

THE LAST TAOIST GRAND MASTER AT THE T'ANG IMPERIAL COURT: LI HAN-KUANG AND T'ANG HSUAN-TSUNG

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It is becoming increasingly apparent that the interest of the T'ang emperors in the Taoist religion was far more than a matter of casual curiosity. From the days of Li Yuan's rise as T'ang Kaotsu, Taoists had actively promoted the ascendance of the T'ang, and had received official recognition for assisting the T'ang to demonstrate its legitimacy. A key element in the initial legitimation of T'ang rule had been an age-old prophecy that the coming Taoist messiah -- and perfect ruler -- would be surnamed Li.¹ While that prophecy had been circulated in various segments of pre-T'ang society, it had received particular prominence with the Shang-ch'ing (or Mao-shan) order of Taoism.² For that and other reasons, it was primarily the Taoist masters of the Shang-ch'ing order whom the T'ang emperors regularly patronized.

The association of the T'ang court with Shang-ch'ing Taoism commenced in the days of Kao-tsu, when the Shang-ch'ing master Wang Yuan-chih (528-635) had confirmed the T'ang founder in his possession of Heaven's mandate.³ By confirming Li Yuan in his imperial authority,

The author is grateful for the suggestions and comments made by Paul W. Kroll on an earlier draft of this paper.

¹ See Anna Seidel, "The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism," *History of Religions* 9 (1969), 216-47 Cf Howard J Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty* (New Haven, 1985), 62-69; and Woodbridge Gingham, "The Rise of Li in a Ballad Prophecy," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 57 (1937), 368-74.

² See Anna Seidel, "Taoist Messianism," *Numen* 31 (1984), 171-72; Poul Andersen, *The Method of Holding the Three Ones: A Taoist Manual of Meditation of the Fourth Century A.D.* (London, 1980), 14-15; Michel Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung ching," in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religions*, ed. Welch and Seidel (New Haven, 1979), 153-54

³ Among the numerous biographies of Wang, see *Chiu T'ang shu* 192 5125-26; *Hsin T'ang shu* 204 5803-4; Li Po, *Chen-hsi chuan*, in *Yun-chi ch'i-ch'ien* (HY 1026) 5.11a-13a; end *Mao-shan chih* (HY 304) 22.1a-11a (being an inscription text by Wang Min, dated 642). Discussions of the career of Wang Yuan chih appear in Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk*, 69-73; Edward H. Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times* (Boulder, 1980), 45-46; Strickmann, *Le Taoisme du Mao Chan: Chronique d'une revelation* (Paris, 1981), 32-33; Charles David Benn, *Taoism as Ideology in the Reign of Emperor Hsuan-tsung (712-755)* (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Michigan, 1977), 31-35; Kubo Noritada, *Dokyoshi* (Tokyo, 1977), 222-28; Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Eisei e no*

Wang had re-established the political role which the Taoist "Celestial Masters" (*t'ien-shih*) had developed four hundred years earlier. (At that time, Chang Lu, grandson of the Taoist patriarch Chang Tao-ling, had aligned his movement with Ts'ao Ts'ao at the establishment of the Wei dynasty.) In addition, by proclaiming T'ang Kao-tsu as the Son of Heaven, Wang Yuan-chih had proven the value of Taoism as a force for imperial legitimation within the context of seventh-century China.

Kao-tsu's successors continued to patronize Shang-ch'ing Taoists, most notably the recluse P'an Shih-cheng (585-682), who was recognized as Wang Yuan-chih's successor.⁴ But while Kao-tsung, Wu Tse-t'ien, Chung-tsung, and Juitsung maintained the T'ang association with Shang-ch'ing Taoism, it grew much more intimate under Hsuan-tsung. It is likely no coincidence that it was under Hsuan-tsung that the greatest Taoist master of T'ang times, Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen (646-735), flourished.

Ssu-ma (a descendant of the Chin ruling house) was an accomplished calligrapher, artist, and litterateur. He was furthermore acknowledged as the successor to the principal lineage of Shang-ch'ing Taoism, which traced back through P'an Shih-cheng and Wang Yuan-chih to T'ao Hung-ching (456-536).⁵ Ssu-ma was extensively patronized by Juitsung and Hsuan-tsung. According to contemporary documents, he was esteemed as a sagely advisor: like the ancient worthies Kuangch'eng and Hsu Yu, who had purportedly aided the Yellow Emperor and Yao, Ssu-

negai: Dokyo (Kyoto, 1970), 124-27; and Miyakawa Hisayuki, "Toshitsu no sogyo to Bozanha dokyo," *Bukkyo shigaku* 1.3 (1950).

⁴ P'an studied under Wang during the period 605-617, then dwelt as a recluse on Mt. Sung for more than twenty years. Both T'ang Kao-tsung and Empress Wu (Wu Tse-t'ien) summoned P'an to the court, and the *Tao-tsang* preserves the text of a purported colloquy between Kao-tsung and P'an: *Tao-men ching-fa hsiang-ch'eng tz'u-hsu* (HY 1120). Among the biographies of P'an Shih-cheng, see *Chiu T'ang shu* 192.5126; *Hsin T'ang shu* 196.5605; and *Ch'uan T'ang wen* 215.13b-15a (being a eulogy by the poet Chten Tzu-ang [661-702]). Discussions of P'an's career can be found in Strickmann, *Taoisme du Mao Chan*, 33; Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 46; and Ch'en Kuo-fu, *Tao-tsang yuan-liu k'ao* (1949; rpt. Peking, 1963), 50-52.

⁵ T'ao is best known for two compilations of Shang ch'ing traditions, the *Chen kao* [Declarations of the Perfected] and the *Teng-chen yin-chueh* [Concealed Instructions for Ascent to Perfection]. Among the numerous accounts of T'ao's life and career, see especially Chia Sung, *Hua-yang T'ao Yin-chu nei-chuan* (HY 300); Nan-shih (Peking, 1975), 76.1897-1900; and *Mao-shan chih*, 21.5b-11a. There is also an inscription text concerning T'ao from the hand of Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen, dated 4 October 724: *Mao-shan Chen-po hsien-sheng pei yin-chi* in *Mao-shan chih* 22. 19a-20a; also in Chia Sung's text, 3.6a-7a. Among modern studies of T'ao Hung-ching, see especially Strickmann, *Taoisme du Mao Chan*, 1-28; and Ishii Masako, *Dokyogaku no kenkyu: To Kokei o chushin ni* (Tokyo, 1980).

ma is said to have seconded Juitsung and Hsuan-tsung, guiding and uplifting them in a moral and spiritual capacity.⁶

The Shang-ch'ing masters from Wang Yuan-chih to Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen were all immortalized in the T'ang dynastic histories (as well as in numerous additional materials). But Ssu-ma was the last Shang-ch'ing master to receive a biography in the standard histories. An assessment of the role of Taoists in T'ang society which relied solely upon those sources would give the impression that after Ssu-ma died in 735, the T'ang emperors relinquished their close relationship with the representatives of Shang-ch'ing Taoism. In actuality, however, a thorough analysis of relevant materials preserved in the *Ch'uan T'ang wen* and the *Tao-tsang* reveals that such was not the case. In fact, there was another Shang-ch'ing Taoist upon whom T'ang Hsuan-tsung bestowed at least as much attention as he had upon Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen. That individual was Ssu-ma's student and successor, Li Hankuang (683-769).

