

**The Buddhist Tradition of Prosimetric  
Oral Narrative in Chinese Literature**

**Victor H. Mair**

Since 1972 I have been involved in an extensive investigation of a T'ang period (618-906) form of illustrated Chinese storytelling known as *chuan-pien*, literally "turning [scrolls with painted scenes of] transformational [manifestations]." I have also made an in-depth study of a genre of written popular literature called *pien-wen* ("transformation texts") that derived from the oral stories presented by *chuan-pien* performers. The subject matter of these tales was initially Buddhist, but Chinese historical and legendary material came to be used soon after the introduction of the storytelling form from India (via Central Asia). The results of my investigations have been or will be published in, among others, the following works: *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (1983b), *T'ang Transformation Texts* (1988b), *Painting and Performance: Chinese Picture Recitation, Its Indian Genesis, and Analogues Elsewhere* (1988a), and numerous articles. Additional references may be found in the bibliographies and notes to these publications.

The purpose of the present article is to examine the crucial impact of the Buddhist storytelling tradition upon the development of written vernacular literature (both fiction and drama) in China. In particular, it seeks to explain how and why the characteristically Indian prosimetric or chantefable form (alternating prose and verse) came to be an identifying feature of the vast majority of Chinese popular literary genres. Basically, there are two questions that need to be answered. Why did transformation texts come into being during the T'ang period? And why did they apparently die out in the Northern Sung period (960-1126)?

One very good reason why transformations may have become popular during the T'ang period is that it was the very time when foreign cultural influence had reached a peak in China: "The

vogue for foreign clothes, foreign food, and foreign music was especially prevalent in the eighth century, but no part of the T'ang era was free from it" (Schafer 1963:28). And, of foreign influences in the T'ang period, by far the most pervasive was Buddhism. As Arthur Wright and Denis Twitchett have written, "it is obvious to the most casually interested that during the T'ang dynasty Buddhism suffused T'ang life, penetrated every segment of Chinese society to a degree that it had not done before and was never to do again" (1973:18).

Paul Demiéville has already hinted, in a brief but perceptive note, that Buddhism was responsible for the rise of Chinese vernacular literature in a very general way:

There is scarcely any doubt that the source of this remarkable development is to be sought in Buddhism, which had an overwhelming influence during the T'ang dynasty and whose egalitarian doctrine and propaganda were directed to the people at large, without distinction of class and culture (1974:186).

Buddhism in India had served to diminish the ill effects of the caste system. In China, too, it acted as a social leveler. Anyone who believed could praise the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas through whatever means were available to him—road-building, printing of charms, donation of art-work, copying of sutras (scriptures), recitation of prayers, and so on. All interested souls were welcomed and encouraged to attend religious lectures which were skillfully aimed at the level of understanding of widely varying audiences. Buddhist authorities and lay organizations were involved in various educational enterprises directed towards the common people. Theoretically, everyone was equal within the *saṅgha* (community). And anyone could enter the Western Paradise through a profession of faith. People from all walks of life and all social classes could leave their families (*ch'u-chia*, Sanskrit *pravraj*) to become monks and nuns. What is more, they might remain celibate and hence fail to produce offspring—the worst possible sin for a filial Chinese son or daughter. For these reasons—and many others—Buddhism was damned by the establishment as being un-Chinese and destructive to the *status in quo* of the social fabric. But by the middle of the T'ang period the damage (or the benefit) had been irreparably done: the social effect of the penetration of Buddhist ideals and institutions into all

reaches of Chinese life was ineradicable. One of the results of that penetration was the creation of a climate favorable to the development of popular literature. For its adherents, there were now viable and religiously legitimized literary alternatives to the classically sanctioned modes of history, poetry, and *belles lettres*. With the passage of time, the originally Buddhist nature of these profound social and literary changes would be forgotten. Of course, there were many other social, political, and economic factors involved in the explosive spread of popular culture during the T'ang. I stress here the importance of Buddhism in this expansion of the popular realm because it is so often totally ignored.

