

APPENDIX ONE

EARLY BIOGRAPHIES OF HO CHING-MING

The most important source for this book has been the corpus of Ho Ching-ming's works, together with those of his contemporaries. All the same, frequent use has been made of biographical narratives as well, for they often contain accounts of events that go unnoticed in literary works. Broadly speaking, these biographies fall into three classes. First, there are independent accounts composed from scratch, as it were. Although they draw on a variety of sources, some of them identifiable but many now inaccessible, including personal memories, things heard from other people, and written documents no longer extant, they clearly represent fresh attempts to present Ho's life and its significance. Then, there are numerous accounts found in biographical compendia of various sorts that typically draw on one earlier account, or in some cases two or three. These the compilers cut, pad, combine, and rephrase according to their own priorities. Works that fall into this class generally do so quite obviously, deriving both their arrangement of materials and most of their phraseology from a single pre-existing source. Finally, there are sources that eschew any attempt at a full account, offering instead one or more short biographical or critical essays as part of works consisting of similar materials about a wide range of people.

Although the last class of material has been drawn upon in this book, no attempt is made to give a full account of it here. The other types are inventoried and discussed one by one, but our primary concern is to give an account of the independent biographies, from the first two, prepared immediately after Ho died, down to the one that has served as summative for traditional scholarship, that included in the *Ming Shih*.

Such a review is worth undertaking for several reasons. First, it allows us to consider in one place various characteristics of particular biographers, such as Li K'ai-hsien's penchant for dramatic presentation or the clouded relationship with Li Meng-yang that emerges from examination of Meng Yang's version of Ho's life. More

broadly, in the case of the larger compendia that include biographies of many Ming figures, it may suggest some priorities and cautions to those at work on Ming personalities and facing a long list of potential sources. Second, a chronological presentation of the biographies shows how Ho's historical image shifted over time and according to the interests of later generations of biographers. This is not to suggest sinister or programatically manipulative motives on the part of the biographers so much as to call attention to the varying sorts of significance they attached to Ho's life and works and hence to allow us to draw on their narratives while keeping their interests in mind. A particular secondary goal is to show in some detail how the biography found in the *Ming Shih* was assembled and to suggest why certain sources were relied upon and certain elements either included or omitted.

In general, these accounts contain two different sorts of material, which we might characterise as narrative and interpretive, chronological and impressionistic, or as matters of fact and significance. That is, they all provide a certain amount of potentially falsifiable information such as dates, offices held, actions taken, and the like. In addition, they all attempt to record or assign significance to their information, whether explicitly in editorial comments or the recording of views held by other people, including Ho himself, or implicitly by the way in which information is included, omitted, or juxtaposed.

Although all the biographies share common characteristics conditioned both by the traditions of Chinese biographical writing and by broader cultural presuppositions, they vary in a number of respects. Perhaps the most obvious is their differing treatments of Ho's relationship with Li Meng-yang. Another, less contentious, variation involves the balance between Ho's public career and 'moral' actions, on the one hand, and his literary interests and practice, on the other. Yet another is a matter of organisation. Speaking broadly again, the earlier biographies tend to take chronology as their primary compositional principle, making interpretive comments along the way and reserving a section at the end for a synthetic account of Ho's character and personality. Later writers are more likely to take their understanding of Ho's historical, literary, and ethical significance as their basis and to subordinate chronology to this, where they do not abandon it altogether.

The very earliest account is of course the Curriculum by Fan P'eng:

Curriculum Vitae of Master Ho Ta-fu, Grand Master of Palace Accord
and Education Vice-Commissioner of Shensi

Master Ho's formal name was Ching-ming; his informal name was Chung-mo, and his sobriquet was Ta-fu Shan-jen. His ancestors were natives of Lo-t'ien in Hukwang. [Ho] T'ai-shan, his ancestor in the fourth generation, fled to Hsin-yang at the time of the Red Turban uprising, and so subsequent generations of the family were natives of Hsin-yang. T'ai-shan had four sons, Lung-yi, Lung-erh, Lung-san, and Lung-ssu. Lung-erh, also known as [Ho] Hai, was the Master's great-grandfather. His grandfather Chien was the local Master Geomancer, known in his district and village for self-effacing benevolence. Chien bore Hsin, who served as Post-station Master and was later made Honourary Secretariat Drafter. He was a man of broad learning and a capable poet, with the sobriquet Sir Plum Glen. He had four sons. By his first wife Madame Lu he had two sons. The elder, Ching-shao, passed the Honan provincial examination in the *ping-tzu* 丙子 year of the Ch'eng-hua reign.¹ He served in successive offices, reaching Assistant Prefect of Tung-ch'ang before his decease. The younger, Ching-yang, passed the Honan provincial examination along with the Master in the *wu-wu* 戊午 year of the Hung-chih reign [1498] and is presently in office as Assistant Prefect of An-ch'ing. [Ho Hsin] subsequently married Madame Li, by whom he had two sons. The elder, Ching-hui, did not seek office; the younger was the Master.

In his sixth year, the Master was able to make parallel couplets and produce unusual characters, memorising several hundred words a day. He understood paying respect to his elder brothers, not daring to talk back even if struck. When he saw gangs of children at their games, he did not join them. In his eighth year he could write essays.

In his thirteenth year, he went with his father, who was taking up office in the post station of Hui-ning in Shensi. Sir Li [Chi], who was Prefect of Lin-t'ao at the time, heard of his unusual qualities and ordered him placed in his own establishment, where he showed him great fondness and favour. [Li] had provided a teacher to give instruction in the *Annals*. The teacher going out for a while, the other older boys all gave themselves up to pranks and jokes, tramping on the teacher's mat. Only the Master remained calmly in his place, reciting the *Annals*. Sir Li saw this and sighed, "This lad Ho is a kylin, a phoenix!" On one occasion, [Li] was summoned to attendance dressed in his cap, robe, and gold cords. He said to his wife, "I suppose you think me a success? Someday that lad may well be more successful than

¹ There was no such year; since Ching-shao died in 1507 in his forty-sixth year, a plausible correct date would be the *ping-wu* 丙午 year, 1486.

I!" After three year, [Ho's] father retired, but was too poor to return home. Sir Li give him a horse and cart and summoned the other officials to a farewell in the suburban pavilion, at which he toasted the Master with the words, "My young friend."

When [Ho] had returned home, he switched to the study of the *Documents*. After he had studied this text for only nine months, Censor Li Han of Ch'in-shui, who was in charge of the Ju-ning area at the time, came to put the students of Hsin-yang through their paces. The Master went with his elder brother to sit the examination. When the Censor read his essay, he said, "An unusual talent, an unusual talent! I have never known the hills and streams so rich as to produce such a person." He then returned to Hsin-yang to see him.

Later, when [Ho] took first place in the provincial examination, someone came to announce the result, and Ho received him lying down. When asked "Why are you not celebrating?" [Ho] said, "I was quite sure of myself; why should I rejoice?" At this time he was only in his fifteenth year, and still a child in appearance and attire. The nobility and noteables contended for a sight of him in such numbers and confusion that he took refuge in the prefectural offices and would not come out. Wherever he rested or travelled, the crowds were such that he could not make his way through. He turned out hundreds of sheets of cursive calligraphy a day in response to requests and was universally deemed a child prodigy.

At the spring [i.e. *chin-shih*] examination the following year, his paper was rejected on reexamination on account of its numerous unusual characters. Having failed to place, he entered the Imperial University. When he returned home after one full month there, Libationer Lin [Han] presented him with a poem. It was unprecedented for a Libationer to present a poem to a student. Not yet having come of age, he achieved the *chin-shih* in the *jen-hsü* 壬戌 year of the Hung-chih reign [1502] and was appointed a Secretariat Drafter.

He bore the Announcement of Mourning for the Respectful Sovereign [the Hung-chih Emperor, d.1505] to the southern regions, where the nobility and senior officials of those distant parts all offered him precious pieces of rhinoceros tusk, ivory and jewelry. A eunuch named Hsiung made particularly rich offerings, but the Master would not even look at them. This had a profound effect on the eunuch, who said, "If this young man is capable of such a thing, I should be ashamed of myself!" Whereupon he resigned his post. When [Ho] returned the following year, he had no more than a single chest of books and clothing.

Later, when the disloyal [eunuch Liu] Chin took power, [Ho] realised that as a minor official he could not resist, while most of the senior officials were looking out for themselves, so he excused himself on grounds of illness and returned home. After some time had passed, Sir Plum Glen and Madame Li both died at the same time. The Master

grieved so intensely that his bones were visible. He neither drank nor played his lute until after the rites were performed at the end of the mourning period.