Li, the foremost disciple of Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen, was recognized as the successor to Ssu-ma's spiritual authority, and the thirteenth Grand Master (*tsung-shih*) of the Shang-ch'ing order.⁷ He is reported to have been an accomplished scholar in the Taoist classics, and to have shown a proficiency at calligraphy, though he reportedly hung up his brush in filial deference when someone suggested that his skill exceeded that of his father.

Li is portrayed as having devoted most of his adult life to supervising the principal Shang-ch'ing establishment at Mao-shan (in Kiangsu), and to restoring the textual relics of the fourth-century founders of the Shang-ch'ing order. Documentary evidence indicates that during the last ten years of his reign, Hsuan-tsung continually endeavored to attach Li Han-kuang to his cortege. But Li is represented as having been intrinsically uncomfortable with the intense imperial attention, and as continually excusing himself on grounds of illness or old age. Nonetheless, the emperor showered Li with gifts and with missives, the corpus of their correspondence (which is still extant) becoming quite extensive.⁸

⁶ For the life of Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen, and his image in contemporary and later materials, see J. Russell Kirkland, "Taoists of the High T'ang: An Inquiry into the Perceived Significance of Eminent Taoists in Medieval Chinese Society" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana Univ., 1985), 43-70, 218-300.

⁷ The title *tsung-shih* is often translated "patriarch"

⁸ The correspondence between Li and Hsuan-tsung is preserved in *Mao-shan chih*, ch. 2; and in *Ch'uan T'ang wen*, ch. 36 passim, 44 7b and 927 1b-5a.

In the years immediately following Li's death in 769, his life was commemorated in two inscription texts composed by members of the imperial administration. An examination of those works provides information not only about the career of Li Han-kuang, but also about the role of Shang-ch'ing Taoism in high T'ang government and society.

The earlier of the two memorial texts devoted to Li is dated 15 September 772. It was composed by Liu Shih (fl. ca. 770), Secretary of the Imperial Library (*mi-shu lang*).⁹ It reads as follows.

Taoism (*tao-men*) [arising] at Hua-yang [was] like Confucianism (*ju-men*) [arising] at Shu-ssu: their profound evolution was initiated here.¹⁰ Rising like the brilliant sun at dawn, there were the Mao brothers of the Western Han. Concealing their luminosity and [undergoing] secret transformation, there were the Hsu family of the Eastern Chin. Hiding their brightness and blending their activities in order to initiate the influence of the Tao, there were Master Chen-po of the Liang [i.e. T'ao Hung ching] and Master Hsuan-ching of the T'ang [i.e. Li Han-kuang].

During the *K'ai-yuan* period [713-742], Hsuan-tsung respectfully invited the Venerable Master (*tsun-shih*) (i.e. Li), and inquired concerning governance. [Li] responded, saying, "The *Tao te ching* is the teacher of rulers and kings. Formerly, Emperor Wen of the Han put its words into practice, and the whole world [achieved] benevolence (*jen*) and longevity." [The emperor] then inquired concerning the Golden Tripods (*chin-ting*)¹¹ [Li] replied, "The Tao and its Virtue are public [matters]. Arising lightly [as an immortal] is a private [matter] within the public [matter]. At times manifesting the private [matter] is the sage who

⁹ The text is entitled *T'ang Mao-shan Tzu-yang kuan Hsuan-ching hsien-sheng pei*; it is preserved in *Mao-shan chih*, Master 23.1a-3b. Liu Shih, uncle of the noted official Liu Hun, was himself a celebrated prose writer. For lives of both men, see *Hsin T'ang shu* 142.467173.

¹⁰ Hua-yang was the name of a crypt-heaven (*tung-t'ien*) at Mt. Wangwu, and of a hermitage there; T'ao Hung-ching, Wang Yuan-chih and Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen had all resided there. Shu-ssu was reputedly a location where Confucius had taught his disciples (between the Shu and Ssu rivers); it is unattested in the *Lun-yu*, but is mentioned in the works of several Six Dynasties poets.

¹¹ I have not succeeded in determining the significance of this term.

abides and teaches. But if one seeks after life and pursues one's desires, that would be like [trying to] tie up the wind!" The emperor was pleased, and accordingly granted him the by name of Hsuan-ching. Before long, [Li] firmly begged leave on account of illness, and returned east to Kou-ch'u (i.e. Mao-shan).

The Master had the tabooed name Han-kuang. His original surname was Hung. Because [Empress Wu] Tse-t'ien tabooed the name Hung, [the family's] namer was changed to the surname of Li.¹² His father, Hsiao-wei was locally known as the Master of Chaste Seclusion (*Chen-yin hsien-sheng*). The family was originally [one of] learned scholars. They were registrants of Chin-ling.

Now when one's nature communes with the subtleties of the Tao, one's perfection has [the quality of] revolving around Non-being (*wu*). Students of the olden days, though they had attainments, if they were not outwardly sighing and chasing after sights, then they were inwardly reflecting and pursuing mental constructs; and if they were not distantly contemplating transforming metals, then they were immediately thinking of transforming desires. Students of the present day for the most part reveal [precisely] the opposite, for they practice principles of perfection, deeply contemplating subtleties; they present their true nature at the outset, developing and clarifying the primordial origination. Hsuan ching was such a person.

At the age of thirteen, he bade his family farewell and received the principles of the Tao.¹³ [Though his perception was so vast that he could] discern the mists [at the ends of] the sky, he was compassionate toward simple [folk].¹⁴

¹² The precise date of this name change is not indicated, but external data permit us to date it to the years 656-675: "Hung" was the personal name of the emperor Kao-tsung's fifth son, and became taboo when the youth was posthumously proclaimed emperor (see *Chiu T'ang shu* 86.2829-30; *Hsin T'ang shu* 81.3588-90; *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 202.6377). Yet the imperial surname was not tabooed, and, for a reason as yet undetermined, Hung Hsiao-wei traded his newly-tabooed surname for that of the imperial house. Had Hung been a government official, such an act might well have been adjudged hubris. But since he was quite obscure, it seems to have aroused no disapprobation at the time. Inasmuch as Li Han-kuang himself was not born until 683, it seems certain that his father would have already taken the Li surname, hence that Han-kuang would have entered the world with the name of Li.

¹³ The statement that Li obtained ordination at the tender age of thirteen may well constitute a scribal error, since in Yen Chen-ch'ing's text the age is given, much more plausibly, as twenty-three.

