

The Historical Value of the Ch'üan-chen Sources in the Tao-tsang
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Scholars have long been aware of the large number of Taoist and Buddhist writings which have accumulated in the past two millennia. But until recently relatively few historians of Chinese history have attempted to search for data of historical significance among these works. Several efforts have been made to examine the value of Buddhist works as historical sources, some of which have been shown to be of high value for the study of Chinese history.¹ However, very little effort has been made to examine the Taoist canon as a historical source. This paper is a preliminary report on the historical value of a small portion of the voluminous Tao-tsang 道藏, or Taoist canon.²

All the works examined here relate to the Ch'üan-chen 全真 sect and almost all of them are written by Ch'üan-chen adherents. These works can be roughly divided into three categories: collected works, biographies, and miscellany. I shall briefly discuss the contents of each category:

(1) Collected Works

The majority of the works fall into this category. A collected work is usually a compilation of the poems and essays of a Ch'üan-chen master edited by one of his disciples. Poetry dominates Ch'üan-chen writings probably because of the occasional nature of the genre. The poems may feature instructions to disciples, lyrical self-expression, or efforts at proselytizing the Ch'üan-chan sect.

(2) Biographies

While resembling the biographies of the dynastic histories in form, the individual biographies of each of the Ch'üan-chen masters must be used with discretion, for they contain many apocryphal accounts.

(3) Miscellany

These works do not fit into "collected works" or "biographies". They include travel diaries, collections of inscriptions on tablets from Taoist temples, magical formulas and sect regulations. Not all of the books that I have examined contain valuable historical information. For example, those works dealing with sect regulations and magical formulas yield little useful data on contemporary events. Most of these sources in fact contain but a small proportion of useful information, encountered only sporadically or in fragments. Among the material I have examined, nothing approaches the Buddhist church history, Fo-tsu t'ung-chi 佛祖統記 by Chih-p'an 志磐 which, following the style of dynastic histories, includes annals, treatises, tables, and biographies. The historically valuable material from Ch'üan-chen sect writings is almost all in biographical form.

I would like now to discuss each category more specifically in terms of its historical value. Although most Ch'üan-chen writings fall into the category of collected works, this category contains very little historical data. The poems, which are the major components of the collected works, carry very little information that would attract historians' attention. Most of them were written to teach Ch'üan-chen followers self-cultivation or to persuade

people to join the Ch'üan-chen sect. The titles of the poems may even be more valuable than the poems themselves, for they yield such information as to whom and on what occasion the poems were written. From the names or the recipients of the poems we are able to identify what class of people were associated with the Ch'üan-chen sect. The recipients represent classes ranging from emperors to female adherents, from Buddhist monks to regional commanders, and from Jürchen officials to Chinese literati. Many poems were written by the Ch'üan-chen masters to express their gratitude for imperial patronage.

Ch'iu Ch'u-chi 邱處機 wrote a preface to the elegy for Emperor Shih-tsung 世宗 of the Chin which provides us with a detailed account on his experiences at Emperor Shih-tsung's court.³ This account can also be found in several other Taoist works, but it is not found in the Chin History 金史. Professor Yao Ts'ung-wu 姚從吾 considered this account as reliable,⁴ and it has been used to show Emperor Shih-tsung's interest in popular religions in his last years. It is recorded in Wang Ch'u-i's 王處 Yün-kuang chi 雲光集 that he was summoned to Emperor Shih-tsung and Emperor Chang-tsung's 章宗 courts.⁵ These events are not found in the dynastic history. Probably the historians thought that they were too trivial to be included in official history. Another trivial matter which is not recorded in the dynastic history is that Prince Hsien-tsung 顯宗, second son of Shih-tsung, once painted a portrait of Chuang-tzu.⁶ In Yün-kuang chi, there is also a poem by Wang Ch'u-i entitled "Refusing to receive a foreign envoy who came to visit me".⁷ This small matter suggests that the popularity of the Ch'üan-chen sect spread even beyond the borders of China. It also implies that this Ch'üan-chen master, for some reason, was unwilling to deal with foreign envoys. Obviously, it would have been desirable had the source specified who the foreign envoy was or why Wang Ch'u-i refused to grant him an audience.

