

**THREE ENTRIES FOR A T'ANG BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY:
WANG HSI-I, HUANG LING-WEI, HO CHIH-CHANG**

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I. WANG HSI-I

WANG Hsi-i (ca. 630-ca. 726). Recluse.

Offices (Honorary)

Provisional Erudite Scholar in [the College for] the Sons of State (shou kuo-tsu po-shih)

Wang Hsi-i is one of those historical figures whose biographies tell us much more about the biographers than about the subject himself. All that we know for certain about Wang Hsi-i is that he was a native of Hsu-chou who was living as a recluse when Hsuan tsung heard of him and invited him to attend the *feng* ceremony in 725. All the other reported data of Wang's life are dubious to some extent.

The standard biographies of Wang are based upon an account of his life in a work by Liu Su, entitled the *Ta T'ang hsin-yu* ("New Accounts of the Great T'ang," compiled in 807). Liu Su (fl. ca. 806-821) was a superintendent of records (*chu-pu*) in Hsun-yang, district of Chiang-chou; little more is known about him. According to Liu, Wang began as a pious and filial lad who hired himself out as a shepherd in order to raise the money to bury his deceased parents. He then secluded himself on Mt. Sung, where he studied the arts of self-cultivation (*hsiu-yang*) with an unnamed *tao-shih*. Afterwards, he resided in the Ts'u-lai mountains in Yenchou, apparently for many years. Eventually, the prefect Lu Ch'i-ch'ing called upon him and asked for advice about governing, but Wang simply quoted Confucius' "Golden Rule." When Hsuan-tsung was about to perform the *feng*, he ordered the local officials to bring forth the hermit, who was then ninety-six years old. The emperor had Chang Yueh question Wang, but while Chang was profoundly impressed with the man, he refrained from entrusting him with public office, citing the hermit's advanced age. At this point, Liu Su reproduces a laudatory edict by Hsuantsung. It is interesting that the edict praises Wang as a recluse who "holds to unity and dwells in purity" (allusions to the

Tao te ching), but also styles him a "scholar" (*ju*) and a "worthy" (*hsien*) In addition, it compares Wang to the Han-dynasty worthies Ch'i Li-chi and Fu Sheng, and closes by conferring upon Wang the rank of *chung-san ta-fu* as well as an honorary academic title. Following the edict, Liu adds that Wang was allowed to retire to the mountains, where the local officials were ordered to convey annual gifts of silk, mutton, and wine to him. No death date is provided, but owing to Wang's advanced age, it is reasonably assumed that he passed away relatively soon after the events of 725.

Liu's biography of Wang must be read critically. Wang's alleged filiality sounds fictitious: the motif of working as a laborer to raise his parent's funeral expenses is a biographical stereotype. It is also noteworthy that Wang is never said to have had any education (a fact that makes one suspicious about his quotation of Confucius in response to Lu Chti-ch'ing). Since the text provides no details about Wang's alleged studies in "self-cultivation" with the unnamed *tao-shih*, one suspects that that element may have been an invention designed to explain the man's extreme longevity. All of these matters are rendered historically questionable by the fact that Liu is unable to provide any other real historical data in the life of the nonagenarian. Clearly, to Liu Su, all that really mattered about Wang is that he was an aged hermit who attended Hsuan-tsung's *feng*. Beyond that fact, Liu had relatively little interest in the historical events of Wang's life. He dresses Wang up as a Confucian exemplar—a paragon of humility and filiality who even quotes Confucius, and responds obediently when summoned by political authorities. But this vapid caricature stands in sharp contrast with the image of Wang presented in Hsuan-tsung's edict: by likening the man to Ch'i Li-chi, the emperor placed Wang Hsi-i squarely in the mold of the sagely old hermit who disdains courtly society yet is coveted by the ruler. Tradition held that a ruler's ability to lure such worthies to court would demonstrate the moral legitimacy of his reign, and Hsuantsung undoubtedly invited Wang to his *feng* for precisely that reason.

