The Shih chi biography of Wu Tzu-hsü

By R.C. Rudolph

(Was Angeles)

Wu Tzu-hsü[1], a hero in China in the sixth century B.C., has been a popular figure ever since that time. His whole biography in the Shih chi is involved with the high ideal of a son's avenging his wronged father. In doing this, Wu Tzu-hsü gave what appears to be an extreme example of the fulfillment of a son's filial obligations. Finally forced to commit suicide through political machinations, he was soon thought of as the controlling genius of the awesome bore that twice daily surges along the Ch'ien-t'ang River at Hangchou. As a spirit connected with water, temples were eventually built and dedicated to him in all parts of China. Regarded as the personification of unwavering resolution and high ideals, he was portrayed on early bronze mirrors and found a place in popular literature. Some index to his popularity may be derived from the fact that several manuscript scrolls in which he is the central figure of a historical romance were found in the famous lost library of Tun-huang which was sealed up around A.D. 1100. The story of his life consists of a number of highly dramatic episodes ready-made for the professional story teller and playwright.

His biography, as related in the Shih chi, falls into four parts: 1) Introduction to the situation which leads to his flight from his native state of Ch'u and his rise to power in the rival state of Wu (35% of the whole). 2) The numerous and successful attacks against Ch'u which reach a climax in the sack of the Ch'u capital and the flogging of his enemy's corpse (24%). 3) His efforts to protect and further the interests of Wu, after his mission of vengeance had been fulfilled, which lead to his decline and the second climax of the biography — his enforced suicide (26%). 4) The adventures of the son of the former Ch'u Heir Apparent who tries to avenge the assassination of his father (15%).

The Ch'ing scholar, Niu Yün-ch'en[2] (1706-1758), has the following to say about this biography in his Shih chi p'ing chu, ch. 7: "The biography of Wu Tzu-hsü is detailed and closely woven. It has some 2000 words which are well connected from beginning to end. Within it there is a clear disposition of the material, and the order and sequence are both manifest. It is involved and detailed but one does not object to its prolixity. It is repetitious and reiterative but one is not bored with its duplication. Its style is the best of

[1] 伍子胥

[2] 牛運震
the long sections in the Shih chi." This is a fair characterization of the biography except for the fact that it contains some 3100 words instead of 2000.

An attempt to trace the sources used for this biography, in order to discover what Su-ma Ch'ien's library contained, indicates that 28% of it, by actual count of characters, agrees so closely with certain passages in the Tso chuan that they must be considered as the original source for this part. Another 13% appears to have been paraphrased from the same source. Thus 41% of this biography was derived, either directly or indirectly, from the Tso chuan. Another 5% can be traced to the following four works listed according to the amount of material extracted from them: Lü shih ch'un ch'iu, Kuo yü, Huai nan tsu, Ku liang chuan.

Why did Su-ma Ch'ien include the biography of Wu Tzu-hsü in his great compilation? "Because Chien was slandered and it eventually involved Wu She, and Wu Shang went to save his father, and Wu Yun fled to Wu, I wrote the sixth biography, that of Wu Tzu-hsü." Thus, in this simple statement in his autobiography, Su-ma Ch'ien gives his reason for devoting a chapter of his work to the life of Wu Tzu-hsü.

The Biography of Wu Tzu-hsü in Shih chi ch. 66

Wu Tzu-hsü was a native of Ch'u and his personal name was Yun[4]. Yun's father was called Wu She[4], and his elder brother was called Wu Shang[8]. His grandfather, called Wu Chü[1], through his serving King Chuang[8] of Ch'u (696–682) by means of a straightforward remonstrance had acquired distinction[2], so his descendants for generations were well-known in Ch'u.

---

1 The text used for this translation was chapter 66 of the so-called Tōkyō edition of the Shih chi, Shih chi hui chu'kao ch'eng (Shiki kaishü köshō), edited by Takigawa Kametaro (Tōkyō, 1932). The following abbreviations are used: KY for Kuo yü, Su pu pei yao ed.; LSCC for Lü shih ch'un ch'iu, ibid.; MH for Eduard Chavannes, Les mémoires historiques de Sema Ts'ien (Paris, 1895–1905); SC for Shih chi in general; SCKC for the Japanese edition of the Shi chi noted above; SCCI for Shih chi chi i by Liang Yu-sheng[1], Kuang ya ts'ung shu ed.; TC for the Tso chuan text in Ch'un ch'iu iso chuan chu shu, Su pu pei yao ed.; WYCC for Wu Yüeh ch'un ch'iu, ibid. Due to a strict limitation on space, the original notes on this translation have been reduced by over one-third and most of the surviving notes have been reduced to little more than textual references.

2 The statement that Wu Chü served King Chuang appears to be an anachronism. The remonstrance, which is apparently the one referred to here, is given in detail in SCKC 40.18 where he reprimanded the king on his behavior in 611 B.C. by means of a riddle. In TC, Wu Chü (there also called Chiao Chü) is mentioned over twenty times, and these only between 547–533. Since King Chuang ruled from 613–591, in which latter year he died, it is unlikely that they were contemporaries. Moreover, as late as 538 we find Wu Chü going on an important diplomatic mission to the state of Chin (TC Chao 4), and in 533 he was engaged in the transfer of certain portions of Ch'u territory (TC Chao 9). Assuming that Wu Chü was at least twenty years old when and if he reprimanded the king in 611, he would then have been ninety-three.
King P'ing\[8\] (528—516) of Ch'u had an heir apparent whose personal name was Chien\[10\]\[3\], [for whom the king] employed Wu She as Grand Tutor and Fei Wu-chi\[11\] as Junior Tutor. (Fei) Wu-chi was not loyal to the Heir Apparent Chien. King P'ing sent (Fei) Wu-chi\[4\] to choose a wife for the heir apparent in Ch'in. The Ch'in woman was attractive and (Fei) Wu-chi hurriedly returned and reported to King P'ing, saying, "The Ch'in woman is exceedingly beautiful. Your Majesty can take her for yourself and choose another wife for the heir apparent." King P'ing thereupon took the Ch'in woman for himself\[5\], loved her ardently, favored her [with his visits] and begot of her a son [named] Chen\[12\]. [In return] he selected another wife for the heir apparent.