The biographies furnish us numerous accounts of Ch'üan-chen masters' visits to the Chin and the Yüan courts. According to the Yüan History 元史, Chinggis Khan sent Liu Chung-lu 劉仲祿 and Jabar 札巴兒 to summon Ch'iu Ch'u-chi to his court.⁸ But, throughout the Ch'üan-chen documents only Liu Chung-lu's name is mentioned; Jabar is not mentioned at all. Professor Yao Ts'ung-wu made a detailed examination of this incident, concluding that the Yüan History was wrong.⁹ This suggests how Ch'üan-chen works can be used to correct mistakes made in the official history. It is also recorded in the Yüan History that both the Chin and the Sung sent envoys to invite Ch'iu Chiu-chi to their courts, but Ch'iu refused to go. Unfortunately, it yields no further detail. However the Ch'üan--chen documents provide us with the dates of these two events, the names of the two Emperors and the names of the envoys, Clearly, Ch'üan-chen works can usefully supplement the official histories.

Numerous accounts of warfare, banditry, famine and drought are recorded in the Ch'üan-chen collections. The Ch'üan-chen followers believed that their sect provided relief for those people who suffered from disasters. The following account gives us a vivid scene of North China after the fall of the Chin.

Since the Great Dynasty (i.e. Yüan) prospered and the Chin lost its rule, warfare has never ceased. It has gone on for almost forty years now. Wherever the horseshoe touched, the toughest fortress would fall into pieces. Wherever swords appeared, people and things would turn into ashes. Valleys changed into mounds... Every household was slaughtered and nine out of ten families were exterminated. The orphaned were not exempted. Not one of ten-thousand survived. Those who escaped the slaughtering and those who were not yet dead were lonely and sad. Those who lost their fathers and sons were desolate and lonely.... At a critical time like that one must rely on Taoism for relief.¹⁰

Accounts as explicit as this are not often to be found in the standard histories, and they are certainly valuable in giving us first-hand pictures of what North China was like at that time.

Most of the disasters that we find recounted in the Ch'üan-chen writings can be verified through the official histories. But sometimes the Ch'üan-chen sources provide us with additional information. For example, it is recorded in Kan-shui hsien-yüan lu 甘水仙源錄, that in 1221 "The Heavenly Soldiers (i.e. Mongol soldiers) came down to Ho-tung 河東 (present day Shansi) and took half of the populace of the Che 澤 district (present day Chin-ch'eng 晉城) into captivity."¹¹ But in the official history we only find that "the Mongols attacked the T'ien-ching Pass 天井關 (near present day Chin-ch'eng)" without any mention of the captives.¹²

The last group of materials contains various interesting pieces of information. It is recorded in the Kung-kuan pei-chih 宮觀碑志 that in the second month of 1190 Empress T'u-tan 徒單 (Emperor chang-tsung's mother) became sick. All medicine failed to cure her. Consequently, the Emperor held a general Taoist sacrifice for seven days and seven nights and granted the Taoists five million pieces of cash. After that the Empress recovered and expressed her deep gratitude to the Taoists. In the same year the Emperor built a palace next to the Taoist T'ien-ch'ang temple 天長觀 for his mother. He also allotted a section of the palace to the temple so the Taoists could build a house to store the printing blocks of the Taoist Canon.¹³ The above account is not found in the Chin History, except for a line mentioning that in the sixth month of the year 1190 the Emperor served his mother in a temple, probably the one that he had built for her.¹⁴ The above accounts give one the impression that Emperor Chang-tsung was really on good terms with the Ch'üan-chen sect. Yet it is recorded in the Chin History that in the eleventh month of the same year Emperor Chang-tsung banned the Ch'üan-chen for the reason that it "deluded the multitude and disordered the people".¹⁵ One cannot but wonder what caused Chang-tsung's radical change of attitude toward the sect in so short a period of time.

Another interesting account is found in the Hsüan-feng ch'ing-hui lu 玄風慶會錄 which is the only work among those I am dealing with here was written by a non-Taoist. This book is attributed to I-la Ch'u-ts'ai 移刺楚材¹⁶ and it is supposed to be a record of Chinggis Khan's audience with Ch'iu Ch'u-chi. According to Professor Yao Ts'ung-wu, this book is quite reliable.¹⁷ It contains an interesting item not found anywhere else:

Previously, after the Emperor Shih-tsung of the Chin ascended the throne for ten years, he over-indulged in sex and was overcome by exhaustion. Every morning he needed to be carried by two men to the court.¹⁸