Though he moved within a darkened chamber, [he was reverent and humble] as though facing his sovereign or parent. Whenever people saw him, his essence and sentiments were wholly collected.

When young, he was proficient at seal and clerical script. Some praised him as surpassing his father [in calligraphic skill]. Once he had heard that critique, he never [again] wrote, to the end of his life.

In his *Hsien-hsueh ch'uan-chi* ["Notes on the Study of the Immortals"], he rectified a number of omissions. He also discussed the divergences and convergences of the Three Arcana (san-hsuan), and wrote the *Chen-ching* [*yin-i*] ["Pronunciation and Meaning of the Scriptures of the Perfected"] and *Pen-ts 'ao yin-i* ["Pronunciation and Meaning of the Pharmacopoeia"]. All [those works] are incisive and detailed. In his studies, he dispelled doubts and fully exhausted principles, like the bell which reverberates with sound.

Afterward, he served Lord Ssu-ma of Hua-kai peak (*Hua-kai feng Ssu-ma chun*) as his teacher. [Ssu-ma, who had] precious books in the cloudy script, emptied his satchel and conveyed them [all] to [Li]. [Ssu-ma] then eyed him and said, "[You are] truly a visitor from [the sphere of] Jade Purity. One who engages in meritorious practices while embracing Emptiness (*hsu- wu*) is inexhaustible in terms of the Tao. One who obliterates his traces while trusting to secluded moors is indeed shallow in terms of Virtue. Though one may transmit [teachings] at a great distance, it is more fitting to save people."

After this initiation, [Li] gave himself to study and received esoteric instruction. The Master's original vital force (*ch' i*) was not dispersed. [His] precious charts shone in the void, and [his] advanced numinosity was already enduring.¹⁵ [His] brilliance was constant. [His] motion was not a matter of openness, and [his] stillness was not a matter of closure. He matched the confluence of the myriad whfffs, and accorded with the genesis of unffication.¹⁶

¹⁴ For *ch'ing-shou*, I follow the reading *ch'ing-hsiao* found in *Yun chi ch'i-ch'ien* 5.16a.

¹⁵ For "charts" as tokens of Taoist ordination, see Anna Seidel, "Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments -- Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha," in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A.Stein*, Vol.2 (Brussels, 1981), 291-371.

The resultant manifestations can be named, [though] the eternal Tao cannot be named.¹⁷ When the flock of fools seeks me, how [then] can I reward them with [mere] verbal expositions?¹⁸ One gives birth and nurtures to achieve transformation, [until] emptiness blends things with the mind.¹⁹ The mind, in one transformation, attains learning; learning, in one transformation, attains the Tao. Unfied and pure, the life force naturally emerges. Being obtained, it is not seen, [yet it is that] whereby one lifts one's robes and goes forward. There being no far or near, one looks up to a model of primordial harmony. A vigorous disposition and completed nature is like the luxuriance of autumn fragrances mounting to the peaks, or the confluence of summer rains filling the streams.²⁰

The Master forgot his feelings for himself and yet was compassionate toward others. Auspicious omens repeatedly responded. He peered into the unity of all phenomena, and persons of all classes consulted him. His visage conveyed his intentions [to them]. He often would order an ornamented altar, close off the courtyard for a *chiao* fire, and [personally] select firewood.²¹ His essential rarity and sincere reverence were all of this type. Celestial documents of former times were passed down [and entrusted to] his perfect responsibility. Wishing to venerate and honor [him], the dukes and ministers implored him [to serve at court], trusting to [his embodiment of] Emptiness.

¹⁶ An allusion to *Chuang-tzu* 2. See *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu* (Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 20), 3; and A. C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and other writings from the book Chuang-tzu* (London, 1981), 49. See further Fung Yu-lan, *Chuang-tzu: A New Selected Translation with an Exposition of the Philosophy of Kuo Hsiang*, 2nd ed. (1933; rpt. New York, 1964), 44-45.

¹⁷ An allusion to the *Tao te ching*, sections 1 and 32.

¹⁸ An allusion to the *I ching*, hexagram 4, *tuan*. See *A Concordance to Yi Ching* (Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 10), 5; and Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, trans. Cary F. Baynes, (Princeton, 1967), 21-22.

¹⁹ For *i-hsin* I follow the reading *wu-hsin* found in *Yun-chi ch'I-ch'ien* 5.1 6a.

²⁰ This paragraph is designed to convey the proper principles of instruction in the Tao, and the qualities manifested by one who successfully completes such study.

²¹ For the *chiao* ritual in the T'ang Shang-ch'ing edition, see Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 42-43.

At the end of the month, he proceeded within the gates of the arcana and reverted to the perceptin of Perfected simplicity. He grasped the treasures of sympathy and temperance, and returned to the air of [the legendary sage-emperors] [Fu] Hsi and Huang [ti]²² Perfect were the teachings of our master!

In the winter of the fourth year of *Ta-li* in the eleventh month [December 769], he turned to address his advanced disciples Wei Ching-chao and Meng Chanjan, saying "I am about to submit to transformation."²³ His spirits were good, as if sitting in forgetfulness (*tso-wang*)²⁴ At the time of his death, he was aged eighty-seven. Numinous clouds descended upon his apartments. He held his screed (*chien*) as though he were alive.²⁵ According to the "Scriptures of the Perfected," these were precisely the profound subtleties of gradual transformation through the stages of immortality.

When the followers first came to know the Way of our master, we took it to be the flavor of sweet springs and drank of it. Only after long study do we wish to recount [the deeds of] the Perfected Ancestor [i.e. Li], in order to make them known to posterity. Having followed [the master's] Way, I venture to set forth its arcane air.

The Inscription reads:

²² The first half of this line is an allusion to the *Tao te ching*, section 67. The reference to the "air" of the sage-emperors Fu Hsi and Huang-ti reflects the Han concept of "The Ambience of Grand Tranquility" (*t'ai-p'ing chih ch'i*).

²³ Wei Ching-chao (d. 785) was recognized as Li's successor and the fourteenth Grand Master of the Shang-ch'ing tradition. He has a biography in *Mao-shan chih* 11.5b. The *Chen-hsi chuan* biography of Li Han-kuang names two successors of Wei, neither of whom were incorporated into the official Shangch'ing lineage (cf. Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 48).

²⁴ For the term *tso-wang* and its meaning during the T'ang, see Robinet, "Chuang tzu et le taoisme 'religieux,'" *Journal of Chinese Religions* 11 (1983), 92-99.

²⁵ A Taoist's "screed" represented a sort of celestial passport, "containing all vital information about oneself and one's attainment in the Tao, presented as a calling-card by the adept, upon his arrival at the gates" of paradise. See Paul W. Kroll, "In the Halls of the Azure Lad," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105 (1985), 83, n. 68.

