

“Chao Wen-hua was a native of Tz’u-ch’i [Chekiang]. He obtained his chin-shih degree in the eighth year of Chia-ching [1529]. He was appointed to be a secretary in the Justice ministry. On account of poor

rating in official evaluation, he was demoted to the post of vice-prefect of Tung-p'ing [Shantung]. In the course of time, he worked his way up to be transmission commissioner. He was cunning by nature. Before his success at the metropolitan examination, he had attended the imperial academy which was then under Yen Sung as its chancellor, and Yen appreciated Chao's talents. Later when Chao became an official at court, and Yen, having found favor with the emperor, became more and more influential, the two established a relationship like that of father and son. Thinking that he had committed many errors and bad things and that if he could get one of his men in the office of transmission, he would foil any impeachment moves, Yen therefore placed Chao in that position.

"Wishing to curry favor with the emperor, Chao presented the Hundred Flower Immortal Wine (*pai-hua hsien-chiu*),¹⁸ falsely claiming that that was [the wine] that had enabled his teacher, Yen Sung, to live a long life. The emperor took some and liked it. He personally wrote a note to Yen to inquire about it. Taken by surprise, Yen exclaimed, 'How could Chao do this to me!' Accordingly, in reply Yen meekly said, 'All my life I have never taken to medicine. I really do not know what has enabled me to live long.' Resentful that Chao had not first told him about it, Yen summoned Chao to his office and gave the latter a scolding. Chao knelt and wept and for a long time did not dare to stand up. When Hsü Chieh and Li Pen¹⁹ saw this, they interceded and Chao was told to leave. Then Yen returned home for his periodic rest. When the leading officials in the government went to his home to pay him respect, Yen was still furious at Chao and ordered his subordinates to throw Chao out. Chao felt greatly distressed. Chao therefore handsomely bribed Yen's wife, who made Chao wait in a room during one of Yen's home rests. After Yen became high-spirited with wine, his wife interceded on Chao's behalf. Thereupon Chao came out to pay respects to Yen, who then treated Chao as before.

"For his recommendation to build the outer wall of the capital, Chao was promoted to be the junior vice-minister of Works.

"When the Wo troubles in the southeast heightened, Chao presented seven proposals. He began with the offering of sacrifice to the spirits of the sea, recommending the sending of an official to perform the ceremony in Chiang-yin and/or Ch'ang-shu [both in Kiangsu.] The next proposal was to have the authorities bury the dead and reduce the corvée service. Next was to increase the number of recruits for the maritime forces. Next was to impose extra levies in Soochow, Sungkiang, Ch'ang-shu and Chen-kiang on the cultivated land in excess of one hundred mou owned by any one household and to collect in advance three year's levies from government-owned paddy fields. Next was to encourage the wealthy to contribute to the cause with the promise of reward at the end of the crisis. Next was to dispatch thither a high-ranking official with proper authorization to take command of all the armed forces. Next was to enlist those who had had contact with

the barbarians and also those salt smugglers on the coast and to give them titles connoting the idea of loyalty and righteousness so that they might be used to spy on the pirates or to play one group off against the other.²⁰

"After deliberation, War Minister Nieh Pao²¹ recommended adoption of five of the proposals but not the two measures concerning the increase of grain levies and the dispatch of a high-ranking official. Angered, the emperor dismissed Nieh from office. Following the advice of Yen, he sent Chao to offer sacrifice to the spirits of the sea and to investigate the pirate situation.

"At that time, Chang Ching,²² the commander-in-chief of the armed forces with the title of War Minister, having sent for reinforcements from all over the empire such as the wolf pack and the frontier braves,²³ was planning for a big operation. Thinking that he outranked Chao in official status, Chang slighted him. Chao was displeased. When the wolf pack had achieved some success in fighting, Chao rewarded them handsomely and made them advance against the pirates. When they went up to Ts'ao-ching,²⁴ they were defeated sustaining the loss of fourteen of their officers. Chao was indignant. Repeatedly he urged Chang Ching to give battle. For fear that Chao lacking in experience and seriousness might leak military secrets, Chang refused to share classified information with him. This made Chao more indignant. He therefore accused Chang of indulging the pirates and letting favorable opportunities slip by. As soon as [Chao's impeachment] memorial was presented, Chang won a great victory at Wang-chiang-ching.²⁵ But Chao claimed all the credit saying that he and Regional Inspector Hu Tsung-hsien had been instrumental in winning the victory. Chang was finally condemned to death. Chao also accused Governor of Chekiang Li T'ien-ch'ung²⁶ of malfeasance and recommended Hu Tsung-hsien to take Li's place. Li was also condemned to death.

