

THE HAGIOGRAPHY OF THE CHINESE GOD CHEN-WU

(The transmission of rural traditions in Chahar)

by

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CHAPTER I: SUBJECT OF THIS STUDY

1. The investigation of Chinese popular cults

The true nature of the popular religion of China has been obscured by the immense amount of written records produced by Buddhists and Taoists alike. For both foreign and Chinese scholars, it brought more satisfaction to read those treatises and to build systems and schools than to gather concrete evidence about the infinitely diversified usages in all parts of China.

Of course, both Buddhism and Taoism, besides shaping a sometimes powerful religious elite, the monks, also exercised a noticeable influence on the beliefs of the masses. This influence however was rather superimposed on an already rich religious background, with which it tended more and more to blend as time wore on.

When one reads carefully the remarkable studies of Paul Serruys, C.I.C.M., and of Johann Frick, S.V.D., on the ceremony of marriage in the rural parts of North Shansi and of Ch'ing-hai respectively¹⁾, one is struck by the complexity of this huge body of beliefs and rites which has been transmitted independently of any classified religious hierarchy. This is not the only domain, of course, in which the rich popular tradition pushes its mighty waters along, not without receiving some influence from the shape of its banks. It is well-known that the first Taoist systems were built around

1) Paul Serruys, C.I.C.M., *Les Cérémonies du mariage, usages populaires et textes dialectaux du sud de la préfecture de Tat'oung* (Chansi) *Folklore Studies*, III, 1, 1944, 73-154, III, 2, 77-129. Johann Frick, S.V.D. *Hochzeitsitten von Hui-tsuei-tzu in der Provinz Ch'ing-hai*, *Folklore Studies*, Supplement No. 1, 1952, 1-102.

a large body of popular beliefs which existed prior to it. Much of the systematization of the Taoist theoreticians never reached the masses at all. Therefore, it is not rare to find in greater cities, temples with cults based on purely written sources and which therefore stand out among the surrounding really popular cults.²⁾

One of the great tasks presented by China's culture is the exploration of the large body of popular traditions, groping into their past history independently of official dogmas. What is intended here can be brought into light clearly by contrast with a purely theoretical analysis of a Chinese cult, like that given by Van Gulik in his study on the K'ui-hsing 魁星³⁾. His line of argument runs approximately as follows: 1—there was a special god of literature of local Szechwan origin; 2—an emperor of the Yüan period, around 1314–1320, giving this god a title, used for the first time the name Wen-ch'ang 文昌, which is that of a star; 3—these stellar deities, K'ui-hsing and Wen-ch'ang, present a cluster of associations and interpretations, namely, in Taoist writings and astrological treatises; 4—conclusion: two stellar gods of literature came into being, the cult of Wen-ch'ang spread to the whole empire, and so on.

It seems to be an uncertain step from the meager facts of these reinterpretations of a stellar name to conclusions about the large dispersion of a popular cult in all parts of an immense country. The merest contact with the facts shows that there could hardly be a connection between the use of the name of Wen-ch'ang by an emperor in 1314 and, for instance, the present existence of a great number of temples to that god, the oldest one dating from well before 1426, in a frontier territory 200 kilometers from Peking.

This is not meant as a criticism of Van Gulik's analysis of all possible documents. I simply want to emphasize the limitation of these documents and the need of comparing them with material gathered in the field. Now to bridge the gap between the attested, present-day religious practices and the literary sources which give for the most part only theoretical systems, there is but one method: namely, that of trying to penetrate more deeply into the nature of the popular cults by reconstructing their former stages of evolution.

There are, of course, no archives to speak of in rural China, but by combining the epigraphy of the rural temples with the analysis of the geographical dispersion of the cults within one thoroughly explored area, we have found

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- 2) As a characteristic example, there is the sanctuary of the God of Wine, Chiu-shen, 酒神 found in a former Taoist monastery at Cz 315a (see map). This cult is completely unknown in the more than two hundred villages explored in the same region.
- 3) R.H. van Gulik, *On the Seal representing the God of Literature, Monumenta Nipponica*, Tôkyô, IV, 1, 1941.

that new light can be thrown on the processes of the evolution of rural cults, and also that sometimes earlier stages of these cults can be reconstructed. Such a geographical study was done in the rural parts of Tatung (North Shansi) and in two contiguous counties of South Chahar, Wan-ch'üan and Hsüan-hua.⁴⁾

2. Aim of the present study

During the last two surveys we have gathered a completely new kind of material, namely, the popular legends on the life of the God Chen-wu 真武, as they are transmitted in the rural communities of South Chahar. We noted twenty-six different versions of the same hagiography which furnish a good basis for comparison. Furthermore, we intend to compare this material with the version of the same legend as it is found in popular literature.

The role played by the rural theater and by the popular novels in rural China is well-known. For the illiterate peasants these two factors constitute the real educational tool which secured the transmission of the traditional culture. It is also well-known that most of the great popular novels, as well as many less known works, existed at first only in the mouth of travelling minstrels and in the repertory of the rural shows. From the 13th century and on, many themes of historical and religious plays are attested in more or less fragmentary literary elaborations. They were embodied in later centuries in the great novels, *Shui-hu-chuan*, *Hsi-yu-chi*, *Feng-shen-pang*, and others.

In the present study we hope to bring some light into the relation between a popular novel about the life of Chen-wu and the rural hagiography of the god. The date of the latter may be inferred from this comparison and for the first time the processes of the transmission of rural religious beliefs can be somewhat described.

This study will proceed along the following lines: Chapter 2: A short account of the earliest quotations in literary sources about this god, his cult, and his legend. Broadly speaking, the Sung time (960–1280) furnishes the first hagiographic elements of the god's life.

Chapter 3: The legend is firmly attested in Yüan period (1280–1368),

4) Willem A. Grootaers, C.I.C.M., *Les temples villageois de la région au sud-est de Tat'ong (Chansi Nord), leurs inscriptions et leur histoire.*—*Folklore Studies*, IV, 1945, 161–212.

The same (with Li 李世瑜 Shih-yu and Chang Chi-wen 張冀文); *Temples and History of Wan-ch'üan (Chahar), the Geographical Method applied to Folklore.*—*Monumenta Serica*, Peking XIII, 1948, 209–316.

The same (with Li Shih-yu 李世瑜 and Wang Fu-shih 王輔世), *Rural Temples around Hsuan-hua (South Chahar), their Iconography and their History.*—*Folklore Studies*, X, 1, 1951, 1–116. The three students who helped gather the materials of the last two papers were also helpful in gathering the material studied in the present article.

and we have now enough details to base our comparisons.

Chapter 4: Between the years 1596 and 1631 we find the life of this god elaborately described in a popular novel. There appear in it a great number of new elements, some due to a natural growth of the legend, some due to the imagination of the novelist.

Chapter 5: The legend of Chen-wu as attested in the rural frescoes of Chahar temples presents a mixture of several lines of tradition. Generally speaking, the frescoes represent an earlier state of the legend than that attested by the novel.

CHAPTER II: THE LITERARY ACCOUNTS ABOUT CHEN-WU

The name used for this god Chen-wu is current in most parts of North China, except North Shansi, where the local name sounds like Chen-wang 眞王. Chen-wu was however introduced in 998 because of a tabu; the real name of the god is Hsüan-wu 玄武.

On the origin of the name Hsüan-wu and on the first legends about him, a historical study was published by Hsü Tao-ling 許道齡 attached during the war to the Museum of Oriental Ethnology of the Catholic University of Peking where he conducted a detailed survey of all the temples of Peking. It may be useful to give a short account of this paper which may be not be easily accessible; we complete some of its references and dates⁵).

One finds the name Hsüan-wu as the collective name of seven mansions of the zodiac. It is first mentioned in Huai-nan-tzu 淮南子 (traditional date: 178-122 B.C.), then in Chapter 27 of the *Shih-chi*. But as a stellar name, Hsüan-wu is already in the *Ch'u-tz'u* 楚辭, poetry of the fourth century B.C. At that occasion Wang I 王逸 (89-158 A.D.) adds the note, "It is the name of the god of the northern region." This is the very first hint of a religious usage of this term.

There is then a large gap in our sources. The famed commentator Hung Hsing-tsu 洪興祖 (1070-1155) gives some details which show two elements of this god's legend already present in the 12th century. This is contemporary with the first iconography, as can be seen from the reproduction given by Maspéro, BEFEO, 8, 1914, p. 28, fig. 16. Hung Hsing-tsu's words are, "Hsüan-wu is called a tortoise and a serpent; residing in the north, he is called *hsüan* 玄 "obscure," his body being covered by scales, he is called *wu* 武 "military." This analysis shows, of course, the typical

5) *Hsuan-wu chih ch'i-yuan chi ch'i shui-pien k'ao* 玄武之起源及其蛻變考, "On the Origin of Hsüan-wu and its development," in *Historical Journal* 史學季刊, No. 5, December 1947, 223-240.

weakness of Chinese lexicographers when confronted by a group of two characters. But we may safely conclude that the tortoise and the snake were symbols already connected in some way with our god at that time. Chu Hsi (1130–1200) gives later his confirmation to this definition.

The Taoist Canon has its own set of legends about this gods. When Yüan-shih Shang-ti 元始上帝, the Primeval Ruler, saw the corruption of Chou 紂, last ruler of the Shang 商 dynasty, he ordered Chin-ch'üeh Yü-huang 金闕玉皇, Jade Emperor of the Golden Gate, to come among men to help the prince of Chou 周 subdue the tyrant. In his human shape the Jade Emperor held a flag, was bare-headed and barefooted, and he carried an armour. The peace restored, he climbed on a tortoise-serpent to ride back to Heaven where he became ennobled under the name Hsüan-wu.

In the punitive expedition of Chou against Shang, we clearly have an echo of the legends which were crystallized in the later novel *Feng-shen-pang* 封神榜.

Hsü Tao-ling is rather inclined to think that the Hsüan-wu legend did not take such a shape until the T'ang dynasty (after 907), but he relies solely on internal evidence, arguing that "such theme corresponds to post-T'ang conceptions."⁶⁾

There is a different legend of the god Chen-wu, connected with the mountain Wu-tang 武當, mentioned in ancient geographical descriptions. This mountain is quoted in connection with our god for the first time in Sung time, by Chu Mu 祝穆 (before 1265). From the 16th century and on, the mountain figures prominently in this legend as we shall see in the modern rural traditions.

Temples dedicated to the god Chen-wu are attested for the year 1018 by Kao Ch'eng 高承 in his work *Shih-wu-chi-yüan* 事物紀原, and the city of Peking gets its first temple in 1270⁷⁾. Chen-wu became also the patron

- 6) In the present state of research on the Taoist Canon, it seems impossible to date many of the incidental writings embodied into it throughout the centuries. The main dogmatic writings were grouped in the Canon from the 5th century and on. From the years 1111–1117 (first printing), the present Canon seems to have been definitely fixed. Among the most recent studies see: Ch'en Kuo-fu 陳國符, *Tao-tsang yüan-liu k'ao* 道藏源流考. On the origin and development of the Taoist Canon, Shanghai, 1949, 16+300 pp., and Fukui Kōjun 福井康順, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū* 道教の基礎的研究, Fundamental Studies on Taoism, Tōkyō, 1952, 35+452 pp.
- 7) *Pei-p'ing shih-piao ch'ang-pien* 北平史表長編, Materials for an history of Peking, by Chü Hsüan-ying 瞿宣穎, 1932, p. 25 and *Jih-hsia chiu wen-k'ao* 日下舊聞考, Studies on old history of Peking-by Chu I-tsun 朱彝尊, 1774, c. 97, f. 16b. In our exploration of the Wanch'üan county, the oldest temple was one restored in 1439 at Cz 216. In the Hsüan-hua rural temples, the oldest monument was a stele dated 1486 at Dv 83a. In the city of Hsüan-hua, material as yet unpublished, the oldest temple was erected between 1368 and 1398. In his exploration of rural temples in Manchuria, Murata Jirō 村田治郎 in his *Manshū no shiseki* 滿洲の史蹟, Historical Monuments of Manchuria, Tōkyō, 1944, pp. 105–106, found one dated 1382 and one of 1419.

saint of all imperial stores and workshops because, a stele of 1580, "He keeps away water and fire." This is the first mention of a theme recurring in the novel and once in the rural legends. The same stele mentions the presence of Ssu-shih 四師, "Four Masters," by the side of the god. Hsü Tao-ling identifies them with the Ssu-sheng 四聖, "Four Saints," quoted in a work by the 12th century philosopher Chu Hsi, but the latter had only three saints in addition to Chen-wu in mind.

Actually there is some trace of a cult to an Emperor of the North Pole, Pei-chi Ta-ti 北極大帝, with his four assistants, one of which is called Chen-wu, in a 13th century gazetteer⁸⁾. All these fragmentary and widely dispersed facts give no clear idea of the earlier form of a Chen-wu cult.

From the 17th century and on, two statues are found near Chen-wu, T'ao-hua 桃花 and Chou-kung 周公. Hsü Tao-ling finds these two attested in popular plays of the 14th century. In Peking alone, from thirty to forty temples were built to the Chen-wu god.

The main facts from Hsü Tao-ling's study may be summarized as follows :

1. Hsüan-wu as the name of a northern star group from the 4th century B.C., hence as the synonym of north;⁹⁾
2. As the god of the north from the 2nd century A.D.
3. The name changed into Chen-wu in 998 A.D.
4. With his own temple from 1018 A.D.

Concerning the legends about the life of the God, several variations are quoted by Hsü Tao-ling; however, either he quotes late Taoist sources or he gives an oversimplified summary of the texts which we are going to analyze in the next chapters.

CHAPTER III: PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF CHEN-WU 'S LIFE

We wish to examine more in detail the elements of the Chen-wu legends as they are attested in the earliest texts. We have only a few lines by Chu Mu (before 1265), but a slightly later work gives a detailed account of the god's life.

8) *Lin-an chih* 臨安志, dated 1265-1274, c. 13, f. 11a; see Maspéro, *BEFEO*, XIV, 8, 1914, p. 28.

