue. In Kao Ming's portrayal, the protagonist is a better man than in most of the folk versions. It is ironic that this difference, the only one relating to the real Ts'ai Yung has produced the opposite of its intended result. On the contrary, the play has solidified the false connection between the real and fictional bearers of the name Ts'ai Yung. Thus, it has helped to establish as fact, even among the educated class, a view of the real Ts'ai Yung as being a dishonorable man, though it is more positive than that offered by most folk versions. Some scholars have further complicated the problem by misinterpreting as an immoral man a protagonist whom his creator had intended to be a model of virtue. In fact, Kao Ming employed very few of the actual events of Ts'ai Yung's life as they are given in the *Hou-Han shu* and other source books. With the exception of his name and the fact of his filial piety, the whole story in the play remains entirely different from that found in history. In other words, the *P'i-p'a chi* is a different story of another figure who happens to have had imposed on him the same name as Ts'ai Yung of the Han times.

Notes

1. Representative evidence is exemplified in an article entitled "Chi *P'i-p'a chi* te yen chu" (記琵琶記的演出, An Account of the Performance of the *P'i-p'a Chi*) published in the *Chuan-chi wen-hsüeh* (傳記文學, The Biographical Literature), 6 (December, 1969), pp. 18-20. The author, Liang Shih-ch'iu (梁實秋), relates an event which illustrates how literary story overshadows historical fact. In the spring of 1925, the Chinese Student Association at Harvard University decided to ask Hsieh Ping-hsin (謝冰心), Liang Shih-ch'iu, Huang Wen-ying (黃文英), Ku I-ch'iao (顧一樵), and others to perform the play of *P'i-p'a chi* in celebration of the Chinese New Year. After the successful performance, Wen I-to (聞一多) compose a Chinese poem condemning the protagonist for his unfaithful conduct. The implicit subject of his moral denunciation was the Ts'ai Yung of Han times,

whom he identified with the main character of the play.

2. The reason why the understanding of a writer's personality is necessary is that moral judgment plays an important role in literary criticism in China. If a good writer has or is thought to have some overt vice, he can hardly win among his readers the appreciation and recognition that he deserves for his writings.
3. *TCLC*, in *SPPY*, *chüan* 9, p. 12b; Anonymous (闕名), "Ts'ai Hsi pei" (蔡携碑, The Tombstone Inscription of Ts'ai Hsi), in *YEN*, vol. I, p. 1000.
4. See *FAN YEH*, *chüan* 50, pp. 1980-2006, and the collection of *TCLC*, in *SPPY*, in 8 volume.
5. *FAN YEH*, section of biographies, *chüan* 50, p. 1980; *TCLC*, *wai chi chüan* 2, p. 11b.
6. There is a memorial, in the collection of his writings, which Ts'ai Yung wrote to the emperor at the age of forty-six. In this document, he admitted that Yang Chih was his elder relative by marriage. We may infer from this point that Ts'ai Yung's wife was from the family of Yang Chih. This connection may also be evidenced by the fact that when he was exiled to the south of the Yang-tze, the Yang family of T'ai-shan (太山羊氏, *T'ai-shan Yang shih*) supplied him with provisions for ten years (see *FAN YEH*, *chüan* 50, p. 2003). The biography of Yang Chih in the *Hou-Han shu* says that Yang Chih was from the Liang-fu (梁父) District of T'ai-shan Prefecture (see *FAN YEH*, *chüan* 57, p. 2209); undoubtedly, "*T'ai-shan Yang shih*" refers to Yang Chih. Only an elder relative could be relied on for so long a period of support.
7. Both Ts'ai Yung and his daughter Ts'ai Yen were praised not only for their technical excellence in playing musical instruments, but also for their unusual ability to understand *Ch'in-hsin* (琴心), or the "mind of the lute." See *FAN YEH*, section of biographies, *chüan* 50, pp. 2004-5, Fu Hsüan (傅玄), "Ch'in fu" (琴賦, A Rhyme-prose Describing a Lute), in *YEN*, vol. II, p. 1716, and Liu Chao (劉昭, fl. 510), *Yu-tung chuan* (幼童傳, Biographies of Unusual Youngsters), the passage preserved in the footnotes of the *Hou-Han shu*, section of distinguished women, *chüan* 74, p. 2800.
8. *FAN YEH*, section of biographies, *chüan* 50, p. 1990.
9. *TCLC*, *wai chi* (外紀), p. 1b.
10. *FAN YEH*, section of biographies, *chüan* 50, p. 2002.
11. *Ibid.*, section of biographies, *chüan* 50, pp. 2003, 2005.
12. Wang Ch'ang (王昶), "Ts'ai Yung nien-piao" (蔡邕年表, Chronological Table of Ts'ai Yung), published with *TCLC* as Appendix II, p. *nien-piao*, 9a.
13. Chinese literary criticism has invariably recognized Ts'ai Yen as one of the gifted poetesses in Chinese history. Her first husband Wei Chung-tao (韋仲道) died very young, probably when he was less than twenty. Because they had no children, she returned to her parents' home. While she was still in mourning for her husband and her father, she was captured by the Hsiung-nu (匈奴) troops who revolted in the chaotic years of Hsing-p'ing (興平, 194-196). In the Hsiung-nu domain, south of the Gobi desert, she was married to a Hsiung-nu prince, Tso-hsien-wang (左賢王). She lived outside of the Great Wall for twelve years and gave birth to two sons of the Hsiung-nu prince. When Ts'ao Ts'ao (曹操) rose to power, he sent a special envoy to the Hsiung-nu to redeem Ts'ai Yen with gold, silk and horses. Ts'ai Yen wrote two long poems to express her sorrow in leaving her two sons and for her misfortunes on the way back to the Han Empire. The titles of these two poems are