The dynastic histories reprise Liu Su's biography of Wang, with subtle modifications. The *Chiu T'ang shu* gives a name (Huang I) to the *tao-shih* with whom Wang allegedly trained at Mt. Sung, and claims that they spent forty years together. It adds similar data concerning Wang's retreat in the Tsu-lai mountains: he befriended the *tao-shih* Liu Hsuan-po (otherwise unknown), studied the *I ching* and the *Lao-tzu*, lived on a diet of pine needles and flower petals, and grew even more robust as he passed into his seventies during the Ching-lung period (707-10). While there is no real reason to question the names of the two *tao-shih* mentioned here, the remaining data are *topoi* of the "Taoistic hermit": pine needles comprised the diet of a number of quasi-legendary figures in the

Lieh-hsien chuan, and among the texts that occupied T'ang Taoists, the *I ching* and *Lao-tzu* were hardly central. Among other minor deviations from Liu Su's account, the *Chiu T'ang shu* states that Hsuan-tsung granted Wang only the rank of ch'ao-san ta-fu, not the higher rank of *chung-san tai-fu*. It also adds a three-word obituary, a historically meaningless report that Wang "subsequently died at an advanced age."

Clearly, the historians transmitted an account of Wang Hsi-i because of the associations attached to him in the imperial edict of 725: Wang could be presented as an embodiment of "the elusive recluse," who graced his sovereign with his "illustrious" presence, and thereby with moral legitimation. In other contexts, the historians clearly presented Taoist masters in the same light (e.g., Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen, 646-735). It is thus quite understandable that they would seek to embellish the image of Wang's life, and enhance its Taoistic overtones. Later biographies of Wang are extremely brief and entirely derivative.

BIOGRAPHIES

Liu Su, *Ta T'ang hsin-yu*:

Preserved in several versions, some of which are incomplete (such as that in the *T'ang-tai ts'ungshu*). The complete text is available in (1) a Ming manuscript of the Wan-li era; (2) the Ming anthology *Pai hai* by Shang Chun (Taipei, 1968), 10.13b-14a (pp. 436-37); (3) *Ts'ungshu chi-ch'eng ch'u-pien* edn., 10.113-14; and (4) a modern punctuated edition (Shanghai, 1957), 10.163-64.

Chiu T'ang shu (Peking, 1975), 192.5121.

Hsin T'ang shu (Peking, 1975), 196.5600-1.

San-tung ch'un-hsien lu (HY 1238), 6.20a.

Yu Ch'in, *Ch'i sheng*, completed by 1333 (Taipei 1973), 6.28a.

Chang Yu, *Hsuan-p'in lu* (HY 780), 5.3b-4b; also in Yen Ip'ing, *Tao-chiao yen-chiu tzu-liao* (Taipei, 1974), 118.

SECONDARY STUDIES

Russell Kirkland, "Taoists of the High T'ang," Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1986, pp. 14759, 444-47.

II. HUANG LING-WEI

HUANG Ling-wei (ca. 640-721/22). Also known as Hua-ku ("Miss Flower"). Taoist priestess.

The dynastic histories rarely acknowledge the deeds of women who were not (1) associated with the imperial house or (2) models of stereotypical feminine virtues. Yet certain women were fairly prominent in their own way, and among them was the Taoist priestess Huang Ling-wei. Our knowledge of Huang's life is limited, since she was neglected by the official historians and apparently wrote nothing herself. What we know of her life is derived from two epitaphs composed by the accomplished scholar and statesman Yen Chen-ch'ing (709-784). Yen apparently learned of Huang's deeds in 768/69, when he was appointed prefect of Fu-chou (where Huang had been active). In 769, he composed a text to be inscribed at Huang's shrine at Lin-ch'uan, and described her life again in a similar text that he prepared for inscription at the nearby shrine of the earlier Taoist luminary Wei Hua-ts'un (251-334).