The mourning period expired and the disloyal Chin fell. At this time many prominent and principled men had been contaminated by association with Chin, and those who had not joined him had suffered greatly. Only the Master had risen far above it all. Everyone [now] said, "How lofty was Master Ho, to have acted with such foresight!" Later, he was restored to the Secretariat on the recommendation of the Grand Secretary Sir Li [Tung-yang], assigned to the Grand Secretariat Proclamation Office and made a participant in the Classics Colloquium.

When his friend Li Hsien-chi [i.e. Li Meng-yang] was subject to false accusations in Kiangsi and everyone was making much of his shortcomings, with none willing to come to his defence, the Master alone submitted a letter contesting the charges, taking the case to the Minister of Personnel Yang [Yi-ch'ing], so that the matter was properly dealt with.

At the time of the fire in the Ch'ien-ch'ing Palace, he submitted a memorial discussing contemporary policy issues, saying, "If human affairs are not set in order, we shall see a change in heaven once again." In a blunt denunciation, he said that such-and-such an adopted son should not be supported and that such-and-such a eunuch should not be favoured. Hence [his memorial] was retained in the palace without response, and people were terrified for him.

At this time, Ch'ien Ning was in full sway, pulling all the strings among the civil service. One day he came to the Master's door with an old painting, for which he sought an inscription. The Master said, "Such a fine painting should not be sullied by my inscription." He kept it for a year without adding a single character to it.

When Censor Shih [Ts'un-chih] died in an inn while visiting the capital, the imperial favourite Liao [P'eng] presented a coffin [for his funeral]. The Master rejected it with contempt, saying, "My friend accepted nothing improperly while he was alive; how can he be sullied now that he is dead!" He then contributed money on his own to help pay for the funeral. Such was his courage in doing what was right.

Up to this time, it was unknown for an official in the capital who had not been charged with any offense to serve a full nine years in one post without change. Things were made exceptionally difficult for the Master because of his high principles, and only after being held back in the Secretariat for over ten years was he finally transferred to Vice-Director in the Ministry of Personnel, and then promoted to Education Intendant for Shensi.

The frontiers of Shensi run through barbarian territory, and the routes to a number of the districts along the frontier go out among the barbarians. In former times, the Education Intendants had regarded this as a hardship and had only marked exams for the students of those

districts. The Master said, "To do so is to abandon them." He actually went to carry out the examinations as in other districts.

There was a severe drought in Lan-t'ien, where there was a spring in the mountains. When the Master got there, he climbed into the mountains and cast a sacrificial text into the spring, whereupon a downpour fell at once. The campus of the state school in Shang-chou was cramped, but beside it was an altar to the "Queen Mother" and the family shrine of a high official, which the people of the district believed sacred. The Master therefore asked the Magistrate, "What shrines are these? Have them all destroyed at once." Even the official's family did not dare complain. When he had tested the students of all the areas pertaining to Shensi, he took the exceptional ones into the Cheng-hsüeh Academy, where he supervised their instruction himself, sometimes contributing money from his own salary when funds were insufficient. Kuan-chung then prospered in its recruitment.

In the fourth month of this year, he finally contracted a heart ailment on account of his labours in the administration of education. He announced his departure in the sixth month, taking very little in the way of baggage, and died six days after reaching home.

Now our glorious Ming is established, but the Master could not long remain in it. Surely this was Fate! The Master was of preternatural intelligence by nature, and his virtue was pure, his ambitions great, and his conduct firm. His learning was of the highest and his vision great. He was well and broadly informed about all things and careful in his handling of them. On examining all his works, we can say that his integrity was perfect. At home he was even-tempered; among friends, affable. In giving and accepting, advancing and withdrawing, he was decisive. Since I began my attendance on him, I never saw him look either joyful or angry. He did not so much as mention wealth or fame nor in all his life did he take even a single coin. In studying, it was his practice to continue until midnight, nor did he ever weary of discussion. He was at peace with poverty and took pleasure in the Way, giving no thought to enriching his household. In office, he devoted himself to his work and maintained himself on his official salary, never accepting the slightest improper gift. Even so, he was generous; after his death, when his purse was examined, there were only thirty or so coins in it. He was surely one to be considered a pure gentleman!

Our dynasty is far removed from antiquity, and poetry and prose writing had by the years of the Hung-chih reign [1487-1505] become extremely so. The Master first joined with Master Li of Pei-ti [Li Meng-yang] to effect a complete change and move to antiquity. Among everything from the Three Ages down, in prose they chose the Tso [Chuan] and [Ssu]-ma [Ch'ien]; in poetry they approved of Ts'ao [Chih], and Liu [Chen]; in rhapsody they appreciated Ch'ü [Yüan] and Sung [Yü]; and in calligraphy they praised Yen [Chen-ch'ing] and Liu [Kung-ch'üan]. All in the Empire flocked to follow them. It was

magnificent, such a time as occurs only once in a thousand years! He once said, "Poetry and prose have immutable patterns, the words should be decisive and arguments coherent, one must link categories and compare things." And, "Different roads and a hundred ideas, and yet they all arrive at the same destination." And, "Prose grew weak in the Sui, but Han [Yü] energetically animated it, and ancient prose disappeared with Han; poetry grew weak with T'ao [Ch'ien]; but Hsieh [Ling-yün] energetically animated it, and ancient poetry disappeared with Hsieh." Regarded from this standpoint, all that the Master wrote and transmitted is evident. The Master was well versed in the Five Classics, but was especially fond of the *Changes* and *Songs*; he had mastered the subtleties of *yin-yang*, medical diagnosis, astronomy, geography, musical theory, and calendrical calculation. His writings include the "Mr. Ho's Collected Works" (*Ho Shih Chi* 何氏集 [i.e. the Shen recension]) and the "Twelve Discourses" 十二論. He compiled the "Selection of Ancient Ballads" 古樂府選, the "Poems of the Han and Wei" 漢魏詩, and the "Gazetteer of the Three Ch'in [regions]" 三秦志, all of them published to the world.²

The Master was born on the sixth day of the eighth month of the nineteenth year of the *Ch'eng-hua* reign [September 7, 1483] and died on the fifth day of the eighth month of the sixteenth year of *Cheng-te* [August 5, 1521], in his thirty-ninth year. He first married Madame Chang, who predeceased him with the honorary title of Child Nurturess. His second wife was Madame Wang, honorary title Child Nurturess, who died sixteen days after the Master. The Nurturess accompanied the Master wherever he went and loved him dearly, being capable of respect as well. It was always she who served him food and drink, there being nothing that she did not taste with pleasure. At night, she did not go to bed before the Master. When the Master died, she wailed unceasingly day and night, pacing around his coffin saying, "I want to die!" She would not touch food or drink and finally died without illness. Alas! Husband and wife departed together; the Nurturess's will to loyalty was extraordinary. The Nurturess was two years younger than the Master and bore three sons. The eldest, Fu 夫, is studying and can write essays; he is betrothed to a girl of the Wang clan of Chia-hsien, a daughter of the Administration Vice Commissioner [Wang Shang-chiung]. The second son is [Ho] Li 立, and the third [Ho] Teng 登. The eldest daughter is betrothed to a son of the Yüan clan, the second to a son of the Feng clan, and the third to a son of the Chang clan. All are still young.

On the seventh day of the tenth month of this year [November 5,

² The anthology of Han and Wei poetry is presumably the one compiled not by Ho himself but by Liu Ch'eng-te, to which Ho contributed a preface (see above, chapters six and ten). The "Gazetteer of the Three Ch'in" is presumably the *Yung Ta Chi*.

1521], they are to be buried together on the hill north of the Fishing Terrace. [Ching-ming's] elder brother Ching-hui told me, "My late brother was very fond of you; do write his curriculum." I have lived in the same neighbourhood as the Master since I was young and studied with him as I was growing up. The Master once said to Sir Plum Glen, "This young man is very capable; in him I have hope." After this, the Master was in office in the capital for six years, and since then it has been over five years. Since I have been devoting myself to writing in verse and prose, I was looking forward to the Master's return so that we could have discussions on the subject, but when he did return he was at his end. How painful! When the Master's illness became very serious, his nephew [Ho] Shih, his disciple Chang Shih, and I went in and held his hand, weeping. The Master said, "Death and life and constant principles; there is nothing in them to lament. I have only caused you gentlemen a great deal of trouble." His voice was still clear and strong.

