

Folk Literature and Popular Beliefs in the Ho-hsi Corridor (Kansu Province)

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The Texts

This lecture is intended to give information about our research on (*pao-chüan*) texts from the Ho-hsi corridor, being carried out at the moment.

Ho-hsi is situated west of 烏稍嶺 (Wu-shao-ling) and comprises (Wu-wei), 張掖 (Chang-yeh), and (Chiu-ch'üan, see map). The reason why we are interested in the *pao-chüan* from the Ho-hsi corridor, lies solely in the fact that they are part of a tradition still very much alive there. That is to say that the farmers in the region still recite *pao-chüan* although they were banned for thirty years and were actually meant to be destroyed. The *pao-chüan* survived this campaign and were subsequently brought to the light of day from caves, holes under the earth, or other places where they had been hidden. Only in this area do farmers — to this day — respect and recite *pao-chüan* in a solemn and pious atmosphere as if performing a religious ceremony, all of which is not known to be practised in other areas of China. So we would like to encourage everybody to study Ho-hsi *pao-chüan* especially students of popular beliefs, folklore and linguistics.

The texts in question which we received from Professor Tuan,¹ 80

1 Professor 段平 (Tuan P'ing), University of Lanchou, has collected many *pao-chüan* since 1983, some of which have already been published. His publications include 河西寶卷選 (*Ho-hsi Pao-chuan-hsuan*), (Lanchou, 1988), and 河西寶卷選 (*Ho-hsi Pao-chuan-hsuan*), (2 vols, Taipei, 1992).

altogether, exist in manuscript form. This does not mean that they have never been published before, it only means that printed material was copied by hand — and sometimes changed — and distributed in the Ho-hsi area. For our ultimate goal of editing these texts, we intend to try and find the earliest printed versions of each one, compare them to the Ho-hsi versions carefully, state in detail all the words and sentences left out or added and describe all differences of style, grammar, contents, and the like. In my lecture today I will confine myself to informing you, on the basis of a general description of the contents of some selected *pao-chüan* which we have already worked out, of some of the problems arising when studying these texts, putting special emphasis on the religious motives contained in them.

Pao-chüan: History and Literary Structure

As to the development of the *pao-chüan*, opinions differ among Chinese experts. According to Cheng Chen-tuo, *pao-chüan* developed out of the *pien-wen* of the T'ang period.² Li Shih-yü, on the other hand, argues that although they did exist in Sung times they only got their name in the Ming period. Judging from their structure, we are more on the side of Cheng Chen-tuo in this matter.³

Pao-chüan, which means “precious scrolls”, are in their literary structure very similar to the *pien-wen* texts. They begin with rhymed verse (the beginning being called *k'ai-chüan*) which is followed by a main part

2 See 鄭振鐸 (Cheng Chen-tuo), 中國俗文學史 (*Chung-kuo Su Wen-hsüeh-shih*) (rpt. Shanghai: 1984), pp. 306-310. And: 葉德均 (Yeh Te-chün), 戲曲小說叢考 (*Hsi-ch'ü Hsiao-shuo Ts'ung-k'ao*) (Peking: Chung-hua, 1979), p. 625.

3 According to 李世瑜 (Li Shih-yü), the *pao-chüan* texts are closely related to the White Lotus Sect, whose Holy Scriptures they are - so he supposes. See 寶卷綜錄 (*Pao-chüan Tsung-lu*) (Peking: Chung-hua, 1961), S. 1-2.

consisting of prose and four, five, seven, or ten word verse passages (mostly seven or ten word verses); the end (called *shou-chüan*) is again written in verse, so-called “gatha” verse. *Pao-chüan*, meant primarily for oral presentation, are written in an easily understandable style, which is close to the spoken language of their time. *Pao-chüan* were handed down and used until the beginning of the Republican era, but the most productive period of their development was the Ming dynasty *wan-li* era (1573-1620). The earliest texts extant today date from Ming times.⁴

The Contents of the *Pao-chüan*

Since *pao-chüan*, as we think, originally took the place and function of the *pien-wen*, one would expect their contents to be mainly Buddhist, but that is not the case, mainly because there was also a tradition of non-religious *pien-wen* presenting historical material. Examples of this include 舜子至孝 (*Shun-tzu Chih-hsiao*), 伍子胥 (*Wu Tzu-hsü*), 季布 (*Chi-pu*), 王陵變文 (*Wang Ling Pien-wen*) etc. from which *pao-chüan* partly derive.⁵ The gradual process of secularization, that had already begun in T'ang times *pien-wen*, continued in the *pao-chüan* of later times.⁶

The 80 *pao-chüan* that we are studying can be divided into three groups - according to the characteristics of their contents and the general tendency of their message, namely being rooted in

4 See 任繼愈 (Jen Chi-yü), 中國道教史 (*Chung-kuo Tao-chiao-shih*) (3rd ed. Shanghai: 1991), pp. 684-695. The majority of the *pao-chüan* originate from late Ch'ing and Republican times. See note 3, Li Shih-yü.