Anciently, there was one powerful in reputation,
His primal essence rare and subtle.
The Yellow Emperor bequeathed [those qualities];
The Master obtained them. He gave rein to his heart and went forward,
Proceeding in union with the One.
What his Perfected nature encompassed was
The unified plan of the great Nonbeing.
He daily progressed on the path to immortality,
And did not discuss the time of [its] attainment.
People say that for ten thousand years
We will see his constant disposition.²⁶
Hsuan-tsung had the utmost admiration for him,
And summoned him to capital and court.
At the Purple Culmen (i.e. the palace) he was honored in vain
[In a manner unknown to [the Master of] the White Clouds
(i.e. Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen).
In a distant region, [I, his] disciple, came and went with delight;
Absent and present, he had numerous disciples.
With Perfected essence, self-possessed,
He submitted [to transformation] and departed.
How can others fathom [this]?
With his arcane protocols and secret instructions,
He inherently had an otherworldly rendezvous.

A few years after Liu Shih wrote, Li Han-kuang was commemorated by the prodigious scholar Yen Chench'ing (709-784; *chin-shih* 730).²⁷ Unlike Liu Shih's epitaph, Yen Chench'ing's

²⁶ For *ling*, I follow the reading of *ling* found in *Yun-chi chi-chien* 5.18a

²⁷ Yen was surely one of the more intriguing figures of the eighth century: official, poet calligrapher, bibliographer, genealogist, lexicographer, literary critic and religious historian, Yen Chen-ch'ing also found time to raise crucial armed resistance to the rebellion of An Lu-shan, and is said to have eventually achieved transcendence as a *hsien*. We know of the life of Yen Chen-ching not only from biographies in both

text is a formal biography, with relatively few panegyric passages.²⁸ It also presents a different image of Li Han-kuang and his relationship to the T'ang court.

The Master was surnamed Li, tabooed name Han-kuang. He was a registrant of Chiang-tu in Kuang-ling. He was originally surnamed Hung, but [the surname] was changed owing to the tabooed name of the Hsiao-ching emperor [i.e. Li Hung]. His ancestor in the twenty-first generation, Hung, was a Prefect of Chiang-hsia, who fled from Wang Mang, shifted his residence to Chin-ling, and accordingly became a registrant of that commandery.²⁹ His great-great-grandfather Wen-i was the secretary of the kingdom of Kueiyang under the Ch'en [dynasty]. His great-grandfather Jung it was the Superior Administrator (*ssu-ma*) of Lei chou under [the present] imperial administration. His grandfather K'an went into seclusion in order to pursue his intentions, and changed his residence to Chiang-tu.³⁰ His father Hsiao-wei was broadly learned and loved antiquity. He practiced the Tao of P'eng [Tsu] and [Lao] Tan (i.e. Lao-tzu). He had an extramundane friendship with Tzu-wei, the Refined Master Ssu-ma of T'ien-t'ai (i.e. Ssu-ma Ch'eng chen). His sincerity and genuine faithfulness became known in the region.³¹ For his conduct and deportment, the father was granted the posthumous title of Master of Orthodox Seclusion (Cheng-yin hsien-sheng).³²

standard histories (*Chiu T'ang shu* 128. 3589-97; *Hsin T'ang shu* 153.4854-61), but also from the original "account of conduct" (*hsing-chuang*) upon which those biographies were based (*Ch'uan T'ang wen* 514.9a). While Yen's interest in Taoism is recorded in his own writings (e.g. *Ch'uan T'ang wen* 338.25a), his translation to immortality was the subject of accounts in the *Li-shih chen-hsien t'i tao t'ung-chien* (HY 296) 32.5b-7a; *San-tung ch'un-hsien lu* (HY 1238) 14.15b-16b; and the *Hsien-li chuan*, a T'ang dynasty text by T'ai-shang yin-che ("The One Secluded in the Most High"), for which see E. D. Edwards, *Chinese Prose Literature of the T'ang Period* (London, 1937-38), II, 98.

²⁸ The text is entitled *Mao-shan Hsuan-ching hsien-sheng Kuang-ling Li-chun pei-ming ping-hsu*; it is preserved in *Mao-shan chih*, 23. 3b-8a; and in *Ch'uan T'ang wen* 340.3b-7b.

²⁹ I have located no further data on the original Hung.

³⁰ I have located no further information on Li's grandfather or great-grandfather.

³¹ For *shen*, read *shen*. [*characters not scanned - w.s.*]

³² For *i*, read *i*. Ch'en Kuo-fu emends Hung Hsiao-wei's title to *Chen-yin*, as in Liu Shih's text, noting that Yen avoided the character *chen* owing to a familial taboo (Ch'en Kuo-fu, *Tao-tsang yuan-liu k'ao*, 59).

The Master's mother was of the Wang clan of Lang-ya. She was [a person] of character and intelligence, and had virtue in her conduct.

When the Master was a babe-in-arms, he was highly exceptional. One bright day he took the Hsiao-ching all by himself, as if to hold it up and read it. As a lad with tufted hair, he loved places of serenity, and studied the classics by rote.

At age eighteen, he resolved to pursue the subtleties of the Tao. Consequently, he served as his teacher Master Li of the same district and explored the arts (i) for several years.

At the beginning of the *Shen-lung* period [705], he was ordained as a *tao-shih* on the basis of his pure conduct. He resided at the Lunghsing abbey. He was particularly adept at the subtleties of Lao-Chuang and the *Changes of Chou*.

He attended to mourning with exceptional solemnity.³³ His mouth never savored the taste of delicacies; he consumed only coarse grain. He let all the viands which were given him pass from his hands. When he announced that he was mortifying the flesh to do homage to his parents and family, there was none that was not distressed at it.

In the seventeenth year of *K'ai-yuan* [729], he received the transmission of the grand formulae from Refined Master Ssu-ma at Mt. Wangwu. He [comprehended] the numinous texts and golden writs fully at a single glance. He [conducted] a general investigation of both old and new, and was thoroughly enlightened regarding obscure tenets.

Hsuan-tsung understood that the Master had fully received the Way of [Ssu-ma] Tzu-wei, and consequently summoned the Master to perpetuate it by dwelling at the Yang-t'ai monastery at Mt. Wang-wu. In something more than a year, [Li] begged to return to Mao-shan. He edited and revised the scriptures and formulae [preserved there]. [Although there were] repeated summonses, he declined them all on account of illness, and would not leave [Maoshan].

³³ An allusion to the *I ching*, hexagram 62, *hsiang*. See *Concordance to Yi Ching*, 38; Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, 241.

In the winter of the fourth year of *T'ien-pao* [745-46], [the emperor] consequently ordered the functionaries of the inner palace to send [Li] a missive [sealed with] the imperial seal, to summon him.³⁴ After he arrived, he was invited into the inner chambers. Each time that [the emperor] wished to consult with and question him [about religious matters], [the emperor] first had to purify himself. One day [the emperor] requested the transmission of the Taoist formulae. The Master begged off because of a foot affliction, and many were those who did not accept the responsibility of adjudicating the propriety [of the master] Hsuan-tsung knew that he could not compel him, and desisted.