I heard from my parents that when Madame Li was about to give birth, she dreamed that a great red sun descended into her bosom, and then the Master was born. This year there was a drought from the sixth month to the eighth. On the day he died, just as he had been dressed for burial, there was a great thunderstorm, turning the world dark as night during daytime. Thus there were great anomalies at his birth and death; surely his relation to heaven and earth was not superficial!

Curriculum respectfully presented by the disciple Fan P'eng on the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month of the sixteenth year of the *Cheng-te* reign [August 25, 1521].³

Fan's text is not only the earliest, but also the longest, if the extensive quotations in a few of the later biographies are not taken into account. Toward the end of the curriculum, he explains that although he had studied with Ho during the latter's years of retirement in Hsin-yang, they had been separated for ten years while Ho was in Peking and Shensi. Fan's text is divided rather evenly between a chronological account of Ho's life and a summary of his character and position in literature, with notes on his works, children, and funeral. Fan gives the fullest account anywhere of Ho's ancestors and early life. His treatment of Ho's years in Peking consists of four incidents, which he gives in chronological order but without dating them. They are his intervention with Yang Yi-ch'ing when Li Meng-yang was arrested in Kiangsi (late 1513), his memorial submitted at the time of the palace

³ This is not included in Fan's works, the *Fan Shih Chi*, which contains only poetry. It is included in the *fu-lu* 附錄 (Appendix) of the Standard recension, which gathers a variety of biographical materials. See, for example, the Honan edition, p.678.

fire (early 1514), his refusal to add an inscription to a painting in the possession of Ch'ien Ning (undated, but probably 1515-17), and his rebuff of Liao P'eng's attempt to contribute to the purchase of a coffin for Shih Ts'un-chih (early 1518; Fan doesn't mention Liao's personal name, the same as his own). Fan's account of Ho's years in Shensi includes several incidents not attested elsewhere, including his destruction of a heterodox altar and family shrine in order to expand the official school in Shang-chou, but does not mention his conflict with Liao Luan. Other omissions include the occurrence of both of Ho's marriages; all details of his retirement in 1507, including his letter to Hsü Chin and eventual dismissal; and his letter urging Li Tung-yang not to retire. Perhaps because he is following chronology, Fan omits all dates except those of Ho's birth, death, and *chin-shih* pass. Fan records Ho's association with Li Meng-yang and their promotion of Archaism as part of his summation, between the account of Ho's character and that of his learning, works, and family. He makes no mention of Ho's disagreement with Li, though he quotes more passages from his letter to Li on poetics than any other biographer, introducing them as *obiter dicta* without context.

Meng Yang's epitaph is one of only two biographies to have an introductory passage.⁴ In this he laments Ho's early death and says that the day after he wept for Ho, the latter's 'orphans' (*ku*) visited with Fan's curriculum to ask for an epitaph. This raises the question, to which we shall return later in discussing the biography by Li K'ai-hsien, of where Meng was at the time of Ho's death. In general, Meng follows Fan's text fairly closely, though rarely using the same words. He omits some details, including Ho Hsin's two wives, much of the material concerning Li Chi's early favour and Li Han's recommendation, Ho's *chü-jen* success except for its date, his scrupulousness during his trip to Yunnan, the content of the palace fire memorial, the long delay before his promotion, his actions in Shensi, all the quotations from his letter to Li Meng-yang, specific references to his works, and the deathbed scene. At the same time, Meng does add some new material and disagrees with Fan P'eng in places. For example, on the early trip to Kansu with his father, Fan P'eng gives

⁴ *Meng Yu-ya Chi* (1538 edition) 17.1a, also in the Standard recension, Honan ed. p.681.

Ho's age as thirteen and their destination as Hui-ning; Meng says twelve and Wei-yüan. Meng Yang supplies dates where Fan does not and specifies that it was his elder brother Ching-shao with whom he studied the *Documents*. Meng tells us when Ho married his wives and a good deal more about Ho's efforts against Liu Chin and subsequent retreat to Hsin-yang. On the subject of Ho's last illness and death, Meng differs from Fan in several respects. He says that Ho fell ill in the second month, not the fourth as Fan has it, and that he spat blood, rather than suffering from a heart ailment, as in Fan. He records Ho's last advice to his wife and tells us a little about her. One intriguing difference is that while Fan says that Mme. Wang starved herself after Ho died, Meng tells us that she was already ill.

The most striking thing about Meng's epitaph, however, is its treatment of Li Meng-yang. He inserts his account of their early meeting and common interest in Archaism right after Ho's *chin-shih* success, which is chronologically appropriate. But when he comes to the episode of Ho's assistance to Li when the latter was in trouble in Kiangsi, he not only shifts it, along with Censor Shih's coffin, to a brief transition between Ho's death and his character, but also drops Li's name entirely, referring simply to a 'friend' (友 *yu*). Since he had Fan's curriculum to hand, this cannot have been an oversight. Even had he neglected to include the incident earlier in his text and so inserted it at a later point, the omission of Li's name can only have been intentional. This suggests tensions to which we shall return.

Many of the early biographies of Ho Ching-ming can be dated only approximately. This is the case with the *Huang Ming Hsien-shih* 皇明獻實 (Presented Actualities of the Imperial Ming) compiled by one Yüan Chih 袁袞 (1502-47), a native of Soochow who served as an official but eventually retired and died rather young.⁵ His book, though extant and occasionally cited, is discussed by neither the *Ssu-k'u* editors nor by Franke. It is listed in the Bibliographical Monograph of the *Ming Shih* as a work in twenty *chüan*, but the extant editions vary.⁶ Although the book is not dated, it is reasonable to

⁵ *Huang Ming Hsien-shih*, Ming-jen Wen-chi Ts'ung-k'an, vol. 17 (Taipei: Wen-hai, 1970) 40.[3a] (769).

⁶ MS 97.2387. Note that the work is classified here as a 'miscellaneous history' (雜史 *tsa-shih*) recording Ming period events, not as a collection of biographies. The five copies now extant in China and Taiwan are all described as Ming period manuscripts.

suppose that Yüan completed it during his final period of retirement. Of course this supposition may be wrong altogether, or perhaps Yüan drafted his biography of Ho Ching-ming at an early stage of work. The biographies of Li Meng-yang, Ho Ching-ming, and Hsü Chen-ch'ing come at the end of the forty *chüan* manuscript copy reprinted in Taiwan, but the ordering reflects the chronology of the subjects' lives, not necessarily the order of composition.

In any event, the *Hsien-shih* biography, which is not among those appended to the Standard recension, represents a very early, if not the earliest 'independent' account of Ho Ching-ming. It is a much shorter text than those of Fan P'eng and Meng Yang, consisting of about 540 characters, as against about 1750 for Fan and 1200 for Meng. Like most later accounts, it omits all material concerning the early history of Ho's family, does not mention his wives or descendants, and considerably shortens or omits altogether the account of Ho's early life. Many other elements of the biography are also abbreviated to some extent. The exceptions, parts of the biography that Yüan presents as fully, or almost as fully, as did Fan and Meng, include Ho's experiences in Peking at the time of his first attempt at the *chin-shih*, his return to Peking after the death of Liu Chin, and the 'four stories' (the defence of Li Meng-yang, the Palace Fire memorial, Ch'ien Ning's painting, and the coffin for Censor Shih). There is, however, some new information provided, that Ho ranked third in the *chü-jen* examination; the date of his trip to Yunnan (though this could be inferred); that people approved of Ho's comments about T'ao, Hsieh, Sui prose, and Han; that Ho was grouped with Li Meng-yang, Pien Kung, and Hsü Chen-ch'ing as one of the 'Four Worthies' (四傑 *ssu-chieh*); and the opinion that Ho's prose was inferior to his poetry, the "Twelve Discourses" in particular being disparaged as not very good. Where the *Hsien-shih* presents information already available in Fan or Meng, it sometimes draws on the phraseology of one or the

Each has a different format, and one of those in the Peking Library is described as having been supplemented in the Ch'ing. See *Chung-kuo Ku-chi Shan-pen Shu-mu, Shih-pu* 中國古籍善本書目史部 (Union List of Rare Old Chinese Texts, History Section) (Shanghai: Shanghai Ku-chi, 1993) 1:430; *Taiwan Kung-tsang Shan-pen Shu-mu, Shu-ming So-yin* 臺灣公藏善本書目書名索引 (Union List of Rare Books in Taiwan Public Collections, Title Index) (Taipei: National Central Library, 1971) 1:890. It would require a separate study to sort out the recoverable textual history of this title. Reference here is to the copy reproduced in Taiwan.

other and sometimes recasts the material in new words. It seems clear that Yüan Chih had both texts at hand but that he took neither as his sole, or even his preferred, source.