One of the most profound changes wrought upon literature in China by Buddhism was the subtle devaluation of the written word vis-à-vis the spoken. In a discussion of the apparent absence of epic poetry and the relatively late occurrence of drama in China, Achilles Fang has emphasized the traditional pre-eminence of the written word over the spoken (1965:196-99). Poetry that deserved the name was strangely always written and not oral. Without being adequately informed of the actual historical development of Chinese literature or the true nature of demotic Chinese languages, Max Weber offered some extremely penetrating remarks on the relationship between the written and the spoken word in China:

The stock of written symbols remained far richer than the stock of monosyllabic words, which was inevitably quite delimited. Hence, all phantasy and ardor fled from the poor and formalistic intellectualism of the spoken word and into the quiet beauty of the written symbols. The usual poetic speech was held fundamentally subordinate to the script. Not speaking but writing and reading were valued artistically and considered as worthy of a gentleman, for they were receptive of the artful products of script. *Speech remained truly an affair of the plebs*. This contrasts sharply with Hellenism, to which conversation meant everything and a translation into the style of the dialogue was the adequate form of all experience and contemplation. In China the very finest blossoms of literary culture lingered, so to speak, deaf and mute in their silken splendor. They were valued far higher than was the art of drama, which, characteristically, flowered

during the period of the Mongols [1280-1367]. (1964:124)

The contrast with Hellenism is similar to that with the Indian tradition where oral discourse “meant everything.” It was Buddhism which injected this radically new approach to literature in Chinese society.

There is evidence in the *Collected Major Edicts of the T'ang* (Sung Min-ch'iu 1959:588) that the government tried to stop the activities of folk religious storytellers at about the same time they first became prominent. An edict of the fourth month of the year 731 forbids “monks and nuns” from going out in the villages to tell stories and engage in other unseemly activities. “Except for lecturing on the *vinaya* (discipline), all else is forbidden to monks and nuns.” It is possible that the government may have been ill-informed about who was doing the storytelling in the countryside. For it is very likely that those who were engaged in storytelling in the villages were not really formally ordained monks and nuns at all but lay, semi-professional entertainers.<sup>1</sup> It seems more probable that the edict was worded as it is for legalistic purposes (*viz.*, to put the folk religious storytellers and popular priests—essentially lay figures—completely beyond the pale of legitimate activity). In the tightly structured, hierarchically ordered society that was the goal of all Chinese monarchs, unsanctioned religious activity was liable to be viewed as “cultic,” “seditious,” or even “rebellious.”

In an edict of the seventh month in the year 714, the emperor declares that he has heard Buddhism has been corrupted because, among other things, “in the wards and alleys, [the ‘monks’] have been opening ‘layouts’ and writing [uncanonical] scriptures.” The expression “opening ‘layouts’” (*k'ai p'u*) is extremely suggestive<sup>2</sup> because it might refer to the display of pictures used to illustrate oral narratives. In the next recorded edict, dated the eleventh month of 715, the emperor complains that these undisciplined “monks” create other, minor scriptures, falsely ascribing them to the Buddha himself. In all of these edicts, the emperor shows himself to be genuinely worried about the harmful effects of such activities. On a deeper level, what the emperor’s concern actually reveals is the inability of the government to control the massive spread of folk and popular Buddhism among the people. To the fundamentally Confucian rulers of China, non-elite Buddhism was a subversive threat.

Yet the impact of Buddhist narrative on the shape of Chinese popular literature was revolutionary and long-lasting. In order to assess this impact accurately, it is necessary to sketch briefly the pre-Buddhist characteristics of Chinese narrative. It cannot be denied that China, from a very early time, possessed written historical narrative. The *Chronicle of Tso* (*Tso-chuan*) and the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shih-chi*) are illustrious examples of the glorious Chinese tradition in that sphere. But whether or not China possessed a vital tradition of *fictional* narrative before the introduction of Buddhism is a moot point. Since it seems, from our own experience, that fictionalizing is a natural human impulse, there should be no reason to believe that the Chinese were unsusceptible to it. And yet, on the other hand, there was a strong current of thought traceable to at least the Chou period (c. 1030-221 Before International Era) which worked to counter any incipient growth of fiction. This is what I call the historicization of narrative in China. Regardless of their origins, there was a tendency for established narrative accounts to become literalized. The characters were made into actual historical personages and were provided with plausible biographies. In Chinese mythology, this tendency manifested itself as a sort of reverse euhemerization, such that the gods and their wonderful stories were swiftly written down as proper historical figures and events. Of course, all this was going on under the auspices of officialdom and at elite levels of culture. Unfortunately, it was these circles who determined the picture of Chinese society before the T'ang period upon which we must rely almost exclusively. There may well have been a flourishing tradition of myth, legend, and storytelling in early China, but the historical record does little to enlighten us about its characteristics because the bias of the Confucian literati was strongly against such trivial pursuits. At the same time, the archeological record is still very sketchy on these matters and is insufficient to enable us to piece together the fragments into a coherent whole. There is still no evidence of professional storytelling in China before the T'ang.<sup>3</sup>

