

The Stained Mirror of History: The Historical, Liberal, and Religious Imagination in Hong Sheng's *Changsheng Dian*

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Hong Sheng 洪昇¹ (August 21, 1645–July 2, 1704) stood out as one of the two most notable playwrights in the Qing 清 dynasty (1644–1911). He wrote in the style of *Kunqu* 崑曲 (in Kunshan 崑山 Music) of the Ming *chuangqi* 明傳奇 (Southern Drama).² His salient play of fifty scenes,

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Zi 字 Fangsi 昉思; hao 號 Baiqi 稗畦, Baicun 稗村, Nanping Qiaozhe 南屏樵者.

Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648–1718) was the other best-known playwright of the Qing period. For Kong and his masterwork *Taohua shan* 桃花扇 (The Peach Blossom Fan), see Chun-shu Chang and Hsueh-lun Chang, "K'ung Shang-jen and His *T'ao-hua shan*: A Dramatist's Reflections on the Ming–Ch'ing Dynastic Transition," *The Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong*, 9.2 (1978), pp. 307–37; Chun-shu Chang, "K'ung Shang-jen and *T'ao-hua Shan*," in *China: Linguistic and Literary Criticism*, edited by Graciela de la Lama (Mexico City, Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico, 1982), pp. 231–35; idem, "K'ung Shang-jen," in *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, edited by William H. Nienhauser, Jr. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 520–22. Readers familiar with the history of Chinese drama all know that Hong Sheng's name has been inseparable from that of Kong Shangren in the discussion of Chinese drama in the Qing period. Since the early nineteenth century, they have been referred to together as "Southern Hong and Northern Kong" (Nan-Hong Bei-Kong 南洪北孔) and have been regarded as representatives of Qing drama. See Yang Enshou 楊恩壽 (1834–d. after 1885), *Ciyu conghua* 詞餘叢話 in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* 中國古典戲曲論著集成, edited by

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Changsheng dian 長生殿 (The Palace of Eternal Youth), completed in 1688, is considered the gem of Qing-dynasty *Kunqu* and one of the finest and most popular operas in the history of Chinese literature and theatre, set as it is against the context of the An Lushan 安祿山 Rebellion and barbarian invasion in the mid-eighth century. It surpassed all previous works as drama and in music of the same theme of an emperor and his love.

Staged in the early summer of 1688, the *Changsheng dian* won immediate popularity and created a sensation in the Chinese literary world. Contemporary sources—including Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623–1716), Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709), Xu Lin 徐麟, Jin Zhi 金埴 (1663–1740), and Wu Yiyi 吳儀一, all friends of Hong Sheng's—confirm that the play was copied in almost every household of the nobles and officials in the imperial capital and was staged by all theatrical groups and in all entertainment and pleasure quarters in Beijing (Peking); handwritten copies became the

Note 2 — Continued

Zhongguo xiqu yanjiu yuan 中國戲曲研究院 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiqu chubanshe, 1959), Vol. 9 (pp. 229–86), p. 251; Wu Mei 吳梅, *Zhongguo xiqu gailun* 中國戲曲概論 (1926; reprint, Hong Kong, 1964), juan 卷 3, pp. 1–2, 31–32; Lu Qian 盧前, *Ming Qing xiqu shi* 明清戲曲史 (1935; reprint, Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1961), pp. 89–101; Aoki Masaru 青木正兒, *Zhongguo jinshi xiqu shi* 中國近世戲曲史, translated by Wang Gulu 王古魯 (reprint, Taipei, 1965), Vol. 1, pp. 376–90; Chen Wannai 陳萬鼎, *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu shi* 元明清戲曲史 (Taipei: Zhongguo xueshu zhuzuo weiyuanhui, 1966), pp. 480–500; Zhang Jing 張敬, *Ming Qing chuanqi daolun* 明清傳奇導論 (Taipei: Dongfang shudian, 1961), pp. 45–48; *Zhongguo wenxue shi* 中國文學史, compiled by Beijing daxue zhongwen xi 北京大學中文系 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1959), Vol. 4, pp. 88–118; *Zhongguo wenxue shi* 中國文學史, compiled by Zhongguo kexue yuan wenxue yanjiu suo 中國科學院文學研究所 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1962), Vol. 3, pp. 1050–61; *Zhongguo wenxue jianggao* 中國文學講稿, compiled by Beijing shida zhongwen xi 北京師大中文系 (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1958), Vol. 3, pp. 201–30; Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, *Wenxue dagang* 文學大綱, Vol. 3 (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1927), pp. 342–52; Zhou Yibo 周貽白, *Zhongguo xiju shi* 中國戲劇史, Vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1953), pp. 499–523; Chen Wannai, *Zhongguo guju yuequ zhi yanjiu* 中國古劇樂曲之研究 (Taipei, 1974), pp. 192–99. For the great success and fame that the two plays won their playwrights, see Jin Zhi, *Jinxiang shuo* 巾箱說, in *Guxue huikan* 古學彙刊 (reprint, Taipei, 1964), pp. 3532–35; and Zhou Yibo, *Zhongguo xiju shi*, pp. 513, 521–23. Two technical points should be noted here. First, strictly speaking, *chuanqi* (literally, dramatic romance) is only one type of the Southern Drama. But since it became the dominant form of the Southern Drama and of Chinese drama as a whole from the fourteenth to about the mid-nineteenth century, we shall refer to it as the Southern Drama for the sake of convenience. Second, *Kunqu* originally referred to a new music style developed in Kunshan, a district in Suzhou 蘇州 Prefecture of Nan Zhili 南直隸 (Southern Metropolitan Province) in the sixteenth century. It was a soft, refined, and romantic music, performed by strings, various pipes, and flutes. But as the Kunshan music was rapidly adopted all over the empire and had eventually taken over and altered to its own rules the tunes and keys of the old music of both Northern Drama and Southern Drama, and had thus created a new school of drama which dominated Chinese stage for almost three hundred years, *Kunqu* came to refer to all dramas performed to Kunshan music, and hence one may simply render it as Kunshan Drama.

most popular items in the bookstores in Beijing. According to Mao Qiling, the play reached the Kangxi 康熙 emperor (r. 1662-1722) shortly after its completion and declared excellent. The work then made Hong Sheng the honoured guest at grand parties given by royal princes and leading officials in Beijing. At some of these parties, attended by the most eminent scholars and officials, the best players in China such as those of the Juhe 聚和 Troupe were assembled to play the *Changsheng dian* in the presence of its playwright.³

Oddly enough, the success and popularity of Hong Sheng's play failed to bring its author fortune in his official career. In the autumn of 1689, about a year and a half after the first brilliant staging of the *Changsheng dian*, Hong Sheng was actually removed from the roster of *jiansheng* 監生 ("Student" of the Imperial College [*Guozi jian* 國子監]), a title that he had held for twenty-one years. Although Hong Sheng's misfortune only added popularity to the *Changsheng dian* and made Hong Sheng a legend in his own time, his official career was at an end. This paradox of fate was an illustration of the peculiar experience of a Chinese litterateur who lived in the notable period of the dynastic transition from the Chinese Ming 明 (1368-1644) to the Manchu Qing. An examination of Hong Sheng's life and the political and intellectual issues surrounding the *Changsheng dian* can further enrich our understanding of the intellectual and political temper and climate of exactly that period—the Ming-Qing dynastic transition.

³ Mao Qiling, *Xihe wenji* 西河文集 (*Guoxue jiben congshu* 國學基本叢書 ed.; reprint, Taipei, 1968), *xu* 序 section, p. 526; and Wu Ren's 吳人, Xu Lin's, and others' prefaces to *Changsheng dian*, in Nuanhong shi 暖紅室 ed. of *Changsheng dian*, edited by Liu Shiheng 劉世珩 (Guichi 貴池, 1919), pp. 12ab, 13b, 14ab; Jin Zhi, *Jinxiang shuo*, pp. 3532-35. Zhu Yizun, *Pushu ting ji* 曝書亭集 (*Guoxue jiben congshu* ed.; reprint, Taipei, 1968), p. 366. Later sources are Zha Weiren 查為仁 (1693-1749), *Lianpo shihua* 蓮坡詩話 (*Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 ed.), p. 27; Wang Yingkui 王應奎 (b. 1684), *Liunan suibi* 柳南隨筆 (1740, *Congshu jicheng chubian* ed.), *juan* 6, pp. 110-11; Dong Chao 董潮 (1729-1764), *Donggao zachao* 東皋雜鈔 (1753, *Congshu jicheng chubian* ed.), p. 33; Li Tiaoyuan 李調元 (1753-1803), *Yucun quhua* 雨村曲話 (1784), in *Zhongguo xiqu yanjiu yuan, Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng*, Vol. 8 (1960), p. 26; Jiao Xun 焦循, *Jushuo* 劇說 in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng*, Vol. 8, p. 154; Liang Shaoren 梁紹壬 (b. 1763), *Liangban qiuyu an suibi* 兩般秋雨庵隨筆 in *Biji xiaoshuo daguan xubian* 筆記小說大觀續編 (reprint, Taipei, 1962), p. 4478; Xu Ke 徐珂, *Qingbai leichao* 清稗類鈔 (prefaced 1917) (reprint, Taipei, 1966), Vol. 37, pp. 57-58; Wang Mengsheng 王夢生, *Liyuan jiahua* 梨園佳話 (reprint, Taipei, 1972), p. 6. Mao Qiling's recollection indicates that the Kangxi emperor viewed the play and came to like it shortly after its completion. Wang Yingkui and Dong Chao of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries both shared this view. But Jin Zhi, Hong Sheng's neighbour at the West Lake after Hong's retirement, related that the play did not reach the Kangxi emperor until after the case of "performing *Changsheng dian* during a period of national mourning" in the autumn of 1689. Jin's view was followed by Liang Shaoren and Yang Enshou of the nineteenth century. After careful examination of Mao Qiling's and Jin Zhi's statements and reviewing the fact that while Mao Qiling knew Hong Sheng in Beijing and followed the process of the writing of *Changsheng dian*, Jin Zhi was not well acquainted with Hong Sheng until after 1689, we have followed Mao Qiling's version in the present study.

The Playwright from Hangzhou

Hong Sheng came from an old and distinguished gentry family in the southern cultural centre, Hangzhou 杭州, in Zhejiang 浙江.⁴ His ancestors were traced back to the illustrious official Hong Hao 洪皓 (1088–1155) of the Southern Song 南宋 dynasty (1127–1279) whose three sons, known as the famous “Three Hongs” in the official *Song History* (*Song shi* 宋史, completed in 1343–1345), were all eminent public servants and men of letters. But the Hong clan, although still enjoying certain prestige of an old family, had already declined in Hong Sheng’s day.⁵

- ⁴ His family residence was at the Qingchun 慶春 (also called Caishi 菜市) Gate area in Dongli 東里 (East Ward), on the northeast side of Hangzhou City.
- ⁵ The important works about Hong Sheng’s life are as follows: Zhang Peiheng 章培恆, *Hong Sheng nianpu* 洪昇年譜 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979); idem, “Guanyu Hong Sheng shengping de jige wenti 關於洪昇生平的幾個問題,” *Fudan xuebao* 復旦學報, 1980, No. 3, pp. 68–77; Zeng Yongyi 曾永義, “Hong Fangsi nianpu 洪昉思年譜,” *Zhongshan xueshu wenhua jikan* 中山學術文化集刊, 3 (1969), pp. 825–941; idem, *Changsheng dian yanjiu* 長生殿研究 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1969), pp. 1–6; idem, *Qing Hong Fangsi xiansheng Sheng nianpu* 清洪昉思先生昇年譜 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1981); Chen Wannai, “Hong Baiqi xiansheng nianpu 洪裊畦先生年譜,” *Youshi xuezhì* 幼獅學誌, 7.2 (1968), pp. 1–52; 7.3 (1968), pp. 1–46; idem, *Hong Sheng yanjiu* 洪昇研究 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1970); idem, *Hong Baiqi xiansheng nianpu* 洪裊畦先生年譜 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1976); Hu Chen 胡晨, “Hong Sheng Kaolüe 洪昇考略,” *Wenxue yichan zengkan* 文學遺產增刊 (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe), No. 12 (1963), pp. 60–72; Chen Youqin 陳友琴, “Lüetan Changsheng dian zuozhe Hong Sheng de shengping 略談長生殿作者洪昇的生平,” in *Wenxue yichan xuanji* 文學遺產選集 (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe), pp. 169–80; Wang Yongjian 王永健, “Gudian xiqu zuojia yanjiu de xin shouhuo 古典戲曲作家研究的新收穫,” *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產, 1981, No. 3, pp. 144–47; Liu Hui 劉輝, “Hong Sheng shengping kaolüe 洪昇生平考略,” *Xiqu yanjiu* 戲曲研究, 1982, No. 5, pp. 146–73; Meng Fanshu 孟繁樹, *Hong Sheng ji qi Changsheng dian yanjiu* 洪昇及其長生殿研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiqu chubanshe, 1985), esp. pp. 1–65; Chun-shu Chang, “Hong Sheng,” in Nienhauser, Jr., *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, pp. 458–59; Tu Pien-pu, “*The Palace of Eternal Youth* and Its Author,” *The Palace of Eternal Youth* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), pp. 312–22; *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period*, edited by Arthur M. Hummel (reprint, Taipei, 1967), pp. 375–76. We should point out here that the birth date of Hong Sheng (1646) in Hummel is questionable, and the date of the final release of *Changsheng dian* as “about the year 1684” in the same book is also incorrect. For other important biographical sketches of Hong Sheng, see Li Huan 李桓 (1827–1891), *Guochao qixian leizheng chubian* 國朝耆獻類徵初編 (1890; reprint, Taipei, 1967), juan 430, pp. 46a–47a (quoting Qian Lin 錢林 [1762–1828] and others); *Qingshi liezhuan* 清史列傳 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1928), juan 71, pp. 15ab; Zhou Yibo, *Zhongguo xiqu shi*, pp. 514–23; Zheng Zhenduo, *Wenxue dagang*, pp. 348–52; Meng Yao 孟瑤, *Zhongguo xiqu shi* 中國戲曲史, Vol. 2 (Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue she, 1969), pp. 358–64; and Shionoya On 鹽谷溫 (trans.), *Chōsei den* (Tokyo, 1922), pp. 1–5 (“Introduction”). For Hong Sheng’s reflections on some of the important events in his life, see his two collections of poems, the *Baiqi ji* and the *Baiqi xuji*. The edition we use is the *Baiqi ji. Baiqi xuji* (Shanghai:

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The irony and paradox of Hong Sheng's fate reveals itself by the mysteries surrounding his life. First of all, although we know that his father was Hong Qijiao 洪起蛟 (b. 1626–d. after 1691), we cannot identify the names or styles of Hong Sheng's great-grandfather and grandfather. Contemporary sources indicate that they were officials under the Ming dynasty and because of them Hong Sheng's father was accorded an official post under the Qing. But they give no information regarding their names and their actual government positions.⁶ The written records, however, give a clear picture of

Note 5 — Continued

Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957). Note that this 1957 edition includes two hand-copied editions of the *Baiqi ji*: from page 1 through page 77, it was based on the “Shanghai wenxian tushuguan 上海文獻圖書館 hand-copied edition”; from page 78 through page 155, it was based on the “Nanjing tushuguan 南京圖書館 hand-copied edition.” This means we have two versions of the *Baiqi ji* in one book. In our notes, we will just give the page numbers without repeating the names of the editions when we refer to the *Baiqi ji*. Hong Sheng's *Xiaoyue lou ji* 嘯月樓集 (Collection of Poems of the Xiaoyue Tower) is included in *Hong Sheng ji* 洪昇集 (Complete Works of Hong Sheng), collected and edited by Liu Hui (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1992), pp. 1–171. It should be noted that Zhang Peiheng's book *Hong Sheng nianpu* also quotes numerous poems of the *Xiaoyue lou ji*. Our study of Hong Sheng's life is based on the above sources and numerous Qing works cited in notes 2 and 3 above. Our views and interpretation of Hong Sheng's life, however, are significantly different from those in these works. We have tried to approach Hong Sheng's life from the point of view of an intellectual historian, not from that of a chronological biographer or literary historian. We have thus taken Hong Sheng as a scholar, writer, and intellectual, and placed him in the context of his time and cultural world. In the pages that follow, we shall only note the specific points that we have developed in our study of Hong Sheng, general points will not be noted.

Hong Sheng's birth year has been suggested by almost all scholars to be 1645. Liu Hui, however, proposed in 1982 that Hong Sheng was born in 1657 and died at the age of forty-eight *sui* 歲 (“Hong Sheng shengping kaolüe,” pp. 146–51). This proposal contradicts all clearly known facts and dates about Hong Sheng's life and is thoroughly dismissed by Meng Fanshu (*Hong Sheng ji qi Changsheng dian yanjiu*, p. 65). On the basis of all reliable sources, we also conclude that Hong Sheng was indeed born in 1645, not 1657. Contemporary sources confirm that the Hong clan was originally in Jiangxi 江西 and Hong Hao first moved to Hangzhou in Zhejiang and started Hong Sheng's clan line in that area. It was only in late Ming times that Hong Sheng's immediate ancestry became traceable. The three generations preceding Hong Sheng's and the one following his can be listed as follows: (1) The generation of Hong Sheng's great-grandfather: Hong Zhanzu 洪瞻祖; (2) The generation of Hong Sheng's grandfather: Hong Jihui 洪吉暉, Hong Jixiu 洪吉修, Hong Jichen 洪吉臣, Hong Jifu 洪吉符; (3) The generation of Hong Sheng's father: Hong Qijiao 洪起蛟 (styled Wuwei 武衛, father unknown, Hong Sheng's father), Hong Chao 洪超 (Hong Jihui's son), Hong Jingrong 洪景融 (styled Runsun 潤孫, Hong Jifu's son), Hong Jinggao 洪景高 (styled Zhensun 貞孫, Hong Jifu's son); (4) The generation of Hong Sheng: Hong Sheng (styled Fangsi), Hong Chang 洪昌 (styled Yinzhong 殷仲), Hong Zhongling 洪中令 (style; name unknown) (all three were Hong Qijiao's sons), Hong Huang 洪潢, Hong Chengxiang 洪承祥, Hong Chengxi 洪承禧, Hong Chengyou 洪承佑, Hong Chengzhen 洪承禎 (last five were Hong Chao's sons); (5) The generation of Hong Sheng's children: Hong Zhizhen 洪之震, Hong Zhize 洪之則, Hong Zhiyi 洪之益 (all three were Hong Sheng's sons), Hong Gang 洪綱 (Hong Huang's son). But it is not known who Hong Qijiao's grandfather and father were.

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the genealogy of a branch of the Hong clan headed by Hong Zhanzu 洪瞻祖 (*jinsshi* 進士 of 1598), who, according to Hong Sheng himself, was Hong Sheng's great-grandfather's brother.⁷ We know almost all the names of Hong Zhanzu's sons (the generation of Hong Sheng's grandfather), grandsons (the generation of Hong Sheng's father), and great-grandsons (Hong Sheng's own generation). It seems that a page of family history of the Hong clan was either deliberately omitted or carefully altered.

We know that his father was known to be an official. It is also known that Hong Sheng's mother was a daughter of the Grand Secretary Huang Ji 黃機 (1612–1686). When Hong Sheng reached his twentieth birthday he married his own cousin, the talented poetess Huang Lanci 黃蘭次 (b. August 22, 1645), a daughter of his maternal uncle Huang Yanbo 黃彥博 (*jinsshi* of 1664) and a granddaughter of Huang Ji.⁸ With such prominent relatives and in-laws, it was very unusual indeed that his grandfather's name was not identified in any contemporary records.

