BOOKS ON JOURNEYS TO WESTERN REGIONS

BY

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The importance of careful distinction between various books on journeys to western regions has been brought to my attention by Mr. Arthur Waley since the appearance of my section of "Chinese Japanese Mythology." On p. 190 of that book I referred to two books—one known as Ta T'ang Hsi Yu Chi, i.e. "Western Travels in the T'ang dynasty," or, to give a more accurate translation, "Records of Western Regions in the T'ang Dynasty," and the other book, called Hsi Yu Chi, redacted by Li Chih-ch'ang who accompanied the famous Taoist recluse Ch'iu Ch'u-chi on a journey to India at the request of the Emperor Genghis Khan. Although the names of these two books as they are written in English look alike the Hsi Yu of the former means "western regions" and the Hsi Yu of the latter means "western journeys." For all practical purposes they may be treated as identical. "Western" in both instances is not synonymous with what we now refer to as the occident, but is an indefinite term including Chinese Turkestan, Thibet, India and even that part of modern China now within the borders of southern Szechuan, Yunnan and Kueichow provinces. The term originated in the Han Dynasty to indicate the district west of T'un-huang but later it came to have a wider application.

I.—Ta T'ang Hsi Yu Chi

大唐西域記

This record was written during the reign of the second emperor of the T'ang Dynasty, T'ai Tsung (A.D. 627-50), and was first published A.D. 648. On the first page following the Preface it is stated that "The Tripitaka Master Hsüan Chwang under Imperial instructions explained (the text)" and that "The S'ramana Pien Chi of the Ta Tsung Chih Temple Redacted (it)." The Chinese text is—

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I have used the word "explained" as the equivalent of the character "i" (譯) instead of "translated." "I" is often used in this sense. Hsüan Chwang did not "translate" these records from foreign languages. He communicated the facts orally to his amanuensis Pien Chi who put them in writing.

As far as is known at present there are no editions of this work earlier than the Ming dynasty although according to the Ssu K‘u Ch‘üan Shu T‘i Yao (四庫全書提要) it is mentioned in three collections of the Southern Sung dynasty, viz. by Ch‘ao Kung-wu (晁公武) in his Tu Shu Chih (讀書志), by Ch‘eng Ch‘iao (鄭樵) in the T‘ung Chih (通志) and by Ch‘en Chen-sun (陳振孫) in the Shu Lu Chieh T‘i (書錄解題). It is possible that the edition "preserved in the library of a large Buddhist monastery near Foochow" (Watters) is the one mentioned by these three bibliographies, but on the other hand it is more than likely that it is one of the books appointed for Buddhist temples in the Ming dynasty. I do not know the name or location of the temple referred to by Watters. The Ssu K‘u T‘i Yao also states that there was an edition published by the Wu family (呂氏刋本) but gives no details as to place or time. The latest critical edition was published in Japan in the revised collection of Buddhist books (各宗書籍) and is the one which I use. A new edition with textual criticism and with critical notes on the history and geography of the places visited is greatly needed.