The existence of such works as the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yüeh* (*Wu Yüeh ch'un-ch'iu*) and *Lost Book of Yueh* (*Yüeh chüeh shu*)<sup>4</sup> indicates that, with the Han period (206 B.I.E.-8 I.E.), the historicizing tendency gradually came to loosen its iron grip on narrative. The embellishment and shaping of history for literary purposes shows that an opposite urge was slowly

becoming recognizable and acted upon. Before long, it was possible for such a work as “Southeastward Flies the Peacock” (*K’ung-ch’üeh tung-nan fei*) to appear. Although this is a ballad, it is highly unusual at such an early date<sup>5</sup> in China as an example of extended narrative with a literary rather than a historical intent.

B. L. Riftin, in his *Istoricheskaya epopeye fol’klornaya traditsiya v Kitae* (1970), showed that anecdotes relating to the Three Kingdoms period (221-64) were still in circulation as isolated stories during the time of Kan Pao (fourth century) and Liu I-ch’ing (403-44). It was during the T’ang, however, that they began to form connected cycles, a phenomenon which Riftin associates, correctly in my opinion, with the simultaneous rise of *pien-wen*. Průšek, however, disagrees:

I think it would be more correct to see in it a consequence of the rise at that time of a class of professional storytellers who required artistically worked up narratives of relatively greater length. And so they had to resort to book inspiration with which they could eventually supplement elements taken over from the oral tradition. (1967:8)

But Průšek’s explanation is unsatisfying because one still wishes to know how to account for the rise of the professional storyteller in the T’ang. The superiority of Riftin’s view on this problem is that it directly points to the factor which accounts best both for the appearance of connected narratives *and* for the rise of professional storytellers. That is the large-scale activity of overt Buddhist evangelism from the late Six Dynasties (222-588) period on. In comparison with what they encountered in China, the Buddhist preachers (both lay and clerical) from India brought with them extremely advanced and elaborate narrative techniques. These sophisticated techniques exerted themselves first in the religious sphere but gradually a process of secularization set in whereby Buddho-Indian narrative traditions were transferred to the whole of the popular literary realm of China. This elaboration and extension of the Chinese narrative potential occurred first orally, then, from about the middle of the eighth century on, it began to manifest itself in written form as well. Once Buddhist narrative techniques had taken deep root in Chinese soil, it was natural that a hybrid tradition would emerge. Viewed thus, there is nothing strange or mysterious about the rather sudden appearance of

extended fictional narrative in the T'ang and its flowering in the Sung and Yüan (1280-1367). Naturally, Chinese society at large was also undergoing profound internal change during the period in question and this too must have contributed substantially to the relaxation of the inhibiting effect upon the growth of fiction that strict Confucian values had once imposed. The distaste and distrust of nonhistorical narrative modes so vigorously advanced by stern Confucianists slowly came to be ignored by certain newly solidified social classes. Although the role of Buddhism in the rearrangement of social groupings and forces during this period is a sufficiently complicated subject to merit separate treatment, it seems not implausible that the effect of the massive diffusion of Buddhist thought and organization throughout Chinese society, particularly among the lower levels, must have been enormous. Hence it is conceivable that the narrative revolution which occurred during the T'ang period was—in large measure—Buddhist-inspired, both sociologically and literarily.

But why, then, if Buddhist narrative was so important during the T'ang, did it seem to die out in the Sung? In his *History of Chinese Popular Literature* (1938:I.269), Cheng Chen-to makes the statement that *pien-wen* were prohibited by government order during the reign of Chen-tsung (998-1022) of the Sung dynasty.<sup>6</sup> This has been accepted as virtual dogma by most later scholars. But Cheng gave no proof for his assertion nor has anyone else ever done so. Lacking adequate documentation, I have tried myself to substantiate Cheng's statement but have been unsuccessful in doing so.<sup>7</sup> It appears that, rather than any specific proscriptions against *pien* storytelling and written *pien-wen*, the clear recognition of their Buddhist origins and associations caused them to suffer a setback in the general suppressions of Buddhism which occurred in the years 845 and 972. But more important still in the nominal demise of *pien* storytelling and *pien-wen* was the gradual Sinification of prosimetric storytelling with or without pictures. The evidence is abundant that, while the name *pien-wen* nearly disappeared from China after the Sung, the form flourished spectacularly. Indeed, it may well be said that the disuse of the clearly Buddhist designation *pien* in favor of such indigenously Chinese-sounding expressions as *p'ing-hua* ("expository tale"), *chu-kung-tiao* ("medley"), and so forth, is an index of its thorough domestication.