- the *Pei fen shih* (悲憤詩, A Poem of Grief) and the *Hu-chia shih-pa p'ai* (胡笳十八拍, Eighteen Songs for Singing to the Tunes of the Tartar's Reed Instrument). A few Chinese scholars have doubted the real authorship by Ts'ai Yen of the *Hu-chia shih-pa p'ai*, and this has become an academic dispute. See FAN YEH, section of biographies for distinguished women, *chüan* 74, pp. 2800-2803.
14. Ts'ai Yung's second daughter Ts'ai Chao-chi is not so widely known as his first daughter Ts'ai Yen. There is no biography written for her in the Han history. But several words indicating her noble character and dignified beauty are found in the biographies of her daughter and her son in the history of the Chin Dynasty (T'ang T'ai-tung and others [唐太宗等], *Chin shu* [晉書], section of biographies, *chüan* 31, p. 2a-b; *chüan* 34, p. 1a.). Judging from the birth dates of her children, she must have been much younger than Ts'ai Yen. In Li Hsien's (李賢) commentary of the *Hou-Han shu*, I found a clue which reveals that there was a biography of Ts'ai Chao-chi in the *Lieh-nü hou chuan* (列女後傳, Biographies of Distinguished Women - second series) written by Hsiang Yüan (項原), perhaps of the Chin Dynasty. The name Chao-chi came from the *Lieh-nü hou chuan*, but the commentators of later periods mixed it up with Ts'ai Yen. Unfortunately, the *Lieh-nü hou chuan* was lost during the Sung Dynasty (960-1278).
 15. Kao Ming, *P'i-p'a chi* (Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962), 244p.
 16. Lu Yu (陸游), "She chou pu kuei" (捨舟步歸) (Leaving the Boat and Return-in Home by Walk), in *Lu Fang-weng chuan chi* (陸放翁全集, A Complete Collection of Lu Yu's Writings) (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1970), *chüan* 33, p. 517. This is one of several greatly similar versions.
 17. Huang P'u-yen, *Hsien chung chin ku lu* (閑中今古錄, An Account of Minor matters from Ancient to Recent Times), in Chiao Hsün (焦循), *Chü shuo* (劇說, An Account of Theatricals), in *CHEN chüan* 2, p. 5a.
 18. Chu Yün-ming, *Wei t'an* (猥談, Trifling Talks), in Tao T'ing (陶珽), *Hsü Shuo-fu* (續說郛, Excerpts of Various Unusual Books - continuous series) (Taipei: Hsin-hsin shu-chü, 1964 reprint of a Ch'ing edition), p. 2014. Hsü Wei, *Nan-tz'u hsü ku*, in *CHEN*, vol. 7, p. 10a.
 19. Yao Hua (姚華), *Lu-i-shih ch'ü hua* (荼漪室曲話, Drama-critiques of the Lu-i Studio), in *JEN NA*, series 33, vol. 8, p. 4c.
 20. See Chang Ti-hua (張棣華), *P'i-p'a chi k'ao shu* (琵琶記考述, A Study of the Story of a Lute) (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1966), pp. 65; 71.
 21. *Ibid.*, pp. 65; 71.
 22. Wang Shih-chen, *Wang shih ch'ü tsa'o* (王氏曲藻, Drama-critiques of Wang Shih-chen), in *JEN NA*, series 6, vol. 1, p. 7a; *Lu-i-shih ch'ü hua*, in *JEN NA*, series 33, vol. 8, pp. 5a; 6a.
 23. See *P'i-p'a chi k'ao shu*, pp. 31-32.
 24. T'ao Tsung-i, *Shuo-fu* (Taipei: Hsin-hsin shu-chü, 1963 reprint of a Ming edition), preface, p. 0002.
 25. Hu Ying-lin, *Shao-shih-shan-fang pi-ts'ung* (少室山房筆叢, The Study Notes of the Shao-shih-shan Studio) (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1963), pp. 559-560. Shen Te-fu, *Ku ch'ü tsa yen* (顧曲雜言, Critical Discussions of the Dramatic Songs), in *CHEN*, vol. 7, *Ku pu* (顧部), p. 1a.
 26. *Shao-shih-shan-fang pi-ts'ung*, p. 559; *Ku ch'ü tsa yen*, p. 1a.
 27. In fact, Niu Seng-ju's sons were all highly educated scholars and upright gentlemen. See Ou-yang Hsiu (歐陽修) and others, *Hsin T'ang shu* (新唐書, The New History