Collation of Yüan's account against that in the *Huang Ming Ming-ch'en Yen-hsing Lu* 皇明名臣言行錄 (Record of Words and Deeds by Notable Subjects of the Imperial Ming) shows that the two are almost identical, with four sorts of differences.⁷ The first of these consists of five single character variations of a very trivial sort. The first of these is typical: after the statement that Ho was a native of Hsin-yang, Yüan Chih has the particle 也 *yeh*; the *Yen-hsing Lu* does not. Then, there are three single character variations in each of which the copy of Yüan Chih's account available for collation has manifestly inferior readings, while the *Yen-hsing Lu* has an obviously better text. The examples are (*Hsien-shih* first in each case): 比歸 ('compare return') vs. 北歸 ('north return'), referring to travel between Peking and Hsin-yang; 其詩 ('the poem') vs. 其時 ('the time') introducing the place of Pien Kung and Hsü Chen-ch'ing in literature when Ho was associating with Li Meng-yang; 才各 ('talent each') vs. 才名各 ('talent reputation each', 名 and 各 being characters very similar in appearance) in a statement that each of the 'Four Worthies' had his own (各) point of superiority.

Third, the two texts differ slightly in their accounts of the end of Ho's life. According to the *Hsien-shih*, "He was ill, spat blood, abandoned his office, returned and died at home" (病嘔血棄官歸卒于家); in the *Yen-hsing Lu*, this passage reads, "He abandoned his office and returned, dying at home" (棄官歸以疾卒于家). The spitting (or vomiting) of blood is a symptom mentioned by Meng Yang—recall that Fan P'eng said only that Ho suffered from a heart ailment. It seems more plausible to suppose that the *Yen-hsing Lu* suppressed an unseemly image (nothing else in either account even hints that Ho had any bodily functions at all) than that Yüan Chih added one to pep up his story, but there is no decisive evidence either way.

There are three possibilities for the differences between the two

⁷ *Huang Ming Ming-ch'en Yen-hsing Lu* 34.3a; included in the *fu-lu* of the Standard recension; Honan ed., p.674. Wolfgang Franke lists several works with this or a similar title in *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968), pp.82-83. The one cited here is the 'newly compiled' (新編 *hsin-pien*) work by Shen Ying-k'uei 沈應魁; see HY 3/262.

texts. One is that some or all of the errors arose when the handwritten copy of the *Hsien-shih* was being made from an original that had the better readings. Since the handwritten text has the appearance of a fair transcription rather than a working draft, just the sort of copy likely to be made in order to transmit a rare book, this explanation seems the more likely. Alternatively, the poor readings might have been present in the *Hsien-shih* from the outset, but silently emended by conjecture by the compiler of the *Yen-hsing Lu*. Then, of course, it is always possible that the *Hsien-shih* is not what it claims to be, but rather a later work that took over the *Yen-hsing Lu* account, introducing a few errors in the process.

I am inclined, however, to accept the authenticity and priority of the *Hsien-shih*. For one thing, the concluding discussion as found in the *Yen-hsing Lu* lacks the introductory words, “Yüan Chih says” and the two final passages, one being that Pien Kung was not in the same class as the others and the other the disparaging remarks about Ho’s prose, referred to above. These grow naturally out of what precedes them, but could easily be dropped in a *Yen-hsing Lu* entry concerned only with Ho (in the *Hsien-shih*, the comment on Pien explains why the next biography is of Hsü Chen-ch’ing, there being no entry on Pien even though all four ‘worthies’ have just been mentioned together). Last, it should be noted that while the date of the *Hsien-shih* is not known, it cannot be later than Yüan Chih’s death in 1547, while the *Yen-hsing Lu* was published in 1553.

A very similar text, the biography included in the *Chin-hsien Pei-yi* 今獻備遺 (Complete Gathering of Modern Contributors), compiled by Hsiang Tu-shou 項篤壽, appeared somewhat later, in 1583.⁸ This account also follows the *Hsien-shih* or *Yen-hsing Lu* very closely. Where these two differ, it sometimes agrees with the *Yen-hsing Lu*, as in the case of the conclusion and most of the minor variants, and sometimes with the *Hsien-shih*, as in the description of Ho’s final illness and in reading *pi kui* rather than *pei kui* (see above). Its only innovation is to drop the sections on Ho’s trip to Yunnan and the coffin for Censor Shih.

The next biography to be considered is the brief one in the (*Chia-ching*) *Shensi T’ung-chih* of 1542 陝西通志, compiled by Ho’s

⁸ *Chin-hsien Pei-yi* (SKCS) 42.3a (719).

friends Ma Li and Lü Nan.⁹ It is less than 275 characters in length and understandably concentrates on Ho's time in Shensi. It appears to have been compiled without reference to earlier accounts. Even where it contains the same information as they do, the phraseology is quite different. Unfortunately, it seems to have been ignored by later writers in their turn and hence is the unique source for several incidents, notably the ones describing Ho's remarks to a Prefect who was impatient of his restraints; his judgement, on appeal, in the case of the man in Chou-chih who protested the penalty declared against his father; and his disagreement with an Administrative Commissioner who wished to cut costs by cutting the established numbers of candidates for the provincial examination. Among the other unique characteristics of the *T'ung-chih* biography is that its list of Ho's works refers to the *Ho Chung-mo Chi* (i.e. the Yung recension) rather than the *Ho Shih Chi* (Shen), though the latter had already been published. This presumably reflects the availability of the Yung text in the locality where it was compiled.

We come next to the last account of Ho to have been compiled by someone who had actually known him. This is the biography by Ho's Shensi student Ch'iao Shih-ning.¹⁰ We do not know when it was written. In its present form, it cannot be earlier than 1543, since it mentions that Ho's son Li had passed the *chü-jen* examination in that year. We do not know when Ch'iao died, but he lived at least until 1550, so the biography could be that late. Finally, we do not know the occasion for its compilation. Its earliest appearance is in exemplars of the Standard recension that include Wang Shih-chen's 1558 preface and in some cases the preface by Chou Tzu-yi, dated 1577. For that matter, many versions of this recension include the inscription by Wang Tao-k'un, which is dated 1591 and refers to Ch'iao's biography, so we cannot use the presence of Ch'iao's biography in the Standard recension to date it. Wang Tao-k'un says that after Ho's death, several decades passed before Ch'iao wrote his biography and that several more passed before Ho's grandson Ho Lo-wen asked Wang to write his inscription. All this information taken together suggests that Ch'iao may have written his biography in the 1550s in conjunction

⁹ (*Chia-ching*) *Shensi T'ung-chih* 19.43b.

¹⁰ Included in the *fu-lu* of the Standard recension; Honan ed., p.667.

with the preparation of the Standard recension, though perhaps well before its publication. It may be significant that it is placed first among the collection of biographical materials in the *fu-lu* (appendix) of this recension.

Ch'iao's is one of the longer accounts, about the same length as Meng Yang's epitaph. In addition to personal reminiscences and comments scattered through his text, Ch'iao adds a variety of new items of information, the most important being the episodes of Li Tung-yang's attempt to retire and Ho's conflict with Liao Luan, along with its having been to Hsü Chin that Ho's letter was addressed.¹¹ Ch'iao also adds his fellow Shensi natives K'ang Hai and Wang Chiu-ssu to the list of those who associated with Ho, Li Meng-yang, and Pien Kung at the time of Ho's *chin-shih* success. Like Meng Yang, he takes up the Archaist tone of their literary circle as part of this account of Ho's early career, but his version is rather fuller.

Abandoning chronology, Ch'iao follows his somewhat abbreviated version of the early years with an account of Ho's character, which serves to introduce the stories of Ch'ien Ning's painting, the Palace Fire Memorial, Censor Shih's coffin, and Liao Luan. Then, in an explicit 'flashback', Ch'iao looks back to Ho's letter to Hsü Chin, followed by the letters to Yang Yi-ch'ing in defense of Li Meng-yang and to Li Tung-yang urging him not to retire. Praising Ho's courage in writing these three letters, Ch'iao adds that it was his willingness to offend the powerful and his dislike of flattery that kept him from being promoted for so long. This leads to the assignment to Shensi, Ch'iao's account of which consists of a description of Ho's teaching methods and learning, and thence to a lament on his early death and a few additional examples of his exemplary behaviour, viz. his strict observance of mourning for his parents and his indifference to money, including the thirty coins left in his bag when he died.