"For all this the emperor appreciated Chao the more. He decreed that a special seal be cast with the wording 'in charge of military affairs' and that it be bestowed on Chao while he was on duty there. From then on Chao was placed above the commander-in-chief and acted more recklessly.

"Chao wanted to share with Ts'ao Pang-fu,²⁷ the governor of Soochow and Sung-kiang, the credit for the extermination of the pirates at Hu-shu-kuan [near Soochow]. When he failed to get it, he severely attacked Ts'ao for the defeat at T'ao-chai.²⁸ In fact, in the battle of T'ao-chai it was the troops under Chao and Hu Tsung-hsien who had first been put to rout. Hsia Shih,²⁹ the Supervising Secretary of the Office of Scrutiny for War, learned of the truth and impeached Chao for his deception. Sun Chün,³⁰ the Supervising Secretary of the Office of Scrutiny for Personnel, also memorialized the court to redress the wrong done to Ts'ao. In the end, the emperor believed what Chao had said and Ts'ao was banished to the frontier.

"Chao had already killed [sic] Chang Ching and Li T'ien-ch'ung and

through his impeachment, caused the dismissal from the position of commander-in-chief of both Chou Ch'ung³¹ and Yang I³² before he now made away with Ts'ao Pang-fu. His power was such that both civil officials and military officers vied with one another in offering bribes at his door. Chao so mixed up merits with demerits, so hampered military strategies that discipline had gone to pieces, that the generals and petty officers had all become demoralized. With recruits from half of the empire, the pirates had become more threatening.

"Chao also presented [to the court] defense measures for adoption. He proposed the reclamation of a million mou of cultivable land to be garrisoned by soldiers for the purpose of defending the coastal area and bringing in more revenue and suggested that the gentry residents of the affected area be placed in charge of military matters in the prefectures and districts. These ideas, however, were turned down by the ministry of war.

"Now that the imperial troops had been time and again defeated, Chao knew it was not easy to suppress the pirates and wanted to step down from his responsibility and get away. It happened that the Szechuan troops had defeated the pirates at Chou-p'u [in the vicinity of Shanghai] and Yü Ta-yu³³ had defeated the pirates in the coastal waters. Thereupon Chao memorialized the throne saying that, with the successes at sea and on land, the Chiang-nan region had become peaceful and requested permission to return to Court. Pleased, the emperor complied to it. After his return, news of defeat came in succession. The emperor, suspecting Chao's dishonesty, several times questioned Yen Sung, who strove to explain on his behalf. But the emperor still remained unsatisfied.

"It happened that Li Mo,³⁴ the Personnel Minister, had picked for the metropolitan examination an essay topic which read, 'with his campaigns against the barbarians on the four sides of the Middle Kingdom, the Martial Emperor of the Han Dynasty³⁵ exhausted the economy of the empire; in spite of his recovery of the regions of Huai and Ts'ai, Hsien-tsung of the T'ang dynasty did not have a happy end.'³⁶ Chao impeached Li for slandering the emperor for which Li was sentenced to death. Because of this, the emperor considered Chao to be loyal and advanced him to be the minister of Works and in addition conferred on him the title of the Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent.

"At that time Yen Sung was getting on in years. Fearing that troubles might befall his family after death, he recommended that Chao, with his literary and scholarly accomplishments, should write the offering-prayers and serve in the grand secretariat. The emperor did not assent.

"When more alarms were sounded in the southeast, the ministry [concerned] proposed once again to dispatch an official with plenipotentiary power there. Even though the vice minister of War, Shen Liang-ts'ai³⁷ had already been appointed, Yen Sung still wanted Chao to offer his service and told the emperor that the people of Chiang-nan

had been eagerly awaiting his return. The emperor nodded assent and decreed that Chao be given a concurrent title of junior vice censor-in-chief to be in charge of all military matters for the regions of Chiang-nan and Chekiang.