9) About the popular astronomy in China around the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., Maspéro writes as follows: "La Grande Ourse, appelée constellation du Boisseau, présidait à l'année qu'elle menait en faisant le tour du ciel. . . . la Grande Ourse qui dirigeait la rotation éternelle des étoiles et des saisons, était ainsi la grande régulatrice du calendrier et de la marche constante du monde." *Mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l'histoire de la Chine*, III, *Études Historiques* 1950, pp. 16-17.

The *San-chiao yüan-liu sou-shen ta-ch'üan* 三教源流搜神大全 dates from the Yüan period (1280–1368) and was published in 1909 by Yeh Te-hui 葉德輝 (1864–1927).¹⁰⁾

Here are the main points of the legend:

1. Hsüan-ti 玄帝 as the incarnation of Yüan-shih 元始 came three times into this world during the San-huang 三皇, Three Emperors period;
2. Finally, under the Yellow Emperor, on the 3rd of the 3rd moon,
3. As the sun's essence, he entered the womb.
4. Of the Queen of the kingdom of Ching-lo 淨樂.
5. He was born out of the left side of his mother¹¹⁾.
6. When he was ten, he knew all the classics;
7. He decided to practice the Tao 道 Way.
8. When fifteen years old, he left his parents.
9. He practiced asceticism in a deep valley.
10. Yü-ch'ing 玉清 brings him a message from the Supreme Primeval Ruler.
11. He can go to a mountain in the east and choose a peak.
12. Hsüan-ti goes to the T'ai-ho 太和 mountain.
13. He practices there for forty-two years.
14. One day miraculous clouds cover the mountain.
15. His body grows nine feet tall and his face is transfigured.
16. With naked feet and his hands in prayer he stands on top of the mountain.

10) We used the 1919 reprint, Vol. II. 170 pp. in the collection *Li-lou ts'ung-shu* 麗度叢書. The earlier editions of this collection did not have this work. Yeh Te-hui reproduced a Ming dynasty manuscript. He writes in his preface how he saw a Yüan dynasty edition in a bookshop. He lost track of it, although he kept a vivid memory of examining it in the shop. Eighteen years later he found a Ming dynasty copy in Wu-ch'ang which he reproduced. The Ming edition has a few additions, but the text and the plates are about the same.

Among the earlier impressions of this work we saw one of 1672 with the title: *San-chiao yüan-liu sheng-ti Fo-shih sou shen ta-ch'üan* 三教源流聖帝佛師搜神大全, which has an identical text (except for several misprints and missing words) and the same pagination. The latter edition is quoted at length in Rev. Huang Fei-mo's 黃斐默 excellent *Chi-shuo ch'üan-chen* 集說詮真, pp. 65–66, Shanghai, 1880.

We wish to thank Miss Arai Yôko 新井洋子 of the Oriental Institute of Kyôto for making a careful copy of the Yeh Te-hui text. Professor Kubo Noritada 窪德忠 of the Oriental Institute of Tôkyô kindly copied the 1672 text and was most helpful in discussing the present paper.

11) It was first told of Buddha Sakyamuni that he was born from the right side of his mother. The hagiography of Lao-tzu attributed to the latter a birth from the left side of his mother, (See Liu Kuo-chün 劉國鈞, *Lao-tzu shen-hun k'ao-lieh* 老子神化考略, "Short study on the deification of Lao-tzu," in *Chin-ling Hsüeh-pao* 金陵學報, *Nanking Journal*, IV, 2, 1934, p. 69.)

17. Five genii come down in front of him.
18. Hsüan-ti is given a set of transcendent garments, a sword, and a carriage.
19. He flies to Heaven.
20. There he hears about the plight of the people under the tyrant Chou of the Shang dynasty.
21. He sees how an evil spirit harms all living being.
22. And how poisonous cloud ascends to Heaven.
23. The Primeval Venerable at that time was exposing the law in the Holy Realm of the Pure Jade 玉清聖境.
24. Seeing the world's plight, he orders the Jade Emperor to help King Wu of Chou against the Emperor Chou.
25. Hsüan-ti is ordered to vanquish the devil.
26. And to separate men and devils.
27. Then Hsüan-ti with loose hair, bare feet, a silver amour, and a black flag comes down to the world.
28. He subdues the devil on the plain of Tung-yin 洞陰.
29. The devil changes into a green dragon and into a huge snake.
30. Hsüan-ti crushes them under his feet.
31. Chains them in the Feng-tu 酆都 grotto.
32. Peace being restored, he goes back in triumph to Heaven.
33. His merits are celebrated; his official title is proclaimed: Venerable Patron of the Jade Emptiness.
34. His father is ennobled as Heavenly Ruler of Ching-lo 淨樂 and Great Ruler of Ming-chen 明真.
35. His mother is called Empress of Benevolent Victory 善勝.

This elaboration of the god's legend combines some elements found in one of the Taoist Canon legends (the punitive expedition against the tyrant Chou of Shang) with other elements found in Chu Miao's account, as well as in another part of the Taoist Canon, the miraculous birth in a royal family and the asceticism on a mountain.

But we must specially note that in this version the following themes occur:

1. The incarnation in a royal family.
2. The practice of asceticism followed by glorification.
3. A successful mission to earth.
4. The canonization and cult.

CHAPTER IV: CHEN-WU, THE HERO OF A POPULAR NOVEL

A. The novel *Pei-yu-chi*, date and edition

If the documents above give only a sketchy account of the traditions about Chen-wu, the novelists of the late Ming era have gone to the other extreme. As Hu Shih has shown in details for another religious theme, that of the monk Hsüan Tsang's travels to India, there is a gradual evolution and enrichment of the legends from the 12th century and on, for about 5 or 6 centuries¹²⁾, until a late author constructs a novel out of the popular traditions and from his own imagination.

We were fortunate to have Professor Ogawa Tamaki of Kyôto University draw our attention to a reprint of a Ming edition of a popular novel about the Chen-wu god. The copy kept in the library of the Oriental Institute at Kyôto, known since the war as the Research Institute of Humanistic Sciences, has only volume 1 and 2, without a title page. Through the kindness of Professor Ogawa, we could examine a complete copy, which longs to the library of the Tôhoku University, Sendai. The complete work is a set of four novels under the general title *Hsiao-hsiang Ssu-yü ch'üan-chuan* 繡像四遊全傳, "Complete Account of the Four Travels with Illustrations, newly *chiao* 鐫 in the tenth year of Tao-kuang (1830)." The word *chiao* may be a misprint for *chien* 鐫, and would mean then "newly carved," a term used for block printing. Both writing and plates look rather like an original Ming edition, and we could suggest translating *chiao* as "new impression," meaning then blackened, like *chiao* 焦.

The Four Travels mentioned in the title refer to the title of the four separate novels grouped in one set. They are:

1. *Ch'üan-hsiang Tung-yü-chi shang-tung Pa-hsien chuan* 全像東遊記上洞八仙傳, "Completely illustrated Eastern Travelogue, or the Lives of the Eight Genii of the Upper Grotto," 2 volumes, 2 *chüan*, author: Wu Yüan-t'ai 吳元泰 (around 1566), with a preface by Yü Hsiang-tou 余象斗 (see below).
2. *Hsiao-hsiang Hsi-yü-chi ch'üan-chuan* 繡像西遊記全傳, "Complete Story of the Western Travel, illustrated," 2 volumes, 4 *chüan*, author

12) Hu Shih 胡適, *Chung-kuo chang-hui hsiao-shuo k'ao-cheng* 中國章回小說考證, "Studies on the Chinese popular novel," Dairen, 1943, p. 334.

- Yang Chih-ho 楊致和 (around 1566). This is not the famous Hsi-yu-chi, translated by Arthur Waley under the title "Monkey," by Wu Ch'eng-en 吳承恩 (1500-1582) although a subtitle to the former says: "New edition of travels to the west of the Monk San-tsang 三藏."
3. *T'u-hsiang Nan-yu Hua-kuang chuan* 圖像南遊華光傳, "Illustrated Southern Travels or Life of Hua-kuang," with the sub-title *Chüan-hsiang Wu-hsien Ling-huan Ta-ti Hua-kuang T'ien-wang chüan* 全像五顯靈官大帝華光天王傳, "Completely illustrated Life of the Brilliant Deva, Supreme Ruler Ling-kuan of the Five Manifestations," 2 volumes, 2 volumes, 4 *chüan*, author Yü Hsiang-tou 余象斗.
 4. *Ch'üan-hsiang Pei-yu-chi Yüan-ti ch'u-shen chuan* 全像北遊記元帝出身傳, "Completely Illustrated Northern Travelogue, or the Biography of the Original Ruler," 4 volumes, 4 *chüan*, author Yü Hsiang-tou.

The author of the last two novels and of the preface to the first, Yü Hsiang-tou, 于仰止, a native of San-t'ai-shan 三臺山 in Kiangsu, and head of the Academy, Hu-wan shu-lin 許灣書林 (許 stands for 濟). This place, half-way between Lin-ch'uan 臨川 and Chin-ch'i 金谿 in Kiangsi, was well-known for its carvers of printing blocks; Yü is mentioned in the "Dictionary of Chinese Literators" 中國文學家大辭典 (1934) No-4777, but his birth place there is given as Chien-an 建安 in Fukien. He lived around 1596, and was one of the great booksellers of that province. The date above can be combined with another indication given by Li Hsün (see below) from a few words at the end of his edition of these novels. "The above happened in 1405, more than two hundred years ago." These two dates allow us to translate the first line of the third novel in our edition *hsin-wei meng tung-yieh* 辛未孟冬月, as "a second month of the winter of the year Hsin-wei," which must be here 1631.

There is no doubt that our edition is not the first one. It was made hastily and for popular use from another edition. The mention of "such and such a chapter *hui* 回" were dropped almost all through the text of the fourth novel, although the text retained the words, "If you wish to know what happened then, read the following chapter," which is the classical ending of a chapter in popular novels¹³.

A short description of these novels is given by Sun K'ai-ti 孫楷第 in his "Bibliography of the Chinese Popular Novel," 中國通俗小說書目 1932, p. 241-242. Lu Hsün attributes the success of novels of the supernatural to the renewed popularity of Taoism after 1500. These novels did not origin-

13) The edition of these novels seen by the great literator, Lu Hsün 魯迅 when he wrote his *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih-lüeh* 中國小說史略, "Short History of the Chinese Novel," Shanghai, 1936, seems to have been an earlier one. He gives for each work the exact number of chapters, *hui* 回.

ate in the restricted circle of Taoist monks, but came right from among the people (o.c. p. 189-190)¹⁴⁾.

If we now examine the fourth novel which describes the life of Chen-wu, it is too evidently a popular reprint done without great care. In its four thin volumes, we found not less than seven different versions of the title:

1. 全像北遊記元帝出身傳 “Fully illustrated Notes on a Northern Journey or the Biography of Yüan-ti.” (Yüan instead of Hsüan, a tabu after 1662, is only applied on the title page of the first volume, not to the remainder of the book, which may show that the title-page only was carved again in 1830, the rest of the book being a reprint of old Ming plates).
2. 全像真武傳 “Fully illustrated Biography of Chen-wu.” (fold of the pages, first volume).
3. 真武傳 “Biography of Chen-wu” (fold of the pages, 2nd volume).
4. 新刊北方真武玄天上帝出身志傳 “New edition of the Biography of Chen-wu of the North, High Ruler of the Mysterious Heaven” (first line of the first and third volumes).
5. 新刊北方真武祖師志傳 “New edition of the Life of Chen-wu of the North, the Venerable Master” (last line, first volume).
6. 刊北方真武祖師玄天上帝出身志傳 “Printed Biography of Chen-wu of the North, Venerable Master, High Ruler of the Mysterious Heaven” (first line, second volume).
7. 刊北方玄天上帝全像出身北遊真武傳 “Printed, fully illustrated Biography of the Northern Travel of Chen-wu, High Ruler of the Mysterious Heaven of the North” (last line, second volume).

The printed part of each page is 18 cm. high, 12.5 cm. for the text, 5.5 cm. for each illustration. Each line has seventeen words. The cutter has been careless¹⁵⁾ and made some words too large and in such cases the last words of the line are printed small in parallel columns. This is clearly meant to leave under each plate the text which was related to it in the original edition.

14) Professor Ogawa Tamaki 小川環樹 of Kyôto University took the trouble to copy the relevant passages from Lu Hsün's book. I wish to express here my thanks for his helpful suggestions. See pages 162-163 of the new edition of Lu Hsün's book, Peking 1952, 346 pp.

15) Misprints occur from time to time such as: 不殖 for 不值 (I, 20a), 兩霞 for 西霞 (I, 24b), 紗 for 妙 (I, 28a), 玄元 for 玄天 (II, 23a), 升邊 for 井邊 (II, 28a) and, worse still, the kind of mistakes by sound made by schoolboys such as 七田 for 七天 (I, 11b), 叫 for 較 (III, 19b), and 大京 for 大驚 (III, 24a). These misprints indicate that both the Sendai copy and the incomplete Kyôto copy are from the same plates.

B. Summary of the novel

We will now give a summary of the Chen-wu legend as told in this novel. The short text put along each plate gives sometimes a satisfactory summary of the text of the whole page, (see fig. 1 and 2); but very often, the plate illustrates an accessory incident. To read successively the short subtitles found under the plates would not, of course, make a continuous story. We print these subtitles in italics.

The main themes of the story will be presented in a summary in paragraph C of this chapter.