The second mystery surrounding Hong Sheng's life was his father's banishment, but its nature and causes were not officially recorded in any contemporary sources, and Hong Sheng and his friends only vaguely mentioned it in their writings. From the available information we construe the following hypothesis: The order of banishment was issued either in the late autumn or early winter of the year *jiwei* 己未 (1679) when Hong Sheng was residing at the imperial capital Beijing.⁹ Hong Sheng held

⁷ Hong Jingrong, Zhanzu's grandson, was Hong Sheng's "zushu 族叔"; see *Baiqi xuji*, p. 197.

⁸ When Hong Sheng married his cousin Huang Hui 黃蕙 (styled Lanci) was also a subject of heated debate among scholars. Chen Wannai contends that Sheng was married in 1661 when he was seventeen. Hu Chen first took the view that Sheng was married in 1664 when he was twenty; later Zhang Peiheng and Meng Fanshu also support this view with convincing evidence. Zeng Yongyi does not designate a specific year for Hong Sheng's marriage, but holds that at least on his birthday of 1664, Hong Sheng was already married. Liu Hui holds that Sheng was married in 1674. For details of these scholars' studies, see note 5 above.

⁹ Four of Hong Sheng's poems, plus Zhu Rong's 朱溶 preface to the *Baiqi ji*, lead us to the hypothesis about the incident of his father's banishment. First, in the poem "*Jiwei yuanri* 己未元旦" (The New Year's Day of the Year *Jiwei*), the year *jiwei* (February 11, 1679–January 31, 1680) is established as the seventh year after Hong Sheng "drifted away" from home. Second, in the poem "Nangui 南歸" (Returning South), Hong Sheng makes it very clear that the incident took place in the seventh year after he started his drifting life. Thus with the first poem this poem makes clear that the incident happened in *jiwei*. Third, in another poem "Chuxi pozhou beiguo 除夕泊舟北郭" (Anchoring the Boat at the Northern Suburb on the New Year's Eve), Hong Sheng reveals three facts: that his father was falsely accused, that he hurried home to be with his parents after he had received the news of his father's banishment, and that he accompanied his father in a boat on the evening of the last day of *jiwei* (January 30, 1679), leaving Hangzhou with a thought that his father might never return. Fourth, in the poem "Tuzhong fenghuai Yidu Feng xianggong 途中奉懷益都馮相公" (Remembering Grand Secretary Feng of Yidu on My Way Home), Hong Sheng reveals that it was with the help of Feng Pu 馮溥 (1609–1691) that his father was granted a pardon. This poem confirms the information revealed by Zhu Rong's preface to the *Baiqi ji* that Hong Sheng's father was later pardoned.

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that his father was falsely accused, and was totally shaken up when the news reached him from Hangzhou, his hometown. After all attempts to reverse the order to save his father had failed, Hong Sheng hurried home to Hangzhou. By the end of that year, on the New Year's Eve, Hong Sheng accompanied his father in a boat, leaving Hangzhou with the thought that it might be his father's last time to say goodbye to their beloved hometown.

The details about this banishment and how long it lasted are not known. According to the account of Zhu Rong 朱溶, a friend of Hong Sheng's, it was not very long before help finally came and Hong Sheng's father was pardoned.¹⁰ In fact, there was the possibility that the pardon came while they were in the middle of the journey of banishment, so they might actually not have reached the destination of the banishment at all. This explains why there are no descriptions of the destination of banishment in Hong Sheng's poems which usually record all his travels and personal experiences.

The third mystery surrounding Hong Sheng's life was the so-called “*jianan* 家難” (family catastrophe) or “*nan*” (trouble) or “*huo* 禍” (catastrophe) that was referred to in his poems. Since he never made clear what kind of trouble and catastrophe he was talking about, differing speculations arise. Did it have anything to do with his father's banishment? Was it the litigation against his father which eventually brought his father a guilty verdict and the order of banishment? If the “family catastrophe” referred to was his father's banishment, why all the secrecy since his father was “falsely accused” and later was cleared of blame and “was pardoned”? In fact, the secrecy over these issues was shared by everyone concerned, as testified not only by Hong Sheng's own writings, but also those of his contemporaries. And this secrecy suggests two possibilities: It might involve a highly sensitive political issue, such as being accused of engaging in anti-Manchu writings or activities; or it might have something to do with Hong Sheng's efforts (and other people's respect of his efforts) to protect either his father's or the family's reputation. In any case, Hong Sheng's poems indicate that as early

Note 9 — Continued

For details of these four poems and Zhu Rong's preface to the collection, see Hong Sheng, *Baiqi ji. Baiqi xuji*, pp. 3-4, 48, 49, 85-86, 170. It should be pointed out, however, that there are different opinions regarding his father's banishment among modern scholars. For detailed discussions of the “*jianan* 家難” and its related problems, see Zeng Yongyi, “Hong Fangsi nianpu,” pp. 856-60, and *Qing Hong Fangsi xiangsheng Sheng nianpu*, pp. 185-86; idem, *Changsheng dian yanjiu*, p. 12; Chen Wannai, *Hong Sheng yanjiu*, pp. 55-72; idem, “Hong Baiqi xiansheng nianpu,” pp. 28-36; Hu Chen, “Hong Sheng kaolue,” pp. 61-66; Chen Youqin, “Lüetan *Changsheng dian* zuozhe Hong Sheng de shengping,” pp. 170-72; Xu Shuofang 徐朔方, *Xiqu zaji* 戲曲雜記 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1956), p. 89; Zhang Peiheng, “Guanyu Hong Sheng shengping de jige wenti,” pp. 68-77, esp. pp. 75-76. As to the specific years, scholars have variously given 1662 (Ye Dejun 葉德均 and Xu Shuofang), 1667 (Chen Wannai), 1672 (Hu Chen and Zeng Yongyi), and 1679 (Zhang Peiheng). We believe that Hong Sheng's father received the order of banishment in 1679.

Zhu Rong, “Xu” (Preface) in *Baiqi ji*, pp. 3-4.

as 1675, the specific term “family catastrophe” appears in a poem;¹¹ it is clear that at least by 1675, before the court of banishment (1679), family troubles had already been a source of his anxiety and grief.

The mysteries surrounding Hong Sheng’s life have been the subject of much controversy among modern Hong Sheng scholars. Until all these riddles are unraveled, no conclusive biographical study of Hong Sheng can be made. Yet these mysteries also reflect the tremendous tension that existed in Hong Sheng’s life; they shed light on the anguish of grief expressed in his works and on the pilgrimage he made in search of the meaning of life. In our study, the central focus is Hong Sheng’s *Changsheng dian* which not only represents the highlight of the playwright’s lifelong literary pursuit but also sums up his main beliefs and basic values.

Of the many factors that influenced Hong Sheng’s ideals and values, two are of paramount importance. First, the education that he received during his formative years in Hangzhou was under the strong influence of Ming loyalism practiced by his teachers and influential elder friends such as Lu Fanchao 陸繁弨 (1635–1684), Mao Xianshu 毛先舒 (1620–1688), Zhu Zhijing 朱之京 (1610–1684), Zhang Dan 張丹 (b. 1619), Shen Qian 沈謙 (1620–1670), and Chai Shaobing 柴紹炳 (1616–1670).¹² Second, the discontents and frustration that he experienced during his long stay in Beijing were significant; they reinforced his lingering affection and nostalgia for the falling Ming empire which were already generated earlier by his Ming loyalist teachers and friends in Hangzhou. The third factor would be his father’s banishment, if we could have found out more about the case

¹¹ Hong Sheng, “Yiye 一夜” (One Night) in *Baiqi ji*, p. 51. For a detailed study of this poem, see Zeng Yongyi, “Hong Fangsi nianpu,” p. 860; Chen Wannai, *Hong Sheng yanjiu*, pp. 51–52; Zhang Peiheng, *Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 144, 151–52. All three agree that this poem was written in 1675 when his younger brother Zhongling was on active service in the army fighting against Geng Jingzhong’s 耿精忠 rebellious forces in Fujian 福建. We will discuss this poem in greater detail when we discuss Hong Sheng’s “family catastrophe.”

¹² According to Lu Fanchao’s own introductory note to a poem he wrote to commemorate the double birthday celebration of Hong Sheng and his wife, Hong was referred to as a disciple of his. In Chai Shaobing’s letter to Hong Sheng, Hong was referred to as the student of both Mao Xianshu and Zhu Zhijing. See Zhang Peiheng, *Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 42, 64. For biographies of Lu Fanchao, Mao Xianshu, Zhang Dan, Shen Qian, and Chai Shaobing, see *Hangzhou fuzhi* 杭州府志 (1922; reprint, Taipei, 1974), pp. 2755, 2751; Wen Ruilin 溫睿臨, *Nanjiang yishi* 南疆逸史 (*Wan Ming shiliao congshu* 晚明史料叢書 ed.; reprint, Tokyo, 1967), pp. 92–93; *Qing shi* 清史 (Taipei: Guofang yanjiuyuan, 1962 ed.), p. 5239; *Qingshi liezhuan*, *juan* 70, pp. 9a–11a; Qian Yiji 錢儀吉, *Beizhuan ji* 碑傳集 (reprint, Taipei, 1962), *juan* 124, p. 5b; *juan* 138, p. 7a; Li Huan, *Guochao qixian leizheng chubian*, *juan* 395, p. 17a; *juan* 424, p. 25a; *juan* 475, pp. 47a, 56a; Qian Lin 錢林, *Wenxian zhengcun lu* 文獻徵存錄 (1858 ed.), *juan* 1, p. 31a; *juan* 6, pp. 67b–69b; Li Yuan-du 李元度 (1821–1887), *Guochao xianzheng shilüe* 國朝先正事略 (1866; reprint, Taipei, 1967), *juan* 37, pp. 11b–12b; Zhuo Erkan 卓爾堪, *Ming yimin shi* 明遺民詩 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), pp. 294, 565.

such as the nature and the contents of the charge, the process of the trial and the exact conviction, the people involved in the case, and so forth. Since there were so many cases of unsolved mysteries in this period of Chinese history, we have to accept, at least for now, that his father's banishment was one of those mysteries.¹³ Nevertheless, the incident of the banishment was real, so were all the suffering and hardship inflicted on the family, especially on Hong Sheng since he was the oldest son and hence had the responsibility to take care of his parents.¹⁴ So even if we do not know enough about the case, we know this "unknown" factor also had a permanent effect on Hong Sheng's thought.

To study that thought, we start with his early education in Hangzhou. It must be pointed out that in traditional China the teacher-student relationship was one of life's most revered and permanent relationships, as evidenced by the universally accepted ideals of "One's teacher is like being one's father" and "Once a teacher always a teacher." A teacher's influence on a student was everlasting, the relation with his student was lifelong. Hong Sheng's teachers in Hangzhou were Lu Fanchao, Mao Xianshu, and Zhu Zhijing. From contemporary records and Hong Sheng's writings, we know that he first studied under Lu and then under Mao and Zhu. Lu Fanchao was a Ming loyalist. When he was ten years old, his father, Lu Pei 陸培 (*jinshi* of 1640), who was appointed Messenger (*xingren* 行人) by the Hongguang 弘光 court (1645) of the Southern Ming in South China after the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1644, committed suicide as a martyr for the Southern Ming after the Manchu troops entered Hangzhou. Fanchao loved his father very much and determined when he grew up to have nothing to do with the Manchu regime. Indeed, he chose a semi-reclusive literary career under the Qing and refused to participate in the imperial civil service examinations. In 1663, Fanchao was arrested by the Manchu government, together with about one hundred and seventy-six family members and relatives. The cause of Fanchao's arrest was Lu Qi 陸圻 (1614-d. after 1705), his paternal uncle who, along with over one thousand others, was implicated in the case of Zhuang

¹³ One good example was the mysterious case against Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611-1671) in 1671 in Guangxi 廣西. Fang was an outstanding scholar and thinker of the seventeenth century. Recent studies suggest that Fang Yizhi committed suicide after he had learned that a legal proceeding was initiated against him. The serious nature of the case was evident, but no contemporary records of that case are found. For a detailed study of the mysterious death of Fang Yizhi, see Ren Daobin 任道斌, *Fang Yizhi nianpu* 方以智年譜 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1983), pp. 278-79.

¹⁴ According to Hong Sheng, he had three brothers. See the first poem of a set of four poems entitled "Shu'ai 抒哀" (Expressing My Grief) in *Baiqi xuji*, p. 190. He was the oldest of the three. For his other poems written to or about his two younger brothers Yinzong and Zhongling, see *Baiqi ji*, p. 29: "Zhi Yinzong di 致殷仲弟" (To My Younger Brother Yinzong); p. 29: "Bie Zhongling di 別中令弟" (Farewell to My Younger Brother Zhongling); p. 50: "Zhi Yinzong di jian yi Zhongling di 致殷仲弟兼憶中令弟" (To My Younger Brother Yinzong, and Remembering My Other Younger Brother Zhongling); p. 51: "De Zhongling xiaoxi 得中令消息" (Receiving News from My Younger Brother Zhongling).

Tinglong 莊廷鑑 (the famous Ming History case).¹⁵ Later Lu Qi was acquitted, and so were all his family and relatives. But the experience proved devastating: shortly after his release Lu Qi became a Buddhist monk, and in 1668 he disappeared, never to be heard from again. Meanwhile Hong Sheng was growing up. He was only eighteen when he saw his respected and beloved teacher Lu Fanchao and close friend Lu Yin 陸寅 (1648–1690, Lu Qi's son) arrested. As a sensitive youth at an impressionable age, he must have shared their sense of hopelessness and felt sympathetic for their misfortune. Even though the imprisonment for the Lus was only about five months, the horror and hopelessness of the tragic incident left a deep impact on the young Hong Sheng's mind.

Hong Sheng's two other teachers, Mao Xianshu and Zhu Zhijing, were both *shengyuan* 生員 (holders of the elementary degree) under the Ming, but, unlike Lu Fanchao and some other literati in Hangzhou, they were not active Ming loyalists. Their action under the Qing, however, constituted a kind of Ming loyalism marked by their refusal to participate in government service through their passive retirement. Of these two teachers, Mao Xianshu's influence over Hong Sheng was especially apparent since Mao was a master in phonology and dramatic poetics and wrote several important books in these fields. It was through Mao's tireless effort to bring out the best in the young poet, Hong Sheng, that the foundation for the latter's metrical and dramatic writing was formed. Hong Sheng in return showed his deeply-felt admiration for Mao, and their mutual affection is self-evident in their correspondence and poems.¹⁶ Mao Xianshu was a student of both Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周

¹⁵ The Zhuang Tinglong (d. 1660) case was one of the most unjust literary inquisitions of the Qing period. It implicated more than one thousand people; more than seventy men (two hundred and twenty-one, says one source) were put to death, and their womenfolk banished to the frontier. For discussions of the case, see Zhou Yannian 周延年, *Zhuangshi shi'an kao* 莊氏史案考 (reprint, n.p., n.d.), pp. 1–80; *Zhuangshi shi'an* 莊氏史案 in *Tongshi* 痛史 (reprint, Taipei, 1968), Vol. 1, pp. 1–5; Gui Jingxian 歸靜先, *Qingdai wenxian jilüe* 清代文獻紀略 (reprint, Taipei, 1972), pp. 10–14; Peng Guodong 彭國棟, *Qingshi wenyuan zhi* 清史文獻志 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1969), pp. 5–10; Wu Chengqiao 伍承喬, *Qingdai lizhi congtan* 清代吏治叢談 (reprint, Taipei, 1966), pp. 57–58. See also Luther Carrington Goodrich, *The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-lung* (2nd ed.; New York: Paragon, 1966), pp. 75–76; Hummel, pp. 187–88, 205–6; Robert B. Oxham, *Ruling From Horseback: Manchu Politics in the Obol Regency, 1661–1669* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 109–11; Lawrence D. Kessler, *K'ang-hsi and the Consolidation of Ch'ing Rule, 1661–1684* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 31–33. For a moving description of the horrifying experience of Lu Qi and his family in the Ming History case see his daughter Lu Xinxing's 陸莘行 memoir, "Laofu yunyou shimo 老父雲遊始末," in *Tongshi*, Vol. 12, pp. 1–10. See also Wu Shan-jia 吳山嘉, *Fushe xingshi zhuanlüe* 復社姓氏傳略 (1833; reprint, Hangzhou, 1961), pp. 2b–3a.

¹⁶ In his poem "Feng cheng Mao Zhihuang fuzi 奉呈毛稚黃夫子" (To [My Mentor] Master Mao Zhihuang) in the *Xiaoyue lou ji*, Hong Sheng expresses his profound admiration for Mao. For a complete version of this poem and discussion, see *Hong Sheng ji* (1992), pp. 16–17; Zhang Peiheng, *Hong Sheng nianpu*, p. 46. Mao Xianshu's tireless efforts to teach Hong and to bring out the best in Hong are revealed through Mao's correspondence to Hong. For Mao's letters to Hong Sheng, see Mao Xianshu, *Sun shu* 澐書 (8 ce 冊. Kangxi ed.) *juan* 5, p. 41a; idem, *Sigu tang ji* 思古堂集 (4 ce. Kangxi ed.) *juan* 2, p. 23a; idem, *Kuanglin* 匡林 (1 ce; 2 *juan*), *juan* 2, p. 6b.

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(1578–1645) and Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608–1647), the two Ming patriots and martyrs who died heroically for the Ming cause. Mao also was a good friend of the above-mentioned Lu Qi and of Chai Shaobing, Shen Qian, and Zhang Dan all of whom were avowed Ming loyalists.¹⁷ Mao, Lu, Chai, Shen, and Zhang were also five of the famous “Ten Literary Masters of Xiling 西泠 (in Hangzhou).” Thus Mao Xianshu was clearly associated with some strong Ming loyalists in his intellectual life, and showed his own Ming loyalist feelings when he refused to participate in the Qing civil service examinations and in the Qing government.

It is clear that Hong Sheng was exposed to the intellectual climate of Ming loyalism through his teachers Mao Xianshu and Lu Fanchao in his early education. Furthermore, he was also known to have a warm relationship with Chai, Shen, and Zhang.¹⁸ In fact, as phonologists Chai and Shen, as did Mao Xianshu, also helped young Hong Sheng to develop his interest and skill in meters. The three men’s passive Ming loyalism, as typified by their non-involvement with the Manchu regime under the Qing, must too have made some direct imprint on the mind of young Hong Sheng.¹⁹ Thus we may safely conclude that Hong Sheng’s early intellectual world was infused with Ming loyalism. The noble sentiments, courage, dedication, and sufferings of his Ming loyalist teachers and senior friends must have implicitly inculcated in him the sense of tragedy of dynastic change, the nobility of dynastic loyalty, the dimension and conscience of Ming loyalism, and the sensitivity and consciousness of Chinese nationalism. The seeds of patriotism could be said already to have been planted, only waiting the right time to grow.

Hong Sheng, however, did not become an active Ming loyalist or sympathizer, and he never claimed to be one in his life. Although he was born in Southern Ming territory in the midst of the brutal Manchu takeover of Zhejiang from the late summer of 1645 to the fall of 1646, and was already

For biographies of Chai Shaobing, Shen Qian, and Zhang Dan, see sources cited in note 12.