The names *pien*, *pien-wen*, and *pien-hsiang* (“transformation tableau”) had such a decidedly Buddhist ring about them that the very use of these terms would have been unwise in a time of anti-Buddhist government activity such as the persecution of 845 and frowned upon in an introverted, proto-nationalistic climate such as existed during much of the Sung period. The Buddhist connotations of “transformations” were simply too evident to be ignored.<sup>8</sup> For anyone who has read extensively in Chinese Buddhist literature—both canonical and popular—it is impossible to escape this conclusion: *pien* as a literary and artistic phenomenon is Buddhist-inspired. If *pien* as a literary genre were being used in its strictly normal sense(s) as a Chinese word (i.e., without any Buddhist overtones), it does not seem likely that the name would have disappeared so abruptly at the beginning of the Sung dynasty. The Sung was a period of introspective assessment and assimilation. Much of the best of Buddhist doctrine was absorbed into neo-Confucianism. Likewise, forms of storytelling and lecturing that were overtly Buddhist during the T’ang period gradually lost their (foreign) religious flavor during the course of the Sung. The decisive effect of these developments was heightened by the fact that the Central Asian route through which much popular Buddhist inspiration and nourishment flowed into China was blocked by the Muslims and the Tanguts. The internationalism of the T’ang was no more, except along the southeast coast in scattered port cities. We read in the decree in which the Buddhist proscription of 845 was announced:

We therefore ordain the destruction of 4600 temples, the secularization of 260,500 monks and nuns who henceforth shall pay the semi-annual taxes, the destruction of some 40,000 shrines, the confiscation of millions of acres of arable land, the manumission of 150,000 slaves, both male and female, who shall henceforth pay the semi-annual taxes. *The monks and nuns shall be under the control of the bureau for foreign affairs in order to make it obvious that this is a foreign religion.* As to the Nestorians and the Zoroastrians, they shall be compelled to return to secular life lest they contaminate any longer the customs of China. (Goodrich 1969:130, italics mine)

As Goodrich rightly observes, “Buddhism by now was Chinese and could not perish. “ (1969:130). But there is no doubt that the changing political and intellectual climate had a profound effect on the ability and willingness of the Chinese people to tolerate markedly foreign cultural entities. In 635, the court had given Nestorian Christianity its blessing:

The meaning of the teaching has been carefully examined: it is mysterious, wonderful, calm; it fixes the essentials of life and perfection; it is the salvation of living beings; it is the wealth of man. It is right that it should spread through the empire. Therefore let the local officials build a monastery in the I-ning quarter with twenty-one regular monks. (Moule 1930:65)

But, by the end of 845, Nestorianism was virtually extinct in China. It is no coincidence that, given such a climate, the foreign-sounding name *pien-wen* all but disappeared from Chinese languages.

An equally important explanatory cause of the demise of *pien-wen* in China is the decline of the source of Buddhist inspiration not only in Central Asia but ultimately in India itself. We know that, with the coming of the Turks to Kāshgar sometime before 1000 I.E. and to Khotan in 1006, the Buddho-Indianized culture of Central Asia rapidly withered away. And, already in the eleventh century, Mahmud of Ghazni had begun the Muslim raids on India itself. Hence the apparent disappearance of overtly Buddhist storytelling known as *pien* in China is part of a general pattern of the vicissitudes of Buddhism as a whole. Just as there grew up uniquely Chinese schools of Buddhism such as Pure Land, Zen, and T’ien-t’ai through the process of Sinicization, so there arose storytelling forms related to *pien* but better suited to the Chinese environment and taste. Eventually *pien* would seem to disappear altogether, though we now know that it lived on in numerous Sinicized forms of popular entertainment.<sup>9</sup> And, while Buddhism as a whole manifestly did not die out in China, a good number of its most important philosophical tenets were tacitly adopted by neo-Confucian thinkers and are now barely recognizable as Buddhist *per se*. Hence, though the name “transformation,” in the sense of “storytelling with pictures,” seems to have been eclipsed from the written Chinese vocabulary sometime during the Northern Sung, there is concrete proof<sup>10</sup> that the form itself

survived into the Yuan, the Ming (1368-1644), and even the Ch'ing (1644-1911).