Ch'iao's conclusion stresses that Ho, unlike some of the great men from Honan in earlier ages, such as Pan Ku and Wang Po, combined literary talent with the highest standards of personal behaviour. Mentioning Ho's works, his son Ho Li and grandson Ho Lo-wen briefly, Ch'iao ends by remarking that the reasons for Ho's lasting

¹¹ Ch'iao does not give Hsü's personal name, but refers to him by surname and office, which suffice to identify him (cf. 'Secretary Kissinger' or 'Premier Chou').

fame can be found in his “Master Ho” essays.

Ch’iao Shih-ning’s biography calls attention to the difference between the Chinese term and its conventional Western-language translation. By cutting out most of the detail in his account of Ho’s early years, including most of his experiences in Kansu, his trip to Yunnan, and his retirement and recall, and presenting all material on his later life topically rather than chronologically, Ch’iao’s work exemplifies the *chuan* (傳 ‘transmission’, i.e. of significant information about a human subject) rather than the ‘biography’ (depiction of a life) that the English term promises.

Whatever the original occasion for Ch’iao’s biography, it proved to be an influential work and one often borrowed from. Many of the later accounts adopt his phraseology or base whole sections on his biography. Two extreme examples are Kuo T’ing-hsün’s 過廷訓 *Pen-ch’ao Fen-sheng Jen-wu K’ao* 本朝分省人物考 (Study of Men of Note in the Present Dynasty, Divided by Province), published in 1622, and a Ch’ing dynasty work, Fu Wei-lin’s 傳維 *Ming Shu* 明書 (History of the Ming), dated 1670. These are both large works with ambitions to comprehensiveness, so it is perhaps not surprising that their compilers took over an existing account with only minor modifications.

The *Pen-ch’ao Fen-sheng Jen-wu-k’ao* biography follows Ch’iao very closely, but is very much shortened (about 680 characters, as against about 1200).¹² Kuo T’ing-hsün’s approach is, in general, to cut phrases rather than sections, though some sections are cut more severely than others, especially in the latter parts of the text. He does omit references to Ho’s study with his elder brother Ching-shao and to Ho’s teaching while in Shensi. These cuts contrast with KHL, a roughly contemporaneous work of comparable scope. The latter presents Ch’iao’s biography in its entirety and as Ch’iao’s work.¹³

Fu Wei-lin’s entry for Ho is simply a somewhat less shortened copy of Ch’iao (about 800 characters) with minor stylistic changes (e.g. Ch’iao’s 先生 *hsien-sheng* [‘Master’, ‘the gentleman in question’]

¹² *Pen-ch’ao Fen-sheng Jen-wu K’ao* (1622; repr. Taipei: Ming-wen, 1991) 92.15a (327). The title of this work often begins with *Ming*, rather than *Pen-ch’ao*, as in the Bibliography.

¹³ KHL 96.61a (4097).

becomes 'Ching-ming' throughout).¹⁴ The omissions include most of the information on Ho's early life and references to Ch'iao's personal experiences. The only ones of significance are the dropping of Hsü Chin's surname and the retitling of Ho's collected works as *Ta-fu Chi*, the latter being an 'update' reflecting the publication of the Standard recension under this title. In supplying the name of the addressee of Ho's letter defending Li Meng-yang, Fu gives the wrong name, Yang P'u, instead of Yang Yi-ch'ing (see text, chapter seven).

The next biography to be considered is that compiled by the dramatist Li K'ai-hsien (1502-68).¹⁵ It is one of a group of six biographies of men of letters that Li wrote, the other subjects being Wang Chiu-ssu, K'ang Hai, Lü Nan, Ma Li, and Li Meng-yang. The biographies are not dated, but Li says elsewhere that he sent the six to 'Vice-Commissioner' (大參 *ta-ts'an*) Feng Wei-no 馮惟訥 in response to the latter's request for his latest works.¹⁶ Feng was appointed Administration Vice-Commissioner for the first time in 1563, so the biographies must be among Li's very late works.

Li's biography is clearly an independent production and, at almost 1600 characters, one of the longer accounts. He draws on Fan P'eng, with reference in a few places to information found only in Meng Yang or the *Hsien-shih* or *Yen-hsing Lu*. He appears unaware of Ch'iao Shih-ning's account, which may be a later work or may simply not have been known to him. The bulk of his text follows the pattern of chronology followed by notes on character, works, etc. It begins, however, in a most unusual way. Li first explains the 'educational' value of biographies of his six subjects. He then acknowledges that Ho is the one among them with whom he had never had any personal contact. He begins the biography proper with a 'flash forward' to the scene at Ho's deathbed. He omits the presence of Fan P'eng, but adds Meng Yang to the list of those present and then tells the story, quoted in later collections of anecdotes such as the *Hsi-yüan Wen-chien Lu* 西園聞見錄 (Things Seen and Heard in the Western Garden) but not in any of the other biographies, of how the decision was made to have Meng Yang write Ho's epitaph instead of entrusting the task to Li Meng-yang, as had been Ho's wish. Li K'ai-hsien's regret that this

¹⁴ *Ming Shu* (*Chi-fu Ts'ung-shu*; repr. PP 94/36-41) 146.18a.

¹⁵ *Li K'ai-hsien Ch'üan-chi* (Peking: Wen-hua Yi-shu, 2004) 10.773-75..

¹⁶ *Li K'ai-hsien Ch'üan-chi* 10.776.

was done was one more reason, he tells us, for undertaking his own biography.

This is, of course, a very striking addition to the biographical tradition, a stroke worthy of a practised dramatist. Similarly 'dramatic' is Li's penchant throughout his account for adding to its liveliness by inserting into it details previously unrecorded, especially quoted speech. These late additions to the story naturally inspire skepticism, so it is worthwhile to ask if there is any possibility that they might be reliable.

The evidence suggests that whether or not Li's additions are reliable, he did not have to make them up out of whole cloth. A native of Shantung, Li had the good fortune to meet K'ang Hai and Wang Chiu-ssu while on a trip to the west as a young man. Their lasting friendship was no doubt important in stimulating his interest in drama and dramatic poetry, but it also served as an important link between generations—Li was their junior by about thirty years. When Li came to write his six biographies, including Ho's, he may very well have drawn on things they had told him, but it is in the nature of the case that their contributions would have been partial and not subject to testing. One indirect indication of their influence may be that Li emphasises Ho's role as a man of letters. At the same time, he omits a number of things that one might have expected from his Shensi connections, in particular a good deal of Shensi-related material. The confrontation with Liao Luan is not even mentioned, while the unfulfilled plan to meet Wang T'ing-hsiang where their jurisdictions joined and discuss the Classics is taken into the tradition for first time, presumably on the basis of Wang's preface to Ho's works.

Another source was no doubt Ho's unconventional student Chang Shih. Li wrote a biography of Chang, in which he says that he associated with (交遊 *chiao-yu*) Chang for six or seven years.¹⁷ Chang was, of course, present at the deathbed scene, as Fan P'eng tells us and Li K'ai-hsien confirms. Curiously, in Li K'ai-hsien's version, Meng Yang replaces Fan P'eng as the third person present, along with Chang Shih and Ho's nephew Ho Li. This could mean either that the story is reliable, because based on an eye-witness account, or that it is unreliable, because Chang Shih was an interested party—he was also

¹⁷ Li K'ai-hsien *Ch'üan-chi* 10.747; KHL 115.6a (5090).

a friend of Li Meng-yang. Meng Yang's own account tells against it, since Meng tells us that he was given the Curriculum the day after he wept for Ho, while we know from the curriculum itself that it was not finished until twenty days after Ho died. This suggests that Meng was away from Hsin-yang when Ho died and only returned later.

An additional connection may have been Jen Liang-kan, Magistrate of Hsin-yang, compiler of the *Ta-fu Yi-kao*, and publisher of an edition of the Shen recension (see appendix two). Jen's appointment to Hsin-yang was at least in part a form of recognition for a meritorious act he had performed in his previous position as a local education official. A penniless ex-official who had been returning home along with his young sons under the protection of another official was abandoned by the latter as they passed through Jen's district. Reduced to begging along the roadside, the man and his sons were taken in and supported by Jen. When the father died of illness soon after, Jen took the boys into his family and had them educated alongside his own sons. He was eventually able to contact a relative of the dead man who was an official in Hopeh, and the latter arranged for the boys to be reunited with their mother at home in Shensi. The Hopeh official was a son of Wang Chiu-ssu. We have no reason to suppose that Jen and Li K'ai-hsien ever met, but Li was certainly aware of Jen—his biography is the only one to mention the existence of the *Yi-kao*, whose compilation he attributed to 'Magistrate Jen', so some account of Hsin-yang events was available to him and may have been the source of some of his additions. All the same, recognition that stories grow in the telling requires us to treat Li's account with caution.