The friendship between Hong Sheng and the three poets is demonstrated by the poems they wrote to and about each other. In Hong Sheng’s collection of poems *Baiqi xuji*, we find poems regarding Chai Shaobing (p. 188), Shen Qian (p. 162), and Zhang Dan (p. 161). In Hong Sheng’s other collection of poems, the *Xiaoyue lou ji*, there are at least two poems regarding Zhang Dan and six poems regarding Shen Qian (see *Hong Sheng ji*). In Chai Shaobing’s collection of works, a long letter to Hong Sheng reveals the warm relationship between the two; in Shen Qian’s and Zhang Dan’s collections of poems, especially Shen Qian’s collections, there are quite a few poems written to Hong Sheng attesting to the existence of mutual affection. See Zhang Peiheng, *Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 42, 46, 51, 65, 96, 101, 109, 110. Also see Shen Qujin 沈去矜 (Shen Qian), *Dongjiang ji chao* 東江集鈔 *Dongjiang ji chao* (8 ce. Prefaced by Mao Xianshu in 1655), *juan* 4, pp. 14b, 17b, 18b, 19a; *juan* 5, p. 13b.

In Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China* (esp. chap. 1) and *Redefining History* (esp. chap. 1), we have discussed in detail the subculture of Ming loyalism in Hangzhou during the Ming–Qing dynastic transition.

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two years old (*sui* 歲) when he became a Qing subject,²⁰ Hong Sheng belonged to the generation of Chinese who matter-of-factly accepted the status of being a Qing subject. As such, he naturally participated in the Qing examination system, following the established path of seeking official career for educated men. The issue of dynastic loyalty was a moral conviction for Hong Sheng's teachers and senior friends, but not for him. Having grown up under the Qing rule, Hong Sheng regarded the Ming-Qing dynastic change as one of the dynastic cycles in history and accepted the legitimacy of the Qing regime without reservation. Furthermore, both his father and maternal grandfather (who later became his grandfather-in-law) were officials in the Qing government, and both understandably had exerted influence on Hong Sheng to recognize political reality as the only chance to success in life lay in pursuing an official career. And did Hong Sheng so.

Hong Sheng took the first step on the ladder of imperial examination system and government career, becoming a *jiansheng* in late 1667 or early 1668, when he was twenty-four. As a *jiansheng*, he could take part in the imperial examination for the second degree *juren* 舉人 (provincial graduate) or be appointed to a government post. In the early spring of 1668, Hong Sheng left Hangzhou for Beijing to attend the Imperial College; he thus became one of the privileged few of the multitudinous *jiansheng* who were actually permitted to attend the Imperial College for a limited period.²¹ The things he saw and heard in the capital moved Hong Sheng in many ways. In a long poem written on

²⁰ Our account here is based on our understanding of the complicated process of the Manchu conquest of the Hangzhou area from the Southern Ming (from the summer of 1645 to the summer of 1646). Although the Qing troops reached Hangzhou on July 4, 1645, and entered the city on July 7, the eastern section of the metropolitan Hangzhou area (east of the Qiantang River 錢塘江) remained in the hands of the Southern Ming until more than a year later. (See *Hangzhou fuzhi*, pp. 973-77; *Qing shi*, pp. 5910-13). As the Manchu troops approached Hangzhou, Hong Sheng's mother, who then carried Hong Sheng, left the Hong residence in the City and took refuge in the area east of the Qiantang River; Hong Sheng was born in a farmer's house during this time of war and disorder.

²¹ It is important to point out here that *jiansheng* was merely an academic title which entitled its holder to certain social and political status and privileges, and that it was not necessarily a student status in the Imperial College. In fact, only in exceptional cases did a *jiansheng* go to the capital for a limited period (generally three years) in the Imperial College which could only take a limited number of students (about two hundred and seventy in Hong Sheng's time). The numerous *jiansheng* (hundreds of thousands of them) thus never came to the capital and studied in the Imperial College at all. Hong Sheng was among the privileged few who were permitted to attend the Imperial College for a period. For detailed description of the Imperial College (*Guozhi jian*) and analysis of the status and number of *jiansheng*, see *Qing huidian* 清會典 (*Guoxue jiben congshu* ed.; reprint, Taipei, 1968; in 2 volumes), pp. 876-85; *Qing shi*, pp. 1287-90; Shang Yanliu 商衍鑾, *Qingdai keju kaoshi shulu* 清代科舉考試述錄 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1958), pp. 23-25; Chang Chung-li, *The Chinese Gentry* (Seattle, Washington, 1955), pp. 12-13, 19, 102-11, 136-37. There have been differing suggestions regarding the date of Hong Sheng's first trip to Beijing and his enrollment in the Imperial College. We have determined the early spring of 1668 as the date, a date of critical importance in our study of Hong Sheng's life and career. See also Zhang Peiheng, *Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 87-90; Meng Fanshu, *Hong Sheng ji qi Changsheng dian yanjiu*, p. 13.

May 14, 1669, he tells about the Kangxi emperor's grand visit to the Imperial College on that day and reveals both his fascination with the imperial majesty and his own heightened spirit.²² Hong Sheng then was indeed very excited about his new life in the imperial capital. He was young, promising, and full of great expectations for himself. And everything in the capital was novel to him. He was especially impressed by the cultured and dynamic young emperor, Kangxi, who was Hong Sheng's junior by nine years and on the throne only a little over eight years. Hong Sheng wrote enthusiastic poems to praise the emperor.²³ Evidently he also saw a great future ahead for himself.

The feeling of novelty and initial enthusiasm, however, did not last long. Hong Sheng soon became homesick and depressed in the capital. In a poem written on July 28, 1669, for his

²² See "Gong yu Huangshang shixue, shidian xiansheng, jing fu sishi yun 恭遇皇上視學，釋奠先聖，敬賦四十韻，" in *Xiaoyue lou ji*, p. 99. For the dating of the event in question, see Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1918), *Donghua lu* 東華錄 (n.p., 1899 ed.), Vol. 6, p. 31b. See also Hong Sheng's poem "Ni yuanri zaochao yingzhi 擬元日早朝應制," in *Xiaoyue lou ji*, p. 100 (the New Year's Day in this poem was the first day of the year *jiyou* 己酉, that is February 1, 1669). There are different theories regarding Hong Sheng's years of enrollment in the Imperial College. Chen Wannai, for instance, suggests 1662; Zeng Yongyi, 1669; and Zhang Peiheng, 1668. (See Zeng Yongyi, "Hong Fangsi nianpu," pp. 853–54; Zhang Peiheng, *Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 87, 88–90, 91, 98–99; Chen Wannai, "Hong Baiqi xiansheng nianpu gao," p. 22.) But these literary scholars seem not to be clear about the nature and status of the title *jiansheng* and about the organization and operation of the Imperial College. On the basis of our understanding of the Imperial College and the *jiansheng* system, we believe that Hong Sheng was enrolled in the Imperial College for three years (beginning with the spring of 1668) and after that he only remained on the regular roster of *jiansheng* but was no longer actually "enrolled" in the Imperial College.

²³ Besides the two poems "Ni yuanri zaochao yingzhi" and "Gong yu Huangshang shixue" mentioned above, eight other poems in Hong Sheng's collection of poems *Xiaoyue lou ji* praise Emperor Kangxi unreservedly. It is of no doubt that when Hong Sheng first came to Beijing, he was full of great expectation for a successful political career and was also fascinated by the imperial majesty of the Qing court and its brilliant young emperor. See *Hong Sheng ji* (*Xiaoyue lou ji*, pp. 41, 51, 53, 99–100); and Zhang Peiheng, *Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 99–100. Based on these poems, Zhang Peiheng contends that Hong Sheng wanted very much to serve the Qing court and that he did not have any anti-Qing sentiments at all (*Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 1–32, esp. pp. 25–27). We, however, disagree with Zhang Peiheng on this issue: Hong Sheng, as we see it, was torn between two sets of conflicting values: On the one hand, he wanted to serve the Qing court, to carry out his Confucian *jingshi* 經世 goal; and on the other, he also truly admired the Ming loyalists, shared with them their noble sentiments of patriotism, and respected their total dedication to learning. In his writings, all his conflicting views and emotions are self-evident. It should also be pointed out that as Hong Sheng grew older and became more frustrated with his increasing personal sufferings and failure in securing an official position in the Qing government, his view toward the Qing regime and the Kangxi emperor could also be expected to undergo some change. We would have done Hong Sheng injustice without realizing this simple fact, yet this has been precisely the mistake made by such scholars as Zhang Peiheng who could only see an unchanging Hong Sheng for all his life from young to old.

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twenty-fifth birthday, he already wonders aloud the wisdom of his leaving home to be in the capital.²⁴ In the spring of 1671, he completed his normal three-year attendance in the Imperial College and was no longer actually “enrolled,” but remained only on the regular roster of *jiansheng*.²⁵ Then Hong Sheng happily returned home to Hangzhou.

For a while Hong Sheng enjoyed his carefree life after that first trip to Beijing. Then in 1673 something dreadful happened and that changed his entire life: He was forced to leave home. For whatever cause, on the last day of *guichou* 癸丑 (February 5, 1674), he found himself all alone in a poor tavern, in an isolated town, “in appearance half dead and half alive,” deploring that “family members were scattered.”²⁶ Then suddenly in the fall of the year *jiayin* 甲寅 (1674), Hong Sheng returned to Beijing.²⁷

Contemporary sources suggest that Hong Sheng was forced by adversity to take up his residence at Beijing. According to Wang Shizhen 王士禛 (1634–1711), one of Hong Sheng’s mentors during his Beijing years, Hong Sheng suffered a terrible “family catastrophe” (*jianan*), details unknown, and consequently became very poor.²⁸ Zhao Zhixin 趙執信 (1662–1744), a good friend of Hong Sheng’s in Beijing, confirmed Wang’s account and mentioned further that Hong Sheng was forced to move his family to the capital, again no details.²⁹ The term “*jianan*” and other similar expressions also appear in Hong Sheng’s own poems. In the poem “One Night” (*Yiye* 一夜) written in 1675, the expression “*jianan*” or “family catastrophe” was used unequivocally. While worrying about his parents, he received the news of the death of his younger brother Zhongling 中令 who was in the Qing army fighting against the rebellious forces of Geng Jingzhong 耿精忠 (d. 1682) in Fujian 福建. He wrote in the poem that he had dreamed of his parents, all white-haired (because of grief), and he said, “Death on the battlefield and family catastrophe, in one night there are a hundred worries.”³⁰ The news about his younger brother’s death proved to be wrong, but the family adversities were real, as they emerged again in his poems. In his “Songfu 送父” (Seeing My Father Off) written in 1676, he expressed his

²⁴ See Hong Sheng’s poem “Yanjing keshe shengri zuo 燕京客舍生日作,” in *Baiqi ji*, pp. 22–23.

²⁵ See note 22 above. At least two of Hong Sheng’s poems indicate that in the third year after his arrival at Beijing, he left Beijing for home again. See the two poems, “Fa Dumen 發都門” and “Zhouyue Pinghe qiaoxia zuo 舟月平河橋下作,” in *Baiqi ji*, pp. 15–16; *Baiqi xujì*, p. 165.

²⁶ See his poem “Guichou chuxi 癸丑除夕” (New Year’s Eve of *Guichou*) in *Baiqi ji*, p. 32.

²⁷ Both Zeng Yongyi and Zhang Peiheng contend that Hong Sheng returned to Beijing in 1674. Zeng’s reasoning is based on Hong’s two poems mentioning his younger brother Zhongling who was in the army in Fujian fighting against Geng Jingzhong’s troops. See Zeng Yongyi, “Hong Fangsi nianpu,” p. 857; *Baiqi ji*, pp. 50, 51. Zhang Peiheng bases his point on Hong Sheng’s two poems to Li Tianfu 李天馥 who invited Hong Sheng to live in his house in Beijing. See Zhang Peiheng, *Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 137, 139; *Baiqi ji*, pp. 14–15, 93.

²⁸ Wang Shizhen, *Xiangzu biji* 香祖筆記 (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1934), p. 92.

²⁹ Zhao Zhixin, *Huaijiu ji* 懷舊集 in *Yishan tang shiwen ji* 飴山堂詩文集 (*Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 ed.), *juan* 16, p. 4a.

³⁰ See his poem “Yiye,” in *Baiqi ji*, p. 51.

great concern over his mother who had been home alone by herself and who had suffered in health from recent “catastrophes” (*nan*).³¹ In fact, in many of his poems we often find many expressions describing his anguish of grief over the long parting among family members. Often he used the word “*bei* 悲” (grief) when he thought of his parents or he missed them.³²

It becomes clear that this “catastrophe” of 1673 caused hardship on everyone concerned. Both Wang Shizhen and Zhao Zhixin believed that the reason Hong Sheng took up residence in Beijing was this “catastrophe,” where he had some rough times. A few years later the order of banishment for his father came, in 1679. It was not clear whether or not his father’s banishment had anything to do with the earlier “catastrophe,” but we know now that later his father received pardon and was able to return to Hangzhou.

These still mysterious occurrences have become subjects of controversy among scholars. Many believe that these two incidents were related, that Hong Sheng’s father was implicated in a certain highly sensitive literary persecution, and that his banishment was the result of this case.³³ Some, however, contend that the two issues could be two completely separate incidents. A recent study suggests that “family catastrophe” refers to the fact that Hong Sheng could not get along with his father’s first wife and was driven out of his parents’ home.³⁴ Judging from the grave words Hong Sheng used to describe his sadness and from the third-person manner in which he mentions it, we believe that it was some kind of catastrophe that happened in the family, some serious trouble with a senior member of the family, but not with his own parents. But no matter what the nature of these incidents and whether or not they were two separate happenings or two related incidents, undoubtedly they overshadowed Hong Sheng’s life for many years. It is of no doubt that his experiences during those years had an important bearing on his writing.

³¹ Hong Sheng, *Baiqi ji*, pp. 8–10; esp. p. 9: “[Songfu,] Qisi 其四” (The Fourth Poem [of Seeing My Father Off]).

³² In at least four poems Hong Sheng uses the expressions “*bei qihu* 悲妃姑” (Sadly I yearn for my father and mother) or “*bei zhiqi* 悲陟妃” (Sadly I yearn for my mother) to describe his homesickness. See the four poems “Yanjing keshe shengri zuo,” “Nangui,” “Mengshan 蒙山,” and “[Songfu,] Qisi” in *Baiqi ji*, pp. 9, 19, 22–23, 48. We have discussed all these poems, except “Mengshan” (Meng Mountain).

³³ Chen Wannai, for example, contends that Hong Sheng’s father was implicated in the Shen Tianfu 沈天甫 literary persecution (1667). See Chen Wannai, *Hong Sheng yanjiu*, pp. 55–72. Other scholars do not specify what case his father was implicated in, but speculate that it seemed a very serious case. Zhang Peiheng, however, took issue with Chen Wannai by pointing out that Hong Sheng’s father could not have been involved with the Shen Tianfu’s case in 1667. For details of Zhang’s study, see note 34 below.

³⁴ See Liu Hui, “Hong Sheng shengping kaolue,” pp. 158–59 and “Qianyan 前言” in *Hong Sheng ji*, p. 2; Meng Fanshu, *Hong Sheng ji qi Changsheng dian yanjiu*, pp. 19–21. In his article “Guanyu Hong Sheng shengping de jige wenti” (pp. 68–77), Zhang Peiheng suggests that the “family catastrophe” referred to Hong Sheng’s being driven out of his parents’ house, and contends that Hong Sheng’s father’s banishment was a separate incident. For a different interpretation of Hong Sheng’s “family catastrophe,” see Wang Yongjian, “Gudian xiqu zuojia yanjiu de xin shouhuo,” pp. 145–47.

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Hong Sheng used the word “drifting” to characterize his life after 1673 when he was forced to leave home—a landmark in his life.³⁵ In Beijing, age thirty, he found himself financially insecure and academically unaccomplished. He was very poor now, as the result of his family adversity. Although he remained on the roster of *jiansheng* in the Imperial College, he was not successful in his pursuit of an official post, nor in his pursuit of an advanced academic degree. To make things even worse, he was an arrogant yet sensitive man who was quite at a loss as to how to deal with people.³⁶ He named his residence in Beijing the Hermitage of Solitary Islet (Guyu caotang 孤嶼草堂); thus he saw himself a “solitary islet” from Hangzhou where an islet in the West Lake had that name (also called Solitary Hill or Gushan 孤山), but more profoundly, he really meant his heart, mind, and personality a “solitary islet” in the bustling sea of Beijing.

Nonetheless, Hong Sheng was becoming recognized as a promising poet during those Beijing years, 1674–1691. His unusual poetic talent, together with his distinguished family background and prominent maternal relatives in court, made him known in the literary circles in the capital. Studying the art of poetry under two great contemporary masters, Wang Shizhen and Shi Runzhang 施閏章 (1618–1683), Hong Sheng then committed himself to a lifelong career of literary pursuit.³⁷ The apprenticeship under Wang and Shi and his close contact with many leading poets in Beijing not only refined his poetic art but also furthered his interest in playwriting. The play *Changsheng dian*, which finally brought him fame and glory, was his finest achievement during his stay in Beijing.

³⁵ At least three poems of Hong Sheng’s lend support to this statement. One is the above-mentioned “*Guichou chuxi*”; it establishes the fact that Hong Sheng was forced to leave home in 1673. In “*Wuwu chuxi* 戊午除夕” (New Year’s Eve of the Year *Wuwu*), Hong Sheng wrote “For six years [I have been] a stranger [drifting away from home].” Since the year *wuwu* was 1678, it was 1673, “six years” earlier, when Hong Sheng first left home. In the poem “*Jiwei yuanri*” (The New Year’s Day of *Jiwei*), Hong Sheng deplored, “For seven years I have drifted.” Since the year *jiwei* was 1679, it was again 1673, “seven years” earlier, when Hong Sheng started to drift away from home. For the last two poems, see *Baiqi ji*, p. 129; *Baiqi xuji*, p. 170. For other poems related to this landmark year, see our discussion of his father’s banishment earlier in note 9 above.

³⁶ Contemporary sources suggest that Hong Sheng had difficulty in dealing with people. In Xu Lin’s (Lingzhao 靈昭) preface to the *Changsheng dian*, Hong Sheng was described as a man who was arrogant and critical in expressing his views. See “Xu xu 徐序,” in the *Changsheng dian* (1958 ed.), p. 225. According to Zhao Zhixin’s account, Hong could not get along with the officials and nobilities in the Capital. See *Huaijiu ji* in *Yishan tang shiwen ji*, *juan* 16, p. 4b. For a vivid description of Hong Sheng’s secluded life in Beijing, see Wu Wen’s 吳雯 (1644–1704) poem in *Lianyang shichao* 蓮洋詩鈔 (*Sibu beiyao* ed.), *juan* 2, p. 3a. In Hong Sheng’s own poem describing his lonely and unhappy life at Beijing, he also reveals that he could not get along with people. See his long poem “*Lüci shuhuai, cheng xueshi Li Rongzhai xiansheng* 旅次抒懷呈學士李容齋先生” (Thinking of Old Times and Old Friends during the Middle of a Journey — To Grand Secretary Li Rongzhai) in *Baiqi ji*, pp. 14–15.

³⁷ Wang Shizhen mentioned Hong Sheng as his disciple (*menren* 門人). See *Xiangzu biji*, *juan* 9, p. 92. Hong Sheng also studied poetry under Shi Runzhang, see Wang Shizhen, *Yuyang shihua* 漁洋詩話 (reprint, Taipei, 1956), p. 49.