Demiéville believed that, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, *pien* storytelling went out from the monasteries and into the public places (1952:570). All of the information which I have gathered<sup>11</sup> indicates that transformations were being told outside of the monasteries—by laymen and laywomen entertainers as well as by quasi-monks—from their very beginnings in China. What did take place during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, rather, was the increased secularization and Sinicization of this Buddhistic form of storytelling. It appears, indeed, to have been secularized and Sinicized to such a degree that, by the thirteenth century, picture recitation was no longer recognized as essentially Buddhistic, its religiously charged name (*pien*) having been dropped abruptly in the second half of the tenth century.<sup>12</sup>

There is a crucial passage in T'ao Tsung-i's (c. 1330-1400) *Records Made while Resting from Plowing* which, by the very fact of its misleadingness, allows us to gain some insight into the level of knowledge during the Yüan period regarding various types of orally performed literature in the preceding few dynasties:

In the T'ang, there were "transmissions of the exotic," i.e., classical tales (*ch'uan-ch'i*), in the Sung "dramatic cantos" (*hsi-ch'ii*), "sung jests" (*ch'ang-hun*), and "lyric tales" (*tz'u-shuo*). In the Chin (1115-1234), there were "court texts" (*yüan-pen*), "variety plays" (*tsa-chii*), and "medleys" (*chu-kung-tiao*). "Court texts" and "variety plays" are actually one and the same. (1959:306)

There can be little doubt that T'ao regarded *ch'uan-ch'i* as a type of oral performance. And yet all that we know of *ch'uan-ch'i* in the T'ang tells us that this is simply untrue, for at that time the term essentially meant "classical language short story."<sup>13</sup> The Ming period critic, Hu Ying-lin (fl. 1509), was certainly justified when he accused T'ao Tsung-i of misusing the term in the passage under discussion (1940:II.1a). The later Ming usage of the term to refer to a type of drama bears no immediate relevance to the question we are confronting here which is, basically, one of asking how a supposedly intelligent critic of the Yuan could so abuse such an important literary designation from the T'ang. One possible explanation which might be suggested is that T'ao was using

*ch'uan-ch'i* in the Sung sense where it could refer to a type of oral tale.<sup>14</sup> Another is that he actually was referring to transformations (*pien*) but did not know the correct name for them. For reasons which I have outlined earlier in this article, after the Five Dynasties period (907-60), the term *pien-wen* seems largely to have dropped out of circulation except for a unique reference (c. 1237) to it as being a heretical Manichean phenomenon.<sup>15</sup> The other genres referred to by T'ao are unmistakably in the line of descent from *pien-wen*.<sup>16</sup> T'ao knew well that, so far as China was concerned, these mostly prosimetric genres found their ancestral origins in the T'ang and he also knew well that *ch'uan-ch'i* was a type of story current in the T'ang. In order to give his exposition a (false) sense of completeness, I submit that it is not improbable that T'ao might have succumbed to the temptation to fudge his history just a bit. That T'ao's misuse of the term *ch'uan-ch'i* was no accident can be demonstrated by examination of another passage in *Records Made while Resting from Plowing* in which the same curious assertion is repeated:

When the "tare-gathering officials" (*pai-kuan*) [of the Han period who collected gossip and anecdotes (*hsiao-shuo*) on the streets] died out, then the "transmissions of the exotic" (*ch'uan-ch'i*) arose. The "transmissions of the exotic" having arisen, they were succeeded by "dramatic cantos" (*hsi-ch'ü*). During the Chin period and the beginning of the [Yüan] dynasty, ballads (*yüeh-fu*) were comparable to the current of Sung lyrics (*Sung-tz'u*), and "transmissions of the exotic" were comparable to the modification of Sung dramatic cantos. As transmitted in the world, they were called "variety plays" (*tsa-chü*). (T'ao Tsung-i 1959:332)

On the basis of this confused and sketchy passage, T'ao's competence as a historian of narrative literature deserves to be questioned. Still, the possibility that by *ch'uan-ch'i* he meant *pien-wen* (whose name he most probably would not have known) persists.