The Master noted that the sacred relics of Mao-shan had been dispersed to the point of being lost, and many of the Scriptures of the Perfected and secret registers were also scattered. He requested to return [to Mao-shan] to edit them. Consequently, there was a special edict installing him at the former residence of Yang [Hsi] and the Hsus at Tzu-yang.³⁵ He was thereupon rewarded and seen off with gifts of two hundred rolls of thin silk, two sets of religious vestments, a censer, and imperially composed verses. [The emperor! also prohibited hunting and fishing on the mountainside [at Mao-shan], and those who consumed strong foods and meat could not obtain entry. He [also] conducted public and private prayers and supplications [on behalf of all living things], and totally abolished the livestock pens.

The Master reached the mountain in the autumn of the sixth year [747]. In this year, imperial communications arrived three times, and the incessant favors and emoluments lit up the deepest of gorges.

In the beginning, there were in the mountain the scriptures and formulae which the Shang ching Perfected Ones -- Chief Administrator Hsu (*Hsu chang-shih*), Lord Yang (i.e., Yang Hsi), and T'ao Yin-chu (i.e., T'ao Hung ching) -- had

³⁴ In T'ang times, the term *chung-kuan* was the title of an office in the astronomical bureau (see Robert des Rotours, *Le traite des fonctionnaires et traite de l'armee traduit de la Nouvelle Histoire des T'ang* (Leiden, 1948), 1, 213). However, *chung-kuan* was also a generic term for functionaries in the inner palace.

³⁵ For the structures at Tzu-yang, see Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 2021.

themselves written out.³⁶ They had been handed down as treasures from generation to generation. With time, they had met with loss and destruction, and had been scattered and lost instead of being passed down. The Master received a mandate to seek them out, organize them completely, and present them to the throne.

On a previous occasion, Hsuan-tsung had wished to delve into the grand formulae, and requested that the Master become his teacher. [Li] to the end held to modesty and restraint, excused himself on the grounds of illness, and withdrew. Coming to the spring of the seventh year [748], Hsuan-tsung also wished to receive the Scriptures of the Perfected Ones of the Triune Crypts (*san-tung chen-ching*).³⁷ That spring, in the third month, [he had] the functionaries of the inner palace send [Li] a missive [sealed with] the imperial seal, indicating that on the eighteenth day of that month he would without fail receive the scriptures and pronouncements [of the Perfected] (*ching kao*).³⁸ On that day, he [tended to] the matter of purification and refinement at the Ta-t'ung palace. He subsequently revered the Master from a distance as a Master of Salvation (*tu-shih*).³⁹ At the same time, he conferred upon [Li] a set of garments, in order to extend to him the honor proper to his standing as a master. He then took "Hsuan-ching" as the Master's title of honor, and sanctioned the engraving of a stele at the office of the crypt of Hua-yang, in order to record it.⁴⁰

³⁶ The history of these materials is detailed in a section of T'ao Hung-ching's *Chen kao*, translated in Strickmann, "The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy," *T'oung Pao* 63 (1978), 41-62.

³⁷ According to the *Sui-shu* (35.1092), there were four levels of Taoist ordination, corresponding to four scriptural cycles. The second level involved the materials known as "the Triune Crypts" (*san tung*). (See especially Seidel, "Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments," 323-25.) More generally, however, *san-tung* was a comprehensive term for all the sacred materials of organized Taoism. Hence the precise referent of *san-tung chen-ching* in the present passage is not clear.

³⁸ A reference to the Shang-ch'ing corpus, the "Scriptures of the Perfected" and the *Chen kao*.

³⁹ *Tu-shih* is the reading in the *Mao-shan chih*; the *Ch'uan T'ang wen* reads *yuan-shih*, which is a military term. According to the *Shang-ch'ing san-tsun p'u-lu* (HY 164), 1a-3a, there were three "Masters of Salvation": the supreme deity, the deified Lao-tzu, and the Perfected One (*chen-jen*). One assumes that Yen intends us to believe that Hsuan-tsung viewed Li Han-kuang as a *chen-jen*.

⁴⁰ For these events, see further Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 23; Benn, *Taoism as Ideology*, 91-92.

In the summer of that year, in the fifth month, there were eighty-one stalks of the polypore of immortality (*chih*) which sprouted haphazardly between the pines and stones at the spot where [T'ao] Yin-chu had compounded elixirs.⁴¹ An edict caused the Master and the functionaries of the inner palace to prepare an announcement for the numinous immortals, seal the letter, and submit it.

In the summer, there was also an edict that two hundred households near the Tzu-yang monastery, and one hundred each at the T'ai-pting and Ch'ung-yuan abbeys, should remit their official compulsory labor in order to provide for [the offerings of] incense and fire.⁴²

In autumn, the seventh month, the Master was once again summoned. When he had arrived, he asked to reside in a Taoist abbey in order to tend to an illness. In the spring of the ninth year [750], he begged leave to return to his old mountain. In the summer of that year, in the sixth month, at the spot where the numinous polypores had previously appeared, there once more sprouted more than three hundred stalks, resplendent and extraordinary, such as no one had ever seen. The Master also made a drawing of them, and submitted it [to the throne].⁴³

In the winter of that year, [the emperor] once more summoned the Master, and installed him in a "detached cloister of Tzu-yang" [in the capital]. In the autumn of the tenth year [751], the Master once again begged to take his leave on the grounds of old age. He was sent off with imperially composed verses with a preface.

In the eleventh year [752], the Master received a directive that he and his disciples Wei Ching-chao and others should construct a separate precinct for *chai-*

⁴¹ Cf. *Mao-shan chih*, 2.23a-b. The appearance of the polypores was no doubt perceived as betokening divine approbation of the imperial ordination, as manifested in a characteristically Taoist symbol. For T'ao Hung-ching's involvement with alchemical elixirs, see Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching."

⁴² See the discussion of these events in Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 2122. On the two *kuan* mentioned, see pp. 24-25.