But hardship also gave him the empathy to understand the miseries of life. It enriched him with a profound sense of the human condition and its predicament. His vision of and concerns for humanity were broadened and deepened, as his poems reflect. Besides revealing his own discontents, Hong Sheng took notice of others' sufferings. In his poem "Quzhou zagan 衢州雜感" (Impressions of Quzhou [of Zhejiang]), he wrote compassionately about the suffering of the Quzhou people after the flood in 1686; he expressed his concern over the heavy burden of land tax which compounded people's miseries.³⁸ Hong Sheng had become a deep man, the dimension of his conscience and concerns greatly enlarged. Not surprisingly, he began to express in his poems nostalgic sentiments toward the fallen Ming dynasty and patriotic affections for the historical past of his country.³⁹ Seemingly he became disillusioned with the Manchu prince, Kangxi; he might also have felt some regret about his naiveté in his earlier high praises for the emperor when he first came to Beijing.⁴⁰ For reasons that he himself probably could not clearly and fully comprehend, the inculcation of patriotism, Ming loyalism, and the sense of tragedy in dynastic change in his earlier life now reemerged from the hidden corners of his mind. And, with a deeper understanding about humanity, Hong Sheng began to appreciate more sensitively those noble human sentiments. In the end, he infused his *magnus opus Changsheng dian* with the nostalgic emotions and ideas of patriotism he received from his earlier Ming loyalist teachers and friends.

The great success of the *Changsheng dian* in the early summer of 1688 was beyond Hong Sheng's wildest dream. And it also gave him some acutely needed comforts, for he now approached his forty-fourth (*sui*) birthday and the possibility of an official career was vanishing. But this success proved, in the end, to be a Trojan horse: it brought up a totally unexpected blow which evaded all final hopes for an official career. A year after its initial phenomenal success, the play was suddenly turned into a highly sensitive political case of persecution. The magnitude and implications of this case merit a close examination. On September 28, 1689, in celebration of the play's great success, a special performance of the *Changsheng dian* was staged in honour of Hong Sheng. The show was the big event of the day: it was presided over by Liang Qingbiao 梁清標 (1620–1691), Grand Secretary and President of the Board of War, and sponsored by Zhao Zhixin, Senior Assistant Secretary of the Supervisorate of Imperial Instruction. The performance was attended by a huge audience which included a crowd of officials and celebrated literary men. This great festivity, then considered to be one of the most grandiose events in Beijing's literary and theatrical circles, should, in every sense, be regarded as the high point of Hong Sheng's life. But a newly appointed senior metropolitan censor,

³⁸ Hong Sheng, *Baiqi ji*, pp. 63–66, esp. p. 64.

³⁹ The set of ten poems entitled "Jingdong zagan 京東雜感" (Reflections on Miscellaneous Subjects from the East Side of the Capital) is a good example. See *Baiqi xuji*, pp. 173–75. See also *Baiqi ji*, pp. 48–49: "Ganhuai 感懷" (Reflections on My Drifting Life); p. 49: "Duoqing lou 多景樓" (The Many-view Tower); p. 52: "Hanshi 寒食" (The Day Before Qingming 清明). Note that Hong Sheng's *Baiqi xuji* was listed as one of the books prohibited by the Qing court during the reign of Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 (1736–1795). Evidently there was suspicion of Ming loyalism in Hong Sheng's poems. See Yao Jinyuan 姚覲元, *Qingdai jinhui shumu* 清代禁燬書目 (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1957), p. 117.

⁴⁰ For example, in his second collection of poems, *Baiqi ji*, completed in February–March 1687, he excluded all the poems in his earlier collection of poems *Xiaoyue lou ji* that highly lauded the Kangxi emperor.

Huang Liuhong 黃六鴻 (1633–c. 1719), motivated by his personal animosity toward Zhao Zhixin, memorialized to the Kangxi emperor that the special performance was staged during the one-hundred-day legal period of mourning of Empress Xiaoyi 孝懿 (Tongjia 佟佳), who died on August 24, 1689, and hence was a serious offense, for the law prohibited any kind of merrymaking within one hundred days after the death of an empress. Having suppressed the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories only eight years before in 1681, defeated the Ming loyal forces on Taiwan only five years before in 1683, and put down a dreadful revolt in Wuchang 武昌 (Hubei 湖北) only one year before in 1688, the emperor was quite sensitive about any possible Chinese defiance of the Manchu authority and power in any form, particularly by Chinese officials and scholars. Moreover, on a second examination, the emperor found hidden political and Chinese nationalistic messages—such as the utter contempt for the shameless turncoat officials and the bitter hatred for the barbarian aggressors—in this play, of which he had previously been fond regarding it as an entertaining and moving love story. Suddenly Emperor Kangxi realized the implications of the opera and the further advantage of using it as a warning to the Chinese literati to be careful in their writings. In the name of the law of one-hundred-day mourning for a deceased empress, a law that not even the court itself had followed since 1674, the Emperor immediately ordered the Board of Punishments to arrest the officials and literary men who were present at the play and whose names were presented to him by Huang Liuhong. However, after listening to reasonable explanations, he softened his stand and permitted the matter to be charged to the Board of Civil Officials. Subsequently, Hong Sheng, Zhao Zhixin, and over fifty officials and literary men were dismissed from their posts and debarred from further civil service examinations and any official appointment. The latter group included, among others, Zhu Dian 朱典, Reader in the Hanlin Academy; Weng Shiyong 翁世鏞, a recently appointed prefect of Taiwan; and Zha Silian 查嗣璉, a *jiansheng*.⁴¹

⁴¹ Zhao Zhixin's first name should be read Zhishen by the origin of the term, but it has been commonly read Zhixin since Zhao's time. For Qing sources which directly or indirectly made mention of the special performance of *Changsheng dian* and the subsequent development, see Mao Qiling, *Xihe wenji*, xu section, p. 526; Zhao Zhixin, *Huaijiu ji*, juan 14, pp. 2ab; juan 16, pp. 4ab; Zha Shenxing 查慎行 (1650–1727), *Jingye tang shiji* 敬業堂詩集 (*Guoxue jiben congshu* ed.; reprint, Taipei, 1968), p. 685; Jin Zhi, *Jinxiang shuo*, p. 3535; Wang Yingkui, *Lunan suibi*, juan 6, pp. 110–11; Wu Wen, *Lianyang shichao*, juan 2, p. 7b; Li E 厲鶚 (1692–1752), *Dongcheng zaji* 東城雜記 (Prefaced 1728), (*Yueya tang congshu* 粵雅堂叢書 ed.; reprint, Taipei, 1965), Vol. 1, pp. 454–55; Dong Chao, *Donggao zachao*, juan 3, p. 33; Yuan Kuisheng 阮葵生 (1727–1789), *Chayu kehua* 茶餘客話 (before 1771), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), pp. 233–34; Dai Lu 戴璐 (1739–1806), *Tengyin zaji* 藤陰雜記 (*Shuoku* 說庫 ed.; reprint, Taipei, 1973), p. 1798; Liang Shaoren, *Liangban qiuyu an qutan* 兩般秋雨庵曲談 in *Xin quyuan* 新曲苑 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1941), Vol. 5, pp. 10b–11a; Yang Enshou, *Ciyu conghua*, p. 270; Li Yuandu, *Guochao xianzheng shilüe*, juan 38, pp. 6b–7a; Li Huan, *Guochao qixian leizheng chubian*, juan 430, p. 46a; Xu Ke, *Qingbai leichao*, Vol. 37, p. 57; Zhang Jiangcai 張江裁, *Beijing liyuan zhanggu changbian* 北京梨園掌故長編 in Zhang Jiangcai et al., *Qingdai Yandu liyuan shiliao* 清代燕都梨園史料 (4 vols.; reprint, Taipei, 1965), pp. 1653–64, which is a comprehensive study of all aspects of the controversy over the special performance of

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Changsheng dian and its subsequent development. For the more recent studies of the subject, see Ye Dejun 葉德均, "Yan *Changsheng dian* zhi huo 演長生殿之禍," in his *Xiqu luncong* 戲曲論叢 (Shanghai: Rixin chubanshe, 1947); Deng Zhicheng 鄧之誠, *Gudong sanji* 骨董三記 (Taipei: Zhongguo shutang, n.d.), pp. 623–25; Chen Wannai, *Hong Sheng yanjiu*, pp. 119–34; Zhou Yibo, *Zhongguo xiju shi*, Vol. 3, pp. 516–19; Shionoya On, *Chōsei den*, pp. 3–4 ("Introduction"); Zeng Yongyi, "Hong Fangsi nianpu," pp. 913–20; Cai Yi 蔡毅, "Changsheng dian shi zenyang jinyan de 長生殿是怎樣禁演的?" *Wenxue pinglun congkan* 文學評論叢刊, Vol. 9 (1981), pp. 359–63; Zhang Peiheng, *Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 284–90, 371–403 (Appendix I); Liu Hui, "Hong Sheng shengping kaolüe," pp. 168–70. On the location of Zha lou 查樓 (Zhajia lou 查家樓), see Dai Lu, *Tengyin zaji*, p. 1810; Qian Nanyang 錢南陽, "Xiqu gailun 戲曲概論," *Wenxue zazhi* 文學雜誌, 4.11–12 (December 1944), pp. 28, 30; Yang Moujian 楊懋建 (1831 *juren* 舉人), *Menghua suobu* 夢華瑣簿 (1824) (*Qingdai yandu liyuan shiliao* ed.), p. 703. Various sources suggest that the special show of the *Changsheng dian* was performed by the Neiju 內聚 Troupe and staged at the Taiping yuan 太平園 (also called Shenggong yuan 生公園) or at Hong Sheng's residence. But we consider all these suggestions questionable. On the issue of the mourning of a deceased empress, the elaborated early Qing system had two sets of laws, one set for the officials and one set for the soldiers and common people. The law for the officials in the capital, which directly applied to the case in question, stipulates that for the first twenty-seven days after the death of an empress all metropolitan officials must wear mourning clothes, and that they would have no merrymaking or weddings within one hundred days. The second part of the law, however, had not been in effect in the early Kangxi period. Two empresses, for example, died before 1689, one in 1674 and one in 1687, but both were mourned for only twenty-seven days, during which merrymaking and weddings were prohibited. Thus it was generally understood in the capital that the mourning period for a deceased empress was in practice only for twenty-seven days. This was evidently why Liang Qingbiao and Zhao Zhixin undertook to stage the special performance of the *Changsheng dian* on September 28, 1689, for it was already thirty-seven days after Empress Xiaoyi's death. Nevertheless, the law was still in the book and, as a censor, Huang Liuhong knew it and used it insidiously. See *Da Qing tongli* 大清通禮 (1756 ed.), *juan* 46, p. 2a; *Qingchao tongzhi* 清朝通志 (*Shi tong* 十通 ed.; Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1936), p. 7026; Wang Xianqian, *Donghua lu* (1899 ed.), Vol. 6, p. 55a; Vol. 9, p. 6a; Lin Xichun 林熙春, *Guochao zhanggu jiyao* 國朝掌故輯要 (1902; reprint, Taipei, 1970), p. 274.

The problem of the political conditions and instability in this period is discussed in Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China*, chap. I. For other useful studies of this problem, see Li Xun 李洵, *Ming Qing shi* 明清史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1956), pp. 163–74, 184; Xiao Yishan 蕭一山, *Qingdai tongshi* 清代通史 (5 vols.; Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1963), Vol. I, pp. 419–99, 917–20; Mano Senryū 間野潛龍, *Kōki Tei* 康熙帝 (Tokyo, 1967), pp. 90–130. See also Ts'ao K'ai-fu, *The Rebellion of the Three Feudatories against the Manchu Throne: Its Setting and Significance* (Ph.D. dissertation; New York: Columbia University, 1965), esp. pp. 70–140 (a brief summary of this is found in *Monumenta Serica*, 31 [1974–1975], printed in 1977, pp. 108–30); Lawrence D. Kessler, "Chinese Scholars and the Early Manchu State," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 31 (1971), pp. 179–200; Oxnam, *Ruling From Horseback*, esp. pp. 90–198.

Hong Sheng's contemporaries and later scholars generally believed that Emperor Kangxi's decision to

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Note 41 — Continued

inflict stern punishment on Hong Sheng and others was not really for the purpose of reinforcing the legal requirement for the mourning of an empress, because, as stated earlier, that peculiar legal requirement had not been in effect in the early Kangxi period; but rather, it was for a special political scheme. Liang Shaoren held that the emperor considered the play to be “ridiculing” the Manchu court. Li Ciming 李慈銘 (1829–1894) believed that the play carried a profound political message about court affairs and the rise and fall of dynasties. After Huang Liuhong’s memorial, the Kangxi emperor evidently re-examined the play and found such special political and Chinese nationalistic messages in it. Then he decided to use the occasion to serve a political message to Hong Sheng and other Chinese intellectuals. For Li Ciming’s discussion of the *Changsheng dian* issue, see his *Yueman tang dushu ji* 越縵堂讀書記, edited by You Yunlong 由雲龍 (2 vols; Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1963), p. 920 (this particular note was written in 1886). Yang Moujian mentioned in his *Menghua suobu* (p. 758) that among those officials present at the special performance and later degraded by the Board of Civil Officials were Pan Lei 潘耒 (1646–1708) and Zhu Yizun, but we have found no other documents supporting this statement. While Zhu was a good friend of Hong Sheng’s, Pan was not even acquainted with Hong Sheng. Yang was mistaken on this matter.

Huang Liuhong, a native of Xinchang 新昌 of Jiangxi 江西, was best known for his handbook on local administration, *Fuhui chuanshu* 福惠全書 (prefaced 1694). He secured his *juren* degree in 1651, served as magistrate of Tancheng 鄒城 District (in Shandong 山東) in 1670–1672 and of Dongguang 東光 District (in Hebei) in 1675–1676, became a messenger in the Board of Rites in Beijing in 1676, and was promoted to senior metropolitan censor in the Office of Scrutiny of Metropolitan Officials in 1689. He retired from government service in 1693, and then lived in Nanjing for the next twenty-five years, until 1718 when he moved to Suzhou, where he died a year later. In 1689, while still a messenger, he asked Zhao Zhixin to read (really, praise) his literary writings shortly after Zhao became a sensational celebrity by having obtained the highest *jinshi* degree at the early age of eighteen (*sui*). But Zhao refused his request in a rude manner. Huang was deeply hurt by Zhao’s rude refusal and developed a strong animosity toward Zhao. In the special performance of the *Changsheng dian* Huang saw his chance for revenge and hence memorialized the case to the Kangxi emperor for its offense against the observance of the mourning of Empress Xiaoyi. But it was based on a rule that not even the court itself had followed for a long time. For Huang’s involvement in the *Changsheng dian* case and his motive, see the various sources cited above, especially those works of Yuan Kuisheng, who followed Zhao’s own statement, and Dai Lu, who actually examined Huang’s original memorial in the court archives. For biographical sketches of Huang’s life and career, see *Wuxian zhi* 吳縣志 (1933 ed.), *juan* 76b, pp. 4b–5a; Dai Lu 戴璐, *Guochao liuke Han jishizhong timing lu* 國朝六科漢給事中題名錄, revised by Wang Jiexiang 王家相 (1877 ed.), Kangxi 28; *Xinchang xianzhi* 新昌縣志 (1873 ed.), *juan* 12; *Tancheng xianzhi* 鄒城縣志 (1763 ed.), *juan* 7, pp. 26–27; *Dongguang xianzhi* 東光縣志 (1693 ed.), *juan* 5, p. 9; Wang Zhi 王植 (*jinshi* of 1721), *Chongde tang gao* 崇德堂稿 (10 *juan*; 1759 ed.), *juan* 4: “Tancheng yin Huang Sihuan 鄒城尹黃思湖傳.” The above chronology of Huang Liuhong is based on these sources. For the *Fuhui chuanshu*, see its 1893 reprint (Beijing: Shatu yuan xing wenchang huiguan) and its 1973 reprint (Kyoto: Kyuko Shoin 汲古書院, with an introduction [*kaidai*] and an index prepared by Yamane Yukio 山根幸夫). Yamane Yukio’s brief sketch of Huang’s life in the 1973 reprint (Introduction, pp. 1–2) is based on the *Xinchang xianzhi* and hence has many mistakes on key issues and dates. It should

Continued on next page

But the Kangxi emperor did not ban the play *Changsheng dian*. Nor did he issue an order to prohibit its further showing, for that would unwisely terrify the empire with the appearance that his court was launching another bloody literary inquisition after a period of appeasement of the Chinese intellectuals. Though his official career was unequivocally ended, Hong Sheng chose to stay in Beijing for about a year and a half, and then in the spring of 1691 returned to his home in Hangzhou.⁴² He was forty-seven (*sui*).

During those thirteen years of retirement in the south, Hong Sheng led a very active intellectual life. He moved to a new residence in the Shahe 沙河 Embankment area outside the Wangjiang 望江 (also called Yongchang 永昌) Gate of Hangzhou City, and built a retreat, called Baiqi 稗畦 Hermitage, on the scenic Solitary Hill in the famous West Lake, west of the city. He travelled widely in South China, visiting Suzhou 蘇州, Songjiang 松江, Wujin 武進, Nanjing 南京 (Nanking), Hefei 合肥, and many other places. He accepted disciples who later became distinguished men of letters, including Wang Zeng 汪增 (fl. 1682–1725) who was very close to Hong Sheng in his later years. He made many new friends in various fields—poets and essayists Jin Zhi 劉廷璣 (ca. 1655–d. after 1715), and Zhu Xiang 朱襄 (fl. 1695–1700); historian, poet, and playwright You Tong 尤侗 (1618–1704); artists Wang Gai 王曠 (fl. 1675–1705) and Wang Shi 王蓍 (Wang Gai's younger brother); novelists Chu Renhuo 褚人穫 (ca. 1630–ca. 1705) and Lü Xiong 呂熊 (fl. 1640–ca. 1722); bibliophile Yao Jiheng 姚際恆 (1674–d. after 1702); poet Zhang Yunyi 張雲翼 who then was Provincial Commander-in-Chief of Jiangnan 江南; and playwright, poet, and bibliophile Cao Yin 曹寅 (1658–1712) who then was Textile Commissioner of Jiangning 江寧 and a famous patron of the theatrical arts and opera singers. They all recognized Hong Sheng's poetry but particularly admired his stunning achievement of the *Changsheng dian*. At the same time, his own intellectual and literary *Weltanschauung* was broadened. He became interested in painting and in the vernacular fiction. For example, he made some penetrating commentaries on the vernacular novel *Nüxian waishi* 女仙外史 (An Informal History of An Immortal), a romance of the early Ming rebel heroine Tang Sai'er 唐賽兒

Note 41 — Continued

also be pointed out that the *Fuhui chuanshu* actually contains some biographical information on Huang Lihong (see pp. 5, 53, 55 in the Kyoto reprint).

Needless to say, many different theories were advanced to interpret the *Changsheng dian* case, and some of these even suggested that it was a result of the bitter factional struggle between Songgotu 索額圖 (Suo'etu, d. 1703?) and Mingju 明珠 (Mingzhu, 1635–1708) at the Kangxi court. These suggestions, however, are mere conjectures and lack substantive evidence.