5 This is confirmed by Hu Shih-ying in his bibliography. See 胡世瑩 (Hu Shih-ying), 彈詞寶卷書目 (*T'an-tz'u Pao-chüan Shu-mu*) (Shanghai, 1957), pp. 73-128.

6 See 周紹良 (Chou Shao-liang), 敦煌變文論文錄 (*Tun-huang Pien-wen Lun-wen-lu*) (Shanghai, 1982), pp. 223-230.

- Buddhism,
- Taoism,
- folk traditions, historical tales, folk religions.

Buddhism in Ho-hsi

Since many of the stories contained in *pao-chüan* texts have an intimate connection with Buddhism and Taoism, it seems necessary to say something about the spread of these two religions in the Ho-hsi corridor. It is well known that the four districts (*chün*) of Wu-wei, Chang-yeh, Chiu-ch'üan, and Tun-huang had been settled by nomadic peoples before their establishment by emperor 武 (Wu, 156 - 87 B.C.) of the Han period, after which the Han culture could penetrate there. Buddhism came to China via the Ho-hsi corridor which had become a melting pot of different cultures producing a new culture that influenced all remaining areas. Some very famous monks, like 竺法護 (Chu Fa-hu), 鳩摩羅什 (Chiu Mo-lo-shih, 343 - 413), and 曇無讖 (T'an Wu-ch'en, 384 - 433) spent some time in Ho-hsi translating Buddhist sutras.⁷ The rulers of this area, e.g. 李皓 (Li Hao, 401 - 417) of the Hsi-liang empire, 沮渠蒙遜 (Chü-ch'ü Meng-hsün, 412 - 428) of the Pei-liang empire a.o., were all supporters of Buddhism. The building of famous grottos, like Mo-kao K'u in Tun-huang and others was begun at that time (s. appendix) and Buddhism was widespread in this area from Sui and T'ang through Ch'ing times. The Yüan dynasty saw the introduction of Lamaism and only after the establishment of the republic did Buddhism lose some of its splendor.

⁷ See 慧皎 (Hui Chiao), 高僧傳 (*Kaoseng chuan*), 大正新修大藏經 (*Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo*) (Tokyo, 1964), vol. 50, pp. 326-327. 330-333, 335-337.

Taoism in Ho-hsi

During the time which followed the above mentioned establishment of the four districts, many Han Chinese came to the Ho-hsi area. In the Han period, Chinese troops were stationed there and were followed by more Han immigration. All this can be proved from archaeological evidence. Ho-hsi and the eastern part of Kan-su province were the center of the Tao religion: 崆峒山 (mountain K'ung-tung) and 王母宮 (Wang-mu-kung, The Queen's Palace) on the 涇川山 (Ching-ch'uan mountain) still show traces of it. There is a legend that even the immortal 廣成子 (Kuang Ch'eng-tzu) led the life of a hermit on the K'ung-tung mountain.⁸ In the Yüan dynasty 丘處機 (Ch'iu Ch'u-chi, 1148 - 1227) was made the general supervisor over the Tao religion.⁹ He used the opportunity to build Taoist monasteries in many places including Ho-hsi. This favorable history continued in Ming and Ch'ing times which is the reason why so many *pao-chüan* make use of Taoist stories.

Pao-chüan and Buddhism

I would like to turn to Buddhist *pao-chüan* first. There is for example 目蓮救母寶卷 (*Mu-lien Chiu-mu Pao-chüan*), a story that is based directly on a *pien-wen* from the T'ang dynasty, whose complete title is: 大目乾連冥間救母變文 (*Ta Mu Ch'ien-lien Ming-chien Chiu-mu Pien-wen*). It is kept in the British Museum, bearing the registration number of S 2614. Other versions are archived in Paris (numbers P 2319, P 3107,

8 See 古今圖書集成 (*Ku-chin Tu-shu Chi-ch'eng*) (rpt. Ch'eng-tu: Chung-hua, 1985), vol. 51, p. 62046.

9 See 元史 (*Yüan-shih*) vol. 202 of 二十五史 (*Erh-shih-wu Shih*) (Shanghai: K'ai-ming, 1934), pp. 6580-6581.

and P 3485), but they are not as complete as the London text. The story describes how Mu-lien, who has become a *Luo-han* (*Arhat*), wants to free his mother who is in the O-pi hell. His powers are not sufficient, so he asks Buddha for help. Buddha tells him to perform an Yü-lan-p'en-hui on the 15th of the seventh month, by which his mother is finally freed.¹⁰

The *pao-chüan* text has taken over a *pien-wen* story which itself has its origin in a Buddhist sutra, but the story becomes much more complex.¹¹ Mu-lien leads three subsequent lives, not only one. By opening the gate of hell using a staff that he has received from Buddha, he unintentionally frees eight million souls, so he has to become a human being again, this time 黃巢 (Huang Ch'ao, ? - 884), in order to bring them all back. He has to live a third life as a butcher to bring back all the pigs and sheep that have left the hell together with the human souls. Finally he succeeds in freeing his mother and they ascend to heaven together. The modern Ho-hsi text differs from the Ch'angchou edition of 1886 in many places, not only in terms of its language but also with regards to its content, using modern language and dialectal expressions to a greater extent and leaving out many passages, e.g. the 六道輪迴 ("Liu Tao Lun-hui") part.