(Fei) Wu-chi, after he had ingratiated himself with King P'ing by means of the Ch'in woman, then deserted the heir apparent and served King P'ing. Fearing that one day King P'ing would die and the heir apparent would come into power and kill him, he thereupon slandered Heir Apparent Chien. Chien's mother, a woman of Ts'ai\[13\]\[1\], no longer had the affection of King P'ing, so King P'ing gradually became more distant towards Chien, and [finally] sent him to guard Ch'eng-fu\[14\] and to keep the border troops in readiness.

In the meantime, (Fei) Wu-chi talked both day and night about the heir apparent's short-comings to the King, saying: "The heir apparent, on account of the Ch'in woman, cannot be without hateful expectations [for Your Majesty's death]. May Your Majesty take some precautions to protect yourself. Ever since the heir apparent has been staying in Ch'eng-fu he has been in command of troops, and has been in communication with the feudal nobles of other regions; he surely intends to enter [the capital] to cause an insurrection."

King P'ing thereupon summoned the Grand Tutor Wu She and closely questioned him. Wu She knew that (Fei) Wu-chi had slandered the heir apparent to King P'ing, so he said, "Why is it that Your Majesty, merely because of a slandering and villainous under-minister, estranges one of your own flesh and blood?" (Fei) Wu-chi said, "If Your Majesty does not restrain...

---

\[8\] The SC gives us no information on the birth of Chien other than to say that he was fifteen years old in 527 (SCKC 40.37), and that his mother was a native of the principality of Ts'ai, the present Hsin-ts'ai hsien, Honan. Cf. TC Chao 19.

\[9\] SCKC 40.36, 5.41; SCCI 4.17 b; TC Chao 19.

\[10\] Cf. TC Hsiang 30.

\[11\] 費無忌

\[12\] 補

\[13\] 賴

\[14\] 城父
him (Chien) now, his undertaking will be successful, and then Your Majesty may fall into his hands."

Thereupon King P'ing became angry, imprisoned Wu She and ordered Fen Yang, the marshal of Ch'eng-fu, to go and kill the heir apparent. But before he arrived (at Ch'eng-fu) Fen Yang sent a man to forewarn the heir apparent (saying): "Prince, leave quickly. If you do not, you will be put to death." Heir Apparent Chien escaped and fled to Sung.

(Fei) Wu-chi spoke to King P'ing, saying, "Wu She has two sons, both of whom are worthies. If they are not put to death they will be a source of anxiety for Ch'u. You should summon them by using their father as a hostage or else it will be to Ch'u's sorrow."

The king sent a messenger to speak to Wu She, saying, "If you can cause your two sons to come [to the capital], then you will live; if you cannot, then you will die."

Wu She said, "Shang is a man who is human-hearted; if I call he will surely come. Yün is a man who is obdurate in his stubbornness and able to endure opprobrium; he is able to accomplish great deeds. He will see that his coming will lead to us both being held captive, and under the circumstances surely will not come."

The king paid no attention to this but sent a man to summon the two sons [saying]: "Come, and I shall let your father live. If you do not come, then I shall forthwith kill him."

Wu Shang wanted to go but (Wu) Yün said, "That [the king of] Ch'u summons us brothers is not because he wants to let our father live. He fears that if one of us escapes he will later engender trouble [for Ch'u], hence he is using our father as a hostage so as artfully to summon his two sons. If [we] two sons go there, then father and sons will both die. Of what avail will it be in our father's death? By going there we let our wrong remain unrequited, and nothing else. It would be better to flee to another state and borrow the strength to wipe out our father's disgrace. If both of us perish it will be of no use."

Wu Shang said, "I know that by going I will never be able to preserve our father's life. However, I abhor [the prospect of] not going when my father summons me to save his life, and afterwards, being unable to wipe out the shame, eventually becoming the laughingstock of the empire." [Finally] he said to (Wu) Yün, "Be off! You will be able to avenge the wrong of killing our father. I will return [to the capital] and die." After (Wu) Shang had gone to be arrested, the messenger was [on the point of] seizing Wu (Tzu-)hsü, but the latter drew his bow, grasped his arrows and turned toward the messenger. The messenger did not dare to advance, and Wu (Tzu-)hsü then fled.

He heard that Heir Apparent Chien was in Sung so he went there to serve him as a follower. When (Wu) She heard of (Wu) Tzu-hsü's flight, he said, "The prince and minister of Ch'u are going to suffer bitterly
from war." When Wu Shang arrived at [the capital of] Ch'ü, [the king of] Ch'ü put both (Wu) She and (Wu) Shang to death.

After Wu (Tzu-)hsü reached Sung, it experienced the revolt of the Hua clan, so together with Heir Apparent Chien he fled to Cheng, and the officers of Cheng treated them very well. Heir Apparent Chien also proceeded to Chin. Duke Ch'ing of Chin said, "Since Your Highness has been treated well by Cheng, and Cheng trusts Your Highness, you will be able to act in concert with us from within [Cheng] and we will attack from without [on your information]; then we shall destroy Cheng for a certainty. When Cheng is destroyed, we will enfeoff Your Highness." The heir apparent then returned to Cheng. There had not yet been an opportunity for the act when it happened that for private reasons he wished to kill one of his followers. This follower knew of the plot so he denounced him to [the Duke of] Cheng. Duke Ting of Cheng and Tzu-ch'an put the Heir Apparent Chien to death.

Chien had a son named Sheng, and because Wu (Tzu-)hsü was apprehensive, he and Sheng both fled toward Wu. They arrived at Chao Pass where [the officer in command of] Chao Pass wished to seize them. Wu (Tzu-)hsü and Sheng fled separately on foot, but barely succeeded in escaping. Pursuers were just behind them when they reached the [Yangtse] River. On the river there was a fisherman in a boat; he was aware of Wu (Tzu-)hsü's difficulty so he ferried him across. After Wu (Tzu-)hsü had been ferried across he unfastened his sword and said, "This sword is worth one hundred [weight of] gold. I will give it to you, sir."