⁴² As we have discussed in note 21, *jiansheng* was merely an academic status and only in exceptional cases did a *jiansheng* go to study at the Imperial College, and then he could attend the College for only a limited period (generally three years). Hong Sheng probably was there for three years and then was merely a *jiansheng* without regular attendance as “student” at the Imperial College at all. So, here we avoid to say that he was expelled from the Imperial College, for that would be partly incorrect. See also note 22 above.

(fl. 1420) of Putai 蒲臺 District of Shandong 山東.⁴³ He also befriended Chu Renhuo, the author (or compiler) of the vernacular novel *Sui Tang yanyi* 隋唐演義 (Romance of the Sui and Tang Dynasties).⁴⁴ His interest in art is attested to by his friendship with the renowned painters Wang Gai and Wang Shi. Nevertheless, the centre of Hong Sheng's life after Beijing seems to have been the *Changsheng dian*, the play that won him the greatest fame and satisfaction. Identified chiefly as the author of this drama, he was also recognized and respected as a leading poet of his day. The *Changsheng dian* was widely copied and performed in the empire. It is said that all the entertainment centres and wine houses had special troupes to perform the play as their main attraction. The wealthy, the rich merchants, and the leading officials also all hired special theatrical troupes to perform the *Changsheng dian* in grand festivities which usually lasted several days. A rich Yangzhou 揚州 salt

⁴³ Lü Xiong's *Nüxian waishi*, completed in about 1704, has one hundred chapters. Hong Sheng's commentaries are found in chaps. 1, 4, 28, 31, 39, 58. Lü Xiong, a native of Kunshan District of Suzhou Prefecture, changed both the character of Tang Sai'er and the time of the rebellion. He fictionalized the history to right the wrong of Emperor Yongle's 永樂 (Zhu Di 朱棣, r. 1402–1424) usurpation of the throne of his nephew, Emperor Jianwen 建文 (Zhu Yunwen 朱允炆, r. 1398–1402). The rebel heroine Tang Sai'er also became an immortal (Yuejun 月君, i.e., Chang'e 嫦娥) in the novel. The *Nüxian waishi* (one hundred chapters in thirty-two volumes) was printed by the Junhuang xian 鈞瑣軒 in 1711. Entitled *Xinke Yitian sou Nüxian waishi da qishu* 新刻逸田雙女仙外史大奇書, it remains the best edition of the book. A recent edition is published by the Baihua wenyi chubanshe of Tianjin 天津 in 1985; it is edited by Yang Zhongxian 楊鍾賢 with numerous omissions and changes from the original version. See Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, *Zhongguo tongshu xiaoshuo Shumu* 中國通俗小說書目 (reprint, Hong Kong, 1967), p. 59; Zhao Lisheng 趙儺生 and Gao Zhaoyi 高昭一, *Zhongguo nungmin zhanzheng shi lunwen ji* 中國農民戰爭史論文集 (Shanghai: Xin zhishi chubanshe, 1955), pp. 128–33; Liu Tingji, *Zaiyuan zazhi* 在園雜誌 (reprint, Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1969), p. 74; Ping Buqing 平步青 (ca. 1830–1895), *Xiao Qixia shuobai* 小樓霞說碑 in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng*, Vol. 9, pp. 207–9. Ping Buqing provides a detailed discussion of the Tang Sai'er rebellion and Lü Xiong's novel. For a recent brief biography of Tang Sai'er, see Lienche Tu Fang, "T'ang Sai'er," in *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 1251–52.

⁴⁴ The *Sui Tang yanyi*, completed in about 1675, has one hundred chapters. It covers the Sui (589–618) and the Tang (618–907) up to the time of Xuanzong's 玄宗 death in 762. The three main plot clusters focus on (1) the early Tang heroes, (2) Sui Yangdi 隋煬帝 (r. 604–618) and his love with Zhu Gui'er 朱貴兒, and (3) the story of Tang Xuanzong and Yang Guifei. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that Hong Sheng and Chu Renhuo (from Suzhou) became friends; they both chose the love story of Emperor Xuanzong and Lady Yang as the main theme of their respective representative literary works. Hong Sheng wrote in 1699 a long preface to Chu Renhuo's *Jianhu buji* 堅瓠補集, a collection of miscellaneous notes and writings about a variety of subjects, and expressed that he had many similar intellectual and literary perspectives and aspirations with Chu. See Chu Renhuo, *Sui Tang yanyi* (2 vols; reprint, Hong Kong: Xuelin shudian). For a brief sketch of Chu Renhuo's life, see Robert E. Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 206–8.

merchant actually spent more than 400,000 taels of silver in staging the play for just one show.⁴⁵ Hong Sheng was frequently the guest of honour in such grand *Changsheng dian* carnivals which were hosted or presided over by high officials and were often attended by China's most eminent scholars and literary men. In the autumn of 1697, he was honoured in such a grand festival in Suzhou, then capital of the theatrical world of the Chinese Empire; it was presided over by the governor of Jiangning, Song Luo 宋瑩 (1634–1713), and attended by numerous officials, literati, and literary notables, as well as thousands of rich merchants and townspeople alike. In April 1704, the commander-in-chief of Jiangnan, Zhang Yunyi, invited Hong Sheng to Songjiang for a grand performance of the *Changsheng dian* by specially selected and famous Suzhou performer-singers; it was attended by a crowd of officers, officials, and literary luminaries, as well as over a thousand soldiers. In May 1704, the textile commissioner in Jiangning (Nanjing), Cao Yin, himself an accomplished playwright, planned another grand performance of the *Changsheng dian* to surpass the one given by Zhang Yunyi. He invited all of the eminent scholars and litterateurs in the lower Chang Jiang 長江 region to Nanjing where the play was staged before a huge crowd. Hong Sheng was the honoured guest and evaluated with Cao Yin the performance of the singers for each of the fifty scenes of the play. The show went on for three days and nights and was regarded as one of the most grandiose theatre and cultural events of the time.⁴⁶ It was also about this time that the first printing of the *Changsheng dian*, which began in 1695, appeared. Hong Sheng was then enjoying the happiest time of his life after Beijing. He now saw clearly his immortality through the play. Ironically, by fate his life also came to a close. On his way home from Nanjing after the grand festivity, as his boat reached Wuzhen 烏鎮 (in modern Wuxing 吳興 of Zhejiang) on July 2, he went to visit a friend and drank to excess; returning to his boat he accidentally fell into the East Tiao River 東苕河 and was drowned. He was sixty.

Hong Sheng began his literary career in classical prose and poetry and set his goal of life in the “proper path”—*jingshi* 經世 (“to order the society and to promote the welfare of the people” or simply statesmanship) through the imperial degree and examination system; but he never fulfilled his aspirations. Instead he earned his historical immortality through his achievement in imaginative literature which was considered only *xiaodao* 小道 (the Little or Petty Way) and was not recognized as bona fide literature in traditional China. In the end, Hong Sheng was remembered as a playwright from Hangzhou who composed the great *Changsheng dian*. He was never known as a statesman, an epitaph that would have been his first choice, and was only recognized as one of the numerous minor poets in Chinese history, which hurt his pride. For Hong Sheng himself already saw this fact before he

⁴⁵ Wang Youliang 王友亮 (fl. late eighteenth century), *Shuangpei zhai wenji* 雙佩齋文集 (1810 ed.), *juan* 3, p. 1b.

⁴⁶ Jin Zhi, *Jinxiang shuo*, pp. 3534–35. Hong Sheng once wrote a preface to Cao Yin's *zaju* drama, *Taiping leshi* 太平樂事, dated *layue* 臘月 (twelfth month) of the year *guiwei* 癸未 (corresponding to January 7–February 4, 1704). See also Liu Tingji, *Zaiyuan zazhi*, pp. 144–45; Huang Wenyang 黃文暘 and Dong Kang 董康, *Quhai zongmu tiyao* 曲海總目提要 (reprint, Taipei, 1967), pp. 2090–2102.

died, and he began to realize in his years of retirement that only in his play *Changsheng dian* lay his immortality. So whenever he met an old famous friend or a celebrated literary man, newly acquainted, he requested him to write a preface (*xu* 序) or compose some type of commendation (*tici* 題詞) for his *Changsheng dian*. The list of such people included, among others, Gao Shiqi 高士奇 (1645–1703) in 1693, Mao Qiling in 1695, Chen Yuji 陳玉璣 (fl. 1667–1696) in 1696, You Tong in 1697, Zhu Xiang in 1700, Zhang Yiguang 張奕光 (fl. 1609–1701) and Wang Shi in 1701, Zhu Yizun and Wang Tingmo 王廷謨 in 1702.⁴⁷ The success of the *Changsheng dian* also inspired Hong Sheng to continue his venture in playwriting. In about 1702–1703, he composed a notable *zaju* 雜劇 (Variety Play or Northern Drama) entitled *Si chanjuan* 四嬋娟 (The Four Fair Ladies).⁴⁸ Hong Sheng now was a “complete” playwright, producing outstanding work both in Northern Drama and in Southern Drama. By the time of his death, he knew he would be remembered as an outstanding playwright from Hangzhou and particularly the author of *Changsheng dian*, and hoped, as did so many of his fellow intellectuals, that his imaginative literary creation would realize part of his cherished dream of *jingshi* by teaching some morals to its readers.

Literary Pursuit and Dynastic Transition

Historians of Chinese literature have universally recognized the *Changsheng dian* as one of the two best dramas of the Qing period and its playwright, Hong Sheng, as one of the two most eminent dramatists of that period, the other being Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648–1718). Leading Chinese drama critics since the early eighteenth century have all agreed with this evaluation, and have attributed the play’s greatness to the refinement and beauty of its lines, the elaborate staging, and the perfect harmony of its musical compositions. Specifically, Jin Zhi, a friend of both playwrights, held that the representative plays of Hong and Kong were the two most popular of their days; Liu Tingji, also a friend of both Hong and Kong, concluded, however, that Hong Sheng and the earlier playwright Li Yu 李漁 (1611–1680) were the two best dramatists of the early Qing period.⁴⁹ Since Jin’s and Liu’s evaluations were made in the early eighteenth century, Hong Sheng clearly was then

⁴⁷ See the writings by these men in the “Xu” section of the *Changsheng dian* in *Nuanhong shi huike chuanju* 暖紅室彙刻傳劇, ce 40.

⁴⁸ Four acts, with each being on one of the four famous ladies in Chinese history: Xue Daoyun 謝道韞, Wei Mouyi 衛茂漪, Li Qingzhao 李清照, and Guan Daosheng 管道昇. See our discussion of the *Si chanjuan* later in this article. Writing *zaju*, however, was not new to Hong Sheng; he had already composed before this time two northern dramas, *Tianya lei* 天涯淚 and *Qingshan shi* 青衫濕, but both plays were of inferior quality and hence did not survive.

⁴⁹ Jin Zhi, *Jinxiang shuo*, p. 3534; Liu Tingji, *Zaiyuan zazhi*, p. 112.

recognized as one of the two most outstanding playwrights of early Qing times and his play *Changsheng dian* one of the two best and most popular dramas of that era.⁵⁰ This evaluation of Hong Sheng and his representative play has since prevailed to modern times, its time reference gradually extended to the whole Qing period. Jiao Xun 焦循 (1763–1820), for example, commended the *Changsheng dian* in its skillful selection of excellent musical scores from previous dramas and recognized Hong Sheng as the best playwright in “recent times” (i.e., the Qing period up to his time). Ye Tang 葉堂 (fl. late eighteenth century) highly praised both the verses and the choice of musical arias of the *Changsheng dian*. Liang Tingnan 梁廷柅 (1796–1861) viewed it as a *magnum opus* of Chinese drama of all ages and lauded especially its metrical composition, its plot structure, and its psychological depth.⁵¹ The three leading Chinese drama critics of modern times, Wang Jilie 王季烈,

⁵⁰ Li Yu's reputation as one of the two best playwrights of the early Qing period diminished from the mid-eighteenth century onward, for his alleged “immoral” lifestyle caused the degradation of his literary achievement in the mid-Qing society which placed special emphasis on the Cheng-Zhu 程朱 Neo-Confucian teaching on moral purity of the mind. On the other hand, Li Yu's achievement was represented by ten dramas collectively known as *Shi zhong qu* 十種曲 (Ten Plays), but none of the ten could be singled out as uniquely outstanding as either the *Changsheng dian* or the *Taohua shan*; as a result, the popularity of Li Yu as one of the best playwrights of the early Qing period was significantly lessened in the mind of the literati, and accordingly it gradually cultivated a climate of opinion unfavourable to Li Yu's true literary evaluation even among the learned drama critics. In any case, by the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, Hong Sheng and Kong Shangren emerged in various works of drama criticism as the two most outstanding playwrights of the early Qing period, and they were known as the “Nan-Hong Bei-Kong” or “Southern Hong and Northern Kong,” meaning that the play of Hong Sheng, from the South (Hangzhou), represented and dominated South China and that of Kong Shangren, from the North (Qufu 曲阜), North China. Yang Enshou first made this catchphrase and attributed it to Hong's and Kong's time, but no documents can be found to substantiate this view. As time went on, “Southern Hong and Northern Kong” has been recognized by Chinese drama critics as the representatives of Qing drama. Wu Mei and Lu Qian, for example, are two representatives of such a view in modern times. For a detailed discussion of the unfair treatment of Li Yu as a litterateur in Qing and modern Chinese literary works, see Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China*, “Prologue: In Search of Li Yu and His World.” For the special emphasis on moralistic purity and its effects in mid-Qing polity, see Chun-shu Chang, “Emperorship in Eighteenth-Century China,” *The Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong*, 7.2 (1974), pp. 559–69. For evaluation of Hong Sheng and Kong Shangren as representatives of Qing drama and the views of Yang Enshou, Wu Mei, and Lu Qian, see note 2.

⁵¹ For Jiao Xun's view, see *Jushuo*, pp. 154–55; for Ye Tang's opinion, see his *Nashu ying qupu* 納書楹曲譜 (reprint, Taipei, 1969), Vol. 1 (*zhengji* 正集), *juan 4, mulu* 目錄, pp. 1b–2a; Liang Tingnan's evaluation is found in his *Quhua* 曲話, in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng*, Vol. 8 (pp. 235–95), p. 269.

Wu Mei 吳梅, and Lu Qian 盧前, all have praised *Changsheng dian* along similar points of view.⁵² The leading Japanese scholar on the history of Chinese drama, Aoki Masaru 青木正兒, has perhaps appraised the play in the most incisive way. He believes that the chief achievements of the play lie in its superb music and meters; in this aspect, Hong Sheng, Aoki holds, surpasses even the great Ming dramatist, Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1617).⁵³

The high praise for the superb meters and musical composition of the *Changsheng dian* truly attests to Hong Sheng's strength as a playwright. As we know, Hong Sheng was recognized as a brilliant poet and phonologist even in his youth, reflecting his early education. His earlier teacher, Mao Xianshu, was a distinguished phonologist and an expert on arias in music dramas. Mao's book, *Nanqu zhengyun* 南曲正韻 (Rectification of Rhymes in Southern Arias), is a classic on the rhyme schemes in Southern Drama and on phonology. Mao also wrote several works on ancient Chinese phonology, such as *Shengyun congshuo* 聲韻叢說 (Studies on Sounds and Rhymes) and *Yunxue tongzhi* 韻學通指 (An Introduction to Phonology). Two of Hong Sheng's close senior friends in his early Hangzhou years, Chai Shaobing and Shen Qian, who were like teachers to him because of their being close friends of Mao Xianshu, were also experts on Chinese phonology. Chai wrote a standard text, *Guyun tonglüe* 古韻通略 (A Treatise on Ancient Phonology), and Shen composed the important treatise, *Dongjiang ciyun* 東江詞韻 (Dongjiang's Rules for Rhymes in Lyrics). Hong Sheng's first book was on ancient Chinese phonology: In about 1664, at the age of twenty, he wrote an important work, *Shisao yunzhu* 詩騷韻註 (Notes on the Phonology of the *Shi* Poetry and *Sao* Songs). His teacher Mao Xianshu wrote a foreword to the book and praised the depth of Hong Sheng's phonological studies and their important contribution. In 1675, at the age of thirty-one, Hong Sheng completed the first collection of his poems, *Xiaoyue lou ji* 嘯月樓集 (Poems of the Xiaoyue Tower). In 1687, at forty-three, he finished his second collection of poems, *Baiqi ji* 稗畦集 (Poems of Baiqi). The next year, 1688, his masterpiece *Changsheng dian* was completed and staged. Thus Hong Sheng had already been well versed in phonology and poetry before he wrote his *Changsheng dian*. Phonology and poetry are two fields absolutely essential in traditional Chinese dramatic art, for both the musical composition and the verse component (the chief attraction) of the drama, are conditional on the mastery of these two fields. As an accomplished phonologist and poet, Hong Sheng was naturally able to produce a music drama marked with great refinement and beauty in its verses and perfect harmony in its musical compositions. But the *Changsheng dian* was composed through the author's long successful experience in playwriting. He had already written some eight plays (six *chuanqi* and two *zaju*) on different subjects before the completion of his masterpiece. The *Changsheng dian* even had two previous versions. The first version, entitled *Chenxiang ting* 沉香亭 (The Aloeswood Pavilion), was written while Hong Sheng was in Hangzhou. The second version, entitled *Wu nishang* 舞霓裳 (Dancing "The Rainbow Skirt"), was composed after Hong Sheng had moved to Beijing in 1668. The

⁵² Wang Jilie, *Yinlu qutan* 嬪廬曲談, *juan* 4 in *Jicheng qupu* 集成曲譜 (reprint, Taipei, 1969), Vol. 7 (pp. 9–103), pp. 58–59; Wu Mei, *Zhongguo xiqu gailun*, *juan* 3, pp. 1–2, 31–32; idem, *Guqu zhutan* 顧曲塵談 (reprint, Taipei, 1966), pp. 184–85; Lu Qian, *Ming Qing Xiqu shi*, pp. 89–101; idem, *Zhongguo xiqu gailun* 中國戲劇概論 (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1934), pp. 24–130.

⁵³ Aoki Masaru, *Zhongguo jinshi xiqu shi*, Vol. 1, p. 380. Aoki's view on the merits of the *Changsheng dian* mainly follows Shionoya On's in *Chōsei den*, pp. 15–16.

two early plays were all staged and all very popular among the actors, actresses, and musicians of the various theatre groups. But Hong Sheng was not satisfied with them and eventually produced the final expanded version, *Changsheng dian*, which really was in many ways a new play.⁵⁴ When the *Changsheng dian* was staged and won immediate universal adulation in the early summer of 1688, the other two versions were doomed to become obsolete, and have not survived. The long process of creation of the *Changsheng dian*, from the first version to the final one, had taken more than ten years, according to the author's own account, and it represented the best of his creative genius.⁵⁵ In the end, it became Hong Sheng's representative play and a landmark in the history of Qing drama.

Hong Sheng is credited with more than forty plays, but only ten of them are identifiable. But except for the *Changsheng dian* and the *Si chanjuan*, most of the ten plays are now lost or exist only in fragments.⁵⁶ Because of the overwhelming dramatic superiority and unusual popularity of the *Changsheng dian*, *Si chanjuan* has been completely neglected since the day of its creation. To experts on Chinese drama, Hong Sheng has been identified only with the *Changsheng dian*, the *Si chanjuan* hardly discussed even in Chinese works of dramatic criticism. To the literary scholars and ordinary playgoers, the *Si chanjuan* has been almost ignored. Therefore, Hong Sheng's impact as a playwright and as an intellectual can really be measured only from his *Changsheng dian*. This study is reserved, then, to this masterpiece, with some reference to other plays as well as poems and his other surviving writings which might shed light and understanding of Hong Sheng's literary art and philosophy.