- (1 a) Under the Emperor Yang 煬 (605–618) of the Sui-dynasty, *the Jade Emperor gave a feast and gathered his court officials.*
- (1 b) During the feast, the Jade Emperor saw on earth a beautiful tree; *the Heavenly Ruler 天君 Ko 葛 was sent out and came back with a report to the Jade Emperor: in the house of the Heavenly Ruler Liu 劉 stands a tree Ch'iung-hua 瓊花¹⁶); it is the tree by which heaven is reached.*
- (2 a) The Jade Emperor orders the Star Ruler of the South, Huo-te 火德 to fetch the tree; *the Heavenly Ruler Liu welcomes the arrival of the heavenly messenger.*
- (2 b) But he warns him that the tree loses its seven treasures when it becomes the object of cupidity. *Huo-te goes back to report on his mission.* The Jade Emperor is angry and declares that his heart can only find satisfaction through these treasures. The Heavenly Spirits declare that only descendeants of Liu can mak use of the treasures.
- (3 a) The Jade Emperor decides to send one of his three souls to be incarnated in the Liu family. Only thinking of that tree, and forgetting the pains of human existence, *the Jade Emperor becomes man in a womb.*
- (3 b) *The Princess Liu is enjoying the flowers in her garden with her husband, when a ray of light enters her womb. After one month she become pregnant to her delight.*
- (4 a) *The Princess Red Lotus brings forth a child on the 9th day of the 9th*

16) A tree with great yellow flowers planted in Yang-chou 揚州 in the 8th century and which died in the 13th century. The Taoists made it a symbol of the eight genii, *Pa-hsien* 八仙. However, a Taoist monastery, supposedly erected in the year 11 B.C. outside of Yang-chou city, had already the same name. See *Ta-ch'ing i-t'ung chih*, 大清一統志 1897 ed., c. 67, f. 6a. The *Ta-ming i-t'ung chih* 大明一統志 1559 edition, c. 12, f. 11b, mentions the temple without this old name. The historian Ku Tsu-yü 顧祖禹 (1631–1692) however knew the old name and writes: "Before the year 900, the popular name was Ch'iung-hua," *Tu-shih fang-yü chi-yao* 讀史方輿紀要, 1869 ed., c. 23, f. 14b.)

moon of the year Yüan-huang 元皇¹⁷⁾ in a cloud of perfume. His name is Liu the Eldest Son 長生. When he is three years old, he asks his parents whether they have any treasures in the family. His mother shows him the tree.

- (4 b) Very happy, *Ch'ang-sheng goes to the garden often and looks at the tree*. One day, the seven treasures disappear, fearing the Jade Emperor's cupidity.
- (5 a) *The Buddhas of the Western Heaven come to see the Three Pure San-ch'ing 三清 and ask why the treasures disappeared*.
- (5 b) *The San-ch'ing welcome them in the palace and repeat the whole story*.
- (6 a) *The Buddhas speak in the palace of the San-ch'ing*. Their plan is to try to convert the boy Ch'ang-sheng from his cupidity and to make him practice asceticism. The San-ch'ing change into a Taoist monk and sit under the tree where Ch'ang-sheng comes every day.
- (6 b) Ch'ang-sheng speaks to the Taoist monk but the latter never moves. *In his fury Ch'ang-sheng strikes with stick and knife, but without result*. Finally the Taoist says, "I am *the spirit of the seven treasures of the tree*."
- (7 a) The Taoist tells him about the many treasures in the Heavenly Palace but asceticism is necessary to reach them. *Ch'ang-sheng leaves his parents in his great desire to see those treasures and he disappears in a black cloud*.
- (7 b) *The Buddhas bring Ch'ang-sheng into the presence of the San-ch'ing*. He confesses not to know who he is. He goes to the women's apartments to look into the Celestial Mirror.
- (8 a) *Ch'ang-sheng looking into the mirror sees his original shape of Jade Emperor*. He asks why he became man. They tell him: "Through your cupidity." To regain his real personality, he must practise asceticism.
- (8 b) He hears that he must go to the mountain P'eng-lai 蓬萊¹⁸⁾ and eat only pineapples and drink source water. The San-ch'ing strike him with a branch of *ju-i-hua* 如意花 (perhaps clover) and at once *he goes to the P'eng-lai mountains to practice asceticism*.
- (9 a) One day, Ch'eng-an 成安, *king of She-kuo* 闍國 (Java or Malaya) *goes hunting with his court officials in the mountain where Ch'ang-sheng has been praying for twenty years*. During the hunt, the animals come to Ch'ang-sheng for help.

17) Fictitious *nien-hao* not found in the list of Taoist *nien-hao* in Tchang, *Synchronismes chinois*, 1905, p. LXX.

18) P'eng-lai is the Taoist sojourn of the immortals, often localized on an island off the eastern coast of Shantung.

- (9 b) Ch'ang-sheng tells them to hide behind the mountain. *Then he sits on his seat, while the animals are safe.* The king comes and cannot get any answer from Ch'ang-sheng. In his anger, he cuts him to pieces with his sword, but the pieces grow together.
- (10 a) *The king An-ch'eng* (sic) *prostrates himself in front of the Venerable Teacher* asking for forgiveness; he too wants to reach holiness and invites Ch'ang-sheng to come to the court.
- (10 b) He accepts and *the King celebrates his arrival with a feast in the palace of the Pure Joy, Ching-lo 淨樂.* The Queen Yü-t'ang 玉堂 is also present and is full of admiration for him.
- (11 a) The Protector of the Law, *Chu Li 朱禮*¹⁹⁾ *changes himself into a palace lady* and tries to bring him back to the straight path.
- (11 b) But Ch'ang-sheng dies; shortly afterwards, the queen dies, too. *King Ch'eng-an gives a great funeral for the queen.* He takes the Lady Teng as a concubine. The Venerable Teacher changes himself into a ray of golden light and becomes man in her womb. He is born on the 18th day of the 10th moon. He is called Hsüan-ming 玄明.
- (12 a) A daughter is born in the family of a rich man called Li. The Venerable marries her. *The embassy of the Mohammedan Kingdom of the Western Barbarians comes to the court of the King of Ko-she* (sic). He defies anybody to pierce a copper coin with an arrow.
- (12 b) Hsüan-ming, seven years old, *pierces the drum in front of the palace.*
- (13 a) *And in his anger, he cuts off the head of the envoy.*
- (13 b) *The king gives a feast for his court officials:* the King of the Barbarians sends an army.
- (14 a) The King abdicates and the thirteen years old *Imperial Heir ascends the throne among the congratulations of his ministers.* His title is King Ting-ta 定大. The army of the invader approaches.
- (14 b) *A great battle starts between Ma Meng-ming 馬孟明 and the leader of the Barbarians.*
- (15 a) The celestial Venerable Miao-lo 妙樂 is anxious over the way of life of the Venerable. He is afraid the latter will never get back to his first state. *Miao-lo changes into a Taoist monk and goes to the Court and speaks to him.*
- (15 b) With his sword of the Seven Stars, he can vanquish everybody; *he goes to help on the battlefield.*
- (16 a) *The monk with his magic tricks annihilates the Barbarians.*
- (16 b) *Victorious, the monk comes and greets the King.* He promises him happiness if he practices asceticism for ten years.

19) There is an Arhat, called 朱利, 祝利 or 周利, but we don't know whether he is well-known enough to be used in such popular narrative.

- (17 a) *The Celestial Miao-lo converts the King who has now two sons.*
 (17 b) *The King Ting-ta takes the Venerable Mia-lo as his master and decides to renounce all.*
 (18 a) *The king leaves his kingdom for a life of asceticism.*
 (18 b) *The heir follows him on the throne and all the officials pay him homage. The new king starts a reign called K'ai-ming 開明²⁰).*
 (19 a) *The king goes to the P'englai mountain looking for his teacher and he meets him on the way.*
 (19 b) *The king leaves his master, the latter having asked him to buy a ch'un 椿 at the foot of the mountain. (ch'un: a kind of a tree, must be a mistake for another word).*
 (20 a) *The Celestial Venerable changes into a beautiful girl to try out the king's virtue: she wants a thousand ounces of gold for a ch'un and invites him to her house.*
 (20 b) *He gets the ch'un by promising to follow her in his next life; then he goes back to his teacher.*
 (21 a) *The Celestial Venerable asks him what happened: he lies about his promise to the girl.*
 (21 b) *The Teacher declares that all his merits are lost and he will have to be born again. The king cries, refuses to eat, and dies.*
 (22 a) *The Teacher tells him he shall be born in the kingdom of Hsi-hsia 西霞; the king is then buried in the sea, where the fish and the shrimps fight for his body.*
 (22 b) *A woman called Meng Ying 孟英 puts up an altar for libations and asks for an offspring. From heaven, the Jade Emperor sends his three hun 魂 and his seven p'o 魄 to her. But three years and six months later, there is still nothing.*
 (23 a) *The angry king asks the queen about it.*
 (23 b) *The queen gives birth to a child in her palace.*
 (24 a) *The king calls his officials to a feast. The son is called Hsüan-huang 玄晃. When he is fifteen, the king abdicates.*
 (24 b) *The heir succeeds to the throne.*
 (25 a) *The Celestial Venerable changes into a Taoist monk and exhorts the king because his life is evil.*
 (25 b) *The king asks the monk to teach him the true road. The monk tells him how and why he became a king.*
 (26 a) *The king is angry and strikes with his sword, but no harm is done to the monk.*
 (26 b) *The king looking into a water basin, sees there a hsien-jen 仙人, a*

20) One K'ai-ming period is 619-621, which follows the reign of Emperor Yang, mentioned at the start of the novel, but here again we have a fictitious date.

transcendental being, who tells him about *his former lives*. "You were the Jade Emperor. You then became *hsien-jen*, and then a king. Next you will become a cow, if you don't practice asceticism."

- (27 a) *The monk is elevated into the air, and preaches to the king; where-upon the latter repents his sins.*
- (27 b) *In the palace Ch'ing-hua-t'ing 青華亭 "Pavillion of the Azure Flower," the king takes leave of his ministers and goes to the Ling-chiu 靈鷲 mountain²¹.*
- (28 a) *He goes to the Vulture mountain to practice asceticism. He meets there the Celestial Venerable Miao-lo 妙樂.*
- (28 b) *The King listens to an exhortation by the Celestial Venerable.*
- (29 a) *Meanwhile the Imperial Heir had succeeded his father; the queen sends him with an army to look for his father in the mountain.*
- (29 b) *The king sitting on a rock practices meditation and refuses to answer the questions of his son. He disappears in a cloud. The army goes back with the Imperial Prince.*
- (30 a) *Queen and Prince go back to the court.*

VOLUME II

- (1 a) *The king reaches holiness and sees the Celestial Venerable.*
- (1 b) *From the latter's questions it appears that the king is now perfect. He takes the king with him to the San-ch'ing 三清 where a general gathering is held of the heavenly court.*
- (2 a) *The Heavenly Ruler receives the king in his palace. He canonizes him under the title Chin-ch'üeh 金闕, the Golden Gate. His task will be to subdue the evil spirits with the help of thirty-six followers. He receives the Dragon Robe, the Sword of the Seven Stars, and the Crown of the Seven Treasures²². The next day, he goes to the Sun Palace to fetch his followers.*
- (2 b) *The Venerable Master, Destroyer of the Devils, has there a vision in which he is told that all his followers have gone to the world and that he has to go to look for them.*
- (3 a) *The Venerable Master consults the Celestial Venerable Miao-lo. He is told to become man again.*
- (3 b) *The king of Ching-lo 淨洛 (sic) has no son and is praying for one. The Queen Shan-sheng 善勝 in her garden is burning incense. Changing himself into a ray of light, he is swallowed as a red sun by the sleeping Queen. He is born on the 3rd day of the 3rd moon of the period*

21) Several mountains in China have this name, borrowed from the Buddhist Vulture Peak, Gridhakûta, where Sakyamuni preached the Saddharma Pundarika Sûtra.

22) That is a case where the literary imagination went against all popular usages. His statues and the legends about him show him with floating hair.

- K'ai-huang 開皇²³).
- (4 a) *The Queen Shan-sheng gives birth in the palace through her left side. A purple fog covers the place, and nine dragons pour water to wash the Imperial Heir. The king has the child brought to him and names him Hsüan-wu 玄武. When he is fourteen years old, he wishes to go out one night to the Lantern Festival (15th of the first moon).*
- (4 b) *The Imperial Heir goes to the Lantern festival with T'ang Po 湯伯 and five other friends, all in disguise. In the south street, he sees drunks; in the north street, he sees prostitutes; in the east street he sees a fight over money. He is disgusted by the sight of the evils of wine, lust, money and anger²⁴.*
- (5 a) *The Goddess of the Dipper 斗母元君, wandering in the world as a Taoist monk, exhorts the Imperial Heir. T'ang Po wants to kill her, but she climbs to Heaven.*
- (5 b) *The Heir asks his father for permission to practice asceticism.*
- (6 a) *The King becomes angry, and puts him in jail, where he invokes the Goddess of the Dipper.*
- (6 b) *He burns incense and prays in jail. The Goddess of the Dipper appears and takes her original shape.*
- (7 a) *The Heir worships her. She tells him about the Wu-tang 武當 mountain, 85 li from there. He closes his eyes and she takes him in her arms to the mountain. Everyday, he receives a teaching from her. The jailer does not find him.*
- (7 b) *The King organizes a public search for the Heir. A woodcutter had seen the Heir going to the mountain.*
- (8 a) *He reports to the king. A detachment is sent to the mountain where they see him sitting against a wall practicing meditation. His hair is parted into two tufts.*
- (8 b) *T'ang Po goes to the palace and reports to the king.*
- (9 a) *A great number of officials go to the mountain to fetch the Heir. Long speeches.*
- (9 b) *The officials implore the Heir to come back. He answers, "Tell my father he may expect a second son."*
- (10 a) *The officials go back to the court and report to the king.*
- (10 b) *The queen of Ching-lo 淨洛 (sic) gives birth to a child.*
- (11 a) *After 20 years of asceticism, the Holy Mother changes into a girl to tempt the Venerable Teacher.*

23) K'ai-huang is the period 581-601, but this reign is listed by Tchang, o.c., among the Taoist *nien-hao*.

24) One may guess that a sentence was dropped here, telling us what he saw in the western street, some instance of anger.