⁴³ The second crop of numinous polypores seems to have been taken as an omen approving Li's return to Mao-shan after a year and a half in the capital. The visual representation of the fungi which Li is said to have submitted to the throne may have constituted an attempt to impress upon Hsuan-tsung the notion that Heaven had ordained Li's tenancy at Mao-shan, rather than forced appearances at the capital.

rituals at Forested Ridge (Yu-kang), east of Tzu-yang.⁴⁴ He determined [to do it] with sincerity and reverence. That night, "sweet dew" appeared everywhere among the groves at the altar of the immortals. When the emperor learned of it, [he indicated] his joy and amazement in a special edict.⁴⁵

In the beginning, Master [T'ao] Yin-chu transmitted the Scriptures of the Perfected Ones of the Trinne Crypts to Master Sheng-hsuan (i.e., Wang Yuan-chih). Sheng-hsuan committed them to Master T'I-hsuan (i.e., P'an Shih-cheng). T'i-hsuan committed them to Master Cheng-i (i.e., Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen). Cheng-i committed them to the Master (i.e., Li Han-kuang). From the Master to Yin-chu was a total of five generations. They all inherited the Grand Orthodox Perfected Formulae of the Gates of Subtlety (*miao-men ta-cheng chen-fa*), whereby Mao-shan became the fountainhead of the study of the Tao for the entire world.⁴⁶ Oh! Positive and negative can be equalized, and externalities and the self become the same. Life and death can be forgotten, and waking therein becomes identical to dreaming. One who is like this how can he limit his mind to the fringes of transformation and change.⁴⁷

In the *Ta-li* reign, the *chi-yu* year, in winter, the fourteenth day of the eleventh month [16 December 769], the Master was secretly transformed (*tun-hua*) at the separate cloister of Tzu-yang.⁴⁸ His years were eighty-seven. On the

⁴⁴ Schafer discusses these events in *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 15. For the *chai* rituals as practiced at Mao-shan, see Schafer, 40-42. For more on the *chai*, see Werner Eichhorn, *Die Religionen Chinas* (Stuttgart, 1973), 229-30.

⁴⁵ "Sweet dew" was among the most rare and sublime of omens, fabled since classical antiquity. In other materials contemporary with Yen's inscription, we read that the "sweet dew" at Mao-shan was witnessed by a eunuch from Hsuan-tsung's palace, and that one of Li's followers conveyed two containers of the substance to the emperor. For these events, see the letters preserved in *Mao-shan chih* 2.16a-b; and in *Ch'uan T'ang wen* 927.3b-4a. Schafer discusses this matter in his *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 15. The appearance of the "sweet dew" was likely interpreted as having signified, at least in part, a heavenly blessing upon Li's permanent ensconcement at Mao-shan.

⁴⁶ Schafer discusses this passage in his *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 39.

⁴⁷ The language of this passage is strongly influenced by *Chuang-tzu*.

⁴⁸ Schafer gives this date as 13 December (*Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 47). He does, however, agree on 9 January as the date of the funeral.

eighth day of the twelfth month [9 January 770], a total of several thousand followers arrived to attend the funeral, wailing and paying their respects with proper ceremony.⁴⁹ The interment was shifted to the west of Mt. Lei-p'ing⁵⁰ The will directed that a bamboo staff, a wooden bench, a water pitcher, a dressing case, and a censer be arranged within a pine coffin.⁵¹ [Li's] intimates and disciples offered up fine admonitions with subdued compliance and self-restraint.

The Master's knowledge was perfected and pure, and his conduct was noble and lofty. His Tao exhausted the foundations of essence and destiny (*hsing-ming*), and his learning surpassed the boundaries of heaven and humanity. By means of [those qualities], he roamed the thickets of Kou-ch'u without care, and acted as the teacher of kings. He came and went in the halls of brilliance, and was specially favored with the honor of a sedan chair. On account of this, he went along with the currents, yet inquired of the ancient praise of the Yellow Emperor. He gazed into the mountains, yet requested a current audience with Hsuan-tsung.

Furthermore, he extensively perused all written works, and was strong in compilation and annotation. Through the texts on botany (*pen-ts'ao*), he became knowledgeable regarding pharmaceutical matters and involved with the life-processes. [Since those texts] were hard to use and difficult to follow, he compiled the [*Pen-ts'ao*] yin-i in two scrolls.⁵² He also considered *Lao-Chuang* and the *Changes of Chou* to be works of purity and serenity, and compiled the [*Lao-Chuang*] hsueh-chi ["Notes on the Study of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu"] and the [*Chou-i*] i-lueh ["The Meaning of the *Changes of Chou* in Brief"], each in

⁴⁹ Schafer (*Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 47) interprets the reference to kuan-hsi to mean that Li's "personal possessions, including his crown [and] slippers ... were buried in a pine coffin..." I read *kuan-hsi* as analogous to *kuan-lu*, which has the meaning of "proper ceremony" (*li-i*).

⁵⁰ Lei-p'ing was another mountain near Mao-shan (see Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 4).

⁵¹ It is odd that the Master's will should have specified that implements of daily use should be interred with him, as though he would make use of them in the next life. Such an archaic concept is difficult to reconcile with known Taoist views of the afterlife. Dr. Wiling O. Eide has suggested in a private communication that the reference to utilitarian implements may have been intended to demonstrate Li's personal simplicity and austerity, in the same manner as the reference to Li's diet of coarse grain.

⁵² For *yin*, read *k'un*.

three chapters. [He also wrote] the *Nei-hsueh chi* ["Notes on the Study of Inner (Realities)"] in two chapters, in order to preserve the matters bequeathed in the school of the immortals (*hsien-chia*). [In those works there was] no loss of either the terms or the realities; both the language and the purport were all-inclusive and expansive.⁵³

At first, when the Master was a youth, he was highly proficient at seal-style characters, and his clerical script was truly wondrous. A visitor praised him, saying that [Li's] skill was more excellent than [that of] his father. Consequently, he put aside his brush and did not write [again].

Hsuan-tsung mandated the hermit (*shan-jen*) Wang Min forcefully to request the Master to write out thirteen pages of the Shang[-ch'ing] scriptures in regular script, in order to restore the deficiencies of Yang and the Hsus.⁵⁴

The Master was capable in the Way of *yin-yang* and numerological divination, but did not regard aesthetic pursuits as his forte. He excelled at matters of concocting comestible potions, but did not regard the cultivation of longevity as his metier. But as regards deeply embracing simplicity and subtly savoring the mysterious ichor -- if it was not this magnificent paragon (*chih-jen*), [then] who could attain it?⁵⁵

In the second year of *ch'ien-yuan* [759/60], [I,] Chen-ch'ing, became prefect of Sheng-chou and acting imperial commissioner for western Chekiang (*Che-chiang-hsi chich-tu*).⁵⁶ I respectfully undertook [to perpetuate the Master's] perfect virtue, and reverentially contracted [to convey the Master's] arcane rarity.

⁵³ Ch'en Kuo-fu, *Tao-tsang yuan-liu k'ao*, 61, analyzes the reports of Li's *opera* in detail. My reconstruction of the full titles of Li's works on *Lao-Chuang* and the *Chou-i* follows the *Mao-shan chih* (ch. 9) rather than the *Hsin T'ang shu* (59.1518).

⁵⁴ Little is known of Wang Min, but see above, note 3.

⁵⁵ Like the term *chen-jen* -- which came to be applied to spiritually perfected beings in the Shang-ch'ing tradition -- the term *chih-jen* originated in the *Chuang-tzu*. In brief, the *chih-jen* was a person who had attained all the ideals of *Tao*, *te*, and *wu-wei*, and transcended material reality on a very concrete level (i.e., the *chih-jen* displayed seemingly superhuman powers).

⁵⁶ Sheng-chou was a short distance to the north of Mao-shan.

