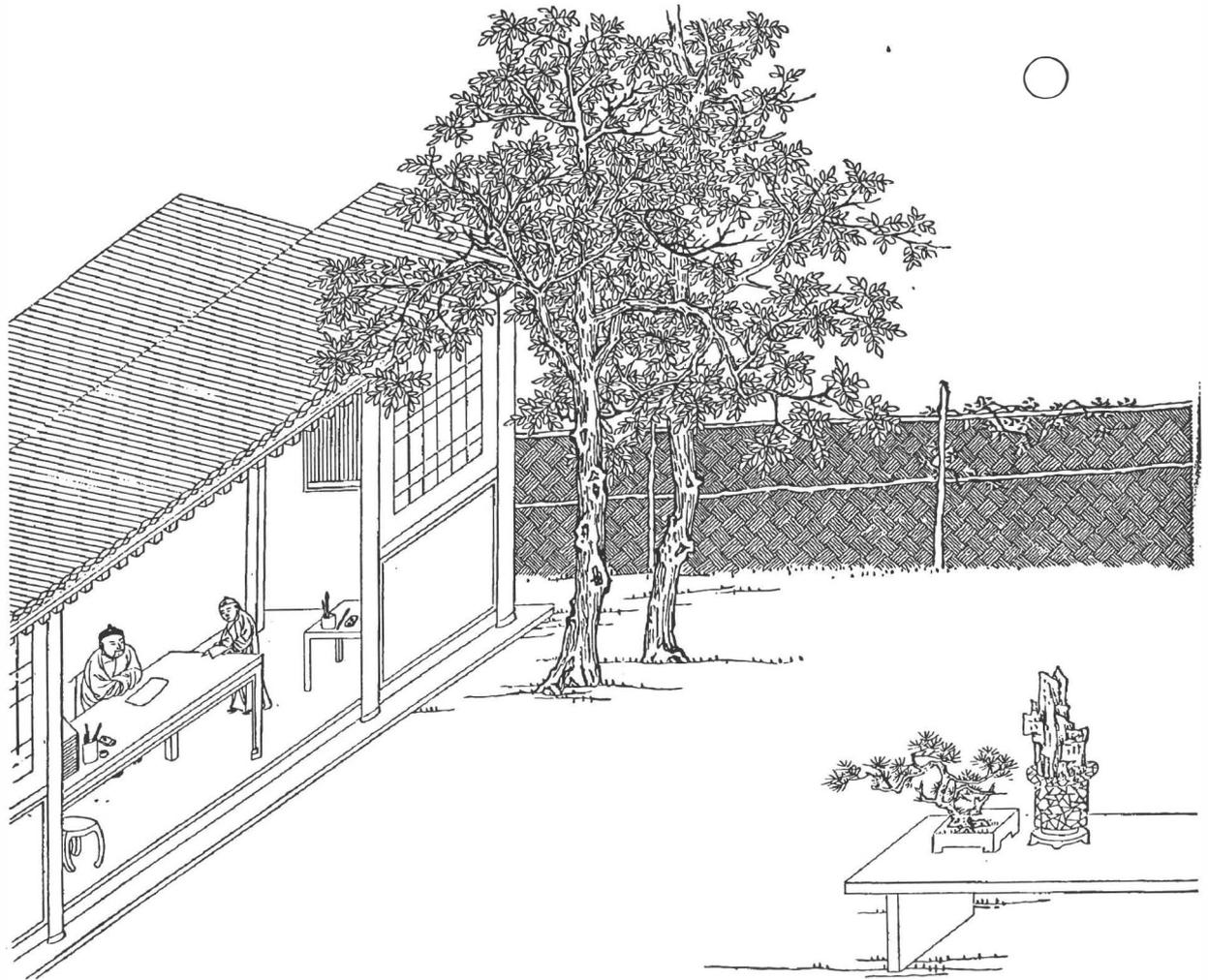


靜存受經



Studying the Classics in Serenity Hall

In the year *jen-bsu* [1802], when I was twelve years of age, I studied the classics, together with my two brothers, my two elder cousins, Ku Ch'un-ku 顧春谷⁴⁰ and Yun Tzu-shang 惲子尚,⁴¹ one younger cousin, Tzu-p'ien 子駢,⁴² and also Chang Hsiao-lou 張曉樓⁴³ and Yu Hsing-chieh 豫星階.⁴⁴ We were taught by my maternal uncle Chieh-shih 潔士.⁴⁵ The family school was named Serenity Hall.