Emperor Shih-tsung of the Chin has been hailed by traditional historians as a miniature of the ancient sage rulers Yao and Shun. He was the best ruler of the Chin dynasty. Could it be possible that this "minor Yao or Shun" indulged to the extent that he could not even walk? Did Ch'iu Ch'u-chi make this up in order to persuade Chinggis Khan not to indulge in sex? I am afraid that these questions will have to remain unsolved. The Kung-kuan pei-chih also provides us with information that Chao Ping-wen's 趙秉文 calligraphy was found in a Taoist temple.¹⁹ Chao Ping-wen, a leading literati and a high official of the Chin dynasty, was known to be familiar with the Three Doctrines (i.e. Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism) and wrote on all three of them. However, for some reason, he disassociated himself from Buddhism and Taoism by destroying all of his writings on those two religions. His only extant work, Hsien hsien lao-jen fu-shui wen-chi 閑閑老人滄水文集, contains nothing on Buddhism and Taoism. The piece of evidence unearthed here confirms that at one time at least he was associated with the Ch'üan-chen sect.

One Ch'üan-chen document is of course very well known, the Ch'ang-ch'un chen-jen hsi-yu chi 長春真人西遊記, which is the travel account of Ch'iu Ch'u-chi's (H. Ch'ang-ch'un) enroute to the Mongol court in Central Asia recorded by Ch'iu's disciple Li Chih-ch'ang 李志常. It has been translated into English by Arthur Waley as The Travels of An Alchemist. It is very useful for the study of the customs and geography of Central Asia. This is also the only Ch'üan-chen work which is included in the Ssu-pu pei-yao 四部備要。

I would like now to say a few words about some of the work that has been done to make the Tao-tsang and Ch'üan-chen materials in particular more accessible. There is a book entitled Tao-tsang mu-lu hsiang-chu 道藏目錄詳注 by Pai Yün-chi 白雲霽 of Ming dynasty. Although the title indicates that it is a "detailed" annotated bibliography, it fails to provide any information at all on some books. For example, under the entry for Wu-chen chi 悟真集, it merely gives the number of chuan without even indicating the author. There is another volume, Tao-tsang yüan-liu k'ao 道藏源流考 written by Ch'en Kuo-fu 陳國符 (Shanghai, 1949), who was a professor of chemistry. Ch'en deals with several of the Ch'üan-chen works, but, unfortunately, he was more interested in dating them and identifying their authors than in examining their contents as such. More recently, Liu Ts'un-yan has written an article entitled "The Compilation and Historical Value of the Tao-tsang" which is included in Essays on the Sources for Chinese History edited by Donald D. Leslie, et al (Canberra, 1973). This article provides us with a detailed history of the compilation of the Tao-tsang together with a few remarks on its historical value. Some of the Ch'üan-chen works are included in the Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu 四庫全書. The annotation on them in the Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao 總目提要 provides us with helpful but usually insufficient information.

The most useful tool for locating historical sources in the Tao-tsang is the Tao-tsang tzu-mu yin-te 道藏子目引得. This index, compiled under the direction of Weng Tu-chien 翁獨健, is one of the Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index series. In this work, Weng Tu-chien severely criticized Leon Wieger's index to the Tao-tsang, which is incorporated in Wieger's book entitled Taoism, yet he included it in this index. In addition to title and author indexes, Weng also compiled a separate index to the names of the Taoists based on seventy-seven historical works in the Tao-tsang.

Now, a few words on the authors of our sources before I sum up. The collected works are almost exclusively done by the Ch'üan-chen Taoists. Only one of the authors is female and only one book is attributed to a non-Chinese Ch'üan-chen disciple. There are also cases where the editors are Ch'üan-chen disciples but the authors outsiders. Take the Kan-shui hsien-yüan lu for example. It is a compilation of biographical information on the Ch'üan-chen Taoists written either by Ch'üan-chen disciples or by contemporary literary figures and high officials who were not themselves Ch'üan-chen adherents. This book also includes some inscriptions from temple tablets recording the histories of the temples. For reasons of convenience, I have placed it under the category of biography.

I started this study with the hope that I would be able to find many valuable historical sources. The result, I must admit, is rather disappointing, for the bulk of the literature carries little historical value. Most discouraging is the fact that one could not even formulate a picture of Ch'üan-chen church organization. However, this research has not come up empty either, for I did at least find some sources of value. One may not conclude that the Tao-tsang as a whole is not useful for historical research simply because the Ch'üan-chen sources are not highly significant. The Ch'üan-chen materials comprise only a tiny portion of the entire body of the Tao-tsang and there are many works of historical interest that are not related to the Ch'üan-chen sect. The following are some examples.