In the first text, Yen identifies Huang as a person of Lin-ch'uan in Fu-chou, but gives no information about her family; it seems likely that her place of origin was wholly unknown, and that Yen called her a person of Lin-ch'uan simply because she was active there during her mature years. Clearly, little was known about Huang even in Yen's day: he says that she was ordained as a *tao-shih* at the age of twelve (which is not implausible), but tells us nothing more of Huang's life until she was around the age of fifty. It was at that point of her life that she drew attention to herself by rediscovering the long-lost shrine of Wei Hua-ts'un. According to Yen, Huang sought Wei's shrine without success until late 693, when she obtained the assistance of a theurgist named Hu Hui-ch'ao in the Western Mountains of Hung-chou. Following Hu's directions, she discovered Wei's shrine in Lin-ch'uan and excavated a number of religious artifacts. Here Yen relates that Empress Wu heard of Huang's discovery and confiscated all the artifacts. (Apparently, however, the empress was not sufficiently impressed to order an account of the matter to be transmitted to the imperial historians.) Undaunted, Huang went on to locate and restore a second shrine at the nearby Mount of the Well (Ching-shan) and apparently maintained *chai* observances there until her death nearly thirty years later. Huang's demise is a colorful bit of hagiography: in K'ai-yuan 9 (721-22), she "was ready to ascend," and told her disciples not to nail her coffin shut, but merely to cover it with crimson gauze. A few evenings later, a bolt of lightning struck the place, leaving a hole in the gauze and a large

opening in the roof. When the disciples looked into the coffin, there was no body, but only the shroud and Huang's "screed" (a document that served as the passport for an ascended immortal in the heavenly realms). In other words, Huang underwent *shih-chieh* ("transformation by means of the corpse") and ascended to heaven. Yen gives no indication here as to the number (or gender) of Huang's disciples, but later mentions one by name, a woman named Li Ch'iunghsien; Li and other women apparently maintained the shrines at Lin-ch'uan for some years, and male *tao-shih* seem to have kept up the *chai* and *chiao* rituals into the late K'aiyuan period. At some point thereafter, the shrines seem to have fallen once again into desuetude, for Yen intimates that when he arrived in Fu-chou in the spring of 769 he learned of the entire matter only because people were talking about the piety of a female *tao-shih* named Tseng Miao-hsing, who once met Li Ch'iang-hsien and reported having a vision of Huang.

Yen's second account of Huang's life (the inscription for "Lady Wei") varies from the first on several points. For one thing, it reports that during the Ching-yun period (710-12) the emperor Jui-tsung sent a *tao-shih* to Lin-chuan to reinstate the religious observances there, then had a monastery built and seven female *tao-shih* ordained there. It further reports that at the beginning of the K'ai-yuan period, Hsuan-tsung had them (the female *tao-shih*?) perform *chino* and *chai* there. These plausible reports fill in troubling gaps in the first account. A later passage says that Hsuantsung heard of the winds and clouds that would sweep through the hall each year on the anniversary of Huang's transformation and ordered a *tao-shih* named Ts'ai Wei to enter a record on the matter in the *Hou-hsien chuan* ("Accounts of Later Immortals"); unfortunately, that text was lost at an early date (possibly during the fire of 756). Yen further reports that "a *tao-shih* bearing the imperial insignia" was dispatched to conduct a *chino* at the shrine on 8 April 741, and that the prefect at that time, Chang Ching-i, erected a commemorative stele. It is possible to infer that most of the new data in Yen's second text derived from that stele (of which he had apparently been unaware when he composed the first text).

Yen Chen-ch'ing presents Huang as a woman of exemplary humility, piety, and courage, and seems to have been quite comfortable in eliciting readers' approval of a woman who passed beyond the "traditional" norms of female behavior. Moreover, he makes it quite clear that Huang's activities had all been sanctioned by higher forces: (1) the theurgist Hu Hui-ch'ao gave her his blessing and predicted that she would achieve the Tao; (2) supernatural messages and omens

guided her in her search; and (3) wondrous phenomena continued at the shrine throughout her life, and even afterward.