The fisherman said, "According to a decree of Ch'ü, the one who catches Wu (Tzu-)hsü shall be rewarded with 50,000 piculs of grain, and granted

---

8 SCKC 40.37; TC Chao 19.
7 SCKC 38.38; TC Chao 20.
6 See TC Ai 16, Chao 20; SCCI 8.82 b, 33.10 b; SCKC 42.33.
8 According to the So yin commentary (SCKC 66.6) this pass was west of the Yangtse River, on the border between Wu and Ch'ü. Shina rekidak chimei yöran, p. 355, says it is ten li north of Han-shan hsien, An-ch'ing fu, Anhui. The continuity of the text seems to be broken here, and one is led to believe that either a part of SC has been lost, or that Ssu-MA Ch'ien did not copy the entire account of this episode from whatever source he was using. HAN FEI, writing almost two centuries earlier, gives us an account that would fit in here and preserve the continuity of the story: "When [Wu] Tzu-hsü was making his escape, a frontier patrol caught him. (Wu) Tzu-hsü said: 'The authorities want me because they think I have a beautiful pearl. Now I have already lost it. But I will say that you have seized and swallowed it.' Thereupon the patrol released him." Han fei tsu, 7.6 b; Cf. W. K. LIAO, The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu, p. 229. The importance of the pearl in Chinese belief is illustrated in A. PRIEZMAIER'S article "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Perlen", Sitzungsberichte der k. Akad. der Wissenschaften (Wien, Phil.-Hist. Classe), LVII (1867), 617–654; this story is given on p. 643. WYCC 3.3 b follows Han Fei very closely in relating this incident, and supplies li "officer" after the second Chao kuan. Chan kuo is'e, 5.4 b, says that when Wu Tzu-hsü left Chao pass he travelled by night and hid by day, and SCKC 79.13 follows this account word for word.
the title of chih kuei\textsuperscript{[23]}. Why [should I seek] a mere sword of one hundred [weight of] gold?\textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{10} He would not accept it. Wu (Tzu-)hsü had not yet reached Wu when he fell ill and stopped on the road to beg food\textsuperscript{19}.

When he arrived in Wu, King Liao\textsuperscript{[24]} of Wu had just assumed authority and Prince Kuang\textsuperscript{[25]}\textsuperscript{11} was general. Wu (Tzu-)hsü, through the offices of Prince Kuang, sought to obtain an audience with the King of Wu.

After some time King P'ing of Ch'\u became very angry because in his border town of Chung-li\textsuperscript{[26]}\textsuperscript{12} and in Wu's border town of Pei-liang\textsuperscript{[27]}, where the people were all silk-growers, two women had quarreled over mulberry trees and so [the two towns] attacked each other. This resulted in the two states raising armies and waging war on each other. Wu sent Prince Kuang to attack Ch'\u; he reduced its [towns of] Chung-li and Chü-ch'ao\textsuperscript{[28]} and then returned.

Wu Tzu-hsü spoke with the Wu king, Liao, and said, "Ch'\u must be destroyed. It is desirable that [Your Majesty] again send Prince Kuang [to attack it]."

Prince Kuang spoke to the King of Wu and said, "That Wu (Tzu-)hsü's father and elder brother were put to death in Ch'\u, and his exhorting Your Majesty to attack Ch'\u is only [due to] his wanting to avenge himself personally on his enemy. If we attack Ch'\u we cannot destroy it at this time."

Wu (Tzu)hsü knew that Prince Kuang had secret plans, that he wanted to assassinate the king and put himself on the throne, and that he (Wu Tzu-hsü) could not yet advise [the king] about external affairs. He thereupon introduced Chuan Chu\textsuperscript{[29]}\textsuperscript{13} to Prince Kuang, retired [from the capital] with Sheng, the son of Heir apparent Chien, and with him farmed in the country.

\textsuperscript{10} Here again, as in the story about the escape from Chao Pass, the continuity is abruptly broken off. According to WYCC 3.4a Wu Tzu-hsü became ill on the road and begged food from a young woman at Li-yang (in present Kiangsu Province). After some discussion of propriety, she finally fed him and sent him on his way but drowned herself in order to atone for her offence against proper conduct. According to the same source, the fisherman who took him across the river also drowned himself. These two deaths by drowning which legend connects with the life of Wu Tzu-hsü are interesting in view of the fact that after his death he himself was cast into a river and was later regarded as a water spirit, i.e., the spirit of the Ch'ien-t'ang River here.

\textsuperscript{11} Cf. SCKC 31.8 ff; 86.5.

\textsuperscript{12} Cf. SCKC 31.24, 40.39.

\textsuperscript{13} According to SCKC 86.4, Chuan Chu was a native of T'ang-i in Wu. As to Chuan Chu's assassination of King Liao (see text, infra), according to SCKC 31.27 and 86.4--7, Kuang secreted a number of armed soldiers in his residence and then invited the king to a banquet. The king, suspicious, took along a strong bodyguard of armed men and even had the route from his palace to Kuang's place guarded with soldiers. In the course of the banquet, Chuan Chu advanced to the king offering him a large fish within which a short sword was concealed. When he was within striking distance, he drew this sword and killed the king. Kuang's hidden troops then annihilated Liao's guard, but not until they had killed Chuan Chu. Kuang then put himself on the throne as King Ho-lü (514). Cf. TC Chao 20 and 27 where the assassin is called Chuan She-chu.
Five years [later] King Ping of Ch'u died (516). The Ch'in woman whom King Ping had taken away from Heir Apparent Chien had born a son [named] Chen. When King Ping died, Chen was finally established as successor. This was King Chao.