Subsequently, I specially dispatched a missive to Mao-shan, in order to extend an earnest supplication. The Master specifically directed the Refined Master Wei Chingchao to reply with a letter. [That] grace [shown to me,] Chench'ing, so enwrapped me that I bent my mind to the transcendental. Thus the Grand Master can gaze upward to the Purple Archive (*tzu-fu*), which is not far.⁵⁷ The affairs of royalty are not carelessly entrusted to [the Master of the] White Clouds, who is [now] distant.⁵⁸

As of the sixth year of *Ta-li* [771/72], [I,] Chen-ch'ing, gave up [the office of] prefect of Lin ch'uan, and returned by boat to Chien-yeh [i.e., modern Nanking]. I was about to settle my mind upon a range of hills, where my lofty tracks [could be] sheltered forever, but my prefectural assignment was changed to Wu-hsing.⁵⁹ Matters diverted my former intention, and I went to and fro in the region of the commandery, vainly harboring thoughts of venerating the Tao.

While I gazed with respect at the wooded peaks, forever carrying memories of the former mountain (i.e., Mao-shan), [Wei] Ching-chao, Kuo Hung, and others, because of the Master's flourishing ardor and fragrant admonitions, wished an engraved inscription, and asked the *tao-shih* Liu Ming-su to beseech this text [of me].⁶⁰

[I,] Chen-ch'ing, along with the Master's disciples "Chung-lin-tzu" -- Yin Shu -- and "I-ming-tzu" -- Wei Ch'u-mou -- received [the benefit of] discerning [the Master's] roamings in Perfection, and inherited [the benefit of] perceiving [the Master's] Virtue which embraced unity.⁶¹ I venture to strengthen his

⁵⁷ The Purple Archive was a place where immortals dwelt.

⁵⁸ I understand the last two lines to mean that the spiritual and political responsibilities once shouldered by the illustrious Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen have now safely been passed down from Li Han-kuang to his successor Wei Ching-chao.

⁵⁹ Wu-hsing was located in modern Chekiang, just south of lake T'ai.

⁶⁰ For *chieh*, read *hsi*.

⁶¹ I have not identified Yin Shu. Wei Ch'u-mou (749-801), scion of an illustrious house, was a rare example of a T'ang personage who spanned the "Three teachings" (*san-chiao*) -- Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Wei began as a *tao-shih*, converted to Buddhism, and held official posts in the imperial library and

reputation among the alleys and villages. How could it be sufficient to make a case for it within the ethereal vastness?

The text reads:

Holding to unity, integrated with the cosmos,
Is the filament and mainstay of humanity.
The Master made use of it,
[So] his vital force was kingly and his spirit was powerful.
Thus he set forth the arcane tenets
And the mystic gateway was thereby made known.
Consequently, he became the teacher of emperors,
And the *tao* of the emperor was robust.
Sweet dew manifested its auspiciousness,
And numinous polypores revealed its felicity.
Superior scholars said that [those portents signified] a
sympathetic response [in the cosmos]:⁶²
His noble influence soared on high.
Crane-like, he reverted to his immortal temple;
Cloud-like, he bade farewell to the emperor's district.
Returning in reversion, he attained old age,
Subtle and discerning in activity or retirement.⁶³
His roots in Virtue were free of complication,
And his mind in the Tao possessed constancy.
It is truly said that he shed his form (*hsing-chieh*)
While engrossed in "sitting in forgetfulness" (*tso-wang*).

imperial academy. In 796, Wei was one of twelve persons summoned to expound upon the three teachings before the T'ang emperor Te-tsung (see *Chiu T'ang shu* 135.3728-29; *Hsin T'ang shu* 167.5109-10).

⁶² An allusion to the *Tao te ching*, section 41.

⁶³ An allusion to the *Lun-yu*, 7.10.

[We] carve a stone to commemorate his tomb,
And engrave his name to convey his excellences.
The valleys [will] change and the hillocks [will] shift,
But his traces [will remain] far-reachingly brilliant.
-- Erected in the Twelfth year of *ta-li*, summer, fifth month [June-
July 777].
Engraved by Wu Ch'ung-hsiu of Po-hai.⁶⁴

Much of Yen Chen-ch'ing's account concerns Li's relationship with T'ang Hsuan-tsung. One notes that Li is said to have firmly resisted Hsuan-tsung's efforts to forge more intimate relations, at one point refusing to transmit his religious formulae, citing an ailing foot.⁶⁵ But in 748, Hsuan-tsung would be put off no longer, and commanded Li ineluctably to appear at court and confer upon him the scriptures and formulae of the Shang-ch'ing order. Hsuan-tsung had already received the articles of faith from Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen in 721, and perhaps more recently from the obscure *tao-shih* Chang Kao.⁶⁶ But he apparently felt it proper to have his status as a divinely ordained monarch once again confirmed and magnified by the foremost living Taoist of the age.

The image of Li Han-kuang which emerges from Yen Chen-ch'ing's text is that of a diffident, bookish man who devoted his life to maintaining the institutions of Shang-ch'ing Taoism. Li seems to have lived most of his adult life in the shadow of Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen: he is portrayed as having undertaken few initiatives of any sort, apparently preferring to act as a preserver rather than as an innovator. Indeed, by all accounts, Li's role in the Mao-shan lineage was more that of a

⁶⁴ I have located no information on Wu.

⁶⁵ The notice that the court officers were nonplussed by Li's podalic alibi has the ring of authenticity. In fact, the entire episode provides what seems to be an unusually genuine insight into the dynamics of court protocol and its application to Taoists who availed themselves of an unofficial but time-honored custom of court indulgence. While Li may indeed have suffered from some affliction of the feet, it is debatable whether such a relatively minor health problem justified refusing a pious imperial request. Perhaps Li believed that his office as steward of the Shang-ch'ing tradition warranted extraordinary forbearance. But while court and ruler seem to have assumed no such extreme indulgence, any attempt to have overridden Li's claim of privilege would have strayed into indeterminate areas of church-state protocol which no one seemed anxious to breach. Consequently, Li Han-kuang managed, even while hobbling on a sore foot, to tread on the tail of the dragon without incurring harm.

⁶⁶ See J. Russell Kirkland, "Chang Kao: Noteworthy T'ang Taoist?", *T'ang Studies* 2 (1984), 31-35.

custodian than that of an active and vital participant.⁶⁷ Moreover, the attention which he received from T'ang Hsuan-tsung was hardly an achievement creditable to Li himself: to the contrary, Li is depicted as having obstinately resisted the emperor's advances. Hence according to Yen Chench'ing, Li's chief claim to fame -- the patronage of Hsuan-tsung -- was a greatness which Li actually had thrust upon him.