This book was translated into French by M. Stamslas Julien and published in 1857 with the title "Memoires sur les Contrees occidentales traduit du Sanscrit en Chinois en l’an 648 par Hionen-Thsang, et du Chinois en Francais." In 1884 S. Beal published an English version called "Buddhist Records of the Western World Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang (A.D. 629)." In the China Review Vol. XVIII 1889-90 T. Watters contributed Notes on this book under the heading "The Shadow of a Pilgrim" which were later elaborated into a book and published in 1904 after his death with the title "On Yuan Chwang’s Travels in India." It is an account of the travels of the Buddhist priest Yuan Chwang through Central Asia and India during the years between A.D. 629 and 645. He started from the capital Ch‘ang-an (modern Hsia-an) in Shensi province and passing through Lan-chow and Su-chow reached An-hsi. On his return he used this same route. From An-hsi he turned to the northwest, the desert and mountains to Turfan, thence westward to Kurla and Akon, crossed the Bedal Pass, onward to Kora Bula where he turned southward through Tashkend and Samarkand to Kunduz. After travelling through India he started on his return journey from Kunduz and passed through Shignom, Kashgar, Yarkand skirting the southern edge of the Tarim Desert and passing Lop Nor on his way back to An-hsi. He brought back with him 657 Sanskrit treatises of which after his return he translated about 75 into Chinese. These explained the Mahayana form of Buddhist dogma and hence Hsuan Chwang earned the title of Mahayana deva (摩訶邪那提婆), i.e. the patriarch of the Mahayana School.
The Preface to my edition of Ta T'ang Hsi Yu Chi was written by one who signs himself "Senior President of a Board, the Kuke of Yen" (尚書左僕射燕國公). Watters has shown conclusively that the tradition of these titles referring to Chang Yueh (張悅) is incompatible with the contents of the Preface and that in all probability they refer to Yu Chih-ning (于志奮). The priestly name of the great traveller was originally Hsuan Chwang (玄奘). Since the reign of K'ang Hsi began in 1662 the character Hsuan was tabooed on account of its being part of the personal name of this emperor. The form of the character was changed to 玄 or Yuan (元) so that down to the end of the Manchu dynasty in 1912 the correct writing of the name was Yuan Chwang. Since the inauguration of the Republic there are no tabooed characters and, therefore, it is quite proper to use either the original form Hsüan Chwang or the later form Yuan Chwang which was the correct literary form during the Manchu dynasty. Mr. Wylie was the only one of the early foreign writers who used the correct term Yuan Chwang; Julien, Mayers, Beal, and Legge all use Hsüan Chwang in defiance or ignorance of its being improper at the time of their writing. The name of the redactor is also written in two forms. In my Japanese edition Pien is written 禮 whereas in the Tz'u Yuan and Biographical Dictionary the more usual 彰 is used. There are also many variants in the texts.

II. Ch'ang Ch'ung Chen Jen Hsi Yu Chi.

This record of the travels of Ch'iu Ch'u-ch'i, known more commonly by his ecclesiastical name of Ch'ang Ch'un Chen Jen, was written by his travelling companion Li Chih-ch'ang (李志常) at the dictation of his Master. The date of an Introduction by Sun Hsi (孫錫) is A.D. 1228, the journey having been made in the three years 1221-24. The book was not published until two years later at the very earliest, for it contains an account of the death of Ch'iu which took place in 1230. This book is included in the "Collection of Taoist Writings," Tao Tsang Chi Yao (道藏集要). It is reprinted in the collection Lien Yun I Ts'ung Shu (連繋叢書) prepared by Yang Shang-wen (楊尚文) and published in 1848 in Peking. In 1928 it was again reprinted in the memorial collection of Wang Kuo-wei and annotated by this learned scholar. A translation into Russian by Palladius was published in 1866 and into English by Bretschneider in "Mediaeval Researches" Vol. I (London, 1910, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.). According to the introduction of Wang Kuo-wei in his reprint of this work it was first brought to the attention of scholars during the reign of Ch'ien Lung by Ch'ien Ta-hsin (錢大昕), who found it among the books of the Yuan Miao Kuan (元妙觀), a Taoist temple near Soochow. Juan Yuan (阮元) made a copy of it and presented it to the Imperial Library. During the reign of Tao Kuang it became better known to scholars through the investigation and comments of Hsu Hsing-po (徐星伯), Ch'eng Ch'un-lou (程春盧) and Shen Tzu-tun (沈子敦). Mr. Wang added that he began to study this book in 1925.
My attention was first called to it in 1900 by Mr. Shen I-an (沈乙庵) who frequently visited the Nanyang College when I was President and who later became Director. Mr. Wang Kuo-wei refers to Mr. Shen in his Introduction. I did not see a copy in Chinese until it appeared among Mr. Wang’s reprints but had often heard the popular comment that its contents were similar to those of a novel by the same name. I had also seen the statement of the Cho Keng Lu that Hsi Yu Chi was written by Chi’iu Ch’u-chi but learned later that what the author of this book, Tao Tsung-i (陶宗儀), referred to must have been the Hsi Yü Chi dictated by Chi’iu Ch’u-chi and not the novel Hsi Yü Chi. The statement of the Cho Keng Lu, it cannot be denied, misled later scholars for I have been frequently told by learned men that Chi’iu Ch’u-chi was the author of the novel. In an edition of the novel published in 1819 there is an introduction dated 1758 by Liu I-ming (劉一明) who states that the novel was written by Ch’u Ch’u-chi and gives a biographical sketch of him. This confusion is not strange for the name of the travel book and of the novel is identical; copies of the novel were easily obtainable whereas the existence of the other manuscript was known only to a few. Fortunately for foreign scholarship the identity of Chi’iu’s book was discovered by the learned Palladius who brought it to the attention of the western world. The early tradition concerning the authorship of the novel is still current but the reprint of Chi’iu’s travels in the edition of Wang Kuo-wei’s writings will go far in overtaking the mistake and correcting the confusion.