⁵⁴ Concerning the time of the writing and revision of *Changsheng dian*, the primary sources are Hong Sheng's own preface (1679) and "Liyan 例言" (Explanations) in the play. See Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 1954 photographic reprint of the original Baiqi caotang printed edition), pp. 1a-1b: "Zixu 自序" (Preface) and "Liyan."

⁵⁵ Hong Sheng, "Liyan" in *Changsheng dian* (1958; reprint, Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 1980), pp. 1-2. For different interpretations regarding the time of writing and revision of the play, see, among others, Guan Dedong 關德棟, "Hong Sheng he *Changsheng dian* 洪昇和長生殿," in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu yanjiu lunwen ji* 元明清戲曲研究論文集 (Beijing: Zuoji chubanshe, 1957), pp. 478-79; Wang Weimin 王衛民, "Guanyu *Changsheng dian* xiezuoshijian wenti 關於長生殿寫作時間問題," *Wenxue yichan zengkan*, No. 12, pp. 73-77; Qian Dongfu 錢東甫, "Guanyu Hong Sheng he ta de xiqu *Changsheng dian* 關於洪昇和他的戲曲長生殿," in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu yanjiu lunwen ji*, p. 462; Chen Wannai, *Hong Sheng yanjiu*, pp. 135-52; Zhang Peiheng, "Qianyan 前言" (Introduction) in *Hong Sheng nianpu*, pp. 15-20.

⁵⁶ The extant sources give the names of ten plays: *Changsheng dian*, *Si chanjuan*, *Huiwen jin* 迴文錦, *Huilong ji* 迴龍記, *Jinxiu tu* 錦綉圖, *Nao Gaotang* 鬧高唐, *Jiexiao fang* 節孝坊, *Tianya lei*, *Qingshan shi*, and *Chang hong qiao* 長虹橋. If we add *Chenxiang ting* and *Wu nishang*, the first and second versions of the play *Changsheng dian*, to the list, it will give a total of twelve plays, as suggested by both Chen Wannai and Zeng Yongyi. But since Hong Sheng himself was not satisfied with the first two versions and wrote *Changsheng dian* to supersede them, we do not think they should be treated as two separate, independent plays. For Chen's and Zeng's discussions of Hong Sheng's plays, see their works *Hong Sheng yanjiu* (pp. 311-24) and *Changsheng dian yanjiu* (pp. 39-40) respectively.

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The *Changsheng dian* has, in the standard *chuanqi* tradition, two *juan* 卷, and each *juan* has twenty-five scenes, thus a total of fifty scenes in the play.⁵⁷ The play deals with the timeless and ever-popular love story of the Tang emperor Minghuang 唐明皇 (Xuanzong 玄宗, 685–762; r. 712–756) and Lady Yang (Yang Guifei 楊貴妃; Yuhuan 玉環, Taizhen 太真; 719–756). The drama starts with the moving, ecstatic love between Minghuang and Yuhuan. With Yuhuan's influence comes the rise of her family members, particularly her "brother" (really cousin) Yang Guozhong 楊國忠 who becomes Prime Minister in the court. Meanwhile a frontier officer, An Lushan (703–757), of barbarian blood, becomes the favourite of the emperor, causing a conflict between Lushan and the Prime Minister, Guozhong. Lushan is then sent to the northeastern region when he loses his political struggle with Guozhong. Substituting barbarian chiefs for the Chinese generals under him, Lushan raises a devastating rebellion against the Tang empire. As Lushan's forces approach the capital Chang'an 長安 (modern Xi'an 西安, Shaanxi 陝西), Emperor Minghuang flees, as does the entire imperial court. At the Mawei 馬嵬 Station (about thirty-five miles west of Chang'an), the imperial troops mutiny to kill the Prime Minister Yang Guozhong and force beautiful Yuhuan to commit suicide by blaming the Yangs as the cause of Lushan's rebellion. Minghuang's sorrow and sadness for Yuhuan's death grows deeper and deeper after the rebellion is suppressed, and he returns to the capital. Then a Daoist necromancer, at the emperor's request, meets Yuhuan, now an immortal, at a fairy mountain and arranges a reunion of Minghuang and Yuhuan. Finally the two lovers are reunited in the palace on the moon and remain as immortal lovers in the palace of the highest heaven.

The central theme of the *Changsheng dian* is love—not only love between a man and a woman, but also deep devotion to one's country, affection for one's family. This theme is illustrated by Hong Sheng in his opening Prologue:

Since ancient times how few lovers
 Have really remained constant to the end;
 But those who were true have come together at last,
 Even though thousands of miles apart,
 Even though torn from each other by death. And all
 Who curse their unhappy fate are simply those
 Lacking in love. True love moves heaven and earth,
 Metal and stone, shines like the sun, and lights
 The pages of old histories; loyal subjects
 And filial sons are all of them true lovers;
 Even Confucius did not delete the love poems of Zheng and Wei
 [When he compiled the *Book of Poetry*]; so we shall now

⁵⁷ The two-*juan* division was the format in the original Baiqi caotang 稗畦草堂 edition of the *Changsheng dian*, first printed in 1704. Most of the later reprints have generally omitted the *juan* divisions. See Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (Beijing, 1954 photographic reprint of the original Baiqi caotang ed.; also Beijing: Wenxue guji kanxing she, 1955 photographic reprint of the original Baiqi caotang ed.).

Take music and “The Tale of Lady Yang Taizhen”
To offer a new play in praise of love!⁵⁸

Sentimentalism, with its overemphasis on emotion and its optimistic belief in the goodness and value of the individual, represents the individual’s effort of emancipating himself from society; it is one of the fundamental characteristics of the Chinese world of letters. Its emphasis on love as the most

⁵⁸ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (Beijing, 1954 ed.; hereafter 1954 ed.), Pt. 1, p. 1a. Our English translation is adopted, with changes, from *The Palace of Eternal Youth*, translated by Yang Hsien-yi 楊憲益 and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), p. 7. We interpret “*Taizhen waizhuan*” in the text as an abbreviation of the title of Yue Shi’s 樂史 famous story about Lady Yang, “Yang Taizhen waizhuan,” and have therefore translated it as “The Tale of Lady Yang Taizhen.” But it is also possible that Hong Sheng used the term *waizhuan*, meaning “tale, romance, unofficial history, and the like,” in its ordinary sense. For Yue Shi’s story, see the reference given below in notes 63 and 98. *Taizhen*, meaning “Prefect Purity,” is the name by which Lady Yang was known at court. Originally, it was the name she received when she was in a Daoist nunnery, during the short interval before she became Emperor Minghuang’s consort. It is significant to note at this point of our study that although the Yang translation (complete except for minor omissions) of the *Changsheng dian* is very delightful reading, it is a free rendering and is inexact and inaccurate from a strict scholarly standard. We therefore have translated, based on a better edition of the play, all passages quoted in this study. In three cases, however, we have adopted the Yang rendering, but with changes and corrections. On many occasions we have also specifically referred readers to compare the differences between our translation and the Yangs’. There has been much discussion on the central themes of the *Changsheng dian* since the late 1950s. Among the important works are “*Changsheng dian de zhuti sixiang* 長生殿的主題思想,” by the 1956 Class of the Chinese Department at Beijing University, in *Beijing daxue xuebao* 北京大學學報, 1961, No. 6, pp. 55–61; and “*Lun Changsheng dian de zhuti sixiang* 論長生殿的主題思想,” by Zhongguo wenxue shi jiaoyan shi 中國文學史教研室, in *Beijing daxue xuebao*, 1961, No. 4, pp. 43–50; Chen Youqin, “*Du Changsheng dian chuanqi*,” in *Wenxue yichan xuanji*, No. 1, pp. 191–205; Xu Shuofang, “*Cong Changsheng ge dao Changsheng dian* 從長恨歌到長生殿,” in *Wenxue yichan xuanji*, No. 1, pp. 181–90; Shao Zengqi 邵曾祺, “*Hong Sheng de Changsheng dian chuanqi* 洪昇的長生殿傳奇,” in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu yanjiu lunwen ji*, pp. 446–52; Song Yunbin 宋雲彬, “*Hong Sheng he ta de zuopin* 洪昇和他的作品長生殿,” in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu yanjiu lunwen ji*, pp. 436–45; Zuo Ming 左明, “*Changsheng dian de renmin xing* 長生殿的人民性,” in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu yanjiu lunwen ji*, pp. 453–60; and Yuan Shishuo 袁世碩, “*Shilun Hong Sheng juzuo Changsheng dian de zhuti sixiang* 試論洪昇劇作長生殿的主題思想,” in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu yanjiu lunwen ji*, pp. 418–34; Zhou Laixiang 周來祥 and Xu Wendou 徐文斗, “*Changsheng dian de zhuti sixiang jiujiing shi shenme* 長生殿的主題思想究竟是甚麼?” *Wen shi zhe*, 1957, No. 2, pp. 15–26; Nie Shiqiao 聶石樵 and Deng Kuiying 鄧魁英, *Gudai xiaoshuo xiqu lunji* 古代小說戲曲論集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), pp. 359–73; Meng Fanshu, *Hong Sheng ji Changsheng dian yanjiu*, pp. 137–70; *Changsheng dian taolun ji* 長生殿討論集, edited by Zhongshan daxue zhongwen xi 中山大學中文系 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1989), pp. 1–158 (comments by forty scholars); Wang Yongjian, *Hong Sheng he Changsheng dian* 洪昇和長生殿 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), pp. 55–89.

essential element in life is represented by the great Ming dramatist, Tang Xianzu. Hong Sheng carries on Tang's belief by claiming that "true love moves heaven and earth, metal and stone," and that "those who were true have come together even though torn from each other by death." He adds that "loyal subjects and filial sons are all of them true lovers." At first glance, this lofty and dogmatic Confucian ethic seems to have been interpreted by Hong Sheng in an odd way. But if we take into account the fact that *Changsheng dian* is a historical drama, and if we also keep in mind that Hong Sheng wrote his drama in an extremely sensitive and hostile alien court, then we can see in the stereotypical phrase, "loyal subjects and filial sons" (*zhongchen xiaozi* 忠臣孝子), a new and different meaning. It represents the dramatist's deep love for his own country and cultural tradition. It was this love and special feeling that his teachers Lu Fanchao and Mao Xianshu and their Ming loyalist friends Chai Shaobing, Shen Qian, and Zhang Dan exemplified with such an enduring inspiration to him in his youth. Now, after all the hardship in his personal life and all the frustration in his career failures, after his father's banishment, and after his growing disillusionment with his Manchu prince, he himself finally understood and developed such a special nationalistic feeling. "*Zhongchen xiaozi*" was a cliché by itself, but to Hong Sheng it now meant a belief so deep and so sensitive in his heart. And his verse expresses this nationalistic feeling with utmost profundity and sincerity.

In the scene "Tanci 彈詞" (The Rhapsody), when the white-bearded orchestra leader Li Guinian 李龜年 reminisces over the good old days, Hong Sheng expresses his sorrow over the empire's fall, a deep-felt sense of tragedy of dynastic change.

I sing of the dynasties that rise and fall,
To vanish away like dreams;
And I play of endless sorrow and sighs.
I have seen such tragedy and sadness in the country, I
pluck the strings
To express my sorrow in the melodies.
And today I will tell you slowly
Of the events of the Tianbao era.⁵⁹

In the scene of "Mazei 罵賊" (The Patriot and the Rebel), when the lute player Lei Haiqing 雷海青 denounces An Lushan and the turncoat officials, Hong Sheng expresses his hatred for foreign aggressors and the time-serving officials.

Still the same old generals and officials,
But they become turncoats and serve the new regime;
We musicians, at least, have stuck to moral principles,
And are not afraid to sacrifice our lives.
I am only a humble, simple, unlettered musician;
I have never studied or sent memorials to the throne,
Never passed the civil service examinations
Or won high official rank;
But I have blood in my veins,

⁵⁹ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. II, p. 49a. Also compare Yang and Yang, p. 231.

Loyalty in my heart, and a sense of justice;
 And now seeing this destruction and facing this calamity
 and catastrophe,
 I cannot help gnashing my teeth in anger and sorrow.
 I hate the brute barbarian who has polluted the throne
 Like the toad [in the proverb] who tried to eat the swan,
 And who has forced our emperor to fly south.
 His treason is so disgusting
 That even if I eat his flesh and sleep on his hide,
 I shall never forget my hatred!
 Yet those rotten courtiers, those good-for-nothing curs
 Who always talked so much of loyalty and filial piety,
 As soon as disaster came just turned shamelessly their coats
 To grab at wealth and position.⁶⁰

Hong Sheng contrasts, forcefully and movingly, disloyalty with loyalty, hypocrisy with truthfulness, and selfishness with selflessness. It is the barbarian who brought down the empire, but it is those shameless officials and generals who betrayed the trust of the emperor and sold out their country. “Loyalty and filial piety” (*zhongxiao* 忠孝) are not mere words; they must be practiced and stand the test of time and crisis. When those who, by their training and their devoted preaching and according to their position, were supposed to be the paragon of those cardinal Confucian virtues, failed the test of their credo when their deeds meant the survival or demise of their country, the true meaning of that age-long catch phrase became so biting and so revealing. After reading the above passionate verses, one is struck with the impression that in Hong Sheng’s mind “loyal subject and filial son” are words with deep feeling and a strong sense of hidden patriotism. Thus, although the central theme of the *Changsheng dian* is the everlasting love of Emperor Minghuang and Lady Yang, Hong Sheng expands his ideal of love to an abstract level of deep devotion to his country and cultural tradition. Many of his poems in the *Baiqi ji* and the *Baiqi xuji* 稗畦續集 (Poems of Baiqi, Second Series) also express deep nationalistic feelings and hidden patriotism. It was clearly for this reason that the latter book was on the list of prohibited books issued in the late Qianlong 乾隆 reign (1736–1795).⁶¹ As discussed earlier, Hong Sheng’s patriotism to the “old country”—an allusion to the Ming—and his strong contempt for both foreign aggressors—an allusion to the Manchus—and the (Ming) turncoat officials were planted in his early education under the influence of his teachers and friends who were either Ming sympathizers or avowed Ming loyalists. Perhaps Hong Sheng’s nationalistic sentiments also grew with age as he began to have contact with more Ming loyalists outside Zhejiang, such as Du Jun 杜濬 (1611–1687), Yun Ge 憚格 (1633–1690), and Zeng Can 曾燦. In this respect, Hong Sheng’s life exemplified the life and traumatic experiences of the generation of the Ming–Qing dynastic transition. These intellectuals were Qing subjects by birth or grew up under the Qing; they had no personal experience or affection for the Ming dynasty. But for a variety of reasons, in their

⁶⁰ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. II, pp. 9a–10a. Also compare Yang and Yang, pp. 170–71.

⁶¹ For poems expressing Hong Sheng’s deep nationalistic feelings and hidden patriotism and the court prohibition of the *Baiqi xuji*, see above, note 39.

Weltanschauung they were never free, intellectually or practically, from the bitter controversy on dynastic loyalty and from the reign of terror created by the Manchu rulers in their ruthless suppression of anti-Manchu sentiments, real or imaginary. As they were growing up under the climate of dynastic transition, they often used dynastic loyalty and patriotism as central themes in their literary or intellectual exercises; because of this, they were often the target of persecution, to varying degrees and forms by the Manchu court.⁶² That was what happened to Hong Sheng's experience.

In his play *Changsheng dian*, he used as his main stream of ideas some of the prevailing ethos of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition, such as the nobility of dynastic loyalty and the conscience of Chinese nationalism marked by strong hatred for foreign aggressors and for the Chinese turncoats. And that made him the victim of a certain literary persecution. For Hong Sheng's views and metaphors evidently caught the ever-alert mind of the Kangxi emperor upon receiving Huang Lihong's memorial about the special performance of the *Changsheng dian*, and hence he decided to use the occasion to punish Hong Sheng as well as other Chinese officials and scholars who were present at the play. The whole issue of "performing drama during a period of national mourning" can be understood as one of the literary persecutions against the Chinese literati launched by the earlier Qing rulers in consolidating the Manchu rule in China.

The Playwright as Historian

The story frame of this playwright's *magnum opus*, the Minghuang-Lady Yang romance, has been a favourite subject in Chinese literature. For about a thousand years it has captured the imagination of poets, storytellers, and dramatists, who used it repeatedly in their works. About one hundred and fifty literary pieces were written on the subject. But among the approximately thirty-two well-known literary creations, the most famous are the romance "Changhen ge zhuan 長恨歌傳" (The Story of "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow") by Chen Hong 陳鴻 (fl. early ninth century); the poem "Changhen ge" (The Song of Everlasting Sorrow) by Bo Juyi 白居易 (772-846); the long story "Yang Taizhen waizhuan 楊太真外傳" (The Tale of Yang Taizhen) by Yue Shi 樂史 (930-1007); the play *Wutong yu* 梧桐雨 (Rain on the Wutong Trees) by Bo Pu 白樸 (1226-1285); the medley *Tianbao yishi zhugongdiao* 天寶遺事諸宮調 (A Medley on the Events of the Tianbao Era) by Wang Bocheng 王伯成 (fl. c. 1279); the dramas *Jinghong ji* 驚鴻記 (The Story of "Startling the Wild Swan") by Wu Shimei 吳世美 (fl. 1590) and *Caihao ji* 綵毫記 (The Story of Li Bo 李白) by Tu Long 屠隆 (1542-1605). In his "Liyan 例言" to the *Changsheng dian*, Hong Sheng mentioned that his story was generally based on Bo Juyi's poem, Chen Hong's romance, and that he followed—but only for romantic and

⁶² For systematic and detailed discussions and sources of the literary inquisition and persecution of scholars during the Shunzhi 順治 and Kangxi reigns, see Chang and Chang, "The World of P'u Sung-ling's *Liao-chai Chih-i*: Literature and Intelligentsia during the Ming-Ch'ing Dynastic Transition," pp. 405-6 (including note 17); idem, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China*, chap. 1 and Epilogue. See also Wu Zhefu 吳哲夫, *Qingdai jinhui shumu yanjiu* 清代禁燬書目研究 (Taipei: Jiixin shuini gongsi wenhua jijin hui, 1969), pp. 15-20.

anecdotal details and fantasies—Wang Renyu's 王仁裕 (880–970) *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi* 開元天寶遺事 (Anecdotes of the Kaiyuan and Tianbao Eras), Yue Shi's "Yang Taizhen waizhuan," and Lady Yang's biographies in the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Old Tang History) and *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New Tang History).⁶³ Modern studies, however, have shown that in composing the plot of *Changsheng dian* Hong Sheng followed not only those noted works but also such Tang works as Zheng Chuhui's 鄭處誨 (also 晦; fl. 827–841) *Minghuang zalu* 明皇雜錄 (Accounts of Minghuang) and Duan Anjie's