"By that time, thanks to Chao's recommendations, Hu Tsung-hsien had already replaced Yang I as commander-in-chief. Now that Chao had come out again, Hu wished to establish his connection with Yen Sung through Chao and hence he was all flattery to Chao. Being ignorant of military matters, Chao had to rely on Hu. Hence the two got on splendidly. Later Hu annihilated Hsü Hai and captured Ch'en Tung [the pirate ringleaders] and Chao reported to the throne the great victory, saying that all this had been due to the blessings from Heaven. Greatly elated, the emperor offered sacrifices to the ancestral temples and the national altars of the gods of the soil and grains, reporting the good tidings. He conferred on Chao the title of Junior Guardian and the privilege of making one of Chao's sons a Battalion Commander of the Embroidered-uniform Guard, and summoned Chao back to court. Chao ascribed all the success to the chief grand secretary [i.e., Yen]. When Yen declined the conferment of promotion and privilege, the emperor replied in a kindly-worded decree insisting on his acceptance.

"Now that Chao was in imperial favor and influential, he became more and more arrogant. Toward the eunuchs and Yen Shih-fan, he no longer showed the same respect as he had before. These people felt resentful. Once the emperor sent a messenger to give him a present. It happened that Chao was intoxicated and failed to bow and kneel according to the required etiquette. Upon hearing this, the emperor was annoyed with his disrespect. On another occasion, when the emperor had finished some Taoist medicine which Chao had presented, he dispatched a eunuch to ask Chao for more and Chao was unable to produce a fresh supply. Then Chao failed to complete a storied building in the western garden of the palace on time. One day when the emperor went up to a high point [in the palace], he saw a high-raftered mansion on West Ch'ang-an street and asked who its owner was. The people around him said that it was Minister Chao's new mansion. One of them even remarked that half of the big wood pieces had been used for Chao's mansion, so he had had no time for the new storied building [in the palace]. The emperor became more indignant. Then, a fire burned down three palace halls. The emperor wanted to have a tower on Cheng-yang-gate built as soon as possible, but Chao was not able to do it in a hurry. This added to the emperor's indignation. Furthermore, having heard that in the years he served as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Chao had taken bribes and exaggerated his victory reports, the emperor entertained the idea of dismissing him. Hence the emperor told Yen Sung that being so slow in the construction of the gate-tower, Chao did not act like his old self. Yen still did not catch on to what the emperor meant and endeavored to cover up for Chao,

remarking that having braved the heat in the southern campaign, Chao had taken ill, and recommended the appointment of a vice minister to take charge of the construction job, which the emperor approved. Thereupon, Chao memorialized the throne saying that he had taken ill and he begged for a short leave of absence for rest and recovery. The emperor personally wrote on the memorial the imperial decree that now that important construction was under way, the minister of Works should undertake the task and that since Chao was ill he should go back to his native district for rest and recovery. When the decree was issued, the whole court congratulated one another.

"Having expelled Chao, the emperor still thought that the decree did not give full measure to his guilt. Yet no censors or supervising secretaries made any impeachment moves against him. The emperor had no way to vent his anger. It happened that Chao's son, I-ssu, the Battalion Commander of the Embroidered-uniform Guard, petitioned the throne for a leave of absence to escort his father home. He did this at a time of imperial ceremonial fasting when no petition should be presented. The emperor was enraged and ordered Chao be degraded to the status of a commoner and his son banished to the frontier garrison. He also ordered an investigation of the Office of Scrutiny for Rites on account of their failure to impeach the officials concerned. As a result of this, from Chief Supervising Secretary Hsieh Chiang³⁸ on down, six people were flogged and expunged from the civil service register.

"For some time Chao had been suffering from a swelling disease (ku). Now on the way home in disgrace, he lay in the boat depressed and dejected. One night, when he touched his abdomen, it burst with some organs spilling out and Chao died.

"Later when Supervising Secretary Lo Chia-pin³⁹ and others checked the books of military operation finance, Chao was accused of misappropriating government funds to the tune of one hundred and four thousand taels. It was decreed that the fund should be recovered from his family. Up to the eleventh year of the Wan-li period [i.e., 1583] not even half of the sum had been refunded. When the authorities, on the strength of some amnesty decrees, requested permission to let go the rest, the emperor, Shen-tsung [reigning from 1573 to 1620], refused, and banished his son Shen-ssu to the malarial frontier."

