

## CHAPTER ONE

# 宮

## Introduction

Wang Pin-lu (1867-1921; courtesy name Yen-ch'ing), from Shantung, was a professional performer, teacher, and scholar of the ch'in. He taught at the Mei-an campus of the National Nanking Advanced Normal School. His unique style inspired many students, particularly Hsü Cho (courtesy name Li-sun) and Shao Shen (courtesy name Ta-su). Wang compiled a collection of ch'in scores, notated in his personal versions, entitled *Lung-yin-kuan ch'in-p'u*. When Wang died in the summer of 1921, Hsü Li-sun and Shao Ta-su

began to edit their teacher's manuscript. They completed their work in 1923, but publication of the book was delayed for eight years. In 1929 Hsü and Shao organized the Mei-an Ch'in Society and, with their colleagues' assistance, published 500 copies of the book in 1931.<sup>1</sup> In memory of the place where Wang had taught, they changed the book's title to *Mei-an ch'in-p'u*.

The *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* proved to be very popular and was soon out of print. After World War II and the eventual establishment of the People's Republic of China, a renaissance of public interest in the ch'in caused considerable new demand for the book, and Hsü decided to bring out a revised edition. The entire book was recopied, and errors were corrected whenever possible. Hsü added an essay on the book's characteristics, explanatory notes for each composition, an original composition entitled "Yüeh-shang wu-t'ung," and a third section containing cipher notations for all compositions. Although 750 copies of this second edition were printed in 1959, it, too, was soon out of print.

Hsü Li-sun was active as a ch'in player until at least the mid-1960s and possibly much longer.<sup>2</sup> One of his students is Wu Chung-han, an outstanding ch'in