⁶³ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. I, pp. 1ab. For the various works cited, see Chen Hong's "Changhen ge zhuan" in *Tang Song chuanqi xuan* 唐宋傳奇選, collated and edited by Lu Xun 魯迅 (reprint, Hong Kong, 1967), pp. 103–6; Bo Juji's "Changhen ge" in Lu Xun, *Tang Song chuanqi xuan*, pp. 106–8; an English translation of "Changhen ge" was done by Witter Bynner in *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, edited by Cyril Birch (New York: Grove Press, 1965), Vol. I, pp. 266–69; Yue Shi's "Yang Taizhen waizhuan" in *Tangren xiaoshuo* 唐人小說, collated and edited by Wang Bijiang 汪辟疆 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1955), pp. 124–34; Wang Renyu's *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi* in *Tangdai congshu* 唐代叢書, edited by Wang Wengao 王文誥 and Shao Xizeng 邵希曾 (1806; reprint, Taipei, 1968), pp. 139–46; Duan Anjie's *Yuefu zalu* in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng*, Vol. 1, pp. 37–89; *Jiu Tang shu* (Bona 百衲 ed.), *liezhuan* 列傳, juan 1 (in Vol. 20), pp. 16a–18a; *Xin Tang shu* (Bona ed.), *liezhuan*, juan 150A (in Vol. 40), pp. 1a–5b; Bo Pu's *Wutong yu* in *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選, edited by Zang Mouxun 臧懋循 (1550–1620) (*Sibu beiyao* ed.), No. 21, in *Ce* 4, pp. 1a–11a; Wang Bocheng's *Tianbao yishi zhugongdiao*, extant fragments collected and edited by Zhao Jingshen 趙景深, in *Xueshu* 學術, Vol. 3 (Shanghai, 1940), pp. 123–56; Wu Shimei's *Jinghong ji* in *Guben xiqu congkan erji* 古本戲曲叢刊二集 (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1955), No. 29; Tu Long's *Caihao ji* in *Guben xiqu congkan chuji* 古本戲曲叢刊初集 (Shanghai, 1954), No. 71. Our estimate of the number of literary creations of the love story of Minghuang and Lady Yang is based on a considerable number of sources, such as the verses quoted in the concluding part of each scene of the *Changsheng dian*; Jiao Xun, *Jishuo*, p. 154; Li Tiaoyuan, *Yucun quhua*, p. 16; Wang Bijiang, *Tangren xiaoshuo*, pp. 113–34; Lu Xun, *Tang Song chuanqi xuan*, pp. 282–86; Chen Yinke 陳寅恪, *Yuan Bo shi jianzheng gao* 元白詩箋證稿 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), pp. 1–44; Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1957), pp. 6902–4; Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (ca. 1320–1399), *Chuogeng lu* 輟耕錄 (reprint, Taipei, 1963), pp. 372–85; Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧, *Huaben yu guju* 話本與古劇 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), p. 212; Wang Yong 王泳, "Shige he shice zhong Yang Guifei de shiji 詩歌和史冊中楊貴妃的事蹟," *Si yu yan* 思與言, 3.3 (September 1965), pp. 16–23; Zeng Yongyi, "Yang Guifei gushi da fazhan 楊貴妃故事的發展," *Xiandai xueyuan* 現代學苑, 4.6 (June 1967), pp. 15–21; Xu Shuofang, *Xiqu zaji*, pp. 92–98; Zeng Yongyi, *Changsheng dian yanjiu*, pp. 42–51; Chen Wannai, *Hong Sheng yanjiu*, pp. 89–117. Zeng Yongyi's and Chen Wannai's studies are in general based on the works of Xu Shuofang and other scholars of Mainland China, such as Song Yunbin, Shao Zengqi, Qian Dongfu, Chen Youqin, and Yuan Shishuo, all of whom have already been mentioned.

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段安節 (fl. 894–898) *Yuefu zalu* 樂府雜錄 (Miscellaneous Notes on Music and Entertainment), and the plays of Bo Pu and Wu Shimei and, to a lesser extent, Tu Long's drama.⁶⁴

But Hong Sheng did make one significant departure from the authors who had written before him about the love story of Minghuang and Lady Yang. As he emphatically pointed out in his "Liyang," he excluded in his plot any of the suggestive "dirty stories" about Lady Yang, such as the one portraying her in a debauched love affair with An Lushan in many previous dramas and stories and even historical works. From intellectual and historical perspectives, this is the most important change in his treatment of the subject. Most previous writers who dealt with this love story laid the blame for the downfall of the Tang empire on Lady Yang,⁶⁵ which followed an expedient scheme

⁶⁴ Shionoya On, *Chōsei den*, "Introduction," p. 2; Xu Shuofang, *Xiqu zaji*, pp. 99, 107–9; idem, "Changsheng dian de zuozhe zenyang xiang zai ta yiqian de jizhong xiqu xuexi 長生殿的作者怎樣向在他以前的幾種戲曲學習," in *Yuan Ming Qing xiqu yanjiu lunwen ji*, pp. 486–90, which is also included in Xu Shuofang (ed. and annot.), *Changsheng dian* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1958); Li Dingfang 李鼎芳, "Tan Hong Sheng Changsheng dian chuli shishi gushi de taidu ji qita 談洪昇長生殿處理史實故事的態度及其他," *Wenxue yichan zengkan*, No. 1 (1957), pp. 271–81. See also Zeng Yongyi, *Changsheng dian yanjiu*, pp. 45–52. Xu Shuofang also maintains that Hong Sheng's structure of the *Changsheng dian* was influenced by Ruan Dacheng's 阮大鍼 (ca. 1587–1646) *Yanzi jian* 燕子箋 (The Swallow Messenger of Love) and Tang Xianzu's *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (The Peony Pavilion), and some other plays of the Ming period (*Xiqu zaji*, p. 108). The *Yanzi jian* is included in *Guben xiqu congkan erji*, No. 85 and in *Kokuyaku kanbun taisei*, Vol. II (Tokyo, 1922); the *Mudan ting* can be found in *Tang Xianzu ji* 湯顯祖集, collated by Xu Shuofang and Qian Nanyang (4 vols.; Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), pp. 1803–2079. For a recent and illuminating study of the *Mudan ting*, see C. T. Hsia 夏志清, "Time and the Human Condition in the Plays of T'ang Hsien-tsu," in Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.), *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), esp. pp. 273–79; see also Hou Wailu 侯外廬, *Lun Tang Xianzu juzuo sizhong* 論湯顯祖劇作四種 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1962), pp. 1–19. The *Mudan ting* has been translated into English by Cyril Birch (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980).

⁶⁵ For a modern analysis of the background of the An Lushan Rebellion, see Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 1–103. For the life and administration of Tang Xuanzong, see *Jiu Tang shu*, *juan* 8, pp. 1a–21a and *juan* 9, pp. 1a–15b, and *Xin Tang shu*, *juan* 5, pp. 4a–17b; for further studies and biography of An Lushan, see Howard S. Levy (trans.), *Biography of An Lu-shan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), and Robert des Rotours (trans.), *Histoire de Ngan Lou-chan (Ngan Lou-chan che-tsi)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962); for further analysis of Lady Yang and the reign of Xuanzong, see Howard S. Levy, *Harem Favorites of an Illustrious Celestial* (Taipei: Zhongtai Printing Co., 1958), pp. 9–25, 64–133, esp. pp. 116–21. Yang Guifei's biography is also found in the *Jiu Tang shu*, *liezhuan*, *juan* 1 (in Vol. 15), pp. 11b–13a and *Xin Tang shu*, *liezhuan*, *juan* 1 (in Vol. 20), pp. 16a–18a; G. Soulié de Morant, *La passion de Yang Kwé-fei* (Paris, 1924), including a large number of translations of Chinese poems, stories, and essays. An Lushan's biography is also found in the *Xin Tang shu*, *liezhuan*, *juan* 150A (in Vol. 40), pp. 1a–5b. The comments at the end of these biographies and those of Xuanzong's all blamed Lady Yang for the fall of Xuanzong's reign as a result of the An Lushan Rebellion.

commonly used in traditional society to find a scapegoat for corrupt or incompetent rulers. For by describing women as temptresses and troublemakers, they could lay the blame for all disasters on a few beauties, exonerating the rulers from all responsibility. To take the above-mentioned drama *Wutong yu* as an example, Lady Yang was described in it as a temptress who had had an affair with the barbarian general An Lushan and started all the troubles that later led up to the An Lushan Rebellion. Hong Sheng's attitude is sharply different. He portrays Lady Yang as a charming girl who truly loves the Minghuang emperor and whose death was a tragedy; he does not think that she was to blame for the loss of the empire. In essence, Hong Sheng believes that those who write, in history or in literature, about historical personages and events should have high compassion and a strong sense of fairness, and that evaluation, particularly moral evaluation, of historical personages should be made against the special context of their times and valuations. Writers, Hong Sheng holds, should not morally harm a historical figure just for the sake of dramatic literary effect; basic historical authenticity should be preserved.⁶⁶

Through the medium of the *Changsheng dian*, Hong Sheng has succeeded in reflecting the state of the entire Tang society before and after the rebellion of An Lushan. Here we should point out that while Hong Sheng was describing the Tang society, he actually had in mind the Ming society (before and after the invasion of the Manchus). The phenomena of empires in decline are universally similar: the conflicts within the ruling group, the luxury and overindulgence of the ruling class, the incompetent and corrupting bureaucrats, and the desperate conditions of the masses.⁶⁷ When Hong Sheng deplored the existence of all these fatal elements, he saw in them the causes which were leading to the fall of his own country to the Manchus. Thus in the *Changsheng dian*, we can feel the dramatist's mixed feelings of love and hatred when he reveals to us a vivid picture of a divided and decadent society.

Let us examine this aspect of the *Changsheng dian* more closely. In the scene "Yichan 疑讖" (The Writing on the Wall), the corruption of the ruling class is exposed.⁶⁸ In this scene, Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (687-781), who is to become the most decorated general during and after the An Lushan Rebellion, after having passed the military examination, comes to the capital to await his appointment. In spite of his mastery of all military arts and strategies, he still lacks an official post, while he finds that the worthless relatives of the emperor's favourite concubine (Lady Yang) are granted high-ranking positions and wealth, and that a favourite with the emperor named An Lushan has been

⁶⁶ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1958 ed.), "Zixu" (p. 1) and "Liyan" (pp. 1-2); Mao Qiling, *Xihe wenji*, p. 526.

⁶⁷ The stereotype of these symptoms of a falling dynasty is a recurrent theme in traditional Chinese historiography. The litterateurs naturally used these patterns in their fictional and dramatic writings. This was also a deciding frame in Kong Shangren's description and interpretation of the fall of the Southern Ming court at Nanjing in his *Taohua shan*. For detailed expositions of the traditional historical generalizations of the pattern of the fall of a dynasty, see Chang and Chang, "K'ung Shang-jen and His *T'ao-hua Shan*," p. 321 (including note 42, quoting Hsia Tseng-yu [Xia Zengyou 夏曾佑], Arthur F. Wright, and Lien-sheng Yang [Yang Liansheng 楊聯陞]).

⁶⁸ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. I, pp. 30a-35a; "Yichan." For an English version of this scene, see Yang and Yang, pp. 56-62.

made a prince. Again, in the scene “Quanhong 權閥” (A Dispute Among the Might), the conflicts within the ruling group are revealed.⁶⁹ The power struggle between the prime minister, Yang Guozhong, and the emperor’s favourite, An Lushan, intensifies. As a result, the emperor appoints An Lushan the military governor of Fanyang 范陽 (in modern Hubei 河北), and orders him to proceed at once to his post. With troops at his command and with a powerful enemy, Yang Guozhong, in court, An Lushan eventually revolts against the Tang court.

While the ruling powers indulge themselves in extravagance and power struggles, the masses are in a sad plight. Hong Sheng describes the fate of the poor peasantry most vividly in his famous scene “Jinguo 進果” (The Lichee Fruit).⁷⁰ In this scene, he shows how peasants and poor people are oppressed and neglected by the imperial officials. Lady Yang is fond of fresh lichee fruit; to please her the emperor has ordered that lichee fruit be sent every year as tribute to the court. Since lichee fruit grows only in the South, and the South is a great distance from the capital at Chang’an, the envoys from the southern districts have to make speedy journeys at any cost to keep the fruit fresh upon its arrival at the capital. As a result, the envoys who deliver lichee fruit gallop across the fields to shorten their road; they trample everything underfoot. In one unforgettable scene, envoys trample two blind people on the way and destroy all the grain in the field. Hong Sheng has the old peasant stamping and wailing:

Heaven help us! All crops have been trampled and destroyed. Now, not only shall we have nothing to eat, but how can we pay the tax collectors who are pressing us hard. What a disaster.⁷¹

When the blind woman whose husband is killed by the envoys expresses her wish to go to the authority to make the riders pay for her husband’s life, the old peasant says:

Those horsemen are sending lichee fruit as tribute for Lady Yang. Heaven knows how many people they have trampled to death; but who dares to ask for compensation? And what chance have you, a blind woman?⁷²

With the mass of peasants under the oppression of tax collectors and official envoys, the society is on the edge of total destruction. An Lushan’s rebellion is only the spark that leads to the final explosion. As a historical playwright, Hong Sheng lays the blame for the downfall of the empire on the emperor and the entire ruling official class. This is also the reason why most of the “heroes” in the *Changsheng dian* are “common people”—the lute player Lei Haiqing, the musician Li Guinian, the old peasant Guo Congjin 郭從謹 who cooked oatmeal for the emperor when the latter was in his catastrophic flight to the southwest.⁷³ It is through these humble and unlettered common folk that

⁶⁹ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. I, pp. 42a–45a. For an English version of this scene, see Yang and Yang, pp. 75–79.

⁷⁰ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. I, pp. 49a–54a. For an English version of this scene, see Yang and Yang, pp. 86–92.

⁷¹ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. I, p. 51a.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 51b; English version follows, with minor changes, Yang and Yang, p. 89.

⁷³ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. II, pp. 1a–4b.

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Hong Sheng emphasizes the existence of real patriotism. In the scene “Mazei,” Hong Sheng shows his keen admiration for the humble musician, Lei Haiqing, who defies An Lushan and is killed. In praising Lei Haiqing’s loyalty to his former master, Hong Sheng expresses his deep dislike and hatred for those officials who betray their loyalties. The following lines are Hong Sheng’s powerful expression of sarcasm, said when Lei Haiqing is dragged out and killed by the guards, and the officials say:

It served that musician right—he deserved to be killed.
 Fancy a musician posing as a “loyal minister”!
 He positively tried to put us in the wrong!
 We are all of us simply acting a part;
 For how much, after all, is a loyal minister worth?
 And where did your loyalty land you, Lei Haiqing?
 You were foolish because you had never been an official!⁷⁴

This sarcasm of the useless and shameless scholar-officials also reflects the general criticism among the people of the corrupt government bureaucrats who were held responsible for the fall of the empire.

The writing of *Changsheng dian* was completed in 1688, little more than forty years after the Manchus conquered the Ming empire and set up their alien regime over China, and only about five years after the last Ming loyal forces in Taiwan were defeated. The Chinese empire had been under the climate of dynastic transition for over a half century. As an intellectual who lived through that difficult age of Ming–Qing transition, Hong Sheng’s portrayal of the fall of the Tang under Minghuang and his sensitive commentary on its causes reflected his deep feeling toward the tormenting issues of a dynastic change. This same deep feeling naturally was also shared, as we have discussed elsewhere, by other dramatists of his time, such as Li Yu 李玉 (Xuanyu 玄玉, 1591?–1671?) and Kong Shangren. But Hong Sheng was basically a creative writer as he had already written several very successful plays before the *Changsheng dian*. In this play, he showed himself as a litterateur-historian; he used a sensitive pen to comment on factual history—the history of the fall of a regime. He used “feeling” to light the pages of history—making many bitter historical lessons less painful and more memorable. In the final analysis Hong Sheng wrote “history” to reflect and comment on the “contemporary” issues of the dynastic transition in his time, and among these issues nothing was more challenging and involving than the causes and process of the fall of a dynasty. This is why Hong Sheng took it as the central focus of the *Changsheng dian*. The final moral of the historical lesson in the painful downfall of a regime or a dynasty is, in Hong Sheng’s words, that to the leaders involved, no individual happiness could survive the fall of the state, such as in the case of Minghuang and Lady Yang; and that the conscience of the nation would not be restored from the traumatic ordeal for a long time to come, such as what happened in the aftermath of the An Lushan Rebellion. All these issues were actually current to Hong Sheng. The tragic human suffering in the fall of the Ming and the ordeal of the Ming loyalist intellectuals (such as his teachers and friends) were all fresh in his mind.

Hong Sheng wrote the first half of the *Changsheng dian* as a historical play. He obviously shares the Confucian belief that history provides the ultimate ground for verifying essential truths and for

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 13a; English translation follows, with minor changes, Yang and Yang, p. 175.

passing on the noble judgement about events and people. He sees his play in this light. Thus, to Hong Sheng the writing of the first half of *Changsheng dian* is an exercise of his historical thought. In the development of the story frame he actually follows very closely the relevant authentic historical incidents as recorded in the standard histories of the Tang dynasty—the *New Tang History* and particularly the *Old Tang History*, although he chooses to ignore the biased comments on Lady Yang in these sources. Historical authenticity in the sense of historical facts is definitely a significant intellectual concern in Hong Sheng's structural frame of the *Changsheng dian*. But this point does not conflict with our previously stated view that Hong Sheng in fact examined the Late Ming society in the name of the Tang society before and after the An Lushan Rebellion. For he skillfully used the words of various characters, not the structural frame, to describe and interpret the Late Ming society and politics.

Hong Sheng's historicism⁷⁵ in writing the *Changsheng dian* evidently reflects the traditional Chinese idea of historiographical ability as a major criterion of both a scholar's and an artist's intellect. This intellectual conviction has its roots in the strong historical orientation of the Chinese mind. Such a tendency was particularly overwhelming in a time of dynastic transition, when preservation and interpretation of past historical records—particularly those of the defunct dynasty—and the function of history as a source of legitimacy of political power became of utmost concern to both scholars and political leaders.⁷⁶ This climate of opinion must have played an important role in Hong Sheng's dramatic mind. His elaborate effort to achieve historical accuracy clearly testifies to this point.

Love and Liberal Humanism

The central part of the *Changsheng dian* is the love story of Minghuang and Lady Yang. Hong Sheng's approach toward this love story is both idealistic and realistic. To him, it is possible to have true love between an emperor and one of his many court ladies, because he believes that true love

⁷⁵ "Historicism" here means the attempt to follow historical records and to create historical accuracy in a piece of literature — mainly drama and fiction. This usage of the term is, in general, in tone with, but slightly different from, that of the historians, albeit they have had some difficulties in formulating a uniform definition of the term. For a discussion of the use of the term "historicism" in literature, see George Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, translated by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London, 1962), pp. 152–70; for the historians' views of historicism, see Dwight E. Lee and Robert N. Beck, "The Meaning of 'Historicism'," *American Historical Review*, 59 (1954), pp. 568–77. The term used here should not be confused with Karl R. Popper's definition. To Popper, historicism is the belief in large-scale laws of historical development of the kind to be found in speculative systems in history, whether linear or cyclic. See K. R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960).

⁷⁶ We have examined in detail the historiographic trends of the Ming–Qing transitional period in Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China*, chap. 2. See also Chun-shu Chang, "The Periodization of Chinese History: A Survey of Major Schemes and Hypotheses," *The Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* (Academia Sinica), 45.1 (1973), pp. 178–79.