The object of Chi’iu’s long journey to the Field Headquarters of the Emperor Genghis Khan was to instruct him in Taoist doctrines. The emperor sent him a letter dated May 15, 1219, which is reproduced in the Ch’ang Ch’un Chên Jen Hsi Yü Chi and also in the Cho Keng Lu. It was an invitation to visit the emperor and to instruct him in the principle of the great Tao. To this Chi’iu Ch’u-chi replied favourably in April, 1220, and immediately set out on his journey to Yen (燕) modern Peking. He was accompanied by the emperor’s adjutant Liu Chung-Lu (劉仲祿), who had been sent with an escort of 20 Mongols to Chi’iu’s home in Shantung for this mission. After a short stay in Yen the party left May 18 and travelled northward through the Chê Yüng Pass near Nankow and the Ts’ui P’ing Pass near Kalgan out to the Mongolian Plain and to Dolonor. His route onward has been delineated on a map by Bretschneider in Vol. I of “Medieval Researches.” According to this map the party skirted the east side of the Mongolian Desert as far north as Dalainor, thence along the Kerulun river and on westward through Urga to Uliassutai and to a place a short distance south of Kobdo. Thence across the Great Altai mountains and southward to the Urungu river. Thence they crossed the Zungarian desert to Ku-chêng and turned westward to Urumchi over the road recently described by Lattimore in “The Desert Road to Turkestan.” From this place they went westward passing north of Kuldja, and crossing the Ili river reached Verni. They kept to the north of the Alexander range of mountains till they reached the Talas river. Here they turned to the southwest and after crossing the mountains reached Tashkend. Thence they passed through Samarkand,
Karshi, Khulm and thus to Hindu Kush. It was probably at Parwan that Ch'iu had his first audience with the emperor as we know from the account of Rashid-Eddin that Genghis Khan spent the summer of 1222 in this place. It was not until the autumn after the emperor had moved northward, about three days' journey from the Oxus, that Ch'iu, who had returned to Samarkand, again visited him and had his opportunity of explaining Taoist doctrine. The first question of the emperor was as to whether or not Ch'iu had found the pill of immortality and it is evident from the account of the interview that the chief concern of the emperor was with the occult practices of the Taoists and not with their metaphysical doctrines. The conversations evidently made a deep impression upon the emperor, for after Ch'iu's return to China the Taoists were allowed to occupy many of the Buddhist temples which had been destroyed during the last years of the Chin (Nü Chen) dynasty, and to compile two books which were filled with abusive statements concerning the Buddhists.

On his return to Peking Ch'iu lived at first on the hill in the Pei Hai where the white dagoba stands but was later presented with a palace which had been built for an imperial princess, and has been since known as the Po Yün Kuan (白雲觀) outside of the Hsi Pien Mên, Peking. He is considered as the leading spirit of Taoism in the Yüan dynasty and he brought his deep knowledge of classical literature to his aid in expounding his ascetic and occult interpretation of his religion.