Early in the tenth century, Yen's portrait of the life of Huang Ling-wei was subsumed into a biography in the *Yung-ch'eng chi-hsien lu* of Tu Kuang-t'ing (850-933). But more interesting is a brief reference to Huang in a different part of Tu's work: in a biography of another Taoist woman, Tu quotes a rescript issued by the emperor Hsi-tsung in 882, and it mentions Huang Ling-wei as an immortal who had descended from heaven. While Yen's flowery encomium had called Huang "classed among the Actualized Immortals (*chen-hsien*)," there is little evidence that anyone in the eighth century really thought of her as a divine being. But the rescript of 882 demonstrates that her reputation had reached the imperial academicians at court, and that they viewed Huang's life as having had transcendental significance. Why, then, was she not granted a biography in the standard histories? Certainly her gender was a factor, but it also seems important that Huang's activities were seldom presented as having had any socio-political ramifications. Since she did little that would recommend her as a political exemplar, the official historians had little reason to take any interest in her.

BIOGRAPHIES

There is no biography of Huang in either *T'ang shu*. The only known T'ang sources for her life are the two inscription texts by Yen Chen-ch'ing. The first (dated 769) is entitled *Fu-chou Lin-ch'uan-hsien Ching-shan Hua-ku hsien-t'an pei-ming* and is preserved (1) in the *Ch'uan T'ang wen* (340.1a-3b), and (2) among Yen's collected works, *Wen-chung chi* (*Pai-pu ts'ung-shu chich'eng* edn.), 9.7b-10a. Yen's second account is found in the epitaph entitled *Chintzu hsu-yuan chun ling-shangchen ssu-ming Nan-yuehfu-jen hsien-t'an pei-ming*. This text, which appears to have been composed slightly later than the first, is preserved also in the *Ch'uan T'ang wen* (340/17a-22b) and in the *Wen-chung chi* (9.1a-7a). In each case, the actual text prepared for engraving at the shrine was a poetic eulogy, which Yen prefaced with a longer prose text that gives a fuller and more comprehensible version of the same events.

Tu Kuang-t'ing's biography of Huang in the *Yung-ch'eng chi-hsien lu* appears in the Sung encyclopedia *Yun-chi chti-chien* (HY 1026), 115.9b-12a. Another, wholly derivative biography appears in a Ming text, the *Li-shih chen-hsien t'i-tao t'ung-chien hou-chi* (HY 298), 4.13b-16a.

SECONDARY STUDIES

Edward H. Schafer, "The Restoration of the Shrine of Wei Hua-ts'un at Lin-ch'uan in the Eighth Century," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 15 (1977), 124-37.

Russell Kirkland, "Huang Ling-wei: A Taoist Priestess in T'ang China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 19 (1991), 47-73.

III. HO CHIH-CHANG

HO Chih-chang (659-744). Tzu: Chih-chen. *Tzu-hao*: Ssuming K'uang-k'o ("The Madman of Ssuming"). Title: Ho pi-chien (Ho, Director of the Palace Library). Statesman, poet, calligrapher, Taoist priest.

Offices

695 Received *chih-shih* degree

--- Erudite Scholar in [the Sector of] the Four Gates in [the University for] the Sons of States (*Kuo-tzu ssu-men po-shih*)

--- Erudite Scholar in [the Court of] Imperial Sacrifices (*T'ai-ch'ang po-shih*)

722 Commissioner for Revision of Texts (*Hsiu-shu shih*)

--- Vice-president of [the Court on Imperial Sacrifices (*T'ai-ch'ang shao-ch'ing*)

725 Vice-president of the Board of Rites (*Li-pu shih-lang*)

Academician in the Academy of Assembled Worthies (*Chi-hsienynan hsueh-shih*)

Right Mentor of the Heir-Apparent (*T'ai-tzu yu-shu-tzu*)

Reader-in-Attendance to the Heir-Apparent (*Huang t'ai-tzu shihtu*)

7Z6 Vice President of the Board of Public Works (*Kung-pu shih-lang*)

Director of the Palace Library, Supplemental to the Regular Functionary (*Pi-shu-chien t'ung cheng-yuan*)

Monitor of the Heir-Apparent (*T'ai-tzu pin-k'o*)

Director of the Palace Library, Regularly Appointed (*Cheng-shou pi-shu-chien*)

758 President of the Board of Rites (*Li-pu shang-shu*) [posthumous]

Ho Chih-chang is best known in the West as a poet, but it was generally for his political career that Ho is remembered in Chinese biographical literature. Ho was a statesman of prominence during the reigns of Empress Wu and the emperors Chung-tsung and Juitsung, but gained his greatest success under the emperor Hsuantsung. During a fifty-year tenure in the central government, Ho held a number of administrative posts and several academic positions. He is presented in the standard histories as an eccentric, who sometimes overstepped the bounds of good taste and good sense. At the end of his lengthy career, Ho retired from office to take ordination as a Taoist priest.