We have seen that, before the arrival of Buddhism in China, the public posture of orthodox Confucianism was inimical to myth, legend, and storytelling. At the close of the Later Han dynasty in 220 I.E., Confucianism was temporarily eclipsed by Taoism and

then Buddhism. Its stranglehold on society relaxed for several centuries during which foreign dynasties ruled in North China, the climate was ripe for innovation in philosophy, religion, and a wide spectrum of the arts. The oral arts were no exception. Under the influence of the vibrant and rich Buddhist storytelling tradition that originated in India and passed through Central Asia, Chinese storytellers created a series of novel narrational and dramatic genres. The prosimetric form and a new-found propensity for fantasy were fundamental elements of these genres (Mair 1983a:1-27). And both of these elements are central to the lay Buddhist storytelling form of *chuan-pien*. Hence, though *chuan-pien* and *pien-wen* nominally waned after the T'ang period, their impact on Chinese oral and performing arts was indelible.

## Glossary

- Ch'a-t'u pen Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih* 插圖本中國文學史  
*ch'ang-hun* 唱譚  
 Chen-tsung 真宗  
 Cheng Chen-to 鄭振鐸  
*Ch'o-keng lu* 輟耕錄  
*chu-kung-tiao* 諸宮調  
*ch'u-chia* 出家  
*chuan-pien* 轉變  
*ch'uan-ch'i* 傳奇  
*Fo-tsu li-tai t'ung-tsai* 佛祖歷代通載  
*Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* 佛祖統記  
*hsi-ch'ü* 戲曲  
*hsiao-shuo* 小說  
*Hsü tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 續資治通鑑  
 Hu Ying-lin 胡應麟

- k'ai p'u* 開鋪  
*Kan Pao* 干寶  
*K'ung-ch'üeh tung-nan fei* 孔雀東南飛  
*Liu I-ch'ing* 劉義慶  
*pai-kuan* 裨官  
*Pi Yüan* 畢沅  
*pien* 變  
*pien-hsiang* 變相  
*pien-wen* 變文  
*p'ing-hua* 評話  
*Sung Min-ch'iu* 宋敏求  
*Sung-tz'u* 宋詞  
*Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經  
*T'ang ta chao-ling chi* 唐大詔令集  
*T'ao Tsung-i* 陶宗儀  
*tso-chü* 雜劇  
*tz'u-shuo* 詞說  
*Wu Yüeh ch'un-ch'iu* 吳越春秋  
*yüan-pen* 院本  
*Yüeh chüeh shu* 越絕書  
*yüeh-fu* 樂府

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Cf. chapters five and six of *T'ang Transformation Texts*.

<sup>2</sup>See my discussion of the term *p'u* as a denominator of illustrations for storytelling in chapters two and four of *Picture Recitation*, chapter three of *T'ang Transformation Texts*, and my article entitled "Records of Transformation Tableaux" (1986). It is possible, though less likely, that *p'u* might also mean "stall" or "shop" in this context.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Y. W. Ma's important article entitled "The Beginnings of Professional Storytelling in China: A Critique of Current Theories and Evidence" (1976).

<sup>4</sup>The meaning of this title is disputed (*Book on the Demise of Yüeh?*).

<sup>5</sup>Though it was supposedly popular as a song at the end of the Han (early third century), "Southeastward Flies the Peacock" probably did not take its present written shape until about the fifth century.

<sup>6</sup>The same claim was repeated in *Cheng's Ch'a-t'u pen Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih [Illustrated History of Chinese Literature]* (1957:450).

<sup>7</sup>I have checked all the edicts for Chen-tsung's reign that I could lay my hands on, as well as the annals in the official *Sung History*. Also cf. *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi [Unified Chronology of the Buddhist Patriarchate]* in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō (The Tripitaka in Chinese)*, vol. 49, text 2035, pp. 402a-408b; *Fo-tsu li-tai t'ung-tsai [Comprehensive Records of the Buddhist Patriarchate through Successive Dynasties]* in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, vol. 49, text 2036, pp. 660c-661c; and Pi Yüan, *Hsü tzu-chih t'ung-chien [Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government, Continuation]* (Peking: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1957), vol. 1, pp. 463-808. My suspicion is that the reasons for the demise of the transformations and transformation texts during the Sung period were much more subtle than overt suppression.

<sup>8</sup>The Sanskrit antecedents of Chinese Buddhist *pien* are given in *T'ang Transformation Texts*, chapter two (Mair 1988b).