King Liao of Wu took advantage of Ch'u's mourning and sent two princes at the head of troops to go and make a surprise attack on Ch'u. But Ch'u sent out troops to cut off the Wu army's rear [communications] and they were not able to return. The state of Wu being devoid [of troops] within, Prince Kuang accordingly ordered Chuan Chu to assassinate Liao, and placed himself on the throne. This was King Ho-lü of Wu (514).

After Ho-lü came into power and realized his aspirations, he summoned Wu Yün [from his retirement] in order to make him director of foreign relations, and planned state affairs with him. Ch'u put to death the great officers Ch'i Yuan and Po Chou-li. Po Chou-li's grandson Po P'i escaped and fled to Wu, so Wu also made Po P'i a great officer [as it had Wu Tzu-hsü]. The two princes whom the late King Liao had sent in command of troops to attack Ch'u, [having found] their communications cut off, could not return. Later, when they heard that Ho-lü had assassinated King Liao and had enthroned himself, they surrendered their armies to Ch'u. Ch'u enfeoffed them in Shu.

After Ho-lü had been on the throne for three years (512), he raised an army and with [the leadership of] Wu (Tzu)-hsü and Po P'i attacked Ch'u. They reduced Shu and subsequently captured the two former generals who had turned against Wu. On account of this [success] the king wanted to go on to Ying [the capital of Ch'u], but General Sun Wu said, "The people are worn out and we cannot do it now. Let it wait for the time being." So they returned.

In the fourth year (of Ho-lü's reign—511) Wu attacked Ch'u and seized Liu and Ch'ien. In the fifth year [510] [Wu] attacked Yüeh and

---

14 This gives rise to the question: Five years after what? All sources agree that King Ping died in 516. This is three years after the mulberry war of 518 — by Chinese reckoning — and seven years after the other most important preceding event in Wu history, the arrival of Wu Tzu-hsü in 522. Cf. SCCI 27.15b—16a. If the date of King Ping's death was taken from Ch'u records, it could be dated from the execution of his son, Heir Apparent Chien, in Cheng in 520.

15 SCKC 40.40; TC Chao 26.
16 SCKC 31.25; SCCI 17.6a.
17 TC Chao 1, 27; Ting 4; SCCI 27.16a.
18 TC Chao 27.
19 Commonly known as Sun Tsu and reputed author of the well-known treatise on war Ping fa. His biography is given in SC 65 but he is not mentioned in TC. On various problems concerning this figure, see Ch'i Ssu-ho, "Sun tzu chu tso shih tai k'ao," YCHP, no. 26 (Dec., 1939), pp. 175—190.
20 Liu was thirteen li northeast of the present Liu-an chou, Anhui, and Ch'ien was thirty li northeast of the present Huo-shan hsien, Anhui (MH IV.19, n.4).
21 A large state south of the Ch'ien-t'ang River whose area covered much of present Kiangsi and Chekiang provinces.

---

[31] 峙宛 [34] 舒 [37] 六
defeated it. In the sixth year\(^{22}\) (509) King Chao of Ch’u sent Prince (Tzu-ch’ang) Nang-wa\(^{39}\)\(^{23}\) in command of troops to attack Wu. Wu sent out Wu Yün to meet the attack and he severely defeated the Ch’u army at Yü-chiang\(^{40}\)\(^{24}\) and took Ch’u’s [city of] Chü-ch’ao\(^{28}\).

In the ninth year (of his reign—506) Ho-lü spoke to (Wu) Tzu-hsü and Sun Wu, saying, “Originally you said that Ying could not be entered. Now what is the situation actually like?”

The two officers replied, saying, “The Ch’u general, Nang-wa, is covetous and [the rulers of] both T’ang\(^{41}\) and Ts’ai\(^{43}\)\(^{25}\) hate him. If Your Majesty really wishes to carry out a large-scale attack, you must first obtain T’ang and Ts’ai [as allies] and then you can do it.”

Ho-lü agreed with this, made a complete levy of troops, and with T’ang and Ts’ai attacked Ch’u. [Wu] and Ch’u marshalled their troops on opposite sides of the Han River. The King of Wu’s younger brother, Fu-kai\(^{42}\), who was in command of some troops asked permission to be given free reign, but the king would not hear of it. [However] he then took his command of 5000 men and made a sudden attack on the Ch’u general, Tzu-ch’ang. Tzu-ch’ang was defeated and fled to Cheng\(^{26}\). Thereupon Wu seized upon its advantage and pressed forward. After five battles it [the Wu army] reached Ying. On chi mao\(^{27}\) [day] King Chao of Ch’u left [the capital] and fled, and on keng ch’en (the next day) the King of Wu entered Ying.

---

\(^{22}\) SCCI 8.85b, says that this event happened a year later, i.e., in 508, because it is recorded in TC Ting 2 under this date. He uses TC as an absolute standard in dating this battle and thus rejects the date as given in four chapters of SC. The TC date alone is not very imposing evidence since events are often found recorded in TC a year or more after they actually happened. Was the news entered as of the year of its reception in Lu rather than of the year in which it occurred? It is significant that of the fourteen states listed in SC 14 (nien piao 2) not a single one of them has an entry for the year 508 in the sections devoted to them in the pen chi or the shih chia. Neither are there any entries for the year 508 in the nien piao. This seems like more than mere coincidence and was probably due to some fault in the compilation or transmission of the Shih chi.

\(^{23}\) He is also called Tzu-ch’ang and Tzu-ch’ang Nang-wa throughout SC and TC.

\(^{24}\) This is the present Nang-ch’ang hsien in Kiangsi.

\(^{25}\) These were two vassal principalities of Ch’u. T’ang was the present T’ang hsien in Honan, and Ts’ai was the present Hsin-ts’ai hsien, Honan.

\(^{26}\) TC Ting 4.