The epitaph story is the most important addition that Li makes, but his account has a number of other points of interest. He is the only one after Fan and Meng to mention Ho's brothers or how the family's ancestor had come to Hsin-yang. He agrees with Meng Yang that Ho went to Kansu with his father in his twelfth year (Fan P'eng says thirteenth) but with Fan that their destination was Hui-ning (Meng says Wei-yüan, which is correct). He also includes much more detail about Ho's time in Kansu and his first trip to Peking than anyone after Fan and Meng. Uniquely, he attributes Ho's failure to attain a promising early post to a dislike in high places of poets. Like Meng Yang and a number of others, he gives his account of Ho's association with Li Meng-yang and others immediately following his *chin-shih* success.

Li's account, however, is remarkable for a number of additions. He is the only biographer to say that Ho changed his *hao* from Pai-p'ò to Ta-fu, and he inserts a long passage comparing Ho's relationship with Li Meng-yang to that of T'ang Shun-chih 唐順之 with his mentor Wang Shen-chung 王慎中. He omits mention of Li, Ho, Pien Kung, and Hsü Chen-ch'ing being known as the 'Four Worthies', but adds three new groupings, including an early mention of the 'Seven Masters of the *Hung[-chih and Cheng-]te* periods'. Although he omits all references to Ho's letter to Hsü Chin and return home 'sick', he adds that when Ho was dismissed, he had no regrets. Li is the only biographer to suggest that Ho was involved in K'ang Hai's rescue of Li in 1508, indeed that he 'energetically sought (力求 *li ch'iu*) K'ang's intervention. Li also quotes from Ho's letter to Yang Yi-ch'ing and adds, as no other biographer does, that Ho persisted in his efforts to defend Li in Kiangsi even though his doing so offended some of his friends. His accounts of Ho's time in Shensi and his death are less full than those of Fan and Meng.

In short, even if some of Li K'ai-hsien's material is doubtful, his account is valuable as a fresh and independent attempt to portray Ho Ching-ming and his life. It was not, however, as influential in shaping the tradition as Ch'iao Shih-ning's biography. The account of the Palace Fire Memorial given by Ch'ien Ch'ien-yi (see below) seems to be derived from Li K'ai-hsien, but, in the limited number of other cases in which Li was the first to add an element to the biographical corpus that occurs in later accounts as well, there are no textual parallels, and the later version appears to be independent. The only exceptions are in collections of anecdotes such as the inclusion in the *Hsi-yüan Wen-chien Lu* of Li's account of the decision to have Meng Yang write Ho's epitaph.¹⁸

We turn next to the brief (a little over 100 characters) biography in the (*Chia-ching*) *Honan T'ung-chih* 河南通志 (Comprehensive Gazetteer of Honan) (1555).¹⁹ This identifies Ho, mentions his *chin-shih*, first appointment, and devotion to antiquity, with the shift in literary styles that this brought about. The account of his career is

¹⁸ *Hsi-yüan Wen-chien Lu*, compiled by Chang Hsüan 張萱, (1940; repr. Ming-tai Chuan-chi Ts'ung-k'an, vols. 116-24, Taipei: Ming-wen, 1991) 6.23a (489).

¹⁹ (*Chia-ching*) *Honan T'ung-chih* 30.29b.

limited to brief references to his retirement under Liu Chin, subsequent reinstatement, memorial after the palace fire, promotion to Shensi, and death at 39. His works are listed as the *Yung Ta-chi* and *Ho Shih Chi*. Except for one phrase apparently lifted from Ch'iao Shih-ning, the text appears to be independent, but then there are only a few passages in it that are not the baldest possible summaries of information already in the public domain, as it were, and nothing in the way of content is new.

The next biography is that included in the *Huang-ch'ao Chung-chou Jen-wu Chih* 皇朝中州人物志 (Account of Personages from the Central Region During the Imperial Dynasty), compiled by Chu Mu-chieh and completed in 1568.²⁰ This is a text of moderate length, about 650 characters. Almost the only new elements in this account are the provision of dates (not all correct) for a number of incidents that earlier versions had left without explicit date, later information about the careers of Ho Li and Ho Lo-wen, and a concluding comment to the effect that Ho compensated for his failure to realise his political goals by writing the "Twelve Discourses." The *Chung-chou Jen-wu Chih* entry is thus not an original attempt at biography such as those by Ch'iao Shih-ning and Li K'ai-hsien, but neither is it a simple re-editing of a single earlier text such as we have seen in the cases of the *Fen-sheng Jen-wu Chih* and the *Ming Shu* of Fu Wei-lin. It is rather a scissors and paste work. Chu Mu-chieh echoes the phraseology of Ch'iao Shih-ning quite frequently and includes material that first appeared in Ch'iao's biography, such as the letter to Li Tung-yang, but he arranges his material chronologically in the main and also takes some material from other early versions, Meng Yang's epitaph in particular. The opening section, as far as Ho's *chin-shih* success and association with Li Meng-yang in the influential Archaist movement, is taken from Ch'iao Shih-ning, with some cuts and minor rearrangements. But when Chu comes to the next event in chronological terms, Ho's trip to Yunnan, which Ch'iao scarcely mentions, Chu draws on the *Hsien-shih* or the *Yen-hsing Lu*, altering the text in places and adding a reference to Ho's writing poetry with 'the prince and eunuchs' before his sources' report that Ho declined

²⁰ *Huang-ch'ao Chung-chou Jen-wu Chih* (1737; repr. Ming-tai Shih-chi Hui-k'an 18. Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng, 1970) 13.5a (379).

their precious gifts. Chu's account of Ho's letter to Hsü Chin and subsequent return home and dismissal perhaps draws the mention of Hsü by name from Ch'iao Shih-ning, although Ch'iao only gives his surname and title, and a phrase from Meng Yang, but for the most part appears newly composed.

The same is true of some of his version of Ho's defense of Li Meng-yang, though he borrows a passage that originated with Fan P'eng and was taken over by the *Hsien-shih* and *Yen-hsing Lu*. Chu's synthetic approach leads him astray here. Having given, erroneously, the year 1509 as the date of Liu Chin's fall from power, he follows Ch'iao Shih-ning in placing his version of Ho's letter to Yang Yi-ch'ing in defense of Li Meng-yang just before Ho's letter to Li Tung-yang urging him not to retire, to which he assigns the date 1510. Although Ch'iao's sequence is thematic rather than chronological, by following it here, Chu implies that the Li Meng-yang incident took place in 1509 rather than 1514. Chu's account of the Li Tung-yang letter is taken from Ch'iao Shih-ning, as is the summary comment about what the three letters revealed about Ho's public spirit. In other words, by trying to combine Ch'iao's point about the letters with his own chronological treatment, Chu seriously subverts his chronology.

Chu borrows from Fan P'eng in his account of the Palace Fire Memorial and from Meng Yang in that of Ch'ien Ning's painting. The same sort of shifting among available sources appears in his treatment of the incident of Censor Shih, of which Chu's version is similar to those of Fan P'eng and the *Hsien-shih*, and Ho's promotions, in which he again follows Meng Yang. Chu has little to say of Ho's time in Shensi, adopting neither the series of anecdotes provided by Fan P'eng nor Ch'iao Shih-ning's account of the conflict with Liao Luan's adherents, but rather providing a brief summary of Ho's goals and success that draws either on Meng Yang or on the accounts in the *Hsien-shih* and *Yen-hsing Lu*, which follow Meng. The story of Ho's death takes a very brief form that Chu might have abstracted from any of his likely sources. The list given of Ho's works comes directly from Ch'iao Shih-ning.

The next biography to be considered is that contained in the *Huang Ming Shu* 皇明書 (History of the Imperial Ming) compiled in the

latter part of the sixteenth century by Teng Yüan-hsi 鄧元錫 (1529-93).²¹ The apparently considerable length of Teng's account (over 1000 characters) is misleading. A good deal of the text is occupied by extended extracts from Ho's letter to Ho T'ang and an account of Ho and Li Meng-yang by Wang Wei-chen 王維楨; the biography proper amounts to less than 300 characters and comes from the *Hsien-shih* or *Yen-hsing Lu* with only minor changes in language and a few omissions, including Li Tung-yang's recommendation and Ho's final illness. Teng makes cuts in Ho's letter to Ho T'ang amounting to about a quarter of the original, adding a very brief comment that the letter shows Ho's high standards. Teng introduces Wang Wei-chen's text by explaining that Ho and Li had worked together to transform literature but that afterward differences between them had emerged. Wang praises Li Meng-yang to the skies, saying that if he had been born earlier than Li Po or Tu Fu, he might have 'done' either. Although Ho's letter and Wang's essay are not marked off typographically in Teng's text, it is clear that the first is an appendix to the biography of Ho Ching-ming, while the latter plays the role of commentary on *two* biographies (that of Li Meng-yang immediately precedes Ho's).