The story is taken from Buddhism but the virtue of piety is laid more emphasis on which is due to a strong influence from Chinese ethics. Farmers are very impressed by this popular story which also appears in Peking and other local operas.¹²

Another *pao-chüan* is called 唐王遊地獄寶卷 (*T'ang Wang Yu Ti-yü Pao-chüan*). T'ang Wang denotes emperor T'ai-tsung of the T'ang

10 See 佛說盂蘭盆經 ("Fo Shuo Yü-lan-p'en-ching"), *Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo*, vol. 16, p. 779.

11 loc. cit.

12 A detailed description of Mu-lien's story can be found in 目連故事的演變 ("Mu-lien Ku-shih te Yen-pien") in Chou Shao-liang, pp. 457-475. See also 段平 (Tuan P'ing), 河西寶卷選 (*Ho-hsi Pao-chüan-hsüan*) (Taipei, 1992), pp. 1-17.

period, an historical figure, and the hell (ti-yü) has its origin in Buddhism.

The story describes how emperor T'ai-tsung promised to the dragon king from the Ching river to save him from being punished with death by heaven. But he cannot keep his promise. After the execution, the dragon king asks the king of hell to confront him with the T'ang emperor.

On his visit to hell the T'ang emperor promises to do a number of good deeds and is finally taken back to the world.

This story first appears in 朝野僉載 (*Ch'ao-yeh Ch'ien-tsai*),¹³ the ones to ask for a confrontation with the T'ang emperor being prince Chien-ch'eng (589 - 626) of T'ang and others. Only later, in 西遊記話本 (*Hsi-yu Chi Hua-pen*) which the famous novel *Hsi-yu Chi* is based upon, is the dragon king incorporated into the plot.¹⁴ The *pao-chüan* in question having certainly been influenced by *Hsi-yu Chi* is not simply a copy of the novel; it contains many alterations and additions. To give an example, its description of the 18 hells is much more elaborate than the one in *Hsi-yu Chi*, using 860 characters (*Hsi-yu Chi*: 146!)¹⁵ and enumerating in detail the various sins associated with each hell. If one offends against filial piety one is thrown into the 火雷獄 (Huo-lei Yü - Hell of Fire and Thunder), in case of lying it is the 拔舌獄 (Pa-she Yü - Hell of Cutting off the Tongue). For the main purpose of the *pao-chüan* being recited or narrated in order to admonish people to do good the motive of hell seems very appropriate.

13 See 張鷟 (Chang Chuo), 朝野僉載 (*Chao-yeh Ch'ien-tsai*) (Peking: Chung-hua, 1979), vol. 6, pp. 148-149.

14 The story 魏徵夢斬涇河龍 ("Wei Cheng Meng Chan Ching-ho-lung" - "Wei Cheng executes the dragon king from the Ching river") is taken from 永樂大典 (*Yung-le Ta-tien*), vol. 13139. See 送 (Sung), 夢 (Meng): 朱一玄 (Chu I-hsüan), 西遊記資料彙編 (*Hsi-yu-chi Tzu-liao Hui-pien*) (Chungchou/K'aifeng, 1983), pp. 116-118.

15 See 方步和 (Fang Pu-ho), 河西寶卷真本 (*Ho-hsi Pao-chüan Chen-pen*) (Lanchou: 1992), pp. 66-70, *Pao-chüan* that are not mentioned in the notes are in modern manuscript form only.

Retribution and punishment are in accord with the principle that good will be repaid by good and bad by bad (善有善報，惡有惡報 *shan yu shan-pao, o yu o-pao*). For this reason, the belief in the transmigration of souls in hell is deeply rooted in the minds of the farmers. They carefully observed the sequel of sacrifices for the dead after intervals of seven days, a hundred days, one year, and especially three years, when a great ceremony was held. Even today Taoist or Buddhist priests are often asked to make a sacrificial offering so that the dead person will be able to move to a better world.¹⁶

Pao-chüan and Taoism

I would like to present Taoist texts now. The most famous Taoist tales are the *pa-hsien* stories. Among those stories connected with the lives of the Eight Immortals, those about 韓湘子 (Han Hsiang-tzu) and 何仙姑 (Ho Hsien-ku) are the most numerous in our texts, two of them being devoted entirely to the former 韓湘子度林英寶卷 (*Han Hsiang-tzu Tu Lin-ying Pao-chüan*) and 藍關寶卷 (*Lan-kuan Pao-chüan*) and one to the latter 何仙姑寶卷 (*Ho Hsien-ku Pao-chüan*).