\(^{27}\) There is an interesting observation on this passage in Ku Yen-wu’s Jih chih lu, 20.11a–b, which also bears on Chinese historical methods: “From Ch’ün Ch’iu times on, the texts of the annals were certain to have the day linked with the month, the month linked with the season, and the season linked with the year. This was an invariable rule of the historians. In Wu Tzu-hsü’s biography in the Shih chi, the passage chi mao . . . ju ying gives the day but not the month. In the biography of Assassins (SC 86), the passage Szu yüeh ping tsu does not give the year but gives the month. In these cases the historian changed the rules.” This battle took place in the eleventh month of 506 by Ch’ün Ch’iu, Ting 4.

\(^{39}\) 子常撤瓦

\(^{40}\) 豫章

\(^{41}\) 唐

\(^{42}\) 夫慨
When Ying Chao left he fled into Yün-meng, but robbers attacked him so he fled to Yün. The Duke of Yün's younger brother, Huai, said, "King P'ing killed our father. If we kill his son, is this not also fitting?" The Duke of Yün, fearing that his brother would kill the King of Ch'u, fled with the king to Sui.

Wu's troops invested Sui and spoke to the Sui people, saying, "Ch'u completely annihilated the descendants of Chou who were [formerly] around Han-ch'uan." The Sui people then wanted to kill the King of Ch'u, but the Wang-tzu, Ch'i, hid the king and substituted himself for him. The Sui people divined about giving the king up to Wu. It was not propitious, so they refused Wu and did not give up the king.

Originally, Wu Yün was on friendly terms with Shen Pao-hsü. When (Wu) Yün fled, he spoke to (Shen) Pao-hsü, saying, "I am determined to preserve it." When the Wu army entered Ying, Wu Tzu-hsü searched for King Chao but he could not find him. He then dug into the grave-mound of King P'ing of Ch'u, took out his corpse and lashed it three hundred times, and only then did he cease his reprisals.

Shen Pao-hsü had fled into the mountains, but he sent a man to speak to (Wu) Tzu-hsü, saying, "Your avenging of your enmity goes too far! I have heard that if man is legion he may [momentarily] prevail against heaven, but when heaven so determines, it can surely smite man. Now you were formerly

---

28 This was a marshy region south of the present An-lu-hsien, Hupei (KCTM, 971). Chavannes, MH IV.377, n. 1, says that there were two places of this name. One was north of the Yangtse in the present Te-an fu in Hupei, and the other was south of the river, to which the king probably fled, in the present Chih-chiang hsien, Hupei.
29 This was a principality which corresponded to the An-lu hsien, Hupei.
30 On this event, see TC Chao 14. The K'ao cheng commentary, SCKC 66.10, is in error in referring to TC Chao 24 for this event; it should refer to TC Chao 14.
31 A principality south of the present Sui hsien, Hupei.
32 SCKC 40.42 says that the descendants of the Chous were enfeoffed "in the area between the (Yangtse) River and the Han (River)." The princes of both Wu and Sui were by tradition connected with the house of Chou, and had in common the Chou surname of Chi. The Wu officers here take advantage of this fact in trying to enlist the cooperation of the people of Sui.
33 Literally, "The king's son, Ch'i." The text is clearer in SCKC 40.43 where it says "Tzu-ch'i, one of the officers who followed the king." See TC Ting 4.
34 Shen Pao-hsü was an officer of Ch'u. His surname was Kung-sun, but he was commonly called Shen after the place with which he was enfeoffed.
35 LIANG Yü-sheng, SCCI 27.16b—17b, discusses at some length the problem of whether or not King P'ing's corpse was actually beaten, symbolizing complete vengeance on the part of Wu Tzu-hsü. This incident does not appear in TC or Kung yang chuan, but it does appear in Ku liang chuan, Ting 4, where it says that the grave-mound was flogged. Nevertheless, we here reach the climax of the story — Wu Tzu-hsü's long sought — for revenge on Ch'u. The desire for blood revenge plays an important role in Chinese history. On this subject see E. HAENISCH, Rachepflicht, ein Widerstreit zwischen konfuzianischer Ethik und chinesischem Staatsgefühl," ZDMG LXXXV (1931), 69—92.
a subject of King P'ing; you personally faced north and served him. But
now you have gone so far as to abuse a dead person [whom you once served].
Is this not an extreme lack of heaven's principle?"

Wu Tzu-hsü said, "Salute Shen Pao-hsü for me and say: 'My day is waning
and the road is yet long, so I will stumblingly press forward in defiance
and neglect [of proper conduct].'"

Shen Pao-hsü thereupon hurried to Ch'in and reported the desperate
situation [in which Ch'u found itself]. He sought help from Ch'in, but it
would not promise it. (Shen) Pao-hsü stood in the courtyard of Ch'in and
lamented day and night; for seven days and nights he did not stop his cries.
Duke Ai [50] of Ch'in pitied him and said, "Although Ch'u is without principle,
if it has ministers like this can it go unsaved?" So he sent five hundred
chariot units and aided Ch'u in attacking Wu. In the sixth month they de­
feated the Wu army at Chi [51](505) [52].

It happened that after the King of Wu long remained in Ch'u searching
for King Chao, Ho-lü's younger brother, Fu-kai, then ran off and returned
[to Wu] and established himself as king. When Ho-lü heard of it he
abandoned [his search in] Ch'u, and returned and attacked his brother Fu-kai.
Fu-kai was defeated and fled; he finally went to Ch'u. King Chao of Ch'u
saw that Wu had internal strife so he reentered Ying. He enfeoffed Fu-kai in
T'ang-ch'i [53] as lord of T'ang-ch'i. Ch'u again warred against Wu and
defeated it. The King of Wu then returned [to his capital].

After two years [54] Ho-lü sent Heir Apparent Fu-ch'ai [55] in command of
an army to attack Ch'u and he took (the town of) P'an [56]. Ch'u feared that
Wu would again make a great incursion so it abandoned Ying and moved
[the capital] to Jo [57].