- (11 b) *The Holy Mother tempts the Venerable Teacher to come down from his seat. She asks to be allowed to pass the night there because she is far from home. He refuses.*
- (12 a) *The girl complains about a stomach ache and asks the Venerable Teacher to take her in his arms. He exclaims: "Amithabha, what kind of language is that!"*
- (12 b) *She insists, "If you rub my stomach, I will feel better." The Venerable Teacher prays Buddha and does not listen to her.*
- (13 a) *The Venerable Teacher has doubts about his own holiness because he is submitted to such temptations. By this trick, he is induced to come down from his mountain.*
- (13 b) *The Holy Mother changes into an old woman who is sharpening an iron pestle at the foot of the mountain.*
- (14 a) *The old woman goes back with him to the top and splits the rock. She preaches to him the necessity of persevering.*
- (14 b) *The Venerable Teacher goes on to practice asceticism on the Wu-tang mountain (above: Ling-chiu mountain).*
- (15 a) *The Celestial Venerable Miao-lo sends two sleep spirits to him. In his sleep they cut his belly, and extract the bowels which they put under a stone. They replace them then by the interior of a hsien-jen 仙人, a transcendental being.*
- (15 b) *The Celestial Venerable appears to him and declares he will in future be free from sleep. He gives him a sword against the devils.*
- (16 a) *An evil spirit Chu-kan-ching 竹竿精, Bogy of the Bamboo, changes into a girl who tempts him. The Venerable Teacher cuts her head off with his sword.*
- (16 b) *Twenty more years pass and the Earthworm Devil 蟪精 (below called Eel-Devil 鱗精) changes into a girl and comes to greet the Venerable; she asks him to come to her house.*
- (17 a) *He refuses. Kneeling before his seat, she weeps till the night.*
- (17 b) *He brings the girl down the mountain; she leans against him and asks to be carried.*
- (18 a) *He resists all temptations. When finally he takes out his sword, she disappears.*
- (18 b) *The Jade Emperor goes to the Heavenly Palace and makes his report to the Celestial Venerable. The Venerable Teacher is now holy. The Jade Emperor orders five dragons to be ready to support the carriage of the Saint; in the south the blue Mang 龙 (might mean "hairy dog"), in the east the red Mang, in the west the yellow Mang, in the north the black Dragon, in the center the white Mang. The spirit of the Silver Star must prepare a seal for him with the words: Yü-hsü Shih hsiang-pi yin 玉虛師相比印, "Auspicious Seal of the Master of*

the Jade Emptiness." He also prepares a flag.

- (19 a) *The Jade Emperor then goes down to bring the mission to the Venerable Teacher.* The latter comes down from his mountain and receives from the five dragons the following message: "Henceforth you will be known as the High Ruler of the Mysterious Heaven, Hsüan-t'ien Shang-ti 玄天上帝, and Auspicious Ruler of the Jade Emptiness. Thirty-six heavenly officers will follow you, and your feast will be celebrated on the 9th of the 9th moon, and on the 25th of the 12th moon."
- (19 b) *The Jade Emperor climbs to his palace.* A heavenly officer then brings the Venerable Teacher into his presence.
- (20 a) The next day he takes possession of his Sun Palace 太陽宮 where he gives audience to his subjects. Suddenly from the north an atmosphere of dissatisfaction reaches the heavens. *The Venerable Teacher discusses it with his followers.* The cause is the misrule of Emperor Yang 煬 of Sui. The evil influence of the cosmos fills heaven and the subjects of the Supreme Ruler start a rebellion.
- (20 b) *Great merits will be gathered by one who masters them.* The Venerable Teacher volunteers for the task. He receives the Sword of the Seven Stars of the Three Constellations, *San-t'ai ch'i-hsing chien* 三臺七星劍 (*san-t'ai*, three pairs of stars under the seven stars of the Dipper).
- (21 a) *The Venerable Teacher pays a visit to the San-ch'ing* 三清, *Three Pure, in the Boundless Heaven, Liao-yang* 寥陽, to announce his plan. He is told to take along the Tortoise and the Snake. These were born out of the bowels extracted from his belly and put under a stone.
- (21 b) *Meanwhile the Tortoise and the Snake had decided to come down from their mountain to seek pleasure by kidnapping some girls.*
- (22 a) *Two daughters of city officials were walking in their garden* when they were taken away in a whirlwind by the two devils.
- (22 b) *The two fathers go to the temple of the City God and burn incense and implore help for their daughters.* The God calls all the earth gods, *t'u-ti-shen* 土地神, and orders them to look for the girls.
- (23 a) *All mountain gods and earth gods come into the presence of the City God.* They think that the two devils are on the Wu-tang mountain. Because they are in the Water and Fire Grotto, they will be difficult to defeat.
- (23 b) *The two devils try to force the two girls to make love* but they refuse; the Snake wants to devour them, but the Tortoise prefers to wait and meanwhile gives them female servants.
- (24 a) *The God of the City launches an attack on the two evil spirits in their grotto.*

- (24 b) *But he is beaten back and returns mournfully to his temple. The local earth god tells him, "Try asking Hsüan-wu."*
- (25 a) *The God goes to the Three Pure's Palace and explains the situation to the Venerable Teacher.*
- (25 a) *The latter goes to fight the two devils and defeats them.*
- (26 b) *The Venerable Teacher enters the grotto and frees the two girls who go back home.*
- (26 b) *One girl, Golden Chrysanthemum, goes to her father and describes the god who saved her.*
- (27 a) *Together with the father of the other girl, he builds a temple with a statue of the god. The two devils make the plan to change themselves into a boat and to drown people who want to ferry over the river.*
- (27 b) *The Venerable Teacher changes into a Taoist monk and goes to the ferry. He seizes the boat and tries to strike the devils, but they fly.*
- (28 a) *They hide themselves in a well, but the local earth god makes his report to Hsüan-p'ien shang-ti.*
- (28 b) *He calls the fire and the water on them and together they defeat the Tortoise and the Snake, who run away.*
- (29 a) *The Venerable Teacher receives the submission of the two generals.*
- (29 b) *He takes them with him to the Jade Emperor who canonizes them as "Water General" and "Fire General."*
- (30 a) *The Venerable Teacher receives the homage of the Water and the Fire Generals. He brings a report to the Three Pure. There is on earth a black faced king with seven generals who exercises a very evil influence.*
- (30 b) *In presence of the Three Pure, the Venerable Teacher makes his complaint about the seven generals and Chao Kung-ming 趙公明.*
- (31 a) *The Venerable Teacher and his two companions change into travelers and go aboard the ferry on the river. The seven spirits come upon them on a cloud.*
- (31 b) *The Venerable Teacher starts the struggle against Chao Kung-ming and his seven generals. Chao Kung-ming orders one of his generals, Li Pien 李便, to change into a tiger.*
- (32 a) *The Venerable Teacher fights Kung-ming and drives him away. The Snake winds himself around the sword with the thirty-three knots of Kung-ming.*
- (32 b) *The Venerable Teacher changes into a Taoist monk, and his sword changes into a Taoist monastery called Tou-t'ung-hsien kuan 斗通仙觀. The Snake becomes a mountain, the Tortoise a tree.*
- (33 a) *Chao Kung-ming goes to the monastery begging for food. After his meal he shows his real self.*
- (33 b) *The Venerable Teacher catches him, and receives his submission. He*

makes him a member of his retinue.

VOLUME III

- (1 a) *A Black Tiger that changed into a girl devours people along the road.* The Venerable Teacher comes with Fire and Water Generals and with Chao Kung-ming.
- (1 b) The tiger is vanquished by the Seven Stars sword and by the whip of Chao Kung-ming. *The latter is granted the title of "Marshall,"* *yüan-shuai* 元帥.
- (2 a) The Venerable Teacher then continues his expedition against the evil influences. *He meets an evil spirit Sha-tao-o* 沙刀厄, a former follower of Kuan Yü 關羽 in the time of the Three Kingdoms. After a long fight, the Venerable Teacher is wounded and dies.
- (2 b) *The Tortoise and the Snake go up to the Palace of the Three Pure,* to report the death of the Venerable Teacher.
- (3 a) *The Three Pure report it to the Celestial Venerable Miao-lo.* They come down to earth, and by reading a charm they resuscitate the Venerable Teacher.
- (3 b) *The latter expresses his thanks for the gift of life.* He is told by the Three Pure that this evil spirit is none other than Kuan Yü himself.
- (4 a) *They discuss the case of Kuan Yü.* To catch him, they will have to go to the Western Heaven, and to entice Kuan Yü to go there, too. In a cloud, he goes to the Western Heaven.
- (4 b) There, *the Venerable Teacher visits the Buddha Ju-lai.* Meanwhile Kuan Yü is told who the Venerable Teacher is.
- (5 a) *He decides to recognize him and he comes down with Ming P'ing* 明平²⁵⁾ and Chou Ts'ang 周倉 *to make his submission to the Venerable as his Teacher.*
- (5 b) Kuan Yü goes to the mountain and his mere sight is enough to immobilize all evil influences. *He receives a title from the Jade Ruler and thanks him.* Hereafter he will hold a sword, his left foot on the thunder and his right on fire.
- (6 a) *The Venerable Teacher goes to Yung-chou* 雍州 *to subdue evil influences.* He meets an old man.
- (6 b) *From him he hears the reason of his sorrow.* A devil in the mountain has the *ius primae noctis* for all the girls of the valley, but the old man's granddaughter refuses to go.
- (7 a) The Venerable Teacher orders Kuan Yü to change into a girl

25) Among the well-known companions of Kuan Ti in the rural temples dedicated to that god, no one is called Ming P'ing; there is Kuan P'ing 關平, son of Kuan Ti, found in the popular novel about Kuan Ti.

and he himself, as an old man, brings her to the mountain. *The devil comes out and is caught by Kuan Yü and brought in front of the Ruler.*

The following pages of Volume III are extremely monotonous and are not worth-while summarizing here. Not less than forty devils are met one by one, their misdeeds retold, their fight with Hsüan-wu, their defeat, and enrollment under his banner.

Among a few striking facts, we may note that the Venerable Teacher in all these fights, is blown away once, killed a second and a third time, and even captured once by a devil. On page 17 b, we see him climb to Heaven for a short report, after which the punitive expedition is resumed. On page 22 b, Emperor Yang-ti of Sui (see above Vol. I, 1a and Vol. II, 20 a) is mentioned again as being responsible for the death of a princess whose soul joins the company of the Venerable Teacher.

VOLUME IV

The foregoing continues halfway through the fourth volume. When all the evil influences are cleared up, the Venerable Teacher is told that only a couple of devils remain, but they are in the Western Heaven and he needs the help of a perfect Buddha, who is now, as a Royal Heir, praying on a mountain. The Venerable leaves all his companions. Meanwhile Manjusri 文殊 and Samathabhrada 普賢 are greeting this Imperial Heir.

(17 a) *Manjusri changes into a sparrow to tempt the Heir.* As a sparrow fleeing before a vulture, then as a hare fleeing before a tiger, he tries to appeal to the pity of the Heir. The latter presents his own flesh to satisfy the hunger of the tiger (reminiscences of Sakyamuni's legend).

(17 b) *The Heir having attained perfection goes to the Western Heaven* from whence he accompanies the Venerable Teacher to the earth. The two last devils to be submitted are the spirits of Thunder and Lightning. This mission is accomplished.

(20 b) *The Venerable Teacher with his thirty-three devas²⁶⁾ goes to the Jade Emperor to report on his work.*

He receives the title of Supreme Ruler of the Mysterious Heaven, Hsüan-t'ien Shang-ti 玄天上帝, and every year on the 25th of the 12th moon, he comes down for inspection with his companions. The following pages tell about ten miracles done by Hsüan-t'ien in favor of people who prayed to him. Finally a palace is built for him on the mountain Wu-tang, where all people honor him. His birthday is celebrated on the 3rd of the 3rd moon, his climbing to Heaven on the 9th of the 9th month, and in each month, one hour of one day is set apart for his cult.

26) We cannot explain this number. In the beginning, Chen-wu is supposed to conquer thirty-six devils and in actual count fifty are vanquished.

C. The main themes of the novel

The main events of Chen-wu's life as given at the end of our Chapter III (page 8) represent the stage in the evolution of the legend as noted by writers before the year 1000, although the first mention of the Wu-tang mountain in this connection seems to date from a later date, but before 1625. We must not forget that all these texts represent a more or less artificial compilation. Those of the Taoist Canon, especially, are composed by monks, trying to build systems. On the other hand, these systems may have exercised a slow influence on the shape of the popular cults.

The text of our novel dates from around the year 1600 and its themes clearly originate from a treasure house of popular legends. Some order was introduced by the novelist Yü Hsiang-tou, but his main contribution seems to have been an artificial elaboration of the original themes. Between the time of the early legends about Chen-wu (before 1000) and the novel (600 years later), the life of Chen-wu was transmitted by word of mouth, by popular narrators, and by other bearers of the rural tradition (perhaps through theatrical plays). The rural frescoes to be described hereafter are one of these mediums of the rural tradition.

As a parallel case, we may mention here near Kuan-ti 關帝 in his temples of rural Chahar, the presence of four companions²⁷⁾, two of which do not occur in the 3rd century history, *San-kuo-chih* 三國志. By the time the last version of the novel *San-kuo-chih yen-i* 三國志演義 was established in the 17th century, after at least 500 years of literary elaborations, the four companions are all playing an important role at Kuan-ti's death. Their presence in the temple is not due to the influence of the last version of the novel (most temples predate it by many centuries), but reflects an intermediate stage of the literary history of Kuan Yü's legend.

The main features of the Chen-wu novel may be summarized as follows:

1. The Jade Emperor moved by sinful cupidity sends one of his souls to be incarnated in the family of a Liu, the possessor of a treasure tree. That is the beginning of the human career of the future Chen-wu.
2. Chen-wu passes through four incarnations. In each of the first three he starts a life of sin, is converted, and practices asceticism. Through temptation he fails at the end of his first and second life;

27) *Rural Temples around Hsüan-bua, Folklore Studies*, X, 1, 1951, p. 64-65; in note 4, page 65, instead of 考章 read 考證.

- his third life ends in his canonization, but he needs a fourth incarnation to gather his thirty-six companions for his mission against evil.
3. In his second and third life, he is king and in the fourth, the son of a king (the Sakyamuni theme). In his first, second, and fourth incarnations, he is born miraculously through the influence of a ray of light upon his mother and in the third, his son is born by miracle.
 4. In his first and third life he sees in a mirror his former celestial state as a soul of the Jade Emperor.
 5. His life of asceticism in his fourth incarnation ends by his canonization, his triumph in heaven, and the beginning of a new mission to win thirty-six companions.
 6. His adventures during his mission are spun at great length, and follow an almost identical pattern.