We turn next to the biography included in Li Chih's *Hsü Ts'ang Shu* 續藏書 (Continuation of a Book to be Hidden), a book left incomplete when Li died in prison in 1602.²² The biography is rather short, about 430 characters, and nothing of Li's reputed iconoclastic attitude is to be found in it.

In fact, Li Chih simply copies the *Hsien-shih* or *Yen-hsing Lu* biography, as he does the biography of Li Meng-yang that precedes it in both texts, dropping Ho's trip to Yunnan, the phrase 'people were fearful on his behalf' after the Palace Fire Memorial was kept in the palace without comment, the story of Censor Shih, and the date of his illness and death. As did the *Yen-hsing Lu*, Li Chih takes over Yüan Chih's closing comments, dropping all reference to Yüan, but he does alter the ending slightly. Like the *Yen-hsing Lu*, he drops the comment that Ho's prose, including the "Twelve Discourses," was not as good as his poetry, and simply closes by affirming Pien Kung's quality as a writer.²³

²¹ *Huang Ming Shu* (Wan-li edition; repr. TM 3:79) 38.43a (508).

²² *Hsü Ts'ang Shu* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1959) 36.506.

²³ But note, as Chien Chin-sung does in "Li-Ho Shih-lun Yen-chiu" (M.A. thesis,

We turn next to the biography included in the *Sheng-ch'ao Ming-shih K'ao* 聖朝名世考 (Examination of Eminent Nobles of our Sagely Dynasty) compiled by Liu Meng-lei 劉孟雷 with a preface dated 1611.²⁴ One point of interest in this work is that the entries on Li Meng-yang and Hsü Chen-ch'ing are appended to that on Ho. The usual case is for Li's biography to be treated as primary. The opening section on Ho is a short text, a little over 350 characters. It is another in the series based on the *Hsien-shih* or *Yen-hsing Lu*. In this case, everything between the opening identification and Ho's *chin-shih* pass is cut. Otherwise, the text is very close to the others, but a few small details suggest that the immediate source was the *Yen-hsing Lu*.

The next account to be considered is that in the *Ming-ch'en Shih-yi* 名臣諡議 "Discussion of Posthumous Names of Noted Officials," a section of the *Kung-huai Chi* 公槐集 (Ducal Poplar Collection) by Yao Hsi-meng 姚希孟.²⁵ Yao's dates are not exactly known, but he passed the *chin-shih* in 1619. His account of Ho is fairly short at about 350 characters. Although it might be taken for an original account on a superficial view, it is in fact based entirely on Ch'iao Shih-ning's biography. Yao shortens and alters Ch'iao's text, rearranging phrases and sometimes sections and adding a few comments of his own at the end concerning Ho and Li Meng-yang. Yao's text was copied almost verbatim—one short passage is omitted and there is one variant reading—into the *Huang Ming Wen-hai* 皇明文海 (Sea of Letters of the Imperial Ming) compiled by Ku Ssu-li 顧嗣立 (preface dated 1693).²⁶

Our next biography has a much greater claim to excellence, and even originality. This is the account found in the *Ming Shan Ts'ang* 名山藏 (Treasury of Noted Mountains) compiled by Ho Ch'iao-yüan 何喬遠, who died in 1632.²⁷ Although he does not add any completely new material, his contribution is based on a critical return to original

National Taiwan University, 1980), pp.241-44, that Li Chih showed real respect for Li Meng-yang in other writings, in spite of the important differences between them

²⁴ *Sheng-ch'ao Ming-shih K'ao*, (1611; repr. Ming-tai Chuan-chi Ts'ung-k'an, vol.41, Taipei: Ming-wen, 1991) 10.21a (847).

²⁵ *Kung-huai Chi* (*Ch'ung-chen* edition; repr. Ssu-k'u Chin-hui Shu Ts'ung-k'an 4:178-79, Peking: Peking Ch'u-pan-she, 2000) 5.21b (378).

²⁶ *Huang Ming Wen-hai* (ms. edition) han 20, t'ao 5.

²⁷ *Ming Shan Ts'ang* (1640 edition; repr. Peking: Peking University Press, 1993), p.5267.

sources, chiefly Fan P'eng and Meng Yang, but also including Ho Ching-ming's works. The result is a much longer text than most, about 1350 characters, in part because he includes extensive passages from Ho's letters to Hsü Chin and Yang Yi-ch'ing.

The treatment of Ho's early trip to Kansu with his father shows Ho Ch'iao-yüan's approach. He takes the location of Ho Hsin's post from Meng Yang, but the story of the favour shown the young Ho by Li Chi chiefly from Fan P'eng, though some phrases in the heavily rewritten account may have been drawn from Li K'ai-hsien. Ho Ch'iao-yüan then appends passages on Li Chi and Ho Hsin's personalities drawn from Ching-ming's epitaphs for them. The account of Ho's *chü-jen* success is based on Fan P'eng, but his having ranked third is added from another source, probably the *Hsien-shih* or *Yen-hsing Lu* or one of their descendants but perhaps from Li K'ai-hsien or even other documents of the examination no longer extant. Ho Ch'iao-yüan's selection of just two incidents from Ho's early life—Li Chi's patronage and his provincial examination triumph—is also unique. His is the only account to specify that Ching-ming's initial appointment as Drafter came two years after his *chin-shih* success. We cannot tell if Ho Ch'iao-yüan had a now lost documentary source at his disposal or simply inferred the fact from the date given by Meng Yang. His brief comment on Ho's literary association with Li Mengyang and Pien Kung appears to come chiefly from Meng Yang. His reference to Ho's letter to Hsü Chin is also brief and not based on any particular earlier source. That he mentions Hsü by name does not show derivation from the *Hsien-shih* or its descendants but rather from Ho's works, from which he quotes, abridges, rearranges, and paraphrases to create a version of Ho's letter to Hsü that is about half as long as the original, but makes many of its points. The brief account of Ho's retirement and recall takes one significant phrase concerning Liu Chin's purge of his opponents from Meng Yang, but the rest is paraphrased by Ho Ch'iao-yüan. As in the case of the letter to Hsü Chin, Ho Ch'iao-yüan gives his own very brief introduction to the letter to Yang Yi-ch'ing and then quotes over half of the letter (the only other biography to quote from the letter, Li K'ai-hsien's, uses only two phrases). Ho Ch'iao-yüan rearranges and paraphrases less in this case than in that of the letter to Hsü Chin.

In contrast to the extensive treatment of these two letters, Ho Ch'iao-yüan makes only the briefest mention of Ho's Palace Fire

Memorial, passing on quickly via his promotions to his final illness and request to retire. At this point, Ho Ch'iao-yüan inserts a summary, found nowhere else, of the discussions at court that led to Ho's being granted only sick leave until he should recover sufficiently to return to office. The brief account of Ho's death is followed by a few general remarks on his character that share one phrase with Meng Yang and another with Li K'ai-hsien but otherwise appear to be original with Ho Ch'iao-yüan. These remarks are prefatory to a series of examples from Ching-ming's life: his reluctance to accept gifts while in Yunnan (retold from Fan P'eng, including the repentant eunuch), Ch'ien Ning's painting, and the coffin for Censor Shih. The biography ends with a short statement that Ho and Li Meng-yang initially got on well, but broke off relations after their disagreement over poetics. The only work of Ho's mentioned by title is the "Twelve Discourses."

Ho Ch'iao-yüan follows his biographical essay with an explicitly personal comment (郎曰 *lang yüeh*) sketching the state of Ming letters before Li and Ho and discussing their styles and influence. As part of this, he refers to some of the arguments found in their exchange of letters. The earlier claim that the two men broke off relations after the exchange of letters has only one antecedent, in Li K'ai-hsien's dramatised account of the deliberations that followed Ho's death. Since it is almost certain that Ho Ch'iao-yüan had access to Li K'ai-hsien's biography, it would appear that this was his source.