The *Han Hsiang-tzu Tu Lin-ying Pao-chüan* tells how Han Hsiang-tzu himself becomes an immortal and also leads his wife to immortality. The *Lan-kuan Pao-chüan* also describes how Han Hsiang-tzu becomes immortal, Lan-kuan being the place where this happens. The *Ho Hsien-ku Pao-chüan* contains the story how 呂洞賓 Lü Tung-pin — one of the Eight Immortals — helps Ho Hsien-ku to attain immortality. Time is short

16 See 杜斗城 (Tu Tou-ch'eng), 敦煌佛說十王經 (*Tun-huang Fo-shuo Shih-wang Ching*) (Lanchou: 1989), pp. 227-228. There are also representations of the scenes from the 18 hells in sculpture. See the photographs in Anne S. Goodrich, *Chinese Hells, The Peking Temple of Eighteen Hells and Chinese Conceptions of Hell* (St. Augustin: Monumenta Serica, 1981), plates XIII-XXXII. (The photographs were taken in the Peking of 1931/1932)

so I can only give few additional explanations concerning the above mentioned Taoist texts about Han Hsiang-tzu.

Han Hsiang-tzu is first mentioned in 酉陽雜俎 (*Yu-yang Tsa-tsu*) by 段成式 (Tuan Ch'eng-shih) from the T'ang dynasty¹⁷, later he appears in the 太平廣記 (*T'ai-p'ing Kuang-chi*) from the Sung dynasty¹⁸. Both texts are very similar in their contents, of which I will now give a short summary. Han is not very studious and a drinker on top of that. He is endowed with special magic powers and thereby predicts Han Yü's banishment. For the T'ang emperor, Han Yü has written a pamphlet against the worship of a bone of Buddha. The emperor, infuriated by his doing, banishes him. Hsiang-tzu's name is mentioned in neither of the two texts, he is only referred to as Han Yü's nephew. It is only in 青瑣高議 (*Ch'ing-suo Kao-i*) from the Sung period that Han Hsiang-tzu's name is mentioned.¹⁹ It seems likely that Han Hsiang-tzu's transformation into an immortal was not completed before the period of the Five Dynasties.²⁰ This story is told in the Yüan drama *Han Hsiang-tzu San-tu Han Yü Chi* (*Han Hsiang-tzu's threefold conversion of Han Yü*) - a piece by 紀君祥 (Chi Chün-hsiang) which has unfortunately been lost.

A detailed version of the story of Han Hsiang-tzu can be found in the novel 韓湘子全傳 (*Han Hsiang-tzu Ch'üan-chuan*), which was published in 1623. We read about how Han Hsiang-tzu wants to help all his family to become Taoist immortals and finally succeeds.²¹ The *pao-*

17 See 段成式 (Tuan Ch'eng-shih), 酉陽雜俎 (*You-yang Tsa-tsu*) (rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1981), p. 184.

18 See 李昉 (Li Fang), 太平廣記 (*T'ai-p'ing Kuang-chi*) (rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1981), vol. 54, p. 331.

19 See 劉斧 (Liu Fu), 青瑣高議 (*Ch'ing-suo Kao-i*) (rpt. Shanghai, 1983), p. 85.

20 See 任繼愈 (Jen Chi-yü), 中國道教史 (*Chung-kuo Tao-chiao-shih*) (Shanghai, 1990), p. 453.

21 See 楊爾曾 (Yang Erh-tseng), 韓湘子全傳 (*Han Hsiang-tzu Ch'üan-chuan*) (rpt. Shanghai, 1990).

chüan differs from this version in many places.

Although members of the pa-hsien can be found in stories from as early as the T'ang period, it is not until the Ming period that the *pa-hsien* are described as a group and referred to by that name, and not before the Southern Sung period did they appear together as the Eight Immortals. A detailed description was published in 1868 as a part of the 八仙得道 (*Pa-hsien Te Tao* [*The Eight Immortals Achieve Immortality*]).²²

Pao-chüan and Folk Traditions, Historical Tales, Folk Religions

Let us now move from the Taoist and Buddhist *pao-chüan* to texts that cannot so easily be attributed to either of these categories. Generally speaking many *pao-chüan* take well known stories from other spheres of cultural life, especially drama, for which 趙氏賢孝寶卷 (*Chao-shih Hsien-hsiao Pao-chüan* [*The Virtuous and Reverent Mrs Chao*]) is a good example. The story from 琵琶記 (*P'i-p'a Chi*) — Yüan dynasty — describes how reverently Mrs Chao cares for her parents-in-law. Her husband having acquired the title of *chuang-yüan* is forced by the Prime Minister to marry his daughter. After the death of her parents-in-law Mrs Chao goes to the capital to look for her husband, on the way there earning her living by singing songs and accompanying herself by playing the P'i-p'a.²³ This story is well known, many plays have taken over its plot, there is even another version called 趙五娘 *Chao Wu-niang* used in modern Peking opera. The version from the Ho-hsi area differs only little from the *P'i-p'a Chi*.