The elements introduced artificially by the imagination of the novelist are clearly discernible. To begin with, the three first incarnations are artificially constructed on the pattern of the fourth. The canonization at the end of the third life (with the gift of his specific attributes, the dragon robe and the sword of the Seven Stars) in particular, are evidence of the interpolation. It does not have the expected consequences, namely, the end of his probation on earth and his heavenly triumph. To gather his companions, one sees Chen-wu start a fourth life, pass through the same asceticism and the same temptations to be canonized again, and to receive again the same attributes.

In his first life, he is called Ch'ang-sheng 長生 Eldest Son (I, 4 a), but in the three following lives he has names which are clearly artificially constructed in such a way as to bring the last and official name of Chen-wu as climax: Hsüan-ming 玄明 (I, 13 a), Hsüan-k'uang 玄晃 (I, 24 a) and Hsüan-wu 玄武 (II, 4 a).

From the brain of the novelist there seems also to originate the very beginning of the story, where we find the characteristic humanizing trend of the Chinese religious novels. Hu Shih in his study on the composition of the "*Hsi-yu-chi*" 西遊記²⁸⁾ notes: "The reason why the "*Hsi-yu-chi*" became one of the great mythological novels of the world is precisely because there is a satirizing undercurrent in many of its episodes. The reader has a hearty laugh and that makes the religious legend 'human' again." The novel about Chen-wu cannot be said to be especially amusing, and it is not meant to be. But by a process which is the exact opposite of *eubemerism* Chinese popular beliefs are prone to take a matter-of-fact attitude toward gods and demons, and to foist upon them human weaknesses and slightly ridiculous misadventures.

The whole story here starts from the cupidity of the Jade Emperor and

28) Hu Shih, o.c., p. 362.

gets fresh impetus each time he succumbs to some temptation in his incarnated lives. These temptations come mostly from girls. A psychoanalyst could prove something or other maybe about the repressions in the Chinese popular unconscious.

The above chapters give the earliest known form of the Chen-wu story according to literary sources and the final overelaborate shape given to it by a novelist's imagination. We are now in possession of all the necessary facts to analyze the hagiography of Chen-wu as it is transmitted in the rural communities of two counties in Chahar province.

CHAPTER V THE CHEN-WU GOD AND HIS TEMPLES

In all I have visited 169 temples of Chen-wu while exploring 348 villages in the following territories: 52 temples in the Tatung 大同 region, Shansi province and 140 villages, 57 temples in Wanch'üan 萬全 county, Chahar province, and 93 villages, 43 temples in Hsüan-hua 宣化 county, Chahar province, and 115 villages, and 17 temples in the city of Hsüan-hua. This amounts to roughly one temple in every other village. A detailed description of the temples has been given in the studies mentioned in Note 4. A few words about the main characteristics of these temples follow now.

The Chen-wu temple (popular name, *Chen-wu-miao* 真武廟, but in Tatung, *Chen-wang-miao* 真王廟) is as a rule built on the northern edge of the village on a high earthen tower or on top of the northern wall of the village (see fig. 5) Because of the rather high cost of building a tower or a wall, it is rarely found in very small communities of less than fifty families. The oldest Chen-wu temples date from the 15th century in their present state, although a few inscriptions refer to older buildings dating from the beginning of the 14th century²⁹⁾. These temples always have southern orientation.

Chen-wu is called God of the Northern Pole, Pei-chi Shang-ti 北極上帝, and is according to the modern religious practice of the villagers considered as protecting the village from evil influences coming from the north.

The images of Chen-wu are mostly statues and not painted images on the back wall. The god is a round-faced man, with a thin moustache and a small pointed beard and with his hair often hanging loose on his shoulders. His right hand holds a sword, while his left is resting on his knee with the fingers knotted in an intricate way to exercise a magic spell (see fig. 4). On both sides of the statue, two images are often found. The eastern one is

29) See note 7.

that of a young girl, T'ao-hua nü 桃花女, and the western one is an old man, Chou Kung 周公. In front of the statue there is often a snake coiled around a turtle.

The central gangway of the temple is lined by statues. The normal number is twelve, called the twelve celestial rulers, T'ien-chün 天君, but smaller temples may have only six or ten. In about twenty-five cases, these celestial rulers are painted on the side walls.

The Chen-wu God is found in a few instances in connection with another cult (see fig. 3). The temple of Yü-huang 玉皇, Jade Emperor, has in front of the main statue a row of attendants, the last of which, nearest to the entrance, is Chen-wu. Facing him on the other side, is another statue called Nan Chen-wu 南真武, Southern Chen-wu, distinguished from the first by a vertical eye in the middle of his forehead. This Nan Chen-wu also has his own temple, but it is a rarity. We found one in the city of Hsüan-hua 宣化 (Dv 128) and two in the Wan-ch'üan 萬全 region (Cz 260 a and Cz 284)³⁰.

One feature of the Chen-wu temples has yet to be mentioned, namely, the frescoes which are the direct object of this study. Instead of the image of the celestial rulers (see above) the Chen-wu temple often has a series of painted panels on both walls. They show an illustrated biography of the Chen-wu God, the general theme of which is identical in all villages, but with some important variations. We did not take note of the frescoes in the Tatung area; this study therefore is limited to the frescoes of the two counties of Chahar, Wan-ch'üan and Hsüan-hua. The whole wall of the temple is divided into small panels between which a separation is effected by painted ornamental rocks with trees³¹ (see figure 1).

These panels are sometimes continued on the back wall, on both sides of the central image. The sequence of the panels varies, the story beginning either on the eastern wall or on the western wall, in horizontal rows or in vertical rows. Once in a while it even starts on the lower right hand corner to proceed upwards.

We found forty-one villages in our two Chahar surveys which have such biographies. In twenty-eight cases each panel carried a title of four to ten words of which we made a copy. These villages are indicated by a full circle on the map.

The number of panels varies considerably, one place having as many as eighty-eight, but another village with only seventeen. Here are the names of the villages and the number of panels in each.

30) Every locality on the map is indicated by means of a formula in which Cz or Dv indicates a square degree on the map, and the Arabic figure the location of the village within this square.

31) This technique is old. We find it in a life of Buddha at Tun-huang (10th century or earlier), although there is no text on the panels. (See Matsumoto Eiichi 松本榮一, *Tonkô-ga no kenkyû* 燉煌畫の研究, Tôkyô, 1937, Plate XXII, a.

Wan-ch'üan county 萬全縣:

- Cz 75 Chiu-pu 舊堡 (66 panels)
 Cz 77 San-li-chuang 三里莊 (30)
 Cz 241 Hei-shih-hsien (sic) 黑石堰 (27)
 Cz 247 Chiang-chia-liang 蔣家樑 (17)
 Cz 248 Chiu-yang-t'un 舊羊屯 (72)
 Cz 248a Ho-chia-t'un 何家屯 (36)
 Cz 250 Chia-hsien-chuang 賈賢莊 (88)
 Cz 258 Chao-chia-liang 趙家樑 (26)
 Cz 258b Wang-yü-chuang 王玉莊 (40)
 Cz 259 Li-ch'ing-chuang 李青莊 (54)
 Cz 263 Wu-chia-chuang 武家莊 (25)
 Cz 276 Chang-chia-k'ou (Kalgan) 張家口 (54)
 Cz 282 Chou chia-ho 周家河 (36)
 Cz 284 An-chuang-t'un 暗莊屯 (40)
 Cz 292 K'ung-chia-chuang 孔家莊 (44)
 Cz 293 Hsiao-t'un-pu (sic) 小屯堡 (40)

Huai-an county 懷安縣:

- Cz 302 Hsü-chia-chuang 許家莊 (32)
 Cz 305 Tung-hsin-chuang 東辛莊 (only 6 left)

Hsüan-hua-county 宣化縣:

- Cz 278a Kao-miao 高廟 (24)
 Cz 279b Ch'ien-t'un 前屯 (36)
 Cz 311b Lao-wa-chuang 老鴉莊 (30)
 Cz 314 Hsiao-hsin-chuang 小辛莊 (26)
 Cz 315a Ning-yüan-pu (sic) 寧遠堡 (48)
 Cz 319 Hsi-yü-lin 西榆林 (72)
 Cz 353b Chu-chia-fang 朱家房 (46)
 Dv 83 Pei-kan-chuang 北甘莊 (72)
 Dv 133 Hsi-pao-sha 西泡沙 (48)
 Dv 133a Tung-pao-sha 東泡沙 (30)

Total number of panels with text: 1165.

Before looking into the question of the contents of these legends, a few problems present themselves about the form. First of all, the order of the separate panels is not always easy to determine even if one can spot the beginning of the story fairly easily. In one case only, the panels were numbered (Dv 133a) and in a few temples, a doubt exists about the proper sequence.

More vexing is the problem of the words used by the rural artists. They took all kind of liberties with the shape of the characters, sometimes mistook

one word for another, even substituted words which had approximately the same pronunciation. For instance, Lo-wang 落王 (Cz 353b) is meant for 樂王, short for Ching-lo-wang, the king of the Ching-lo kingdom, *kung-shu* 公書 (Cz 315a) is 攻書 to study, *tien-hui* 點會 (Cz 311b), abbreviation of 點會, mistake for *mo-hui* 默會, "intuitive understanding," *t'ou-tao* 投道 (Cz 248) is for *shou-tao* 授道, "teach the Way," but five villages have *shou-tao* 受道, "receive the Way," the exact opposite.

In such cases a couple of villages having the same text, a correction is easily done. For instance 洞兵內練 "the soldiers of the grotto were well versed in ascetic practices," found at Cz 282, means something by itself, but does not fit in the context; however other villages have "the *kumarabhuta* 童眞內練 (boy under ten years of age before his hair is cut) was well versed in ascetic practices"; 洞 is used for 童 because of the similarity in sound (*t'ung*), and 兵 for 眞 because of the resemblances in shape. The latter version of course is the correct one.

When in a single case, there is a good number of mistaken versions of one word, all due to a similarity of sounds, one may well ask oneself whether this is not a proof that the Chen-wu legend was mainly transmitted by word of mouth in the rural communities. For instance, Chen-wu's taking leave of his parents is related in practically all village frescoes we have seen. Often the sentence is *tz'u pieh fu-wang* 辭別父王 "he takes leave of his father the king," or *tz'u ch'in mu-tao* 辭親慕道, "he leaves his parents to pursue the Way." But this first word is written also *tz'u* 慈, or even *shih* 施 (local pronunciation: *ssu*) or *shih* 時 (idem: *ssu*) which of course makes no sense, but sounds alike.

This kind of thing has not encouraged me to try to translate each and all of the texts found in the temple. A long search for the meaning of an obscure expression may only prove to be time needlessly spent on a mistaken word.

More fundamental still is the problem of how to make sense from a succession of subtitles which are not meant to tell a complete story. If one were to take a 19th century English novel and read only the subtitles of the plates, maybe a dozen or two, scattered through the book, how could one ever have a distinct idea about the plot? The subjects of these plates are chosen because of their dramatic value and because they furnish the main episodes of the plot. This is exactly the case with the subtitles of the Chen-wu novel. They were indicated by italics in the translation above. Let us take the four first subtitles in the beginning of the novel (p. 12).

- (1 a) The Jade Emperor gave a feast and gathered his court officials.
- (1 b) The Heavenly Ruler Ko is sent out and reports to the Jade Emperor;

(2 a) . The Heavenly Ruler Liu welcomes the arrival of the Heavenly message.

(2 b) Hua-te goes back to report on his mission.

This is almost gibberish, nothing remaining of the dramatic story told by the novel on the same pages. This is exactly what happened when the frescoes were painted on the walls of the rural temples. From a well-known popular legend, most probably transmitted in a well-memorized sequence, a few scenes were chosen, but their subtitles cannot be read to make up a continuous story.

The printed novel has the following number of plates with subtitle: Vol. I: 59; Vol. II: 66; Vol. III: 57; Vol. IV: 52; total: 234. Compare this with the temples frescoes, their number varying between seventeen and eighty-eight. One may expect the tale found on the frescoes to be still more disjointed. On the other hand, the great number of additional episodes contained in the novel are absent from the traditional life of Chen-wu, as found in the rural temples.

To give an example of the various problems connected with the interpretation of these frescoes, here is now the text and the translation of the story of Chen-wu as found at Dv 133a, in the hills northeast of the city of Hsüan-hua. This is the only case where the subtitles were numbered from 1 to 30, beginning in the lower right hand corner of the eastern wall, near the entrance and continuing towards the left. The second row, above the first, starts at the left with number 6 and continues toward the right. The third row, still higher, starts at the right, number 11, and goes left. The western wall has the same arrangement, and number 16 is found in the lower right hand corner, near the main image of the God.

1. *Ching-lo hsien-kuo* 淨樂仙國: in the fairy kingdom Ching-lo.
2. *Chin-ch'üeh hua-shen* 金闕化身: (the sovereign of) the golden palace takes up a body.
3. *Wang-kung sheng-tan* 王宮聖誕: the holy birth in the royal palace.
4. *Yin chien huang-shang* 引見皇上: he is brought into the presence of the Emperor.
5. *Ching-shu mo-hui* 經書默會: the intuitive understanding of the classics.
6. *Yüan-chün shou-tao* 元君授道: a female genius teaches him the Way.
7. *Tz'u ch'ing mu-tao* 辭親慕道: leaving his parents, he applies himself to the Way.
8. *Wu-tang fa-yüan* 武當發願: on the Wu-tang mountain he makes a vow.
9. *T'ieh kan mo chen* 鐵桿磨針: from an iron pole a needle is ground.
10. *T'ien-ti tz'u chien* 天帝賜劍: the Heavenly ruler gives him a sword.