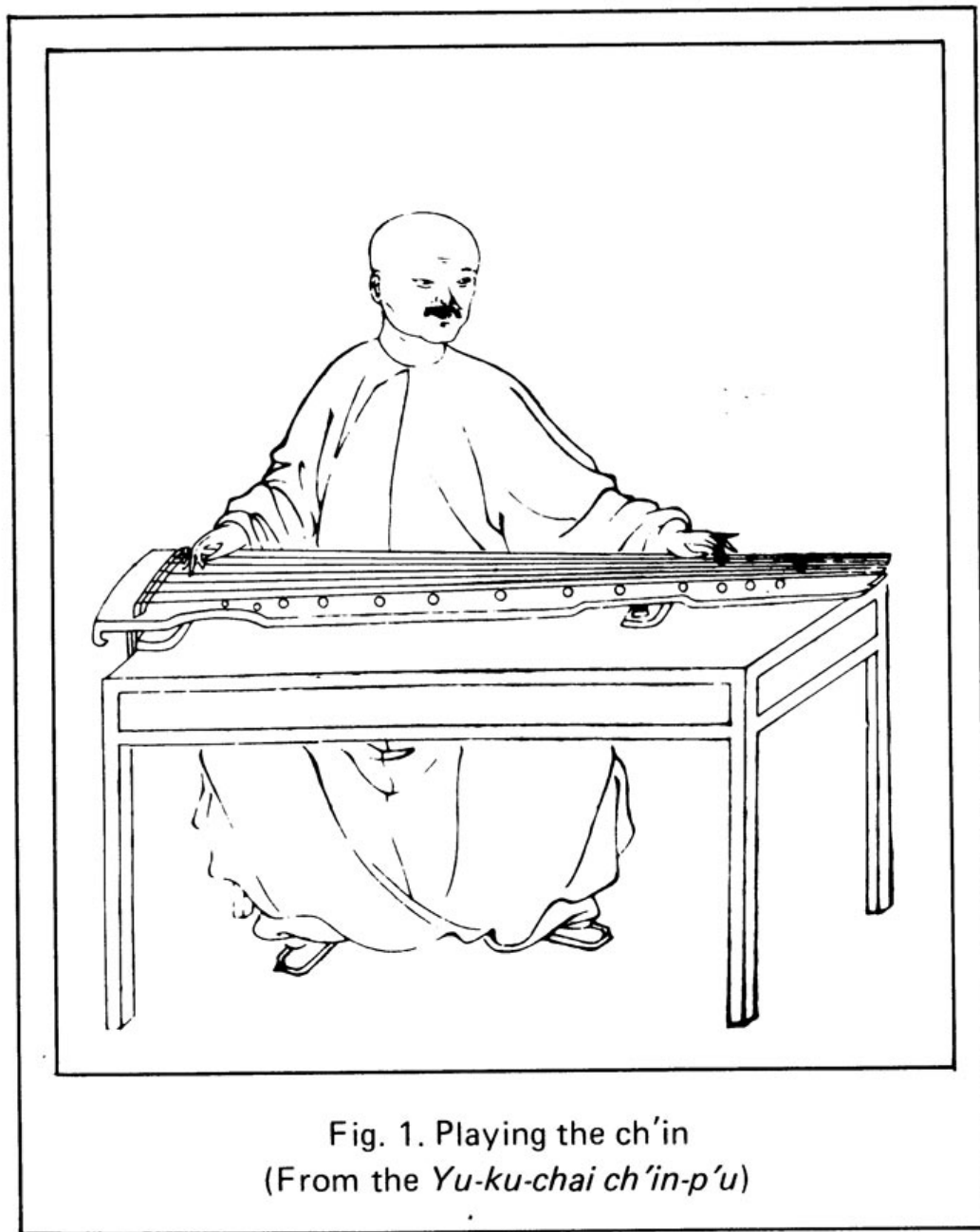


Fig. 1. Playing the ch'in  
(From the *Yu-ku-chai ch'in-p'u*)

player now considered to be the leader of the Mei-an ch'in school; among Wu's students are Lui Pui-yuen, T'ang Chien-yüan, and T'ao Chu-shen. T'ang Chien-yüan decided to prepare a new edition of the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* as a supplement to his massive three-volume anthology *Ch'in fu* (1971a). He wrote a new preface and a chapter of explanatory notes; added three essays by Hsü, which had appeared in the 1940 collection *Chin-yu ch'in-k'an*; reinstated the original preface by Wang Yen-ch'ing, which Hsü had omitted from the second edition; and in Hong Kong in 1971 published these materials integrally with a photolithographic reprint of the text of the second edition.

A fourth edition of the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* has recently been published in Taiwan under the editorship of the ch'in player and scholar Jung T'ien-ch'i. He added a preface of his own and a frontispiece photograph of Wang Yen-ch'ing, while omitting the line-drawing portrait in Hsü Li-sun's introductory essay. He also restored Wang's original preface. Following the photoreprinted text, Jung added Hsü's three essays from the *Chin-yu ch'in-k'an*, a new essay of his own about Wu Chung-han, and an extensive (twelve-part) essay on ch'in research. The postface for this edition is by Wang Chin-hsiang.

Following are my translations of two general introductory essays from the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u*.

### WANG YEN-CH'ING'S ORIGINAL PREFACE<sup>3</sup>

Fu-hsi fashioned the ch'in from *t'ung* wood and twisted silk for the strings. The Great Unity has two original principles: silence is the internal essence, motion is the external expression. The shape [of the ch'in] can be seen, [its] sounds can be heard. According to the twelve hexagrams,<sup>4</sup> the pitch pipes were determined and the five tones fixed to harmonize with the natural sounds of the universe. Finally, the variations of Yin and Yang produced the five modes [*tiao*].

*Huang-chung* is the head, *ta-lü* follows, and next *ying-chung*; these three *lü* take the highest place, alternating as Ruler; *t'ai-ts'ou*, *wu-i*, and so on, do not take part.<sup>5</sup> Scholars from the Sung dynasty to today have been confused about the system of mutual generation by eight, misunderstanding *jui-pin* as *pien-chih*.<sup>6</sup> Through the persistence of these errors, the excellent principles were lost. Furthermore, musical imperfections existed even in the era of the sages. From Ch'in, Han, T'ang, and Sung to the present time, the farther from antiquity, the more the natural tones were corrupted and ignored. But this is not the fault of the elegant compositions. We must seek the reason in those performers who just practice the notes without

understanding the principles, or those scholars who understand the principles but know nothing about music.

There is, however, no reason to lose the sages' knowledge or the elegant music they created. From antiquity to today, about four thousand years, spirits have concentrated at mountains and rivers, and each generation has had its inspired sages. Fu-hsi was a sage: he was born with knowledge. Huang-ti, Emperor Shun, Chou Wen, K'ung-tzu [Confucius], were also sages: they studied and gained knowledge. Shih K'uang, Shih Hsiang, Hsieh Chüan, Ch'eng Lien, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, Hsi K'ang, Su Shih, were all wise men: though with difficulty, they learned. Tzu-hou, Tzu-chien, Po Ya, Tzu-chi, Yen Tzu-ling, Chu-ko Liang, Mao Min-chung, Liu Tsung-yüan, were also wise men: though with difficulty, they studied.<sup>7</sup>