---

[52] 堂霑
[53] 夫差
[54] 番
[55] 郡

[50] A place in Ch'u territory, probably in the present T'ung-pai hsien, Nan-yang
fu, Honan. See TC Ting 5.
[51] This was west of the present Sui-p'ing hsien, Honan.
[52] If we take this to mean two years after Wu entered the Ch'u capital, we have
504, in which SC 14, 31, 40, and TC Ting 6 agree. But LIANG Yü-sheng, op. cit.,
27.17b, does not agree with this. He says that it should read: "after one year,"
but gives no explanation. Perhaps he takes the defeat of Wu by the forces of Ch'in
and Ch'u as his starting point. Although the actual year of this defeat is not given,
we are told that it was in the sixth month of the year following the sack of Ying
(eleventh month of 506), so we must have taken place in 505. Liang himself confirms
this, loc. cit., and probably has this event and date in mind when he says that it
should read one year later.
[53] TC Ting 6 says that Heir Apparent Chung-lei, elder brother of Fu-ch'ai, made
the attack on P'an.
[54] This was the present P'ao-yang hsien, Kiangsi (MH IV.24, n.2). So yin com­
mentary, SCKC 40.44, says that in Ch'un Ch'in times it was on the eastern border
of Ch'u. According to TC Ting 6, the commander of the city was captured and
not the city itself. LIANG Yü-sheng, SCCI 8.87a, 17.7b, and 27.17b, says that Ssu-ma
Ch'ien erred in saying that P'an was attacked.
At this time Wu, by means of the plans of Wu Tzu-hsü and Sun-Wu, defeated the powerful Ch’u in the west, overawed Ch’i and Chin in the north, and subdued the people of Yüeh in the south. Four years after this (500), K’ung-tzu was acting as minister for Lu.¹⁴¹

Four years later (496) [Wu] attacked Yüeh. King Kou-chien of Yüeh met the attack, defeated Wu at Ku-su,¹⁴², and wounded Ho-lū in the finger. The [Wu] army withdrew. Ho-lū, ill from his wound and on the point of death, spoke to the Heir Apparent Fu-ch’ai, saying, “Will you forget that Kou-chien killed your father?” Fu-ch’ai replied, saying, “I do not dare forget it.” That evening Ho-lū died.

After Fu-ch’ai came to the throne as king (495) he took Po P’i as his premier and drilled [his troops in] combat archery. Two years later (494) he attacked Yüeh and defeated it at Fu-chiao.¹⁴³ The Yüeh king, Kou-chien, then took his remaining 5000 men and sought refuge on top of K’uai-chi.¹⁴⁴ He sent the great officer Chung with generous gifts to present to the Wu premier (Po) P’i, and to sue for peace. He sought to surrender his own state and become a vassal [of the King of Wu]. The King of Wu was going to allow it, but Wu Tzu-hsü advised against it saying, “The Yüeh king is a man who is capable of bitter suffering. If Your Majesty does not exterminate him now, later you will surely regret it.” The Wu king paid no attention to him but used Premier (Po) P’i’s plan and made peace with Yüeh.

Five years after this the King of Wu heard that Duke Ching of Ch’i had died (490), that the chief officers were contending for favor, and that the new prince was weak. He therefore raised an army [planning] to go north and attack Ch’i. Wu Tzu-hsü remonstrated, saying, “Kou-chien eats simply. He sorrows over deaths and inquires about illness [among his soldiers]. He has a purpose for which he will want to use them. Unless that man dies, he will certainly become a menace to Wu. Now Wu’s having Yüeh [as an enemy] is like a man’s having an illness in his vitals, and Your Majesty’s not putting Yüeh first, but being concerned with Ch’i— is this not also a mistake?” The King of Wu did not listen to him, but attacked Ch’i and

---

¹⁴¹ As CHAVANNES points out, MH V.320, n.4, there is some confusion in chronology here. Cf. SCKC 47.27, 33; SCCI 25.13a, and CH’IEN Mu, “K’ung Tzu nien pi hao,” Ku shih pien IV.79.

¹⁴² According to So yin commentary, SCKC 31.33, it was thirty li west of Wu hsien, Kiangsu. In his postface to chapter 29 of Shih chi (SCKC 29.18), Ssu-Ma Ch’ien says that he climbed Ku-su during his travels; it was a terrace raised by Ho-lū. TC Ting 14 says that this battle took place in Tsui-li, that Ho-lū was wounded by one Ling Ku-fou and then retreated to a place seven li from Tsui-li where he died. No mention is made of Ku-su in TC. CHAVANNES, MH IV.25, n.3, points out the possibility of a textual error in the passage in SCKC 31.33 which is practically identical with this one in ch. 66.

¹⁴³ A mountain or island in T’ai Lake, Kiangsu; it is also called Pao-shan.

¹⁴⁴ A mountain southeast of Shao-hsing hsien, Chekiang.
severely defeated the Ch'i army at Ai-ling. Then he overawed the princes of Tsou and Lu and returned victorious, further alienating himself from (Wu) Tzu-hsü's policy.

Four years after this when the Wu king was on the point of going north to attack Ch'i, the Yüeh king, Kou-chien, used Tzu-kung's plan: he led his people to help Wu and doubled the valuables presented to Premier Po P'i. Premier Po P'i had several times accepted Yüeh bribes, so his fondness and trust for Yüeh were most extreme. Day and night he talked to the Wu king on its behalf. The Wu king trusted and used (Po) P'i's plan.

Wu Tzu-hsü remonstrated, saying, "That Yüeh, it is like an illness of the vitals. Now [Your Majesty] trusts its specious phrases and cunning falsity, and covets Ch'i. Defeating Ch'i may be compared with a stony field: there is no use in it. Moreover, P'an Keng's announcement said: 'If there are those who are precipitously or carelessly disrespectful [to my orders] I will cut off their noses or utterly exterminate them. I will cause them to leave no progeny after them. I will not allow them to perpetuate their kind in this city.' It was in this way that Shang rose to power. Your Majesty should give up [attacking] Ch'i and put [the subduing of] Yüeh first; otherwise it will then be too late to regret it."