- of the T'ang Dynasty), in *SPPY*, *chüan* 174, section of biographies, *chüan* 99, pp. 5b-8a.
28. The surname Niu in Chinese is the same character as that for "ox." Since ox is a stubborn animal, the Chinese also use it to denote stubborn persons.
 29. Liang Shao-jen, *Liang-pan-ch'iu-yü-an sui-pi* (兩般秋雨菴隨筆, Random Notes of the Liang-pan-ch'iu-yü Studio) (Shanghai: Yüan-chi shu-chuang, 1924), pp. 28-29.
 30. T'o T'o (托托) and others, *Sung shih* (宋史, The History of the Sung Dynasty), in *SPPY*, *chüan* 472, section of biographies, *chüan* 231, pp. 5a-6a.
 31. T'ien I-heng, *Liu-ch'ing jih-cha chai-ch'ao*, in Shen Chieh-fu (沈節甫), *Chi-lu hui-pien* (紀錄彙編, A Comprehensive Collection of Various Records) (Taipei: I-wen yin-shu-kuan, 1966 reprint of a Ming edition), vol. 114, pp. 10b-11b.
 32. Wu Mei (吳梅), *Ku ch'ü chu t'an* (顧曲塵談, Critical Discussions about the Dramatic Songs) (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1969), pp. 104-105.
 33. T'ao Tsung-i (陶宗儀), *Cho Keng lu* (輟耕錄) (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chu, 1963 reprint of an old edition), *chüan* 25, p. 376.
 34. Cf. p. 23.
 35. Ting Fu-pao (丁福保), *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu ku-lin* (說文解字詁林, A Collection of Exegetic Comments on the Etymological Dictionary of Hsü Shen [許慎]) (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1966 reprint of 1928 edition), pp. 222b; 3488a-b.
 36. Ou Ching (歐靜), Preface to the Sung edition of the *Ts'ai Chung-lang chi*, *Ou hsi* (歐序), pp. 1a-2a.
 37. *P'i-p'a chi*, p. 1a.
 38. This play was written by Yüeh Po-chuan (岳伯川, fl. 1279), and its title is *Lü Tung-pin tu T'ieh-kwai Li* (呂洞賓度鐵拐李).