III. Hsi Yu Chi.

This is a novel. It is not known at what time or by whom it was written, but the Tz'u Yüan expresses the usual tradition that it was written in the Ming dynasty. The earliest edition of this novel which I have seen is in the Central Park Library, Peking. It has a Preface by Yu T'ung (尤桐) dated 1696 in which he says that the novel is commonly attributed to Ch'iu Ch'ü-ch'i but that he doubts the accuracy of this on account of the well-known fact that Ch'iu was a Taoist while the novel relates a Buddhistic tale. In the Metropolitan Library, Peking, there are two editions. The title of the first is Hsi Yu Chen Ch'üan (西遊真誥). It has Yu T'ung's Preface and also comments by Ch'en Shih-pin (陳士斌). It is printed from wooden blocks and bound in ten volumes. The second is an edition with comments by Liu I-ming to which reference has been made in a preceding paragraph. It is called Hsi Yu Yüan Chih (西遊原旨) and is in eight volumes. Another edition was published in Shanghai in 1922 by the Hui Wen T'ang press (會 文堂書局) in ten volumes. It has wood block illustrations at the beginning of each volume.

Parts of this novel have been translated into English by G. Taylor and appeared in The China Review Vols. XVI p. 168 and XVII p. 258. In "Chinese Mythology" p. 190 I gave a summary of the wonderful genealogy of Yüan Chwang as depicted by the novelist. The best summary of the whole novel is given by E. T. C. Werner in Chap. XIV of "Myths and Legends in China." The characters depicted as having
been encountered by Yuan Chwang are commonly known by all classes. There were Sun Hou-tzü the king of the monkeys, Chu Pa-chieh the cruel monster that had the head of a pig and carried a muck-rake in his right hand, Sha Ho-shang the priest who carried the baggage, the White Horse that bore the sutras on its back and after reaching China plunged into the water where it was transformed into a dragon. There is a moral in the novel for toward the end it narrates that Kuan Yin in
the guise of an ordinary priest appeared to Yüan Chwang and told him that what he was preaching was the Hinayana dogma (the small conveyance) but that if he went to India he could find the Mahayana teaching (the great conveyance). The inference is that the Mahayana is a higher form of dogma than the Hinayana. Yüan Chwang decided to make the trip which took him thirteen years to complete.

IV. *Hou Hsi Yu Chi.*

This is a continuation of the novel “Western Journeys.” It is the story of a second trip to India which was taken by a priest named Pan Chieh (半 僖) during the reign of Hsien Tsung (806-821) about one hundred and fifty years after the journey of Yüan Chwang. The object of his trip was to secure correct explanations of the Buddhist books brought back by Yüan Chwang. These had been misinterpreted by the priests and used chiefly for securing contributions from ignorant people. Pan Chieh had the same type of retinue as Yüan Chwang. There were a monkey and a pig, descendants of Sun Hou-tzu and Chu Pa-chieh, also a sea-monster and pack horse. The trip took five years.

There is a copy of this book in the Metropolitan Library, Peking, in ten volumes. It is classified among “early prints” (初版) but there is no clue as to its date of publication or as to authorship. I have an illustrated copy published by the Chin Chang Publishing Co. (錦章書局), Shanghai, and also undated. This novel is much less interesting than the original Hsi Yu Chi. It is too didactic.