- (1) Li-tai ch'ung-tao chi 曆代崇道記 by Tu Kuang-t'ing 杜光庭. This book covers the era from King Mu of Chou (1001-947 B. C.) to the Sung dynasty. It tells us how Taoism developed and expanded under each of those rulers.
- (2) Chiang-huai i-jen li 江淮異人錄 by Wen Tsao 溫造. This work can be used as a source for unofficial biography.
- (3) Hsüan-t'ien shang-ti ch'i sheng-lu 玄天上帝啟聖錄. This book is a collection of short essays and notes of historical value.
- (4) Han-wu-ti nei-chuan 漢武帝內傳 and Han-wu-ti wai-chuan 外傳 by Tung-fang Shuo 東方朔. Two legendary accounts of the Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty including biographical information on other individuals.

The Tao-tsang, without doubt, contains much valuable data which can be used to verify and supplement other historical sources. The problem is that such information is scattered about in a wide variety of writings. A great contribution remains to be made by scholars who will systematically analyze the historically relevant content of the Tao-tsang and order it that it can be conveniently exploited by historians in general.

NOTES

1. Works such as Ch'en Yüan's 陳垣 Chung-kuo Fo-chiao shih-chi kai-lun 中國佛教史籍概論 . (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962), and Jan Yüan-hua's "The Fo-tsu-t'ung-chi: a biographical and bibliographical study," *Oriens Extremus*, 10 (1963), 61-82.
2. The Tao-tsang is a huge repository of works on a variety of subjects including self-cultivation, alchemy, medicine and pre-Ch'in philosophy. The works are divided into three main and four supplementary divisions. Each main division is further divided into twelve subdivisions including biographies, rituals, methods (for self-cultivation), alchemical techniques etc. The works in the three main divisions largely fall into appropriate subdivisions although a few are misplaced. The four supplementary divisions are not subdivided at all although works of related interest are usually concentrated. In the absence of anything resembling a subject index, it is difficult to locate material on any specific topic.
3. P'an-ch'i chi 潘溪集, 3/6a-b.
4. "Yuan ch'iu Ch'u-chi nien p'u" 元邱處機年譜, in Tung-pei shih lun-ts'ung 東北史論叢 (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1959), pp. 230-231.
5. P'an-ch'i chi, 1/1a, 2/1a-2a, 3/3b.
6. Ibid., 3/10b.
7. Ibid., 2/35a.
8. Yüan Shih 202
9. Yao Ts'ung-wu, loc. cit., pp. 269-271.
10. Chi Chih-chen 姬志真, Yün-shan chi 雲山集, 7/19b.
11. Li Tao-ch'ien 李道謙 ed., 8/23a.
12. Chih Shih 16.
13. Wei Po-hsiao 魏博霄, "Shih-fang ta T'ien-ch'ang kuan p'u-t'ien ta-chiao jui-ying chi" 十方大天觀普天大醮瑞應記, 26aff. See also in the same book, Feng Chih-heng 馮志亨 "Ch'ih-chien p'u-t'ien huang-lu ta-chiao pei" 敕建普天黃祿大醮碑 8a, and Tang Huai-ying 黨懷英, "Chung-tu shih-fang ta t'ien-ch'ang kuan p'u-tien ta-chiao kan-ying pei," 中都十方大天長觀普天大醮感應碑, 28b.
14. Chin Shih 9.
15. Ibid.
16. Wang Shih-chen 王世貞 of the Ming dynasty suggested that I-la Ch'u-ts'ai was Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai 耶律楚材 . See his Yen-chou shan-jen hsü-kaio 兗州山人續稿 , ch. 158. However, Ch'en Yu-shan 陳友珊 considered that I-la Ch'u-tsai was a mistake for I-la A-hai 阿海. See his "Ch'ang-ch'un Tao-chiao Yuan-liu," 長春道教源流 in Yen I-p'ing 嚴一萍 ed. Tao-chiao yen-chiu tzu-liao 道教研究資料 Vol. 2, (Taipei: I-wen yin-shu kuan, 1974), pp. 391-392.
17. Yao Ts'ung-wu, loc. cit., pp. 256-259.
18. 9a.
19. "Ch'ung-yang ch'eng-tao-kung chi," 重陽成道宮記 3b.