11. *Erh hu pa tung* 二虎把洞: two tigers watch the grotto.
12. *Mo-nü hsien-kung* 魔女獻供: a she-devil brings him presents.
13. *Wu-lung feng sheng* 王龍捧聖: five dragons pay their respect to the Saint.
14. *Yü-chieh ch'ao-ts'an* 玉階朝參: in the Imperial Presence he has an audience (must be 陛).
15. *Shen kui chiu fa* 神鬼救法: good and evil spirits look for salvation. (must be: 求)
16. *Yü-ch'ing yen-fa* 玉清演法: he preaches the Law in the Jade Abode.
17. *Chiang-mo Tung-yin* 降魔洞陰: he subdues the devils in the Tung-yin plains³²⁾.
18. *Fen-p'an jen kui* 分判人鬼: he judges men and devils.
19. *Kung-sheng ch'ung-shih* 供聖重時: the Saint is honored . . .
20. *Tung-t'ien yün-kai* 洞天雲蓋: the heavenly grottoes are covered by a cloud.
21. *Chin tien hsien sheng* 金殿顯聖: in the Golden Palace he shows his holiness.
22. *Wu jen hsien hsiang* 五人現象: five men manifest a portent.
23. *Sheng-chien ch'ui pan* 聖劍垂扮: a holy sword hangs on his garment.
24. *Ch'ieh yüan lung ch'in* 劫院龍擒: (——)³³⁾.
25. *Fu-yü ch'i-ching* 附雨祈晴: he increased rain or prayed for clear weather.
26. *Lu chuan chao wu* 陸傳詔巫: continuously one called upon mediums (詔 is for 召).
27. *Chieh-ch'i fu hun* 陸妻附魂: the wife of the Emperor was possessed by a devil (魂 for *kui* 鬼).
28. *Chen ho hsing fu* 鎮河興福: stopping the bad influences of rivers, he increases happiness.
29. *Chiao min i ssu* 焦民一嗣: (——).
30. *Mu chen hsien ying* 木真顯應: (if read *mu chu* 木主) his tablet shows divine efficacy.

This version is rather typical in our materials. A few sentences have to be corrected, a few more do not make much sense, at least at first sight, and the intrinsic value of the text is not such that extraordinary pains should be taken to find a sense. When compared with the theme of the Chen-wu legend as it is attested in the 14th century (see above, Chapter III), a few elements seem to belong only to this rural version of the legend.

32) See chapter III, No. 28.

33) 劫 could be 禱 as in the temple at Dv 83 and Cz 75; 龍 could be 就 as at Dv 133 and Dv 83; no satisfactory translation.

On panel No. 6, we read "a female genius teaches him the Way." This is the beginning of Chen-wu's conversion. He goes then to the Wu-tang mountain. In the 14th century version, he apparently decides by himself to practice asceticism, although once on the mountain, he is instructed by various heavenly beings. The latter type of events is also found in many rural temples. In the 16th century novel, however, because he has become a man out of cupidity, he is first exhorted to conversion; once out of the palace of his birth, he passes through different periods of instruction. The difference between the two versions is slight, but typical. We have it in the above translated text found at Dv 133a, and also at the following localities: Dv 133, Dv 83, Cz 77, 247, 248a, 258, 263, 276, 278a, 282, 284, 292, 293, 315a, and 319a. These villages are scattered over the whole territory from west to east, mixed with others where the older version of the legend is used.

Panel No. 12 has, "a she-devil brings him presents." This does not seem to be one of the temptations described in the popular novel, but rather a part of the homage brought to Chen-wu after his attaining holiness. This episode is not found in any literary source, but in our rural frescoes only. In fourteen villages, we found this fact related, although with considerable variations. Most frequent are the following:

猿猴献桃 a (white) monkey offers a peach (seven times).

麋鹿献花 a deer offers fruit (and/or) flowers (six times).

天人送果 a genie offers fruit (seven times).

One single temple may have several references to this episode. In six cases there is one more mention of gifts at the very end of the story, at the final glorification of Chen-wu.

From panel No. 25 and on, a few miracles are told. This is unknown in the 14th century versions. The popular novel has a lot of miracles at the end of the story, too. On the other hand, the novel's account of the enlisting of the thirty-six companions is completely omitted in the fresco found at Dv 133a, although the mission to earth after his glorification is described on panels 17 to 20. This story of his companions however takes a good place in other village frescoes as we shall see presently.

* * *

Notwithstanding general similarities, each village has its own way of telling the story of Chen-wu. We wish to give now the text and translation of the legend as found in village Cz 248, located in the west of the explored territory. The sequence of the panels appears from the words used on panels 53, 54, 55, and 56, although there seems to be some contradiction in the sequence of panels 12, 13 and 14. The legend starts at the right-hand upper corner of the east wall, proceeds towards the left; the second line is

to be read then from the left and coming back toward the right; after which the third line starts at the right again and goes towards the left, and so on, alternating back and forth, downwards.

1. *Ching-lo hsien-kuo* 淨樂仙國: in the transcendental country of Ching-lo.
2. *Chin-ch'üeh hua-shen* 金闕化身: (the sovereign of) the Golden Palace takes up a body.
3. *Tso chieh chin-chu* 左脇金主: through the left side the princess (gives birth).
4. *Mu-yü ch'üan shen* 沐浴全身: his whole body is bathed.
5. *Wang-kung tan sheng* 王宮誕聖: in the king's palace a saint is born.
6. *Ching-shu ch'iu-hui* 經書秋會: in a classical book he seeks (must be: 求) illumination.
7. *T'ung-chen nei-lien* 童真內練: when 10 years old, he was well-versed in ascetic practices.
8. *T'z'u-ch'in mu-tao* 辭親慕道: leaving his parents he applies himself to the Way.
9. *Yüan-chün t'ou tao* 元君投道: a female genius teaches (must be: 授) him the Way.
10. *Yü-ch'ing tien-tao* 玉清點道: Yü-ch'ing (Supreme Ruler) teaches him the Way.
11. *T'ien-ti ts'u chien* 天帝賜劍: the Heavenly Ruler grants him a sword.
12. *Wang-ch'en hsün shan* 王臣尋山: the officials of the court look for him in the mountain.
13. *Chien-tsu ch'ün-ch'en* 澗阻群臣: with his sword he keeps away (must be 劍) the court officials.
14. *Hsüan-ti teng shan* 玄帝登山: Hsüan-ti climbs on a mountain.
15. *Hsien-ch'in feng kuo* 仙禽奉果: transcendental birds offer him fruit.
16. *T'ieb-kan ch'eng chen* 鐵杆成針: from an iron pole a needle is made.
17. *Chung-lü yü tao* 鐘呂遇道: a unicorn meets him on the way.
18. *Cheb mei chi hsiang* 折梅寄鄉: breaking the bough of a plum tree, he takes leave of his native place.
19. *Ch'i yao bun tao* 七妖混道: seven evil spirits disturb the Way.
20. *P'eng-lai hsien-lü* 蓬萊仙侶: a transcendental companion from P'eng-lai (Taoist Paradise).
21. *Yü-ti fa chih* 玉帝發旨: The Jade Emperor commands.
22. *Te tao k'ua fu* 得道剝腹: he reaches illumination and he cuts open his belly.
23. *T'z'u-hsiao yüan tao* 紫霄圓道: the Heavenly ruler exposes the Way.

24. *Wu lungfeng-sheng* 五龍捧聖: five dragons pay their respect to the saint.
25. *Pai-jih i sheng* 白日一昇: in bright day he flies to Heaven.
26. *San-t'ien chao ming* 三天詔命: the Three Pure (三清) proclaim an order.
27. *Yü-ti chao-ts'an* 玉帝朝參: The Jade Emperor holds a court reception.
28. *Chu chi tsan-t'an* 祝祭讚嘆: a congratulatory feast is held.
29. *Chen-sheng chia meng* 眞聖嘉夢: the true saint has an auspicious dream.
30. *Ta chao ying kung* 大照應宮: illuminated, he complies with the court's order.
31. *Kao-sheng lin-fan* 高聖臨凡: the Holy One comes down to this world.
32. *Sheng-wang ying-hui* 聖王迎會: the holy king holds a procession.
33. *She-shen ch'iu-yü* 捨身求雨: he sacrifices himself to obtain rain.
34. *Sun yin ch'ien huang* 孫隱遣蝗: (The evil spirit) Sun in secret sends over locusts.
35. *Huang-pang yung-yao* 皇榜榮耀: the imperial proclamation board is illustrious (his canonization).
36. *Shen-hua hung-ying* 神化紅纓: transcendental insignia are given him.
37. *Chen-ch'ing hsien-tu* 眞慶仙都: (must be 喜請 as at Cz 247) with joy he is invited to the Heavenly City.
38. *Yü-ch'ing yen fa* 玉清演法: Yü-ch'ing preaches the law.
39. *Chao-ch'in t'ien-yen* 朝親天顏: (must be 覲) he is admitted to the Heavenly Presence.
40. *Chiang mo t'ung yin* 降魔洞陰: he subdues the devil in the Tung-yin plain.
41. *Tien-kung chia-ch'ing* 天宮家慶: in the heavenly palace, a family celebration.
42. *Hsüan-t'ien ling ying* 玄天領應: Hsüan-t'ien shows (must be 顯) his efficacy.
43. *K'ai huan ch'ing-tu* 凱還清都: in triumph he goes back to the Pure Abode.
44. *Fu k'ang k'an kung* 復伉坎宮: again he goes (must be 住 used three times in other places; 位 is used six times) to the Palace of the Immortals (坎 used in 11 villages, must be 墟).
45. *Yü-ching chiao kung* 玉京較功: in the Jade Capital his merits are made evident.
46. *Ch'ing-t'ai shou ts'e* 瓊臺受冊: on the Heavenly Terrace, he receives a mission (Terrace where the heroes of the novel *Feng-shen yen-i* 封神演義 received theirs).

47. *Tz'u hsiao yü chi* 紫霄雨蹟: in the Celestial Abode (name of a peak of the Wu-tang mountain) clouds (appear).
48. *Kan-lin ying tao* 甘霖應禱: timely rain answers to his prayer.
49. *Wu-lung t'ang hsing* 五龍唐興: five dragons in T'ang-hsing (doubtful sense; the same sentence occurs in six villages; T'ang-hsing is one of the capitals of Sui, between 590-604).
50. *Cb'an fu chen cb'ing* 讖符真慶: he fulfils omens of true happiness.
51. *Yüan ch'ao jui hsien* 元朝瑞現: in the Ch'ao-yüan pavillion, an auspicious apparition; (must be 朝元 as at Dv 133 and Cz 311b; a celebrated apparition of Chen-wu in the year 748).
52. *Ta chao ying kung* 大昭應宮: greatly illuminated, he complies with the Ruler (see above 30).
53. *Cb'u shou Teng-shuai* 初收鄧帥: he first receives the submission of the (future) heavenly marshall Teng.
54. *Tz'u shou Hsin-shuai* 次收辛帥: then the submission of Hsin.
55. *San shou Hun-shuai* 三收混帥: thirdly, the submission of Hun.
56. *Ssu shou T'ao-shuai* 四收陶帥: fourthly the submission of T'ao.
57. *Cheng hsi P'ang-shuai* 政西龐帥: (must be 征) he subjugates the western P'ang.
58. *Pei shou Pai-shuai* 北收白帥: in the north he receives the submission of Pai.
59. *Hai ch'in Ma-shuai* 海擒馬帥: on the sea he captures Ma.
60. *Cb'in hu Chao-shuai* 擒虎趙帥: he captures the tiger and Chao (Kung-ming).
61. *T'ien-huan Wen-shuai* 天環溫帥: Wen of the Heavenly Orb.
62. *Ming ch'ao Liu-shuai* 明朝劉帥: Liu of the Glorious Court.
63. *Ching-kung shen-ming* 敬恭神明: he pays reverence to the gods.
64. *San-pao ta yü* 三寶大有: the Three Jewels are abundant.
65. *Hsien-p'in ch'ing ch'ih* 仙品請敕: with transcendental gifts, he asks for investiture.
66. *Chien shih yüan-kui* 箭射龜龜: with an arrow he shoots the Tortoise.
67. *Wan-yün wu-tang* 萬雲武當: many clouds cover the Wu-tang mountain.
68. *Hei kuo pei* 黑果北: (reading not clear).
69. *Cb'in-shou kui she* 擒收龜蛇: he takes and subdues the Tortoise and the Snake.
70. *Wu-shan suo yao* 巫山鎖妖: on the Wu-mountain he enchains the evil spirits.
71. *Shui yen yüan-ch'eng* 水淹原城: water inundates the city of Yüan (not clear).
72. *Wei-shu shao-ch'en* 僞燭燒塵: (reading not clear).

With about the usual number of mistaken words and of obscure passages, this version of the Chen-wu legend is strikingly different from the one translated before. From panel No. 22 to 28, Chen-wu is shown to have reached a state of holiness after his ascetic practices. After that, he is sent down on a mission on earth (No. 31), which is followed by a second triumph (No. 43 and following). In his glorified state, Chen-wu fulfils then the enlisting of his future companions, twelve of which are enumerated, twelve being the number of statues found most often in front of Chen-wu in this region.

Ascents to Heaven twice and a mission to earth twice, such a theme is found in eleven villages, including the above Cz 248. They are Dv 83, Cz 248a, 250, 258b, 276, 269b, 284, 293, 315a, and 319a. This feature clearly represents a line of tradition nearer to that elaborated by the author of the popular novel. The eleven localities above are grouped somewhat around two centers, Cz 250 in the west and Cz 276 in the east. These two especially have on their temple frescoes a type of legend which presents so many likenesses to the novel that we suppose them to be of a relatively later date. This is especially the case for Cz 276, a large city where literary sources have more chance to have been used in the planning of the arrangement of the temple. This is the only temple in which the legend of Chen-wu describes the seven treasures tree (see summary of the novel, Vol. I, 1b), the wish of Liu to have a son (*ibid.*, 3b), the recourse to Ch'en-huang, the God of the City Walls, to find the girls kidnapped by the devils (Vol. II, 23a), and the freeing of these girls (*ib.* 26a). It is also at Cz 250 and Cz 276 and only there that we find Kuan Ti 關帝, the God of War, making his submission to Chen-wu exactly as in the novel Vol. III, 3a and following).