V. *Tsa Chü Hsi Yu Chi.*

This is a dramatic rendering of the story of the journey of Yüan Chwang. It is divided into six volumes with four scenes in each, making twenty-four in all. It opens with the goddess Kuan Yin in search of a priest who would go to the West to secure the Mahayana. Then appears Chʼén Kuang-jui with his wife on their way to his new official post. The boatman Liu Hung throws Chʼén overboard, takes his wife and proceeds to the post. The son Yüan Chwang shortly after birth is thrown into the river but was rescued by the chief priest of the Chin Shan temple. When he was eighteen years old he was told the story of his birth. At that time Yü Shih-nan (虞世南) was the local official and being on good terms with the priest learned also the story of the boy’s birth. Yü Shih-nan later sent Yüan Chwang to the capital to pray for rain during a period of continued drought. This was done under the inspiration of Kuan Yin who also told him to send Yüan Chwang to the West to secure 5,048 volumes of the Mahayana dogma. The attention of the emperor was called to Yüan Chwang by Yü and this was the origin of his great commission. On the way he was first presented with the dragon horse, then the monkey, the hog and the sea-monster appeared. Yüan Chwang got the books and returned to China on a cloud. After presenting the books to the emperor Yüan Chwang returned to the abode of Buddha.
The tale is well told and interest in the development of the plot never flags.

The National Library which is now located in the Chu Jen T'ang on the Central Sea, Peking, has no novels but it has a copy of this drama. It is a Japanese reproduction of a Ming dynasty edition. It is bound in one volume with six chapters. The full name of the book is Yang Tung-lai Hsien-seng P'ing Hsi Yu Chi (楊東來先生批評西遊記) and its label is Tsa Chü Hsi Yu Chi as given above. There is an introduction dated the year chia-yin, i.e. 1614, during the reign of the Ming Emperor Wan Li. This introduction states that it is one of the longest plays of the Yüan dynasty writers. From the further statement that the writer of the Introduction sent the play to the block makers to be printed it is possible to conjecture that its first appearance in printed form was in 1614 but on the other hand the reputed author was such a famous playwright that it seems strange to think that it had not been produced earlier. This introduction is followed by undated prefatory comments by a writer who signs himself Yun K'ung Chü Shih (雲空居士). In these comments it is said that the dramatist Wu Ch'ang-ling had intended to write a play on the tale which was made into Hsi Hsiang Chi (西厢記) by Wang Shih-fu (王實甫) but on hearing that Wang had already written one he chose Hsi Yu Chi as the title for his work. This Hsi Yu Chi play, whatever the hopes of its writer may have been, has never attained a high rank whereas the Hsi Hsiang Chi has become one of the most famous dramas ever produced.

The writer of this play, Wu Ch'ang-ling (吳昌齡), lived during the first years of the Yüan dynasty. In his "Record of Plays" (曲錄) Wang Kuo-wei (王國維) states that Wu was a native of Hsi-ching (西京) and lists this play under the name of T'ang San-tsang Hsi T'ien Chü Ching (唐三藏西天取經), i.e. The T'ang dynasty Tripitaka secures the Classics from India." In the comment at the end of the book by the Japanese who reprinted it, it is said that Mr. Wang had never seen a copy of the play but that copies were not infrequently found at the beginning of the Ch'ing dynasty. It is mentioned in the Ye Shih Yuan Catalogue (葉氏園書目) and also in the Catalogue of Ts'ao Chien-t'ing (曹榛亭). The Japanese writer of this comment signs himself "Chieh Shan Hsueh Jen" (節山學人). The copy contains a collotype reproduction of a page of the Ming dynasty edition which he had found in a collection of 40 plays in the Japanese Imperial Library.

It is as yet only a matter of conjecture as to whether the novel or the drama is the earlier composition. As a general rule dramas are taken from novels rather than novels from dramas. If this rule were to hold good in the case of the Hsi Yu Chi, the novel must have been produced before the drama which we know to have been written by Wu Ch'ang-ling. At the latest this would make the author of the novel a contemporary of Ch'iu Ch'u-chi. It is, therefore, barely possible that the novel Hsi Yu Chi may be as early as the Ch'ang Ch'un Chen Jen Hsi Yu Chi or it may have been written shortly after the account of the Taoist traveller to offset his influence and to popularize Buddhistic teachings.