But the Wu king would not listen and sent (Wu) Tzü-hsü to Ch'i. (Wu) Tzü-hsü, on the point of going, spoke to his son, saying, "I have repeatedly remonstrated with the king. The king does not use [my advice] and I now foresee the destruction of Wu. That you should perish with Wu is of no advantage." So he entrusted his son to Pao Mu of Ch'i and returned to report to Wu.

The Wu Premier, (Po) P'i, had had a rift with (Wu) Tzu-hsü and because of this slandered him [to the king], saying, "(Wu) Tzu-hsü is a hard and cruel man of slight mercy, suspicious and dangerous. His resentful expectations will probably cause grave misfortunes. On a former day when Your Majesty wished to attack Ch'i, (Wu) Tzu-hsü represented it as infeasible. When Your Majesty finally attacked it, however, you had great success. (Wu) Tzu-hsü, disgraced because his schemes and plans were not used, then turned to resentful hopes [against Your Majesty]. But now that Your Majesty is going to attack Ch'i again, he is especially obstinate and will forcefully remonstrate [in order] to destroy the undertaking. He only hopes for Wu's defeat in order that he may himself succeed in his schemes and plans. Now Your Majesty goes in person to attack Ch'i with the entire military strength of the state. But since (Wu) Tzu-hsü's objection is not being used,

---

45 This place was in Ch'i territory, sixty li south of the present T'ai-an hsien, Shantung.
46 Here again, because the text is out of order, we receive an incorrect impression of the sequence of events.
he will give up, make excuses of a feigned illness, and will not go [with the army to attack Ch'i].

"Your Majesty must by all means prepare [against this]. It is easy for this to develop into a disaster. Furthermore, I, Pi, sent a man to spy on him secretly [and discovered that] when he (Wu Tzu-hsü) was sent to Ch'i he then entrusted his son to the Pao family of Ch'i. Now when a minister does not realize his aims within [the state], he will depend upon the feudal lords on the outside. Regarding himself as the consulting minister of the former ruler, and now not being used, he is constantly discontented and resentfully hopeful. I hope Your Majesty will deal with him at an early date."

The King of Wu said, "[Even] without your words I also would suspect him." So he caused a messenger to present Wu Tzu-hsü with the Shu-lü sword saying, "You die by means of this!" Wu Tzu-hsü looked up to heaven, sighed, and said, "Alas! The slandering minister (Po) Pi has caused trouble for the state. And the king, on the contrary, puts me to death. I caused your father [to attain] the hegemony, and before you yourself had been established [as his successor], and the various princes were contending for the throne, I, at the peril of death, wrested it from the late king, and [even then] you almost did not attain the throne. After you had obtained the throne you wanted to share Wu with me. I did not dare aspire to that. Now, however, you listen to the words of a flattering minister and slay one who is talented." Then he ordered his attendants, saying, "You must plant the top of my grave-mound with catalpa trees, in order that they may be made into coffins, and pluck out my eyes and hang them above the east gate of Wu so they may gaze on the Yüeh invaders entering and destroying Wu." Then he cut his throat and died (484).

When the Wu king heard of this he was greatly incensed, so he took (Wu) Tzu-hsü's corpse, placed it in a leathern sack and set it adrift in the river. The Wu people pitied him (Wu Tzu-hsü) and erected a shrine to him on the river bank. For this reason it was named Hsü hill.

After the Wu king had put (Wu) Tzu-hsü to death he then attacked Ch'i. The Pao clan of Ch'i killed its prince Tao Kung and established Yang Sheng. The Wu king wanted to punish the rebels, but [could] not overcome them so he departed.

47 Since there is no record in the sources under consideration of an attack by Wu on Ch'i after the battle of Ai-ling in 484, we must assume that the attack referred to here is either that of Ai-ling or the one of the preceding year. But a number of sources (TC Ai 11, KY 19.4b, LSCC 26.5b, SCKC 41.9) agree that Wu Tzu-hsü did not commit suicide until after the battle of Ai-ling; therefore our text must be corrupt here.

48 See SCCI 8.91b—92a.

Two years later the King of Wu summoned the princes of Lu and Wei and met with them in T'o-kao. The next year (482) he (the king of Wu) accordingly went north to a great meeting of the feudal lords at Huang-ch'ih in order to dictate to the Chou house. The Yüeh king, Kou-chien, made a sudden attack on Wu, killed the Wu heir apparent, and destroyed the Wu army. When the King of Wu heard of it he returned. He sent an emissary with generous gifts to make peace with Yüeh.

Nine years later (473), the Yüeh king, Kou-chien, finally extinguished Wu and killed Fu-ch'ai. He also put Premier Po to death because he was not loyal to his prince and had received heavy bribes from the outside and had been on intimate terms with him (Kou-chien).

Sheng, the son of the former Heir Apparent Chien of Ch'ü with whom Wu Tzu-hsü had fled, was dwelling in Wu. In the time of the Wu king, Fu-ch'ai, King Hui of Ch'ü wanted to summon Sheng to return to Ch'ü. She Kung admonished him, saying, “Sheng likes bravery and is secretly searching for desperadoes. He is on the verge of some secret undertaking.”

King Hui did not agree, and finally summoned Sheng and sent him to live in the border city of Yen. He was given the title of Pai Kung. Three years after Pai Kung’s return to Ch'ü, Wu put (Wu) Tzu-hsü to death. After Pai Kung Sheng had returned to Ch'ü, he resented Cheng's killing his father so he secretly supported desperadoes and sought revenge on Cheng. Five years after his return to Ch'ü, he asked for permission to attack Cheng. The Ch'ü Premier, Tzu-hsi, authorized it. The army had not yet gone forth when Chin attacked Cheng. Cheng asked for help from Ch'ü, and Ch'ü sent Tzu-hsi to go to its aid. He made a treaty with Cheng and returned. Pai Kung Sheng was angry and said, “Cheng is not my enemy, but Tzu-hsi is.”