My family is from Ch'ing-Ch'i [ancient names indicating N.E. Shantung]; our house was close to Chu Feng. When I had free time after studying, I thought about my family—from our founding ancestor, each generation had a proper person to transmit ch'in-playing. Although my knowledge was very poor, I did not hesitate to follow this difficult path. I researched the books kept by my family, and I asked my uncles and my brothers to teach me. We had eighteen complete *ch'in-p'u*, six incomplete ones, and several fragments. I studied continuously, understanding only a little. I also studied the *Li chi*, *Han shu*, Lai-tzu's annotated *I ching*, and Mr. Chi's anthology.<sup>8</sup> I derived

the principles and understood fully. Though I exhausted my spirit, after several years I still had not reached the internal essence. So then I took my ch'in and went to visit friends. I traveled all over the country for thirty years, always depending on masters of famous ch'in schools, who instructed me in many ways. I gradually asked myself if I had improved, if I felt that this path could cultivate my spirit. I felt that ch'in was like the moon at night and the wind in the morning: truly one cannot abandon them even for a moment. Therefore I shall attempt to describe briefly and correctly the basics, the essentials. I know I will be laughed at by true scholars; I am preparing this for the guidance of students only.

Wang Pin-lu  
[from] Chu Ch'eng

#### SHAO TA-SU'S POSTFACE

At the age of fifteen I dedicated myself to the ch'in. Most people I asked about the ch'in were way off the mark, but thought themselves very profound because they doubted the natural sounds of antiquity. In 1917 my classmate Hsü Li-sun went to study agriculture at Nan-yung [old name for Nanking]. At that time Mr. Chiang I-yüan from Wu-yüan [N.E. Kiangsi] was principal of the school. Famous Confucian scholars often came to give lectures. Thus Mr. K'ang Ch'ang-su<sup>9</sup> from Nan-hai came, bringing

the ch'in master Wang Yen-ch'ing from Chu-ch'eng. After [Wang] finished playing one song, Mr. Chiang pressed him to stay. I advised Li-sun, therefore, to study with Mr. Wang.

During summer and winter vacations [Li-sun] returned home, and I was able to talk with him. My former doubts were gradually resolved. After some time Li-sun graduated and left. I then went to study [with Wang Yen-ch'ing]. Mr. Wang was pleased to have me as his student. One night we met at Mei-an. A crescent moon was in the sky. The teacher caressed the strings, finished playing, and said quietly to me, "Li-sun is the best of my students."

Mr. Wang indulged in drinking wine, which resulted in illness. The following year sickness confined him to bed in the Shantung Society Hall on Lung-p'an Street. Medical treatments had no effect, and he died on April 18, 1921. Before [he died], I went to visit him daily. He said to me, "because of the burial arrangements my funeral will burden Mr. Chao from Lu [old name for Shantung], so I shall give my heirloom ch'in to his son." When dying, he asked to be buried on the eastern slope of Ch'ing-liang Mountain [hills just inside the western walls of Nanking].

When Li-sun heard the news, he was deeply saddened. He arranged and edited Mr. Wang's incomplete *Lung-yin-kuan* handbook; I joined in this effort. After that year people came from far and wide to study with Li-sun and me. They asked us to publish the book. We collected money for publishing and placed Ch'en Hsin-yüan from T'ung-i

[district capital in S.E. Shensi, an old name] in charge of copying and calligraphy. Mr. Hsia P'ei-lin from Shao-hsing [N.E. Chekiang] took charge of drafting the illustrations and preparing the work for lithography. Mr. Hsia supervised the project, working very hard without wasting a day. We started in the winter of 1930 and finished in July 1931, taking 240 days altogether. The cost was two hundred dollars; five hundred copies were printed. The name was changed to *Mei-an ch'in-p'u*. Mei-an is on the campus of Nan-yung, a big house on the northern side, with six-generation-old pines, tall and luxuriant: that is where Mr. Wang taught ch'in.

Although this book cannot convey the entirety and essence of Mr. Wang's skill, scholars able to study it will at least become acquainted with the natural tones from antiquity.

Shao Ta-su  
Nantung, August 1931

The Mei-an school (or tradition) of ch'in playing is the most recent to achieve an independent identity. It is also one of the most widespread, influential and popular traditions—due, perhaps to the dedication and energy of teachers such as Hsü Li-sun and Wu Chung-han, to the timely appearance of new editions of the handbook, and to the accessibility of the

repertory. Several compositions introduced by Wang Yen-ch'ing (either arranged or composed by him), such as "Ch'ang Men yüan" [Lament at the Ch'ang-Men palace] are routinely included in the repertoires of ch'in players of all traditions.

The *Mei-an ch'in-p'u*, compared to typical handbooks of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, is relatively concise. Its essays tend to avoid history, poetical impressions, or allegories in favor of practical information and clearly expressed pedagogy. On many points it differs from what might be considered the mainstream of ch'in tradition, particularly with regard to tuning and mode (see chapter three). Where such differences do occur, however, they are clearly indicated. Therefore, because of its general reliability, popularity, accessibility, contemporaneity, clarity, and conciseness, the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* is an excellent source with which to begin one's investigation of the ch'in.