22 See 無垢道人 (Wu-kou Dao-jen), 八仙得道 (*Pa-hsien Te-tao*) (rpt. Shanghai, 1989), pp. 256-310.

23 See 曾百融 (Tseng Pai-jung), 京劇劇目詞典 (*Ching-chü Chü-mu Tz'u-tien*) (Peking: Chung-hua, 1979), pp. 1499-1517.

Next I would like to take up 金鎖寶卷 (*Chin-so Pao-chüan*), which is based on the Yüan drama 寶娥冤 (*Tou O Yüan*)²⁴ but presents some significant changes, e.g. Tou O's fiancé has not died, but has gone to the dragon palace and meets Tou O later whose execution has been stopped by red snow falling from the sky. At that moment Tou O's father — a high official — comes back, clears up the matter and justice is restored.

雪梅寶卷 (*Hsüeh-mei Pao-chüan*), based on 秦香蓮 (*Ch'in Hsiang-lien*)²⁵, describes how 陳世美 (Ch'en Shih-mei) leaves his wife. The story has not been changed very much, except that Hsiang-lien has become Hsüeh-mei, and special emphasis is put on filial piety. This story, which is very popular, has been used by many theaters and local operas. Finally Ch'en Shih-mei is not executed, as he is in Ch'in Hsiang-lien, but reprieved.

Other *pao-chüan* which contain elements of popular belief are 土地寶卷 (*T'u-ti Pao-chüan* [*Earth God Pao-chüan*]), 灶君寶卷 (*Tsao-chün Pao-chüan* [*Kitchen God Pao-chüan*]), and 財神寶卷 (*Ts'ai-shen Pao-chüan* [*Pao-chüan of the God of Wealth*]). It has to be mentioned that the earth god of the above mentioned *pao-chüan* is not the miserable white haired old man any more, that he was in *Hsi-yu Chi*, but a god possessing abilities like 孫悟空 Sun Wu-k'ung. He has fought against the troops of the Jade Emperor and heaven's generals and has defeated them all. Finally he is caught by Buddha who praises him and tells him that without the earth god there would not be a Buddha (because without earth there would be no Buddha). At the end Buddha burns t'u-ti's body but from this moment his soul is everywhere.²⁶

Another topic that is often found in *pao-chüan* is the love between human beings and gods, for which good examples can be found in

24 See 臧晉叔 (Tsang Chin-shu), 元曲選 (*Yüan-ch'ü Hsüan*) (rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1979), pp. 1499-1517.

25 op.cit., p. 582.

26 See note 2, pp. 334-344.

張四姐大鬧東京寶卷 (*Chang Szu-chieh Ta-nao Tung-ching Pao-chüan* [*Pao-chüan of the Fourth Sister Chang who Makes a Rebellion in the Capital*]) and in 天仙配寶卷 (*T'ien-hsien P'ei Pao-chüan* [*Pao-chüan about Marrying a Goddess*]).

Chang Szu-chieh is the Jade Emperor's fourth daughter. For love of a young man she fights in this world against 楊家將 (Yang chia Chiang), among others, and in heaven against 孫悟空 (Sun Wu-k'ung) and other gods. Finally her mother, the Jade Emperor's wife, has to negotiate with her. She agrees to give in provided that her husband is allowed to accompany her to heaven.²⁷

T'ien-hsien P'ei Pao-chüan describes the love story of 董永 (Tung Yung) and a goddess, an old story that can even be found in the early *pien-wen*.²⁸

Another *pao-chüan*, 仙姑寶卷 (*Hsien-ku Pao-chüan* [*Pao-chüan of the Immortal Woman*]), is centered on a local Ho-hsi celebrity, an ordinary woman, who by great endeavors finally succeeds in becoming an immortal. She makes it a habit to help suffering people, she even builds a bridge over the Hei-ho (Black River) in order to enable the Han general 霍去病 (Huo Ch'ü-ping, 140 - 117) to break through the encirclement by Hsiung-nu troops with his more than 100,000 soldiers.²⁹ In this *pao-chüan* the language of which has a strong local ring to it, one finds descriptions of the Black River area landscape where even today many Hsien-ku temples are still in existence.

27 See 郭儀 (Kuo I), 酒泉寶卷 (*Chiu-ch'üan Pao-chüan*) (Lanchow, Kan-su: Jen-min, 1991), pp. 307-335.

28 See 干寶 (Kan-pao), 搜神記 (*Sou-shen-chi*) (rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1979), pp. 14-15. Also 王重民 (Wang Ch'ung-min), 敦煌變文集 (*Tun-huang Pien-wen-chi*) (Peking: Jen-min, 1984), pp. 109-113.

29 See note 15, pp. 9-51; 341-353.

General Remarks on the Values Conveyed by the *Pao-chüan*

Apart from the examples given so far there are a number of well-known stories for example about the heroic deeds of 武松 (Wu Sung), the judge 包公 (Pao-kung), 楊家將 (Yang-chia Chiang) and others. It seems that the authors decided to work those earlier narratives into the *pao-chüan* in order to make their work more attractive to their audience who were already familiar with the stories.

