



The Dream of Gong Yu | 龔輿夢

Text Information

Author | Hong Mai

Language | Chinese

Period | 12th Century

Genre | History

Source | Hong, Mai. *Yi Jian Zhi*. First ed. 4 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju. 1981.

Collection | Making History: Chronicles, Legends, and Anecdotes

URL | sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/hong_mai_dream_gong_yu/

Translation and introduction by Likun Yang.

Introduction to the Text

This story is one of five in the *Global Medieval Sourcebook* to have been selected from the *Yijian Zhi* (or, *Record of the Listener*, hereafter the *Record*) by Hong Mai (1123-1202). Like many well-educated men in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), Hong Mai grew up in a prominent family, passed the civil service examination, and obtained a post in the imperial government. However, due to misconduct during a diplomatic mission, his career came to an abrupt end. From then on, he retreated to his study and devoted himself to writing the *Record*.

The corpus of the *Record* originally consisted of 420 chapters. What we have today, however, is but a small fraction of the original text. The *Record* shows a remarkable degree of accuracy when we compare it with the official documents and other texts of the same period. Nevertheless, many stories in the *Record* are outright fictitious or based on highly unreliable sources. The *Record* preserved much information about the society, culture, and religion of the Southern Song Dynasty and was a source of inspiration for generations of writers after Hong Mai. Writers in late imperial China, for instance, took up many stories in the *Record* and refashioned them into stories that met the demands and expectations of their own times.

Further Reading

Allen, Sarah M. *Shifting Stories : History, Gossip, and Lore in Narratives from Tang Dynasty China*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014.

- *Explores the tale literature of eighth- and ninth-century China to show how the written tales we have today grew out of a fluid culture of hearsay that circulated within elite society. Contains a chapter that explains the modern (mis)understanding of the tale as a genre.*

Hansen, Valerie. *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.

- *Uses the Yi Jian Zhi tales as historical documents and shows that social and economic developments underlay religious changes in the Southern Song (1127 - 1276).*

Inglis, Alistair David. *Hong Mai's Record of the Listener and Its Song Dynasty Context*. SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.

- *A comprehensive survey of the scholarship on Yi Jian Zhi.*

Luo, Manling. *Literati Storytelling in Late Medieval China*. The Modern Language Initiative. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015.

- *Shows how the tales offer crucial insights into the reconfiguration of the Chinese elite, which monopolized literacy, social prestige, and political participation in tenth-century China.*



The Dream of Gong Yu | 龔與夢

潭州士人龔與，乾道四年冬，與鄉里六七人偕赴省試。過宜春，謁仰山廟祈夢。與夢至官府，見柱上揭紙一片，書[龔與不得]四字，而[不]字上下稍不聯接。既覺，殊不樂，自意必下第。及春榜至，與中選，餘人盡黜，始以語人，謂夢不驗。好事者曰：“不字斷續如此，乃一个也。神言龔與一个得耳，豈不昭然？”

There is a literatus from Tanzhou named Gong Yu. In the winter of the fourth year of the Dao Qian reign, he went with six or seven people from his hometown to participate in the provincial exam. When they passed Yi Chun, they paid their respects to the Yangshan Monastery and prayed for dreams. Gong Yu dreamt that he went into the government building and saw a piece of paper on the pillar of the building. On the paper were the four characters: "Gong Yu Bu De"¹ were written. But the upper part and the lower part of the character "Bu" were not connected. When Gong Yu woke up, he was quite unhappy and thought he would fail the exam. When the results came out in the spring, Gong Yu was selected and the rest of his group were rejected. Gong Yu began to tell people [what had happened], saying that the dream was not accurate. His acquaintances said: "When the character 'Bu' is disconnected like that, it should be read as two characters 'Yi Ge.' The deity was saying that only Gong Yu himself could do it, isn't that obvious?"

Critical Notes

1

Meaning: "Gong Yu will not get it."