Ho Chih-chang was a registrant of Yung-hsing in Kuei-chi. Nothing is known of his immediate family, though it must have been of some significance, since Lu Hsiang-hsien (665-736), President of the Board of Public Works, was Ho's first cousin, and a third cousin, Ho Tejen, once held the office of Librarian to the Heir-Apparent. Ho Chih-chang achieved the degree of *chin-shih* in 695 and served in academic posts for some twenty-seven years. At the age of 63, Ho finally caught the attention of the chief minister Chang Yueh and quickly rose through a succession of offices, including Vice-President of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, Vice-President of the Board of Rites, and Reader-in-Attendance to the Heir-Apparent. In 725 Hsuan-tsung turned to Ho for

procedural advice when performing the *feng* ceremony, but the next year Ho was lax in arranging the funeral for the emperor's younger brother, Li Fan, and became the object of public ridicule. As an apparent face-saving measure, the emperor transferred Ho to the Vice Presidency of Public Works, while also assigning him to the task of directing the palace library. After a very short time, Ho was granted a prestige title (*Yin-ch'ing kuang-lu ta-fu*) and appointed Monitor of the Heir-Apparent (the future emperor Su-tsung). Ho apparently held the same positions into the T'ien-pao reign.

In 744, the life of Ho Chih-chang took an unusual twist. At that time, the eighty-five-year-old Ho apparently underwent an unusual experience of some sort, variously described as a dream or a mental disorder. As a result of that experience, Ho requested and received imperial permission to take ordination as a *tao-shih* and retire to his native village. Ho's retirement was a splendid event: the emperor dispatched the ranks of the entire government to attend a farewell feast, commissioned a collection of farewell poems (still extant), appointed Ho's son Tseng to be the Superior Commander of Kueichi, and permitted a younger son to take Taoist orders. Shortly thereafter, Ho Chih-chang died in his native village. Nothing further is known of the place of his burial, or of Ho's descendants. In 755, after Su-tsung came to the throne, he granted Ho the posthumous title of President of the Board of Rites and issued a memorial edict in his own name. (The text of that edict is appended to Ho's biography in the *Chiu T'ang shu*.) No other memorial texts are known.

The *Chiu T'ang shu* biography of Ho seems to present his career and character in a somewhat negative light, though there is every indication that Ho was generally capable in his duties and highly regarded among his contemporaries. There is ample evidence that Ho was a gentleman of both social and literary refinement. His calligraphy was treasured by connoisseurs from his own times through the Sung and Yuan periods. Tu Fu counted Ho among his "Eight Immortals of the Winecup," and Li Po (in a poem composed after Ho's death) gave credit to Ho for bestowing upon him the renowned byname "Banished Immortal" (*Che-hsien*). But the standard biographies pass over in virtual silence Ho's association with such literary figures.

In later ages, the figure of Ho Chih-chang sometimes appears as a character in literary and religious texts. In the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*, for example, Ho appears in a morality tale as a character who learns to forgo worldly attachments and trust to the wisdom of his spiritual superiors. Meanwhile, in a thirteenth-century local history, the *Chia-ting Ch'ih-ch'eng chih*, Ho appears as a

Taoist immortal. Other works of the same period are more prosaic, often emphasizing Ho's calligraphic skills.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Editions

The corpus of Ho's surviving works consists of some twenty brief poetic works (many of which concern political figures and events), and eight brief prose compositions of a documentary nature. These works have been collected by the modern scholar Feng Chench'un and published as *Ho Pi-chien chi* (one chuan), in *Ssu-ming ts'ung-shu*. An example of Ho's calligraphy (the *Hsiao-ching* in grass script) was preserved in the collection of the Japanese imperial household and was published in 1884 by Kawada Oko (reprinted 1955).