It is important to note that both Liu Shih and Yen Chench'ing were *ju* officials writing for other *ju*. Yet they took great interest in the life of Li Han-kuang, a Grand Master of Shangch'ing Taoism. What is more, it is evident from the writings of Liu and Yen (and from other reliable materials) that Li was highly regarded among the T'ang elite of his day. Yet neither of the T'ang dynastic histories grant Li notice in a *chuan*.⁶⁸ That fact raises an important question: if Li was deemed worthy of special notice by his sovereign, and by two illustrious contemporary scholarofficials, why was he totally passed over by the later official historians?

The answer to that question rests upon a fundamental historiographic consideration: the task of the official historians was not to immortalize prominent clerics, but rather to identify Taoists who could convincingly be portrayed as having promoted standard political ideals, e.g. socio-political stability and the authority and integrity of the throne. The historians could use such figures to achieve the same didactic effect that they achieved with the figures of dutiful scholars and officials. (Similarly, biographies of "virtuous women" and "submissive tributaries" could -- and did -- present females and foreigners as upholding the ideals cherished by the male, Han Chinese elite.)

The historians writing up the T'ang dynasty did not need to look far to locate Taoists suitable for inclusion in their work. Though the values of medieval Taoism are just now beginning to be rediscovered, they were widely appreciated during T'ang and Sung times. And materials like those translated above reveal that the values of the medieval Taoists were, in all essential respects, compatible with the values of the medieval Confucians. In sociopolitical terms, Taoists like Ssu-ma

⁶⁷ Other significant biographies of Li Han-kuang appear in the *Chen-hsi chuan*, (*Yun-chi ch'i-chien*, 5.16a-18a); the *Kao-tao chuan*, in Yen I-p'ing, *Tao-chiao yen-chiu tzu-liao* (Taipei, 1974), I, 3.79-80; the *Hsuan-p'in lu* (HY 780) 4.19b-21b; and the *Mao-shan chih*, 11.3b-5a.

⁶⁸ A fleeting reference to Li appears in the bibliographical section of the *Hsin T'ang shu*. After listing the *Lao-tzu Chuang-tzu Chou-i hsueh-chi* and *l-lueh* (each in 3 *chuan*) by "the *tao-shih* Li Han-kuang," the editors append a succinct biographical note: "Han-kuang, a registrant of Chiang-tu in Yang-chou, was originally surnamed Hung, but changed [his name] to avoid the tabooed name of Hsiao-ching Huang-ti. He was a person of the T'ien-pao period" (*Hsin T'ang shu*, 59. 1518).

Ch'eng-chen were just as much exemplars of loyalty and responsibility as their Confucian counterparts.

Li Han-kuang, however, was another matter. In the materials pertaining to the life of Li, Hsuan-tsung is shown struggling mightily to obtain religious instruction, only to encounter obstinate resistance from the master. Unlike several other Taoist masters of the day, Li Han-kuang was apparently loath to enter the capital, and missed no opportunity to voice his conviction that such demands upon a Taoist Grand Master were inherently excessive and improper. By resisting imperial summonses, Li could well have given many observers the impression that he was withholding religious sanction of the emperor's administration. There is no reason to believe that Li actually maintained such an attitude. But whatever his motivations, Li Han-kuang conspicuously failed to contribute to the age-old imperial tradition whereby Taoist masters conferred enthusiastic blessings upon the reigning emperor.

Could that have been the reason that Li was omitted from the standard histories? It seems quite likely so. An esteemed Taoist who was sensitive to both imperial protocol and *ju* political ideals would always have been in a splendid position to help guarantee political stability by steering a credulous monarch away from misguided schemes. But a Taoist who envisaged for himself a life unhampered by any social or political role was hardly a person whom the official historians would wish to have held up as an exemplar.⁶⁹ I therefore propose that Li Hankuang was

⁶⁹ From the point of view of wary court officials, the worst thing that could happen when the emperor courted a Taoist (or any other favored person) would be for the ruler to grant him excessive trust. Should such a person have achieved inordinate influence, he would theoretically have been in a position to lure the sovereign away from the principles which ensured the proper functioning of court and state. The simplest way to have precluded such dangers would have been for appropriate court officials to have prevented contact between Taoists and the ruler. But some emperors, especially the indomitable Hsuan-tsung, could hardly have been dissuaded from such contacts, particularly since every one of Hsuan-tsung's predecessors had regularly patronized the great Taoists of the day.

What might have been possible -- and likely much more effective as dissuasion -- would have been for court officials to admit to imperial audiences only those Taoists who could be counted upon to steer the emperor away from subversive ideas and practices. I have encountered no textual evidence that Taoists of the high T'ang were ever actually turned away by court officials for harboring heterodox values. Indeed, if the emperor could not be dissuaded from issuing a summons in the first place, the courtiers would hardly have been in a position to turn away the individual summoned. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that some of the Taoists who were summoned to court might have received a preaudience admonition from some well-placed official, advising them in very clear terms as to what would -- and would not -- have been proper to discuss with the Son of Heaven. Such officials would likely have been in a position to recommend honors and favors for those individuals who proved cooperative -- titles, gifts, honors for family and associates, etc. It is even conceivable that the munificent favors sometimes bestowed upon noted Taoists were not purely

omitted from the standard histories because, in the eyes of the historians, he had failed to play the exemplary political role that Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen and other eminent Taoists had played so admirably.

After Li Han-kuang, subsequent Shang-ch'ing masters occasionally received imperial notice. But the T'ang emperors who reigned after the great rebellion generally took less interest in religious legitimation than in maintaining secular power within a much more perilous political, military, and economic context. Accordingly, Shang-ch'ing Taoism lost its intimate alliance with the T'ang throne, and no Grand Master rose to the heights of honor achieved by Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen and Li Han-kuang. The political prominence of Taoism during the early and mid-T'ang thus seems to have been intrinsically linked both to the presence of individual masters with exceptional personal qualities, and to favorable social and political conditions.

tokens of the ruler's personal esteem, but a reward by court officials for having acceded to admonitions to discourage imperial fascination with Taoism.

Seen in that light, many elements in the accounts of Li Han-kuang's life make more sense. In actuality, Li received the most generous imperial largess not when he was in attendance at court, but rather when he was stubbornly ensconced in the fastness of Mao-shan. Perhaps Li Han-kuang was, in effect, being paid to remain in the provinces. Again, when Li first reported the appearance of numinous polypores at Mao-shan, he is said to have done so in conjunction with functionaries of the inner palace. If, as suggested above, the reports of the numinous fungi and "sweet dew" were all intended to persuade the emperor to let Li stay at Mao-shan, then the filing of those reports may have been suggested to Li by court officials who preferred to have him remain at a distance.

Such conjectures are not intended to contradict the notion that Li Hankuang may have been inherently reclusive. It is quite possible that Li was genuinely shy, and that certain officials offered to assist him in achieving his reclusive aims. Perhaps someone even offered Li the excuse of the ailing foot, when he could adduce no other symptom of infirmity. Again, this is speculation. But if Li had in fact been unwilling to accept Hsuan-tsung's incessant attentions, there would doubtless have been individuals at court willing and able to help him evade those attentions, with or without his awareness.