17. See *MS*, 308.
18. According to the biography of Wang Chin in *MS*, 307, the wine was brewed by Wang, an adventurous fortune hunter.
19. Hsü Chieh's biography is in *MS* 213 and also Chiao Hung, *KCHCL*, ch. 16. Hsü (T. Tzu-sheng, H. Shao-hu, also T'sun-chai) was a 1523 chin-shih. He served as grand secretary from 1552 to 1568. Li Pen (1504-1587): T. Ju-li, H. Nan-ch'ü, later in his life he changed his family name back to Lü. He became a chin-shih in 1532 and served as grand secretary from 1549 to 1561. See *MS*, 300 and *KCHCL*, ch. 16.
20. The full text of the memorial may be found in Chao's *Chia-ching p'ing-wo ch'i-i chi-lüeh*, 1/1a-5b. A more detailed abstract is in *STSL*, 419/6a-8a, dated Mar. 7, 1555.
21. Nieh Pao (1487-1563): T. Wen-wei, H. Shuang-chiang; a native of Yung-feng, Kiangsi, a 1517 chin-shih. He was regarded as a leading scholar of the Wang Shou-jen school. Upon the recommendation of his disciple, Hsü Chieh, he became the War Minister from 1553 to 1555. His biography is in *MS*, 202.
22. See note 18, Chapter One.
23. By "the wolf pack and frontier braves" is meant the mercenary recruits from the frontier tribes, especially those from the frontier regions between Hunan and Kwangsi. See *MS*, 91/960.
24. On the coast of modern Kiangsu to the south of Shanghai; located between Che-lin and the guard post of Chin-shan.
25. Wang-chiang-ching was 30 *li* north of the administrative city of Hsiu-shui in the prefecture of Chia-hsing. *The Gazetteer of Chia-hsing* (1879 ed.), 4/36a.
26. Li T'ien-ch'ung: T. Tzu-ch'eng; a native of Meng-tsin, Honan; a 1538 chin-shih. He had served as vice commissioner for military defense before he was promoted to the governorship of Chekiang. *MS*, 205.
27. Ts'ao Pang-fu (1503-1575): T. Tzu-chung, H. Tung-tsun; a native of Ting-t'ao, Shantung; a 1532 chin-shih; he was then serving as Governor of Ying-t'ien. *MS*, 205.
28. T'ao-chai was a market town 18 *li* north of the administration city of Feng-hsien. *The Gazetteer of Feng-hsien* (1878 ed.), 1/6b. At that time Feng-hsien was not a district.
29. Hsia Shih: T. T'ing-chan; a native of Feng-ch'eng, Kiangsi; a 1550 chin-shih. *MJCC*, 406.
30. Sun Chün: T. Tsung-yü, H. Liang-shan; a native of Hsuan-ch'eng in modern Anhwei; a 1550 chin-shih. *MJCC*, 443.
31. Chou Ch'ung was a native of Ying-ch'eng in modern Hupei. From the post of governor of Soochow and Sung-chiang, he was promoted to be Commander-in-Chief

of the armed forces to deal with the Wo. Only 34 days later, he was removed from office and degraded to the status of a commoner. His biography is in *MS*, 205.

32. See note 105 in Chapter Three.

33. Yü Ta-yu (1503-1579): T. Chih-fu, H. Ch'ü-chiang; a native of Chin-chiang, Fukien; a member of a military household. Later he rose to the high positions of Regional Military Commissioner, Regional Commander, and Assistant Commissioner-in-Chief. He achieved the reputation of a great Wo fighter. His biography is in *MS*, 212.

34. Li Mo: T. Shih-yen; a native of Ou-ning, Fukien; a 1521 chin-shih. His biography is in *MS*, 202.

35. Referring to the Martial Emperor of the Han Dynasty who ruled from 140 to 87 B.C.

36. Referring to the T'ang Emperor who ruled from 806 to 820 and strove to restore the authority of the central government. Huai and Ts'ai stand for the area in modern Anhwei and Honan. See Ou-yang Hsiu, *Hsin t'ang-shu* (The New T'ang History), ch. 7.

37. Shen Liang-ts'ai (1506-1567): T. Te-fu; a native of T'ai-chou in modern Kiangsi; a 1535 chin-shih. His biography is in *MS*, 210.

38. Hsieh Chiang: T. Ch'ung-ch'uan, H. Min-shan; a native of Honan; a 1547 chin-shih. *MJCC*, 833.

39. Lo Chia-pin: T. Hsing-pin, H. I-shan; a native of I-pin, Szechuan; a 1553 chin-shih. *MJCC*, 940. According to the biography of P'ang Shang-p'eng in *MS*, 227, Censor P'eng and Lo did the checking together.