The *yin-kuo* relation ("cause and effect" relation) is a principle common to all *pao-chüan* whether they are to be classified in the Buddhist, Taoist, or historical tale category. The authors as well as the reciters of the *pao-chüan* made use of poetic license and incorporated gods and ghosts into them in order to reinforce this message of "cause and effect".

The major goal that was to be achieved by means of the *pao-chüan* being to admonish people to do good, the authors decided to focus on a number of moral principles and teachings, most importantly on the principle of filial piety. I have looked through the 80 texts and found that about one quarter of them have *hsiao* ("filial piety") as their major theme. The second most important principle is that of thriftiness - primarily referring to economy in dealing with grain.

Very typical of this kind of subject is 惜穀寶卷 (*Hsi-ku Pao-chüan*), whose protagonist is Mrs Wang, a cook working for the rich Ch'en family. Having drowned her new born daughter she loses her elder son as a punishment. As her husband has passed away all that she has left is her younger son. Later she repents of her deed and begins to save grain. Whenever she can find a couple of grains on the ground she picks them up. When her master's wife becomes ill, she accompanies him to the P'u-t'o mountain to pray for recovery. Both, Mrs Wang and her master, wish to make donations to a monastery on that mountain. Whereas Mrs Wang's modest donation consisting of only the small amount of grain she has

accumulated at that point is gratefully accepted, her master's large donation is rejected by the monks. Mr Ch'en in a state of fury repeatedly kicks Mrs Wang and is subsequently hit by lightening. Mrs Wang and her younger son live happily ever after.

As for the subject of filial piety there is one extreme example: the 回郎寶卷 (*Hui-lang Pao-chüan*). This story is set in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The protagonist Mr Ts'ao, the husband of a Mrs. Wang, at the age of 39 still has no descendants. As a direct result of his moral integrity, however, he is finally given a son, 曹三 Ts'ao San, who after his father's death is brought up by his mother to be a person of great filial piety. He marries and himself has a son by the name of Hui-lang whom he decides to kill during a famine so as to prevent him from using up the food intended for his grandmother. Hui-lang's mother however will not let that happen. Instead she suggests the selling of their son. As it turns out selling the son is an endeavour impossible to achieve. When Hui-lang reaches his third year of age and the famine has still not come to an end, Ts'ao San finally goes through with his initial plan to kill him. He cooks him and prepares a meal for his mother. His mother, however, in her ignorance intends to share the meal with her grandson. At this point the Jade Emperor, himself impressed by the family's moral conduct, decides to intervene. He resurrects Hui-lang and the family is whole again. Ts'ao San has been renowned for this exemplary deed of filial piety ever since. Extreme as this example may seem, it serves the reciter's intention to point out that anything done in order to obey the principle of filial piety is justified. Other examples include the 明宗孝義達本寶卷 (*Ming-tsung Hsiao-i Ta-pen Pao-chüan*) in two volumes which, although there are the words 孝 (*hsiao*) and 義 (*i*) in its title, contains a saying by the Taoist immortal Lü-tsu at its beginning and many Buddhist teachings in its text. This is a definite proof that Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism have combined to become one set of beliefs.

Different Versions: Why?

It is generally known that commentators and editors in ancient China always expressed their personal opinions in commentaries and that they repositioned and retold excerpts from the original texts. Undoubtedly this applies to a special extent to the Classics, e.g. 朱熹's (Chu Hsi's) commentary on the *Szu-shu*. On the part of vernacular literature it applies to the author or better the editor 馮夢龍 (Feng Meng-lung) who compiled, rearranged and published in three volumes the *hua-pen* from the Sung and Yüan dynasties. It also applies to the authors and reciters of the *pao-chüan*. As admonishing people to do good is the primary function of the *pao-chüan*, the authors base their narratives on stories already well-known to their audience. All of those stories make their strong impression by moving and emotionally affecting the audience. They are much more spontaneously fascinating to an audience than *Lun-yü* or *Hsiao-ching*.

Even further enhancing their narratives' emotional potency the authors make frequent use of ghosts for the purpose of convincing their audience that good moral conduct will be rewarded, possibly even during one's lifetime. Although *pao-chüan* are a kind of 善書 (*shan-shu*) they are not sacred as are the Buddhist sutras. Therefore their authors were entitled to adapt diction and even content freely according to local customs and circumstances. Especially in the Ho-hsi corridor the *pao-chüan* are always recited in the local dialect. In addition to that they are rearranged according to specific needs. Omitting parts, adding newly created material, as well as changing names of characters are common practice.