There is also at Cz 276 and at Cz 247 a mention twice of Chen-wu's looking into a mirror in which he discovers his former state as Jade Emperor (see novel, I, 8a and I, 26b). However, a few other localities also mention this episode once. In the vicinity of Cz 276, we found it at Cz 278a, 279b, and 302 and in the west at Cz 258ab. However, when speaking about identical episodes being found in different localities, one notes great differences in the words used in each case. For instance, the episode of the mirror is told in the following ways:

Cz 276, No. 9: *Chin p'en chao san shih* 金盆照三世, "in a golden basin are reflected his three existences" (*viz.* past, present, future).

Cz 276, No. 10: *Ching chao ch'ien shih shen* 鏡照前世身, "a mirror reflects the state of his former existence."

Cz 247, No. 4: *Ch'ien shih hsing ying* 前世行影, "his former existence projects its shadow."

Cz 247, No. 15: *Ch'ien shih hua ying* 前世畫影, "his former existence depicts a shadow."

Cz 278a, and Cz 279b: *Ching chao wan sheng* 鏡照萬生, "a mirror reflects all his lives."

Cz 302, No. 6: *Chung chao ying shih* 鐘照應世 (*chung* must be *ching* 鏡, *ying* must be 影), "a mirror reflects his existence."

Cz 258b, No. 13: *Cb'ien shih hsing* 前世形 (must be 行) 影 *ying* "his former existence projects its shadows."

The last one is clearly copied by ear from Cz 247, No. 4, but the others are all independently worded.

This brings us to the problem of the origin of the subtitles found on the rural frescoes. Frescoes and images generally are the work of local farmers, or part-time artists, who learned the traditional canons of their craft under a local master, usually their father or grandfather. One may find at least one such artist in every middle-sized village and, in any case, one is sure to find one in each group of two or three villages. Evidently they must be somewhat literate, as it is their job to write the congratulatory verses pasted on temple lintels when the feast of the god comes along. Some popular anthologies of such verses are often found among the wares of travelling peddlers³⁴.

However, the subtitles of the Chen-wu legends differ by far much from one village to the other to have been simply copied from such sources. One more example of variations is based upon a misunderstood oral tradition. In his practice of asceticism, Chen-wu is said "to sacrifice his own body to attain holiness." At Cz 293, it is put in the following way, *shê shen ch'eng sheng* 捨身成聖. It is also found at Cz 248a and Cz 284, not far from the first village. But still in the same neighborhood, at Cz 282, the first word is written *shê* 奢, which has no sense here, but sounds the same. Likewise the same episode is expressed at Cz 353b by the sentence *she shen ch'eng wei*, 捨身成位, "he sacrifices his body to attain his dignity." Again the first word is written *she* 射 at Cz 314, simply because it is homonymous.

Reading the two full versions of the legend as given above, one is struck by the literary turn of many subtitles. The popular 16th century novel nowhere has this terseness of expression and this great number of literary allusions. For instance, the saying *chih liu* 折柳 "breaking a willow twig" is borrowed from the *San fu huang t'u* 三輔黃圖, an old geographical description of Ch'ang-an (Si-an) describing the Han period custom of taking leave of a guest at a bridge east of the city and giving him a twig of a willow growing there. This saying is found in our rural frescoes, at Cz 248, No. 8 (see above) and at Cz 259, although with a plum-tree instead of a willow *chih mei chi*

34) The keeper of the Chen-wu temple at Cz 276 (Kalgan) showed us a copy of such an anthology called *Ching-bsüan tui-lien pei-yao* 精選對聯備要, "Handy Choice of Parallel Verses," 2 volumes, by Chao Shun-hsiang 趙順翔, 1888.

hsiang 折梅寄鄉: "breaking a branch of a plum-tree, he takes leave (or he is given a sent-off from) his native place." The shape of the last character was the origin of two mistakes. At Cz 319 a one has *chih mei chi lang* 折梅寄浪 ("wave," no sense), and at Cz 278a *chih mei chi liu* 折梅寄柳 ("willow," no sense). Still further from the original is the variation at Cz 311a *yang mei ch'i shu* 楊梅奇樹 in which all the characters, except the second, have been wrongly copied from Cz 278a above. Still another variation is at Dv 133 *chih shu ch'uan mei* 折樹穿梅, in which only the first word is correct. This case clearly indicates careless copying from a written source. However, in every single village quoted here, the sentence coming before and after the mistaken subtitles differs in each case. There is therefore no blind copying from an identical source of a complete text.

Again, another literary allusion is found written with mistakes originating from a similarity of sounds. At Dv 83, we find one of the miracles wrought by Chen-wu expressed in the following way: *k'u shu ch'a mei* 枯樹插梅, "on a dead tree he inserts plums." This is an allusion to a Taoist legend in which a monk after 28 years of practice is able to *k'u shu sheng hua* 枯樹生花 "make blossoms flower on a dead tree." The source is the book *Hsü po wu chih* 續博物志 by Li Shih 李石 (circa 1162).

Besides Dv 83, two other localities, Cz 293 and Cz 282 have the same subtitle. In two more villages, the first word has been replaced by a word which makes no sense *ku* 孤: at Cz 284 and *ku* 古: at Cz 292, all in the same neighborhood. A variant which makes some sense is at Cz 315a *ch'a hua chieh shu* 插花結樹, "he stuck a flower and inserted fruit on a tree." The latter seems to have been painted by another craftsman.

We really have no clear evidence from which to decide whether the oral tradition or the written tradition is predominant in the transmission of the Chen-wu legend in the rural communities of Chahar. To tell the truth, we are rather inclined to accept a third or intermediary solution. There must have been a huge body of popular legends, both the oral in the repertory of itinerant theatrical troopers and the written in devotional pamphlets and in the case of temple restorations, the text of the previous frescoes which are done over by a later artist.

* * *

As a last example, we have chosen a type of frescoes which, though fairly short, contains the greatest number of common elements found in most Chen-wu legends of this area. It is found in the Chen-wu Temple at Cz 77, in the extreme west of Wan-ch'üan county. With the knowledge of the legend acquired till now, it will be easy to bridge the large gaps between the scenes of Chen-wu's life, exactly as the rural believers are supposed to be

able to do from their previous knowledge of the god's story.³⁵⁾

1. *Meng t'un jih-kuang* 夢吞日光: in a dream she swallows the light of the sun.
2. *Chiu lung t'u shui* 九龍吐水: nine dragons spout water (to wash the baby, as in the life of Lao-tzu).
3. *T'ai-tzu ju-hsieh* 太子入學: the heir starts his study.
4. *Lao-seng tien-hua* 老僧點化: an old monk converts him.
5. *Tz'u mu ju shan* 辭母入山: leaving his mother, he enters the mountain.
6. *Kan-chui t'ai-tzu* 趕追太子: (court officials) pursue the heir.
7. *Chu-wang hui ch'ao* 諸王回朝: all princes come back to the court.
8. *Yüan lu hsien t'ao* 猿鹿獻桃: a monkey and a deer offer peaches.
9. *Erb hu pa tung* 二虎把洞: two tigers keep guard near the grotto.
10. *Hsiu-hsin che kuai* 修心折怪: practicing asceticism, he brings into submission the evil spirits.
11. *Hua hu chih-tien* 化虎指點: changing the tiger, he converts it.
12. *T'ieh-kan mo chen* 鐵杵磨針: an iron pole is ground to a needle.
13. *K'ai ch'ang cha tu* 開腸剝肚: he opens and destroys (must be 殺 *sha*) his belly.
14. *Shou kui p'an chiang* 收龜判將: he subdues the Tortoise and judges the general.
15. *Fu-shou Chou-kuang* 伏收周公: He subdues the Duke of Chou.
16. *Fu-shou T'ao-hua* 伏收陶花: He subdues the T'ao (must be *t'ao* 桃) girl.
17. *K'ai lung fang niao* 開籠放鳥: opening the cage, he releases the bird.
18. *Tang tien ch'eng fa* 當殿誡法: in the palace he becomes perfect (must be 成) or: he preaches the law (must be 說) (both forms are attested in other villages).
19. *Wu-tang sheng ching* 武當勝景: in the beautiful scenery of the Wu-tang mountain.
20. *Fa sung pai mi* 罰送白米: as a penalty he brings rice.
21. *Erb shih hua kuang* 二士化光: two scholars are brought to the light.
22. *Chu ch'ao i t'ung* 諸朝一統: all dynasties are brought to unity.
23. *Wu lung feng sheng* 五龍捧聖: five dragons bring homage to the Saint.

35) We have here a problem met generally in this field. It was aptly expressed in a review by Edith Porada of the work by Tanmurz, *Der Unsterblichkeitsglaube in der altorientalischen Kunst*, Berlin, 1949: "In the works of ancient Near Eastern art, . . . the religious renderings are frequently abbreviated and contracted from larger scenes, and such pictorial allusions defy interpretations." (See *J.A.O.S.*, 71, 3, 1951, 178a).

24. *Shou Ma Wen shuai* 收馬溫帥: he subdues the marshalls Ma and Wen.
 25. *Shou Hun T'ao shuai* 收混陶帥: . . . Hun and T'ao.
 26. *Chih shan ch'u shui* 指山出水: pointing to a mountain, he makes water gush out.
 27. *Ssu shé tang tao* 死蛇當道: the dead snake bars the way.
 28. *Liu chia ta chan* 六甲大戰: the six spirits of time wage a great battle.
 29. *Hua lien chin ting* 火煉金頂: fire purifies the golden headdress.
 30. *Yü ti ssu chien* 玉帝賜劍: the Jade Emperor grants a sword.

The general theme of this version of the legend is clear enough, but if we did not know any other version, there would be no way of guessing that the hero of the story is a reincarnation of the Jade Emperor. Even his return to Heaven is hardly indicated (No. 23). No doubt, in this and other shorter versions of the legend, the limited number of panels did not allow an enumeration of all the principal episodes.

As an example of the rural decorative art, we reproduce here panels from the Chen-wu temple at Cz 259. The reader will want to compare the painting of the scenes with the translation of the subtitles: (see fig. 6 and 7). Cz 259, Western wall:

30. *Ch'i t'u chieh ming* 七徒借名: seven disciples borrow his name.
 31. *Tsou hsü ch'i ling* 鄒宿契靈: the seven (must be 七) efficacious spirits of the Tsou constellation.
 32. *Wang-shih huai kui* 王氏懷鬼: the Lady Wang conceives a devil.
 33. *Yü-huang shih yen* 玉皇設宴: the Jade Emperor gives a feast.
 37. *T'ien-kung chia-ch'ing* 天宮家慶: in the Heavenly Palace, a family celebration.
 38. *Shen-chiang chiao fa* 神將教法: the heavenly general teaches the law.
 39. *Fu-li chieh ping* 符吏借兵: the executor of a charm borrows soldiers.
 40. *Shé shen ch'iu yü* 捨身求雨: he gives up his life to obtain rain.
 44. *P'ei chien ch'ü hu* 裴劍驅虎: (must be 佩) with his sword he expels the tiger.
 45. *kui shé* 龜蛇: (he subdues) the Tortoise and the Snake.
 46. *Sun yin ch'ien huang* 孫隱遣蝗: Sun in secret sends over locusts.
 47. *Wei yü ch'i ching* 危語祈晴: (must be 雨) because of dangerous rains, he prays for fair weather.

No useful purpose can be attained by giving the full text of all the other legends. However, to illustrate the local variations, and to help understand how such legends are transmitted, we now want to indicate in each story about Chen-wu which elements are unknown to other versions of the legend.

For instance, in the story found at Cz 77 and translated in the third place above, panel No. 20 brings the story of "white rice brought as a penalty,"—by whom is not clear. The early legends or the popular novel have nothing similar, and in our exploration we found only the neighboring village Cz 241 to have a somewhat similar allusion to "rice given by him." This seems to point to an identical source, probably one particular craftsman or his pupils.

We have arranged the complete material gathered in these temples, putting together the identical themes. The sequence of the story as found in most villages is by no means identical, as even a cursory comparison of the three samples given above clearly shows. We will follow the order found in the novel. At the same time, some notes will be given about the geographical dispersion of the main variations.

1. In five villages in the west (Cz 248a, 258, 282 (twice), 284, and 293) the story starts with the sentence *t'ien-ku tzu ming* 天鼓自鳴, "the Heavenly Drum sounds spontaneously." This Drum is used by the Taoist gods to gather all the heavenly spirits; however, it is in Buddhist accounts that such a drum sounds by itself to gather the thirty-three devas when Sakyamuni preaches the law. All the other villages start the story with a heavenly banquet held by the Supreme Ruler, as is the case in the novel.

2. In scattered villages (Cz 75, 284, 319a, 258b, Dv 83, and 133), not the Jade Emperor but the god of the Dipper, Hsüan-t'ien 玄天 is becoming a man. This is an anticipation of what Chen-wu is supposed to become at the end of his mission on earth.

3. After his birth, the heir is washed by nine dragons (see above Cz 77, panel No. 7). This is only found at Cz 77, 75, 241, 282, and 284, that is to say, in the very same territory where many folkloristic elements were found to differ from those of the eastern part of the country because of an old political boundary running east of these villages³⁶). In the remainder of Wan-ch'üan county, five dragons are said to wash the heir, and in Hsüan-hua county this episode is unknown. It is interesting to compare the popular novel (see Vol. II, 4e) where nine dragons are said to wash the heir at his birth.

4. Concerning the person or persons who have a try at converting Chen-wu during his sinful youth, the different versions have: the Three Pure (San-ch'ing 三清), the Jade Pure (Yü-ch'ing 玉青), Lao-tzu, Kuan-yin, an old monk, an old literate, or more generally a genie (*hsien-jen* 仙人).

5. The 16th century novel (Vol. II, 4b) describes how the heir meets the evil consequences of wine, lust, money, and anger in four streets of his city. Some reminiscence of Sakyamuni's life may be presumed here. Much

36) See for a description of this boundary, *Temples and History of Wan-ch'üan*, *Monumenta Serica*, XIII, 1948, p. 309, and map 7.

nearer still to the latter is the version of the legend as found at Cz 315a. The heir sees birth at the northern gate, death at the western gate, illness at the southern gate, and old age at the eastern gate.