Biographies

While there are no *nien-p'u* for Ho Chih-chang, there are a number of brief biographies and other references in local histories and other texts. The official biographies of Ho appear in *Chiu T'ang shu* (Po-na ea.: 190B.14b-15b; Peking ed., 190B.5033-35) and *Hsin T'ang shu* (Po-na ea.: 196.7b-8b; Peking ea., 196.5606-7). An anecdote featuring a character bearing Ho's name appears in the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* (Peking ea.: 42.263). In the *Tao-tsang*, biographies of Ho can be found in the *San-tung ch'un-hsien lu* of Ch'en Pao-kuang (dated 1154; HY 1238, 14.6a7a); and in the *Hsuan-p'in lu* of Chang Yu (by 1335; HY 780, 4.27b-29b). Another account of Ho by a Taoist writer is found in the *Kao-tao chuan* of Chia Shan-hsiang (ca. 1086), as reconstructed in Yen I-p'ing's *Tao-chiao yen-chiu tzu-liao* (Taipei, 1974), 1:107-8. The *T'ang-shih chi-shih* of Chi Yu-kung (ca. 1165) mixes biographical snippets with verses by and about Ho (Peking, 1965: 17.246-47). Local histories containing references to Ho include the Chia-t'ai Kuei-chi chih of Shih Su (dated 1201; Taipei, 1977: 14.30b-31a and 16.12a-b); the *Chia-ting Ch'ih-ch'eng chih* of Ch'en Ch'i-ch'ing (between 1208 and 1225; in Sung Shih-lo, *T'ai-chou ts'ung-shu*, "i-chi," 35.10a); the *Pao-ch'ing Ssu-ming chih* of Lo Chun and Fang Wan-li 77 (dated 1227; unidentified edition, 8.5b-6b) and the *Yen-yu Ssuming chih* of Yuan Chueh (by 1327; unidentified edition, 4.12b-13b). The

Ssu-ming histories reproduce the Hsin T'ang shu biography of Ho, adding what could be learned at the time regarding the local associations of Ho's family. Another derivative account of Ho's life appears in the *T'ang ts'ai-tzu chuan* of Hsin Wen-fang (dated 1304; Shanghai, 1958; 3.38-39). Beginning with the *Chia-ta Kuei-chi chih*, a separate tradition in the thirteenth and fourteenth century extolled Ho Chih-chang as a calligrapher; see Ch'en Ssu, *Shu hsiao-shih* (Taipei, n.d.; 9.12), and T'ao Tsung-i, *Shu-shih hui-yao* (N.p., 1929; 5.16a). All later biographies merely abridge the official biographies of Ho. A wide-ranging collection of materials pertaining to the life of Ho Chih-chang appears in Feng Chench'un's *Ho Pi-chien wai-chi* (3 *chuan*), in *Ssu-ming ts'ung-shu*.

SECONDARY LITERATURE

Brief references to Ho and his relationship with litterateurs such as Li Po are found in several Western works on Chinese poetry, of which the most significant are Arthur Waley, *The Poetry and Career of Li Po* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950), 19-20; and Stephen C'wen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T'ang* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), 15-16, 120-21. The most extensive analysis of the life of Ho Chih-chang appears in Russell Kirkland, "From Imperial Tutor to Taoist Priest: Ho Chih-chang at the T'ang Court," *Journal of Asian History* 23 (1989), 101-33. Included in that study are translations and critical analyses of both of the standard biographies of Ho, and a consideration of many of the historical issues raised by those accounts. The *T'ai-p'ing knang-chi* anecdote and passages from the *Kao-tao chuan* and *Chia-ting Ch'ih-ch'eng chih* are examined in Kirkland, "The Making of an Immortal: The Exaltation of Ho Chih-chang," *Numen* 38 (1991-92), 214-30. All the remaining biographical materials are examined in Kirkland, *Taoists of the High T'ang* (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1986), pp. 112-25, 343-65.