One day I reached school rather late and as soon as I appeared I was requested by our Preceptor to provide a response to a line which he supplied:

The red sun fills the window, yet he lies abed.

I came up instantly with:

The blue clouds pave a way, for me to tread.⁴⁶

My uncle the Preceptor was rather impressed and commended me. He then assigned me the Theme "Worse than Flood and Fire" for a short Diagnostic.⁴⁷ He was quite pleased with my attempt and wrote the comment: "Outstanding Reasoning, Splendid Inspiration! If a juvenile piece can attain this, will not the young writer grow to be one who grasps the Essence of the Classics and wields the Vital Force of the Sages?"⁴⁸ He spoke with pleasure to my mother, the Lady Yun, saying: "This boy has a naturally superior gift. Please do not spoil him with leniency and indulgence. Let him be properly disciplined, that he may develop into an accomplished scholar." Later, when another of my maternal uncles Ch'üeh-shih 確士⁴⁹ came to Peking, he said the same thing to my mother, and she became stricter than ever.

At this time I received, by gracious Imperial favour, a hereditary appointment. As the grandson of a meritorious official, I was entitled to a post of the sixth rank. But the officials in the Government Office concerned were a greedy lot. They proposed to consider my grandfather as having been granted an additional honorary title of President of the Court of Sacrificial Worship⁵⁰ and then grant me an appointment as the grandson of an official of that rank. This made it look as if they were doing me a favour, whereas in fact they were demoting me to a post of the seventh rank. Moreover they pointed out that since there had never been a Junior Metropolitan Official of the seventh rank in the Office of the Imperial Household, the only available post of equivalent rank would be that of Clerk. This obstructive trick of theirs merely strengthened my resolve to build my career on my own scholarship and hard work. This is not to deny the part played by the benevolent and judicious guidance of my elders, and the silent working of Heavenly Grace, which have indeed helped me to make something of my inherited privilege.

I first began my studies under my teacher Cheng Yueh-t'an 鄭月灘,⁵¹ then under Ts'ao Hsu-chai, then under my maternal uncle Chieh-shih, and then under Niu Kung-yu 鈕公瑜.⁵² I give their names here as a memorial.

⁴⁰ Name Yin-liang 寅亮, a Student in the Provincial Academy of Kiangsu.

⁴¹ Name Shou-chang 受章, later passed the state examination and became a Master of Arts, now serving as a County Magistrate.

⁴² Name Hui-ch'ang 彙昌, later admitted into the Prefectural Academy as Student, and now serving as a County Assistant Education Officer.

⁴³ Name I-ch'un 綺春, a Chinese Bannerman, later served as an Official Copyist, and promoted to be Salt Distribution Commissioner.

⁴⁴ Name T'ai 泰, a Chinese Bannerman, Student in the State Academy, later became a Master of Arts, and served as Prefect.

⁴⁵ Name Ping-i 秉怡, passed his Provincial Examination in the first year of Tao-kuang (1821) and became a Master of Arts. (YTH) Here the full official term is used, meaning literally 'filial, righteous and upright'.

⁴⁶ (YTH) The trick here lies in the fact that 'blue clouds' traditionally was the figurative expression for success in one's career.

⁴⁷ (YTH) In the Octopartite, or Eight-Legged Composition, the writing is divided into parts of which each has a special name, and the students are taught to practice the writing of each part separately, until they are proficient enough at each part and ready to write an entire composition. The Diagnostic is the first part of the Octopartite.

⁴⁸ (YTH) The word *sheng* should not be translated as 'saint'. The Buddhists and especially the Christians introduced the notion of saintliness into Chinese thought. Even the Taoists did (and do) not exactly have this notion.

⁴⁹ Name Ping-hsun 秉恂, served as a subordinate officer under a County Magistrate in Hunan Province.

⁵⁰ (YTH) Office in charge of the rites and ceremonies and official activities in connection with all the Religious and Ancestral Temples.

⁵¹ Name Tao-yin 道印, a native of Yen-shih County in Honan Province, *chin-shih* in the year *i-mao* of the reign of Ch'ien-lung (1795), Chief Educational Officer (*chiao-shou* 教授) of a Prefecture. (YTH: Not the modern 'University Professor', but the name of an official post in the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties.)

⁵² Name Shih-yuan 士元, a native of Shun-t'ien, who passed the State Examination and became a Master of Arts with me in the same examination, in the year *wu-chen* (1808), later serving as a County Magistrate.