There are for instance as many as ten different manuscripts of the 方四姐寶卷 (*Fang Szu-chieh Pao-chüan*) in 酒泉 (Chiu-ch'üan), which are similar as to their content but different in the language and descriptions they present as well as in the beginning and final parts.³⁰ In the 百花

30 See 謝生保 (Hsieh Sheng-pao), 酒泉的寶卷 ("Chiu-ch'üan te Pao-chüan"), 陽關 (*Yang-kuan*),

台寶卷 (*Pai-hua-t'ai Pao-chüan*), which was printed in Shanghai in 1917, the Wu dialect is made wide use of.³¹

Pao-chüan in the Ho-hsi Corridor: a Tradition still Alive

Pao-chüan and their impact on audiences have never been the subject of scientific research. However Professor Tuan³², who has collected a great number of *pao-chüan* and frequently has been present at public recitations in China told me that they have an enormous emotional impact on Chinese audiences and that some *pao-chüan* such as *Chao-shih Hsien-hsiao Pao-chüan* and *Chin-so Pao-chüan* often move members of the audience to tears. Moreover the sheer survival of the *pao-chüan* suggests that the rural population loves them very much, as it was only by their hiding the texts that they were still extant when Professor Tuan collected them.

Keeping in mind the living conditions in the Ho-hsi corridor helps understand the relevance of the *pao-chüan* to the rural population's everyday life. Not electrified until 1949 the Ho-hsi corridor is a region in which oil lamps had to be used at night even until well into the 1950's. 90% of its population are farmers who are either illiterate or otherwise familiar with only a small number of characters. Before 1949 the situation was even worse. When they have finished their work for the day they visit their *pao-chüan* reciters to listen to the stories which are their only source of leisure time entertainment.

Realizing the *pao-chüan*'s potency as a device of mass manipulation, rulers of the past have urged reciters to especially emphasize the *pao-chüan*'s

No. 6 (1985), pp. 72-74.

31 百花台寶卷 (*Pai-hua-t'ai Pao-chüan*) (Shanghai, 1917).

32 See note 1.

moral aspects.

The *pao-chüan* are widespread, e.g. in Chang-yeh they can be found everywhere, except in the settlements of the minorities; it is generally true to say: the more remote the area, e.g. the mountain regions of Wu-wei, the more popular they are. They not only have the function of admonishing people to do good and of amusing them but they are also a means of keeping away ghosts and of averting evil. That is why many people respect *pao-chüan* and regard them highly. Listening to a *pao-chüan* is one of the good deeds.

Before 1949, *pao-chüan* were used in education. When the daughter-in-law or the son did not display sufficient filial piety, their parents asked someone to come and recite a *pao-chüan*. The person in question had to make all the necessary preparations like cleaning the room, taking a bath, and fasting, the person then had to listen to the recitation patiently and attentively, in some cases even kneeling, and finally to show repentance in order to escape heaven's punishment. As mentioned above, the *pao-chüan* are written in a language easy to understand and were often recited twice, once in prose and a second time in rhymed verse, so that everybody could understand them. Their stories are fascinating and well-known and very popular and welcome among the audience. Reciting as well as copying a *pao-chüan* was seen as a good deed which is why not only scribes but even cadres of the CCP — atheist as they are supposed to be — engaged in these activities. So today there are still 133 *pao-chüan* to be found in the Ho-hsi corridor, 63 of which have not been included in *Pao-chüan Tsung-lu*.³³

There are no strict regulations regarding when to recite a *pao-chüan*, but it is generally done after a period of hard labor in the countryside, that is at Chinese New Year, during the first 15 days of the first month or at the temple festival.

33 See note 27, pp. 2-3.

The form of reciting required washing one's hands and mouth, burning incense and bowing to the west before beginning. The reciter used to sit in front of a small table on the bed (*k'ang*), facing the audience sitting on stools. While the reciting was going on, no one was allowed to leave the room. At certain points, some listeners, who had been appointed before, repeated parts of the verse and concluded by saying: *A-mi-t'uo-fo* (equivalent to the Christian *Amen*). This ritual is not kept to quite as strictly as in the past, but it is still performed in a very solemn way.

We think that in Ho-hsi reciting a *pao-chüan* is a sort of religious act which combines elements from three different schools or religions, namely Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. In many *pao-chüan* the listener is asked to become a wise man or woman 成聖 (*ch'eng sheng*), a Buddha 成佛 (*ch'eng fo*), or an immortal 成仙 (*ch'eng hsien*). This expresses a certain tolerance in Chinese society towards various religions, which is rarely found in Christianity or Islam, thereby giving an impressive example of the peaceful coexistence of different religions on the basis of one Chinese culture.

Pao-chüan propagating the principle of "cause and effect" take the punishment of hell as deterrents and admonish people to do good, to treat their parents with reverence, to work diligently and to use material things sparingly in order to be rewarded by heaven. This stabilizing function which *pao-chüan* have in society is the reason why even cadres of the CCP supported their spread.

We have - on the other hand - not found any traces of the White Lotus Sect (*pai-lien chiao*) in the Ho-hsi texts³⁴, the main interest of the reciters seems to be in their contents and moral principles.

Finally we would like to emphasize that this lecture is not intended to present conclusions but is only a report on our work at the University of Trier. We are here to learn from all those present. We would like to ask you to forgive us for all shortcomings and mistakes that we may unwillingly have presented.