6. The granting of a sword to Chen-wu is one of the episodes found in every single village, but in only two of them (Cz 77, and 258) this happens at the very end when he is glorified. All the other villages put this happening at the end of Chen-wu's first ascetical apprenticeship.

7. The message brought to Chen-wu by a heavenly being to call him to Heaven after his first practice of asceticism is said to have been handed over by K'ui 魁 and Kuan 罌, star groups of the Dipper, at Cz 278a, 279b, and 319a, clearly a single geographical group.

8. A rather strange episode tells about "an old dragon combing Chen-wu's hair." This happens at the end of his ascetic life at Cz 248a, or at the very end of his glorification at Cz 282 and Cz 258, all in the same neighborhood.

9. We have seen in the older literary sources about Chen-wu that only one of the legends in the Taoist canon brings in the Wu-tang mountain as the place of his struggle for holiness. Exactly half of our villages, scattered over the whole territory, refer to the same mountain.

10. During his second or punitive mission on earth, Chen-wu acquires a flag. That is what we are told in a group of four villages, all in the east: Cz 314, 353b, 319a, and 279b.

11. The Ruler Chuan Hsü 顓頊 (mythological age) is said to have had a huge bell cast, called *hung-chung* 洪鐘. This bell is found quoted in Chen-wu's legend, but we cannot be sure why that bell is said to be "immersed in water." This is found in one group of villages in the west: Cz 284a, 282, 258, and 293 and in one village in the east: Cz 279b.

12. The fight with the devils in the plain of Tung-yin (see above translation of the fresco of Dv 133a, panel No. 17 and the 14th century legend, Chapter III, No. 28) is well-known in the east in Cz 311b, 319a, Dv 133, and 83, and in two villages in the west, Cz 248 and 259.

13. On the contrary the following episode is found only in the west at Cz 75, 284, 248a, 293, 282 (twice), and 258 and only twice in the east at Dv 83 and Cz 319a. It is one of Chen-wu's miracles in which the snow is cleared away to help travellers *hsieh-ching chi-lu* 雪晴濟路.

14. Only the novel tells about an attack from a Mohammedan country upon the court where Chen-wu is ruling during one of his incarnations. Two neighboring villages have an episode where the Mohammedans are said to bring presents at the end of Chen-wu's glorious life: *Hui-hui hsien pao* 回回獻寶 (must be 獻, a mistake because of the shape) at Cz 247: and *Hui-hui hsien pao* 回回現寶 (must be 獻, mistake because of the sound), at Cz 258b, both meaning "the Mohammedans offer treasures."

15. The submission of the Water and the Fire devils told in the novel is used in the frescoes of three villages in the east, Cz 353b, Cz 319a and Cz 279b.

16. Cz 248, panel No. 34 (see above) tells about a devil named Sun who sends over locusts as a plague. This is found nowhere in the literary sources and only once more in the village Cz 259. (See fig. 6, panel No. 46).

17. In four villages, Cz 248a, 259, 282, and 293, the same episode is told about "the executor of a charm preparing an army" *fu-li pei ping* 符吏備兵. The wording is rather faulty, the third word being *kung* 供 twice and *chieb* 借 once. The second word mistakenly read *shih* 使, has been twice written *shih* 施. Actually 符吏 designates the servant of an omen and is found already in the work *Hsü hsien chuan* 續仙傳, "Further biographies of transcendental beings," written by Shen Fen 沈汾 (between 937-975).

18. Two attendants are found near Chen-wu's statue in our temples, that of a girl T'ao-hua nü 桃花女, the Peach Blossom Girl, and that of an old man Chou-kung 周公, the Duke of Chou. To account for their presence, the frescoes sometimes tell about their submission to Chen-wu. The popular novel has nothing about them, but they were found in a few villages, in Cz 305, 315a, 319a, and 353b in the east, and at Cz 77.

19. One must note also that there is a relation between all the variations of the sentence "on a dead tree he inserts plums," discussed above. It is found at Cz 282, 284, 2942, and 293 in the west and at Dv 83 in the east.

20. The same is also true for the sentence "breaking the twig of a plum-tree, he is given a send-off," discussed above. It is found in the west at Cz 248 and 259, in the east at Cz 278a, 311b and Dv 133.

Looking at the map, a certain pattern seems to emerge from all these distinctive variations. The three villages Cz 248a, 282 and 284 each have from six to eight of these episodes. A little to the east, Cz 293 has five. In the east, Cz 319a has nine, Cz 279a has six, and Dv 83 has five. Each of these villages is large enough to have its own religious decorator, representing a more or less independent line of transmission of the Chen-wu legend.

CONCLUSION

The frescoes of Chen-wu's life in the various villages of South Chahar not only present some similarities by which one may trace the influence of the same painter, their differences are much more striking. No two frescoes could be written in parallel columns and have any number of episodes in one column matching a good number of similar episodes in the other column. The stories are mixed up and some artists have lost the thread of the story. One may even find Chen-wu leaving his parents long after his asceticism on the mountain is finished.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that the villages of the same neighborhood use the talent of the same local artist. I have spoken with two of them during my exploration in the Wan-ch'üan region. One of them living at Cz 276 was kept sufficiently busy in the large city itself, but the other at Cz 284 accepted orders from at least half a dozen villages of the vicinity³⁷⁾. However, he explained to me that he could fulfil any order presented by the customers.

In conclusion, we should like to venture an hypothesis. The legend of Chen-wu as found in these rural temples is painted by local artists who decide freely the subtitles of the panels when executing an order. They rely on traditional themes handed down by their masters or transmitted by the story tellers. Since the Chen-wu temple needs a new coat of paint only every hundred years, if at all³⁸⁾, we find now the story of Chen-wu in different stages of its evolution and also in various stages of its corruption by oral transmission. There is, furthermore, the lower or the higher grade of skill one may expect from each painter-farmer. Finally when repolishing a fresco partly in need of repair, the artist may be following the older text found on the wall, improvising more or less aptly when a few words have become undecipherable.

All in all, the rural frescoes represent an old tradition of a number of centuries. Only in a couple of cases may the more recent influence of the 16th century novel be suspected. Because of the wholesale destruction of rural temples between 1210, the time of the first inroad of the Mongols in this region, and 1368, the final overthrow of the Mongols by the Chinese Ming dynasty, most of the present day frescoes may be said to have been made or at least patched up in the late 14th and early 15th centuries.

37) See *Temples and History of Wan-ch'üan*, p. 237.

38) The paintings on the walls are seldom dated. A small temple of the god of the river at Hd 210 has the date 1853 painted on a beam inside the roof and the colours of the painted ceiling are still quite fresh. Even a leak in the roof does not endanger the frescoes; but a leak occurring near the top of the side walls is deadly to the mixture of mud and cut straw on which the paintings are made.

Fig. 2 : Plate of the Chen-wu novel, volume II, page 4 a.

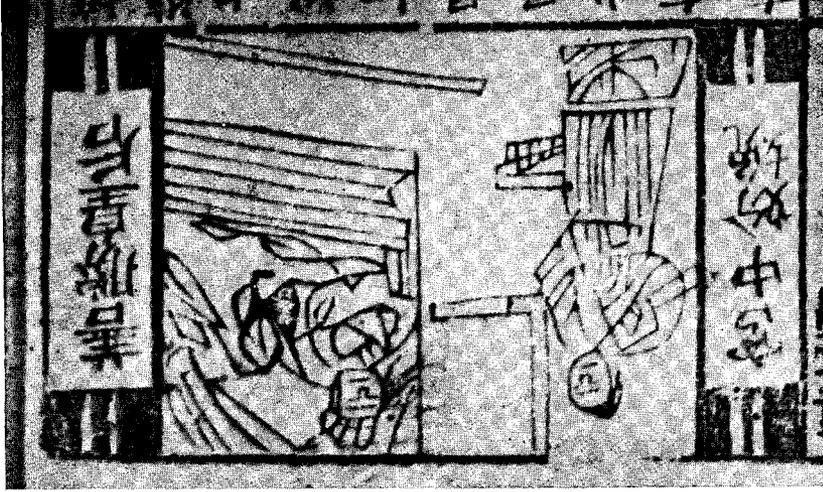


Fig. 1 : Plate of the Chen-wu novel, volume I, page 1 a.

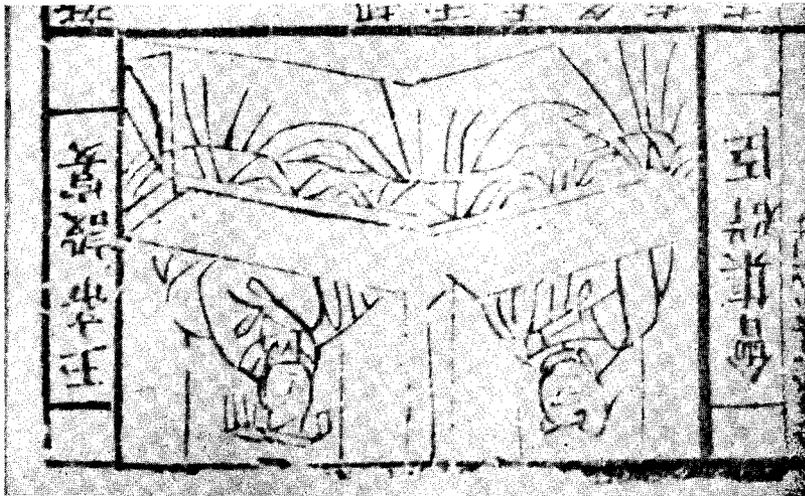




Fig. 3: Temple of Chen-wu; upstairs, temple of Yü-huang, at Cz 282.

Fig. 4: Bronze statue of Chen-wu, dated ca 1530; at Cz 216, Wan-ch'üan city.



Fig. 5: Chen-wu temple on top of village wall, at Yang-men-pu 陽門堡, Cz 286.



Fig. 6: Frescos of the Chen-wu temple at Cz 259 (see text, page 39).

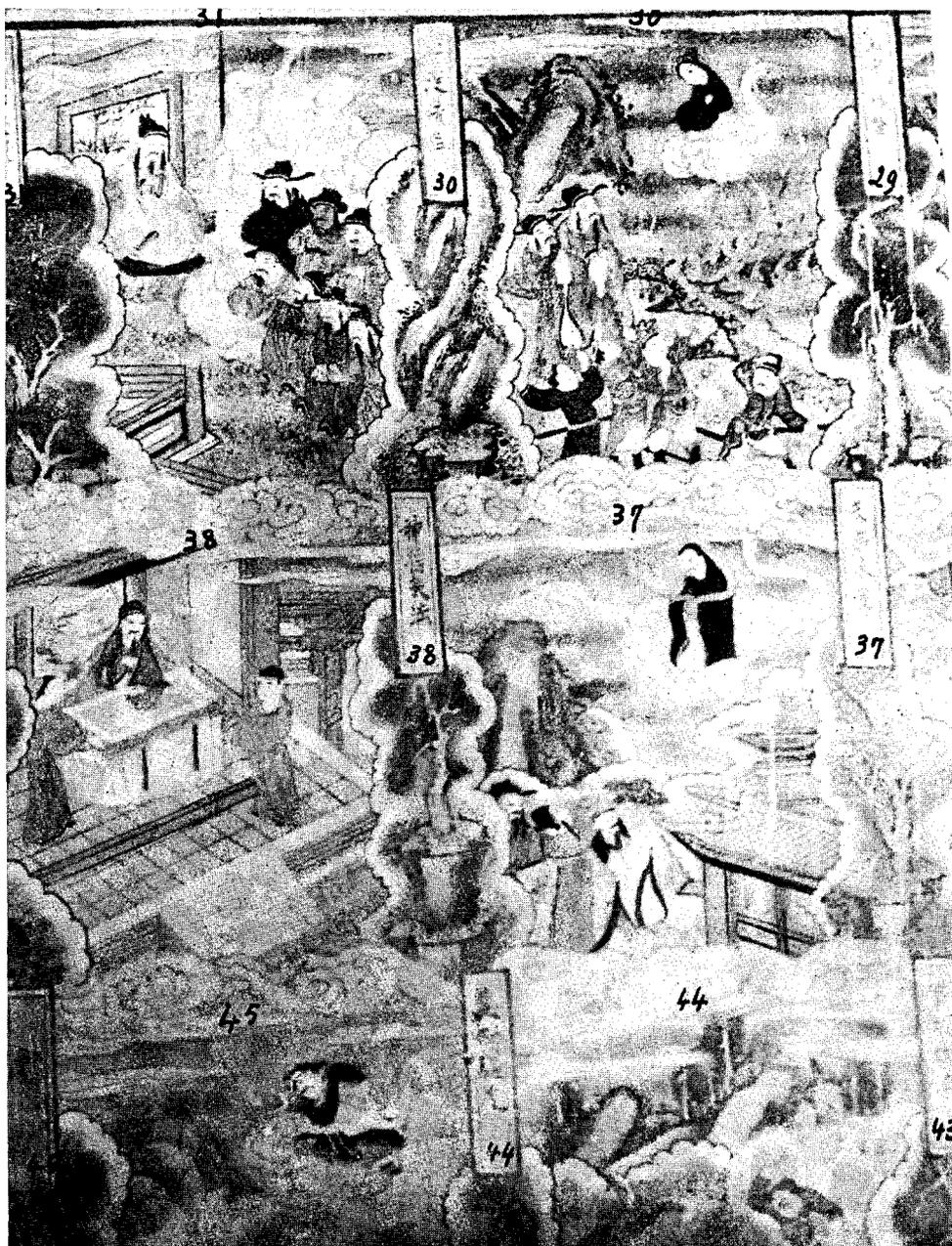


Fig. 7: Frescoes of the Chen-wu temple at Cz 259 (see text, page 39).





崇禮縣
Ch'unghsiensien

龍門縣
Lungmenhsien

宣化縣
Hsüanhuahsien

懷安縣
Huaiansien

張家口
KALGAN

傳

官道

縣地圖

查之地界
調查之村莊
調查之村莊

製圖 賈登松

Cz

Dv

114° 45'

114° 52' 30"

115°

115° 30' copyright Catholic University Peking 1958 115° 30'

40° 30'