---

49 Liang Yü-sheng, SCCI 27.20a, says that this should read one year instead of two years because this meeting took place in the year following the battle of Ai-ling.
50 A place in Wu, sixty li northwest of Ch'ao hsien, Lü-chou fu, Anhui. See TC Ai 12.
51 A place in Wei, southwest of the present Feng-ch'iu hsien, K'ai-feng fu, Honan (K'ao cheng comm., SCKC 31.41).
52 Nine years later refers to the great meeting at Huang-ch'ih in 482. The King of Wu was not actually killed, according to TC Ai 22, but was offered a fief by the King of Yüeh; the defeated king could not bear the humiliation of being a vassal of Yüeh so he felt forced to kill himself. SCKC 41.14 and 31.44 agree that he committed suicide.
53 It was south of I-ch'eng hsien, Hupei (MH II.85, n.5). The corresponding passage in SCKC 40.47 says that he was made tai fu of Ch'ao which, according to Cheng i commentary, was the same as Chü-ch'ao hsien, Lü-chou, Anhui.
54 Cf MH IV.381, n.3.
55 Counting back from 485, the year (probably incorrect) given in SC as the date of Wu Tzu-hsü's death, we obtain 487 for the arrival of Sheng in Ch'ü. This agrees with SCKC 14 and 40.47. Liang Yü-sheng, SCCI 27.20b, says it should be four years — but only if one supposes that Wu Tzu-hsü were killed in 484 (correct).
Sheng himself was sharpening his sword when a man questioned him saying, "What are you going to do with it?" Sheng said, "I want to kill Tzu-hsi with it." Tzu-hsi heard it, laughed, and said, "Sheng is like a mere egg. What can he do?"

Four years later,\(^{58}\) Pai Kung Sheng and Shih Ch'i\(^{78}\) attacked and killed the Ch'u Premier, Tzu-hsi, and marshal Tzu-ch'i\(^{79}\) in the court. Shih Ch'i said, "We must not fail to kill the king." So they seized the king and went to the High Treasury. A follower of Shih Ch'i, Ch'u Ku\(^{81}\), carried King Hui of Ch'u on his back, escaped and fled to the palace of Lady Chao.\(^{58}\)

When She Kung heard that Pai Kung was rebelling, he led the people of his demesne to attack him. Pai Kung's followers were defeated; he escaped and fled into the mountains and killed himself. They captured Shih Ch'i, however, and asked him for the location of Pai Kung's corpse, but he would not tell. They were going to boil Shih Ch'i and he said, "If the affair had been completed I should have become a minister; it was not completed so I get boiled. This is indeed the normal consequence." To the end he was unwilling to tell the location of the corpse so they boiled Shih Ch'i and searched for King Hui to enthrone him once more.

The Grand Recorder\(^{59}\) says: How great is [the effect of] the poison of hatred in man! If even the king should not act in this manner toward his subjects, how much more so [would this apply] to those of the same social rank. Yet, if formerly Wu Tzu-hsi had been caused to obey (Wu) She and all [three] had been killed, how would they have differed from molecrickets and ants? By abandoning a small principle and [thereby] avenging a great wrong, his name has been handed down through later generations. How sad! When (Wu) Tzu-hsi was in straits on the river bank, and begging for food on the road, did he in his determination for one moment forget Ying? Accordingly his dissimulating endurance culminated in great merit.

\(^{58}\) TC AI 15 and SC 14 agree that this revolt took place in 479. Since the preceding event, the Chin-Cheng war, occurred in 481, the text is in error here and should be three years instead of four. LIANG Yu-sheng, SCCI 27.21a, basing his opinion on some unnamed source, says that it should read one year later because the revolt took place in the year following the Chin-Cheng war which he places in 480.

\(^{57}\) According to SCKC 40.48, he was a follower of King Hui, which seems more reasonable. Cf. SCCI 27.21a.

\(^{56}\) She was the mother of King Hui of Ch'u.

\(^{59}\) I have chosen this interpretation of the title T'ai Shih Kung because its sense seems to be closer to Su-ma's actual function than the commonly used Astrologer or Historiographer. Although this interpretation of this title was discussed long ago by CHAVANNES and a quarter of a century ago by Fritz JÄGER, "Der heutige Stand der Shi-ki Forschung," AM 9 (1933), 25, n. 1, and Marcel GRANET, Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne (Paris, 1926), I, 64, n. 2, it has once more become a topic of lively discussion. See, inter alia, Burton WATSON, Su-su Ch'ien Grand Historian of China (New York 1958), p. 204; Chauncey S. GOODRICH, JAOS, 79, p. 108; Homer H. DUBS, op. cit., 80, p. 140.
Who except an ardent hero could attain to this? If Pai Kung had not set himself up as prince⁶⁹, his worthy plan likewise could not have deserved description.

---

⁶⁹ When I was invited to contribute an article to a proposed Festschrift for Dr. F. D. Lessing in 1960, I had already been in Taiwan for one year and did not return to the United States for another eight months. I immediately decided that the most appropriate contribution would be something that Dr. Lessing and I had worked on together, namely, the following translation of Shih chi, ch. 66, the biography of Wu Tzu-hsü. I was completely unaware of the fact that a translation of the same material by the late Fritz Jäger was to appear in Oriens Extremus, 1960, pt. 1, until some time after my return in January of 1961. Because the press of my duties at the University of California, Los Angeles, has made it impossible for me to prepare another article on short notice, the editors of Oriens Extremus have kindly agreed to set aside editorial policy in this instance and to publish this second translation of the same chapter of Shih chi in this journal. This unpublished English translation, referred to in the foreword to Jäger’s article, has been revised since its completion in 1942, but it has not been altered since the appearance of Jäger’s work. It may be of interest to students of the Shih chi to compare these English and German versions of the biography of Wu Tzu-hsü.

---

⁶⁹ Ssu-ma Ch’ien must have had the Ch’u shih chia in mind when he wrote this, for there (SCKC 40.48) it clearly says that Pai Kung established himself as king, but there is no mention of such an act in this chapter. Moreover, it is doubtful whether he actually did this. TC Ai 16 says that he wanted to make one Tzu-lü king, but the latter refused; there is no mention of Pai Kung’s assuming control of the state.