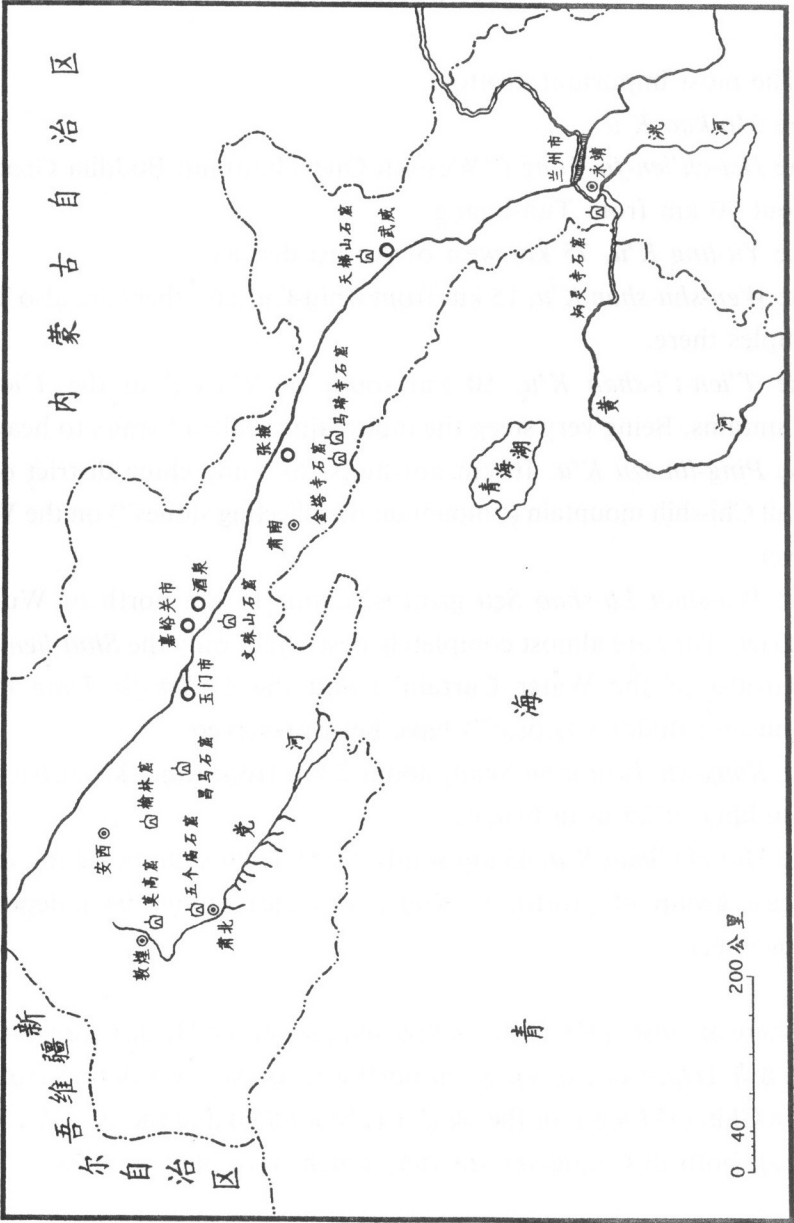
34 See note 3, Li Shih-yü on the White Lotus Sect.

Appendix A

The most important grottos:

1. The *Mo-kao K'u*
2. The *Hsi-ch'ien-fo Tung* ("Western One Thousand Buddha Grotto"), about 70 km from Tun-huang.
3. The *Yü-ling K'u*, 75 km west of An-hsi district.
4. The *Wen-shu-shan K'u*, 15 km from Chiu-Ch'üan, there are also Taoist temples there.
5. The *T'ien-t'i-shan K'u*, 50 km south of Wu-wei in the T'ien-t'ai mountains. Being very steep the mountain is called "stairs to heaven".
6. The *Ping-lin-szu K'u*, 10 km northwest of Yung-ching district on the small Chi-shih mountain ("mountain of collecting stones") on the Yellow River.
7. The *Wu-shan La-shao Szu* grottos, about 15 km north of Wu-shan district. They are almost completely destroyed, only the *Shui-lien Tung* ("Grotto of the Water Curtain") and the *Ch'ien-fo Tung* ("One Thousand Buddha Grotto") have been preserved.
8. The *Kang-ku Ta-hsiang Shan*, about 2 km from Kang-ku district with a Buddha of 25 m in height.
9. The *Mai-chi Shan K'u*, 45 km southeast of T'ien-shui, being the second largest group of grottos in Kansu province (about 94 independent altogether).

There are also a lot of distinctive temples in the Ho-hsi corridor, e.g. the 海藏寺 (*Hai-tsang Szu*), 3 km northwest of Wu-wei dating from the Eastern Chin (317-420), or the 西來寺 (*Hsi-lai Szu*) and the 宏仁寺 (*Hung-jen Szu*), both in Chang-yeh district, which were built in 1078.



甘肃河西走廊主要石窟分布图

(Map taken from: *Ho-hsi Shih-k'u*. Peking: Wen-wu, 1987.)