<sup>9</sup>See my article entitled "The Contributions of Transformation Texts (*pien-wen*) to Later Chinese Popular Literature" (forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup>Adduced in the introduction to *Picture Recitation* (Mair 1988a).

<sup>11</sup>See chapter six of *T'ang Transformation Texts* (Mair 1988b).

<sup>12</sup>Except in such outlying and strongly Buddhist areas as Tun-huang (remote northwest China), where it continued in use through the first third of the eleventh century.

<sup>13</sup>For a brief discussion of the term *ch'uan-ch'i*, see Mair 1978.

<sup>14</sup>This seems unlikely, however, because T'ao specifically links *ch'uan-ch'i* to the T'ang and offers a separate genre for the Sung itself.

<sup>15</sup>Cited in chapter six of *T'ang Transformation Texts* (Mair 1988b). By this time, even establishment Buddhists, ever eager to please their Confucian overlords, had disavowed *pien* storytelling.

<sup>16</sup>See the beginning of Mair, "The Contributions of Transformation Texts" (forthcoming).

## References

- Cheng 1938  
Cheng Chen-to. *Chung-Kuo su-wen-hsüeh shih*. vol. 1. Changsha: Commercial Press.
- Cheng 1957  
\_\_\_\_\_. *Ch'a-t'u pen Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih [Illustrated History of Chinese Literature]*. Peking: Tso-chia ch'u-pan-she.
- Demiéville 1952  
Paul Demiéville. "Les débuts de la littérature en Chinois vulgaire." *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Comptes Rendus*, November-December:570.
- Demiéville 1974  
\_\_\_\_\_. "Tun-huang Texts." In *Dictionary of Oriental Literatures*, vol. I: *East Asia*. Ed. by Zbigniew Stupski, under the general editorship of Jaroslav Průšek. New York: Basic Books.
- Fang 1965  
Achilles Fang. "Out of China." *Poetry* 107.3:196-99.
- Goodrich 1969  
L. Carrington Goodrich. *A Short History of the Chinese People*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Hu 1940  
Hu Ying-lin. "Chuang-yüeh wei-t'an (Small Talk from Chuang-yüeh)." In *Shao-shih shan-fang ch'ü k'ao [Examination of Cantos from the Mountain Study with Few Rooms]*. vol. 2. Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chu.
- Ma 1976  
Y. W. Ma. "The Beginnings of Professional Storytelling in China: A Critique of Current Theories and Evidence." In *Etudes d'histoire et de littérature chinoises offertes au Professeur Jaroslav Průšek*, Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, vol. 24. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. pp. 227-45.
- Mair 1978  
Victor H. Mair. "Scroll Presentation in the T'ang Dynasty." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 38.1:41n19.
- Mair 1983a  
\_\_\_\_\_. "The Narrative Revolution in Chinese Literature: Ontological Presuppositions." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 5.1:1-27.
- Mair 1983b  
\_\_\_\_\_. *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mair 1986  
\_\_\_\_\_. "Records of Transformation Tableaux." *T'oung Pao*, 72:3-43.
- Mair 1988a  
\_\_\_\_\_. *Painting and Performance: Chinese Picture Recitation, Its Indian Genesis, and Analogues Elsewhere*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Mair 1988b  
\_\_\_\_\_. *T'ang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China*.

Harvard-Yenching Monograph Series, 28. Cambridge: Harvard University Council on East Asian Studies.

Mair forthcoming

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Contributions of Transformation Texts (*pien wen*) to Later Chinese Popular Literature."

Moule 1930

Arthur Christopher Moule. *Christians in China: Before the Year 1550*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: Macmillan.

Průšek 1967

Jaroslav Průšek. *The Origins and Authors of the hua-pen*. Prague: Oriental Institute.

Riftin 1970

B. L. Riftin. *Istoricheskaya epopeye fol'klornaya traditsiya v Kitae*. Moscow: Nauka.

Schafer 1963

Edward H. Schafer. *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sung 1959

Sung Min-ch'iu. *T'ang to chao-ling chi* (comp. 1070). Peking: Commercial Press.

Táo 1959

T'ao Tsung-i. *Ch'o-keng lu*. Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü.

Weber 1964

Max Weber. In *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. Trans. and ed. Hans H. Gerth, intro. C. K. Yang. New York: The Free Press.

Wright and Twitchett 1973

Arthur Wright and Denis Twitchett. *Perspectives on the T'ang*. New Haven: Yale University Press.