The last important biography of Ho Ching-ming before the *Ming Shih* is the *hsiao-chuan* in Ch'ien Ch'ien-yi's *Lieh-ch'ao Shih-chi*, from 1652.²⁸ Although, at about 600 characters, it is not one of the longer accounts, it has been very influential. Ch'ien's biographical account proper occupies less than half the text, giving only the briefest mention of most events and omitting many altogether, including Ho's rescue of Li Meng-yang and Censor Shih's coffin. Most elements are treated so briefly as to provide little evidence for Ch'ien's immediate sources, but the evocation of Ho's appearance at the time of his *chü- jen* success echoes Fan P'eng and the account of his early association with Li Meng-yang draws on Ch'iao Shih-ning. After referring to the disagreement between Ho and Li and its continuation by their partisans, Ch'ien uses the latter half of his entry to criticise Ho's

²⁸ *Lieh-ch'ao Shih-chi Hsiao-chuan* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1959), p.322.

comment on “old poetry growing weak with T’ao Ch’ien,” holding Ho’s ideas responsible for what he sees as the confusion of later generations. In quoting the offending passage from Ho’s letter to Li Meng-yang, Ch’ien silently reverses the order of the phrases, as though Ho had begun with poetry, T’ao, and Hsieh and then turned afterward to prose. Presumably Ch’ien did so because poetry was his main concern, but his version was the one taken into the *Ming Shih* and hence remains the more familiar. At the same time, Ch’ien restores an important word, 法 *fa*, that Fan P’eng had omitted.

This brings us to the *Ming Shih* account:

Ho Ching-ming, whose informal name was Chung-mo, was a native of Hsin-yang. In his eighth year, he could write poems and old-style essays. In the eleventh year of the Hung-chih reign [1498] he passed the provincial examination while only in his fifteenth year. The nobility and elite contended in chasing after him for a look, until the crowds of onlookers were like a dam. In the fifteenth year [1502] he placed in the *chin-shih* and was appointed a Secretariat Drafter. He joined with Li Meng-yang and others in promoting poetry and ancient prose. Meng-yang was the most bold and outstanding; Ching-ming emerged a little later and was his match.

With the inception of the *Cheng-te* reign, Liu Chin seized power. [Ching-ming] sent a letter to Hsü Chin, the Minister of Personnel, urging him in the strongest terms to maintain his control on policy without giving way, and consequently excused himself on grounds of illness and went home. After a year had passed, [Liu] Chin cashiered all those officials who had denounced him, and Ching-ming was dismissed. After Chin was executed, [Ching-ming] was restored to office on the recommendation of Li Tung-yang and assigned to the Secretariat Proclamation Office.

When Li Meng-yang was jailed, no one dared to speak out, but Ching-ming submitted a letter to Yang Yi-ch’ing, the Minister of Personnel, and came to Li’s defense. In the ninth year [of Cheng-te, 1514], on the occasion of the fire at the Ch’ien-ch’ing Palace, his memorial spoke of adopted sons who should not be supported, frontier commanders who should not be kept on, foreign monks who should not be favoured, and eunuchs who should not be employed, but it was retained in the palace. After some time had passed, he was promoted to Vice-Director in the Ministry of Personnel, while still attached to the Proclamation Office. Ch’ien Ning wished to make friends with him and sought an inscription for an old painting, but Ching-ming said, “This is a famous work, not to be sullied by human hands.” He kept it for one year before rejecting and returning it.

He was soon after selected as Education Intendant for Shensi. Liao P’eng’s younger brother, the eunuch [Liao] Luan, was in charge of

Kuan-chung. He was very powerful, and his agents did not dismount when they encountered officials of the Three Commissions. Ching-ming seized and whipped them. In teaching students, he limited his scope to Classics as a basis for governance. He selected the best students for the Cheng-hsüeh Academy where he lectured on the Classics himself. He did not rely on the glosses and annotations of the various commentaries, so that the scholars understood for the first time what the study of the Classics really meant. At the beginning of the Chia-ching era [1521] he went home, citing illness, and died soon after in his thirty-ninth year.

Ching-ming set the highest standards for himself, honouring self-control and the sense of right and despising wealth and advantage; like Li Meng-yang, he had the stature of a national figure. As writers, the two of them got on extremely well at first, but after their reputations were established, they began to attack one another. Meng-yang emphasised imitation while Ching-ming emphasised creation. Each planted his barricades and would not back down, and as a result their friends also took sides. His partisans said that Ching-ming's talents were actually inferior to those of Meng-yang, but that his poems were outstanding and accomplished, so that in comparison to Meng-yang he was actually the better. All the same, everyone who discusses poetry and prose mentions them together as Ho and Li. They are also linked with Pien Kung and Hsü Chen-ch'ing as the Four Talents. According to his poetics, poetry became weak with T'ao, and Hsieh energetically animated it, so the norms [*fa*] of ancient poetry disappeared with Hsieh; prose became weak in the Sui, and Han energetically animated it, so the norms of ancient prose disappeared with Han. In compiling his Poems of Successive Reigns (*Lieh-ch'ao Shih-chi*), Ch'ien Ch'ien-yi forcefully denounced this.²⁹

At 468 characters, this is not a very long text, but as the 'official' version of Ho's life, it has greatly influenced discussion of him from the time of its publication in 1736 to the present day. Perhaps the first thing about it that needs to be recorded is that it was taken, like much of the *Ming Shih*, almost verbatim from a pre-existing source, the *Ming Shih Kao* 明史稿 (Draft History of the Ming) compiled by Wang Hung-hsü 王鴻緒 and others.³⁰ This, in turn, was based on the *Ming Shih* 明史 (History of the Ming) compiled by Wan Ssu-tung 萬斯同, who died in 1702.³¹

²⁹ MS 286.7349.

³⁰ Wang Hung-hsü, *Ming Shih Kao* (repr. Taipei: Wen-hai, 1962) 267.15a (vol.6, p.190).

³¹ Wan Ssu-t'ung, *Ming Shih* (Ch'ing manuscript edition; repr. Hsü-hsiu SKCS, vols. 324-331, Shanghai: Shanghai Ku-chi, 1997) 388.168.

The stages of this process were not at all equivalent. While the *Ming Shih Kao* biography was taken over almost unchanged by the *Ming Shih*, significant cuts were made when it was derived from Wan Ssu-t'ung's draft. Wan's draft originally included the story of Ho's first *chin-shih* failure, his stay in the University, and Lin Han's poem, as well as the story of Shih Ts'un-chih and his coffin. Two brief but interesting phrases that were cut report that in Shensi Ho's teaching "did not esteem literature" and in its treatment of the Classics "went beyond the examination curriculum."

Wan's draft, while it draws on a variety of earlier sources for its content and much of its phraseology, is a newly composed account, over half of whose words do not occur in their analogous contexts in any of the other biographies. For the rest, it seems clear that Wan Ssu-t'ung had access to the Standard recension of Ho's works, including both the prefaces and memorial texts found therein. The wording of Fan P'eng and Ch'iao Shih-ning is frequently echoed, and there are turns of phrase that were probably taken, consciously or not, from the prefaces by Wang T'ing-hsiang and Wang Shih-chen and the inscription by Wang Tao-k'un. There are also significant parallels with the *Ming Shan Ts'ang* and, to a lesser extent, the *Hsien-shih* or *Yen-hsing Lu* as well. Some material is quite new, including a reported prediction that Ho Ching-ming would be appointed to a good office after his *chin-shih* pass, and brief concluding accounts of Ho Ching-shao and Ching-yang.

The single source that appears to have contributed the most to Wan's account, however, is the entry in Ch'ien Ch'ien-yi's *Lieh-ch'ao Shih-chi*, well over a hundred of whose 600 or so characters turn up in it, comprising about a quarter of the whole. Much of this material is also found in texts earlier than both, but it is Ch'ien's version of Ho's *mot* on the decline and rejuvenation of poetry and prose that Wan reproduces, complete with restored words and reversed phrases. In contrast to the substantial cuts made to Wan's draft by Wang Hung-hsü and his colleagues, it is interesting that the only substantive change introduced by the compilers of the *Ming Shih* was to replace the *Ming Shih Kao*'s compilers' concluding evaluation of Ho's opinion, that it was much ridiculed, with a statement that Ch'ien Ch'ien-yi strongly criticised it in his *Lieh-ch'ao Shih-chi*.

It may be that Ch'ien Ch'ien-yi had a more crucial influence that is only implicit. This is reflected in the location of Ho's biography in the

Ming Shih. It appears not among the worthy or courageous officials, but rather in the 'Garden of Letters' chapters. This completed and rendered canonical a process under way since Ho's death. If the early writers, close associates such as Fan P'eng, told a life story complete with notable incidents, later writers soon lost control over the chronology of Ho's life, which could only happen when they lost interest in it as well. From then on, aside from accounts that simply cut and revise an antecedant text, the interest in Ho moves increasingly toward an account of the very aspect of his life that he seemed to be moving away from in the last years of his life, poetry and poetics.