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grows as time passes on, especially when it meets the challenge of crisis and passes the critical test of life. In the first half of the drama, before Lady Yang kills herself for her emperor, Hong Sheng's approach is realistic. He describes the emperor just like any other man who takes pleasure in women. In this part of the story, Lady Yang, too, is portrayed as a talented and beautiful but very normal court lady who uses any means to win the favour of her master. But when crisis comes, true and noble love proves itself. When Lady Yang offers to sacrifice herself to pacify the rioting troops and to preserve the empire, Hong Sheng sees in her the symbol of his idealistic love. From that point on, in the second half of the drama, his approach is idealistic. The emperor's character undergoes tremendous change too; Minghuang is changed from a carefree and pleasure-seeking emperor to a serious man with deep sorrow in his heart. His love for Lady Yang deepens as time passes. There are ten moving scenes in the second half of the drama that describe the two separated lovers' mutual devotion.⁷⁷ Hong Sheng finally grants his hero and heroine a happy reunion in the palace on the moon to express his belief that those who are true lovers will come together again, even though they are torn from each other by death.

Hong Sheng's attitude toward Lady Yang was consistent with the new philosophy of love that had developed before his time. To him, the ideal love between man and woman is both physical and spiritual, with mutual trust and respect for each other. We shall cite two more examples of his work to support this point. First, Hong Sheng's other existing play, *Si chanjuan*, deals with four talented ladies in history: Xie Daoyun 謝道韞, of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317-420); Madam Wei (Wei Mouyi 衛茂漪), also of the Eastern Jin; Li Qingzhao 李清照 (Yi'an 易安), of the Song (960-1279); and Guan Daosheng 管道昇 (Zhongji 仲姬), of the Yuan 元 (1279-1368).⁷⁸ Here Hong Sheng's admiration for talented ladies is most obvious, and his ideal of happy marital life is shown in his vivid and detailed description of the happy lives of Li Qingzhao and Guan Daosheng. Although he did not advocate monogamous marriage, his ideal of perfect and faithful love reveals his deep conviction of a sacred relation between man and woman. The other example is a poem Hong Sheng wrote for his friend, Zhang Jingguang 張競光 (1611-1672), who had just lost his wife. He concluded the poem with the following couplet:

He not only mourns over the loss of a wife,
But also a true friend for forty years!⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.). There are ten scenes that describe the two separated lovers' mutual devotion: "Mingzhui 冥追" (Pt. II, pp. 4b-9a); "Wenling 聞鈴" (Pt. II, pp. 13a-15a); "Qinghui" (Pt. II, pp. 15a-18b); "Kuxiang 哭像" (Pt. II, pp. 20b-26a); "Shijie 尸解" (Pt. II, pp. 41a-47a); "Jianyue 見月" (Pt. II, pp. 60a-62b); "Gaizang 改葬" (Pt. II, pp. 66a-69b); "Yumeng 雨夢" (Pt. II, pp. 72b-77a); "Jiqing 寄情" (Pt. II, pp. 89a-91b); "Dexin 得信" (Pt. II, pp. 91b-94a).

⁷⁸ Hong Sheng, *Si chanjuan*, in *Qingren zaju erji* 清人雜劇二集 edited by Zheng Zhenduo (1934; reprint, Hong Kong, 1969), pp. 137-54.

⁷⁹ Hong Sheng, *Baiqi ji*, p. 73; the title of the poem is "Wei Zhang Jue'an xiansheng daowang 為張覺菴先生悼亡" (A Mournful Poem for Mr. Zhang Jue'an [Jingguang] on the Death of His Wife). Also *Hong Sheng ji* (*Xiaoyue lou ji*), p. 167.

In the traditional morally oriented society, friendship represents the highest form of the pure and noble emotion. Thus Hong Sheng's combining the role of a wife with that of an understanding friend represents his idealistic approach toward marriage and womanhood.

In guiding the development of the central theme of the *Changsheng dian*, Hong Sheng astutely adopts the popular folktale of "The Weaving Maid (Vega) and the Cowherd (Altair)." The beautiful love story about the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd is one of the best-known folktales among the Chinese.⁸⁰ According to one version of the story, the Weaving Maid wove silk east of the Milky Way—conceived by the Chinese as a river—while the Cowherd tended his cattle west of it. After they married, they neglected their duties; hence the Heavenly Emperor (Jade Emperor) became angry and separated them, allowing them to meet only once a year on the seventh day of the seventh moon, when magpies would make a bridge for them across the Heavenly River (the Milky Way). The popular custom of the celebration of the "Double Seventh (the seventh day of the seventh month in the Chinese calendar)" is based on this folktale. At the same time, the twin stars, Vega and Altair, representing the lovers in heaven, have been immortalized in the eyes of lovers on earth.

It seems that Hong Sheng got the idea from the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd story that love and pleasure should pay a price. Since the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd indulged themselves in love and pleasure and neglected their tasks when they were first married, they were punished by the Heavenly Emperor. So, too, were the Emperor Minghuang and Lady Yang: when they indulged in pleasure-seeking and neglected their duties to the state, they were punished by being eternally parted as a result of Lady Yang's death.

The legend of the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd represents the general Chinese philosophy of love: it is only a momentary joy in a long hard life. But the Chinese do not seem to complain about it. The Weaving Maid and the Cowherd show the great endurance of their love by working hard all year round and contentedly waiting for the momentary joy of reunion on the Double Seventh. To the Chinese, the legend has special significance in life. When they look up at the twin stars Vega and Altair, they marvel at, and are reassured by, the everlasting love of the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd. As Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) once pointed out, the Chinese view of life is generally optimistic and earthbound, and this explains why traditional Chinese drama and fiction tend

⁸⁰ The Weaving Maid and the Cowherd first appear in the twenty-second scene, "Mishi 密誓" (The Secret Vow), of the first half. But it is in the second half that the world of gods, ghosts, and spirits and fairies comes to parallel the world of man. For a detailed analysis of the origin and evolution of the legend of "The Weaving Maid and the Cowherd," see Zhong Jingwen 鍾敬文, "Qixi fengsu kaolue 七夕風俗考略," *Guoli di yi Zhongshan daxue yuyan lishi xue yanjiu suo zhoukan diyi ji* 國立第一中山大學語言歷史學研究所週刊第一集, Nos. 11-12 (January 1928), pp. 298-312; Fan Ning 范寧, "Niulang zhinü gushi de yanbian 牛郎織女故事的演變," *Wenxue yichan zengkan*, No. 1 (September 1957), pp. 421-33; Wang Xiaolian 王孝廉, "Qianniu zhinü de chuanshuo 牽牛織女的傳說," *Youshi yuekan* 幼獅月刊, 40.1 (July 1974), pp. 55-72. The legend in its romantic form took shape during the period 145 B.C.-A.D. 92; it was further elaborated in literary writings in the early third century; and it had already become one of the most popular folktales and folk beliefs in China by the early sixth century. The version of the legend that Hong Sheng followed was formed in the sixteenth century and it contains many new elements of a moralistic nature that had developed from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries.

to end happily.⁸¹ This was the reason for the long established tradition of “happy ending” in the *chuanqi* genre. And Hong Sheng chose to follow, at least in structural terms, this “happy-ending” tradition. His skillful use of the myth of the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd further reveals the influence of the folk legend on his intellectual mind.

In the *Changsheng dian*, the Weaving Maid, a goddess, and her lover, the Cowherd, are two important supporting characters who appear in several scenes of the play. In the famous scene “Mishi 密誓” (The Secret Vow), when the two central characters, Minghuang and Lady Yang, pledge love to each other in the Palace of Eternal Youth (*Changsheng dian*), wishing to be husband and wife in “every fresh life” and never to be parted, the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd, who are represented as being in heaven and invisible to both Minghuang and Lady Yang, are present in the scene and are touched by their sincerity. Hong Sheng has the Cowherd saying:

We lovers in Heaven should watch over lovers on Earth; and as they have asked us to witness their secret vow of love, we should protect them. . . .⁸²

Here, through the words of the Cowherd, Hong Sheng artfully foreshadows the evolvment and tempo of the play and particularly the final scene of reunion of Minghuang and Lady Yang on the moon. This leads to a later scene “Zonghe 總合” (The Gods Pity the Lovers) in which the Cowherd persuades the Weaving Maid to request the Heavenly Emperor to grant the two lovers reunion after death.

Besides the idea that love and pleasure should pay a price, Hong Sheng also emphasizes the idea of true and equal love between man and woman. He feels very strongly about the pledge of love between the two lovers, for he repeatedly takes it as the central issue in the second half of his play. As pointed out before, Hong Sheng describes Lady Yang’s death as an act of love and heroic sacrifice. In the scene “Shensu 神訴” (The God’s Report), Hong Sheng has the tutelary god of Mawei reporting to the Weaving Maid that Lady Yang has died to save the emperor:

The imperial guards had stupidly mutinied
And besieged the [Mawei] Post Station;
So if she had not sacrificed herself so bravely
There would surely have been serious trouble [for the Emperor]:
The Emperor would never have reached Xichuan unscathed;
Nor would the people have been appeased.⁸³

Not only has Lady Yang sacrificed her life for the emperor, she also repents of all her former pleasure-seeking sins. As she repents, all her “sins” are forgiven, and she is restored to her former position among the fairies. But she is still grieving even when she is on the Penglai 蓬萊 Fairy

⁸¹ Wang Guowei, *Wang Guantang xiansheng quanji* 王觀堂先生全集 (16 vols; reprint, Taipei, 1968), Vol. 5, pp. 1646–47.

⁸² Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. I, p. 82b; English translation follows Yang and Yang, p. 137.

⁸³ *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. II, p. 28b. Xichuan 西川 was what is now western Sichuan 四川, with Chengdu 成都 as its political and cultural centre.

Mountains. In the following conversation between the Weaving Maid and Lady Yang, Hong Sheng makes it very clear that Lady Yang holds love above everything:

Weaving Maid: But now that you rank as an immortal you should
free yourself of earthly affections; because if you allow
them to entangle you,
You may be banished again to the world of men.

Lady Yang: . . . If only we could love again, madam, I would
gladly be banished from heaven.
For if our names were on the list of lovers
And we could be together again in another life, (she kneels)
No punishment on earth could make me regret.⁸⁴

Similarly, Hong Sheng also describes Minghuang's intense grief after Lady Yang's death. In the scene "Kuxiang 哭像" (Mourning before the Image), Hong Sheng has Minghuang sadly blaming himself. Speaking in front of Lady Yang's image, the Emperor says:

I broke my pledge and betrayed your deep affections;
So the love birds of the phoenix were torn apart.
Though we swore that we would never give each other up,
Yet all too soon misfortune overtook us.

* * *

(He weeps.) Ah, what a tragedy! Ah, what a tragedy!
Now I am left all alone; I could die of remorse.
I cover my face in shame and sorrow.
Because of my folly my beautiful lady was killed.
I should never have let her go;
For had I then been willing to shield her with my body,
They might not have dared to attack the emperor;
Or suppose they had struck me down,
What would it have mattered?
We should be together at least in the other world.
Now I live on alone, but my life has no meaning;
Nothing but endless tears and endless sorrow.⁸⁵

It is significant to note Hong Sheng's belief that man should show equal faith, devotion, and responsibility in love—even this man who is an emperor. In a society where women had no place at

⁸⁴ *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. II, pp. 87b–88a. Yang and Yang, p. 291 (with minor changes). *Sansheng* 三生 in the original text refers in this special case to the third life of the three lives of rebirth — past, present, and future.

⁸⁵ *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. II, pp. 20b, 21b, 22a. Also compare Yang and Yang, pp. 188, 189.

all, Hong Sheng actually upheld his sympathy toward women's fate and desire for just treatment. In the scene "Zonghe," he again has the Weaving Maid expressing deep sympathy toward Lady Yang by saying:

Since he [Emperor Minghuang] gave her up lightly and broke his pledge, Yuhuan [Lady Yang] is tormenting herself for nothing. There have always been heartless men who forsake their love; And when the shrike and the swallow fly in opposite directions, How can we bring them together again?

Then, as if he is trying to convince himself, Hong Sheng has the Cowherd reassure the Weaving Maid:

Of course, there is some truth in what you say, and the Emperor ought to be feeling remorse. Still, that day during the mutiny at Mawei:

The empire's fate hung in the balance,
And even the Son of Heaven became powerless.
How could he be able to save her from death?
Today, I think, his heart must be torn with deep
regret and sorrow.⁸⁶

Several scenes in the latter half of the play show the emperor's deep regret over Lady Yang's death. Finally, the emperor has fallen gravely ill as a result of his feverish longing for Lady Yang, thus proving to the Weaving Maid his firmness in love. Consequently, she pleads with the Heavenly Emperor to grant the two lovers reunion on the moon.

Hong Sheng's effort to create the image of Emperor Minghuang as a true lover also reflects the influence of the spirit of the age. In a time when political thinkers such as Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695) viewed the ruler as "a guest of the house" while the people were "the master," and Tang Zhen 唐甄 (1630-1704) regarded all rulers since the Qin 秦 (221-207 B.C.) as "evil robbers," the spirit of the time seems to show a strong tendency toward less despotic ideas.⁸⁷ Hong Sheng's treatment of Minghuang as having the character of a common man conforms to the general tendency,

⁸⁶ *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. II, pp. 71b-72a. The allusion to the shrike and the swallow flying in opposite directions (*Bolao dongqu yan xifei* 伯勞東去燕西飛) is from an old *yuefu* 樂府 song.

⁸⁷ Huang Zongxi, *Mingyi daifang lu* 明夷待訪錄 (*Guoxue jiben congshu* ed.), p. 2; Tang Zhen, *Qian shu* 潛書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), pp. 196-97. For general discussions of this respect, see, among others, Hou Wailu, *Zhongguo zaoqi qimeng sixiang shi* 中國早期啟蒙思想史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1956), pp. 3-30, 155-65, 295-309; Xiao Gongquan 蕭公權 (Kung-chuan Hsiao), *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi* 中國政治思想史 (Taipei: Zhonghua wenhua chuban shiye weiyuanhui, 1954), pp. 595-618; Lü Zhenyu 呂振羽, *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1956), pp. 583-90; Jin Yaoji 金耀基, *Zhongguo minben sixiang zhi shidai fazhan* 中國民本思想之時代發展 (Taipei: Jiixin shuini gongsi wenhua jijin hui, 1964), pp. 127-32; Chun-shu Chang, "Review of *Chinese Government in Ming Times: Seven Studies* by Tilemann Grimm et al.," *American Historical Review*, 75.7 (December 1970), p. 2107.

and his characterization of Lady Yang as a noble heroine who died for the emperor, and thus for the state, also shows his idealist tendency of treating women on an equal basis.

In his treatment of Lady Yang's character, in his interpretation of Emperor Minghuang's personality and fate, in his ideal of love and man-woman relationships, and in his view toward woman in society, Hong Sheng reveals himself to be a liberal humanist. He places emphasis on the dignity and conscience of the individual, on the respect for personal integrity, on the importance of an individual's responsibility for his action, on the appreciation of the imperfectness of humanity, on the understanding of the painful process of personal maturation, and on the equality and just treatment of women. Hong Sheng's views reflected the influence of the marked social and intellectual change in late Ming times. Take, for instance, his liberal view toward woman. It reflects the growing feminism in his time which demanded the due recognition of the legitimate achievement of talented women in society.⁸⁸ So ingrained was this idea of Hong Sheng that he actually made a special emphasis on Lady Yang's sacrifice of her own life to save the emperor and the empire in contrast with those high officials and generals (all men) who were the "pillars" of society but who betrayed the emperor and sold out the empire.

One may raise the issue that the final happy reunion of the two leading characters in the *Changsheng dian* seems to manifest Hong Sheng's conformism in his dramatic imagination, for a "happy ending" was the established tradition of the *chuanqi* genre. But one must also remember that Hong Sheng already broke many traditions and established new thematic practices in his liberal humanist approach to the love story of Minghuang and Lady Yang.⁸⁹ He could well have done away with the "happy ending" too, if he chose to do so. In fact, he might have done just that ambivalently. For there is a legitimate question for one to ask: Was the two lovers' reunion on the moon a real *happy ending* in the traditional sense? "On the moon" means in the heaven; the emperor has to die to ascend to the moon. From the viewpoint of the mundane world, the play could be looked upon as a tragedy since it ends with its two leading characters dead. The genius of the playwright lies in the ambivalent conclusion of the play. It could be viewed as having a happy ending or as having a tragic ending, all depending on whether one believes in an afterlife.

Religious Ideas and Literary Imagination

The first half of the *Changsheng dian* ends with Lady Yang's death for her emperor Minghuang at the Mawei Station; the second half centres on the reunion of the two lovers in heaven through the aids of

⁸⁸ The new social and intellectual developments of late Ming China is treated fully in Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China*, chaps. 1 and 5.

⁸⁹ We have used the term "liberal humanism" as it is defined in Willson H. Coates, Hayden V. White, and J. Salwyn Schapiro, *The Emergence of Liberal Humanism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), and H. J. Blackham, *Humanism* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968).

gods. While the first half of the play is historicized fiction, the second part is plain fiction based on creative imagination. Of the twenty-five scenes of the second half, nine are about the world of gods, ghosts, and fairies. To modern readers, the second half of the *Changsheng dian* is a world of fantasy, a world full of exciting literary imagination and popular religious ideas.

Hong Sheng now shifts the centre of his stage from the mundane world to the otherworld where popular religious ideas and superstitious beliefs are his source of inspiration. A key theme here is the concept of repentance, a dominant religious belief of both popular Buddhism and Daoism. It seems that Hong Sheng was so much aware of the traditional image of Lady Yang's being a worthless temptress and troublemaker that he felt it necessary to win over his audience's sympathy for her. Besides describing her as a noble heroine who died for her emperor, Hong Sheng uses the concept of repentance to convince his audience. In the Prologue of the play, he declares: "But because her spirit repented her sins she became an immortal."⁹⁰

We may now closely examine how Hong Sheng pleads Lady Yang's case in the second half of the play. In the scene "Qinghui 情悔" (Lady Yang's Spirit Repents), he has Lady Yang pray:

Perhaps if I repent my past sins, I may be able to return to heaven. But all that I did in my life was bad, and the outrageous wrongdoings that my brother and cousins and sisters committed in their greed for power will all be laid at my door; so how can I be forgiven? Let me pray earnestly to Heaven under the moon and the stars. (She bows to heaven.)

Before the moon and the stars I am in all sincerity.
Bowling to Heaven and Earth I carefully review my past.
Almighty God, Almighty God,
For all my sins I deserved this punishment;
But tonight, repentant, I confess my crimes;
May Heaven pardon me and be my witness!
Only my love I can never repent,

For I am still drowning in the sea of love;
And even if I cannot be reborn, Almighty God,
I will go on loving [the Emperor] in "the next world."⁹¹

Hong Sheng's idea is that Lady Yang has already been punished for her sins, and since she is repentant, she should be forgiven. So Lady Yang gets her first pardon from Heaven, restoring her to her place among the fairies.⁹² But Lady Yang is not happy in heaven. She is ready to run the risk of being banished from heaven when she tells the Weaving Maid that she still loves Minghuang.⁹³ Lady

⁹⁰ *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. I, p. 1b.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Pt. II, pp. 17ab. Also compare Yang and Yang, p. 182.

⁹² *Changsheng dian* (1954 ed.), Pt. II, pp. 41a-47a: "Shijie" (The Resurrection).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 87b-88a.

Yang's devotion to the emperor moves the Heavenly Weaving Maid, but the Goddess still wants to make sure that the emperor is worthy of Lady Yang's love. Here, again, Hong Sheng employs the concept of repentance to relieve the emperor. Minghuang is filled with remorse for the death of Lady Yang; he blames himself for giving her up lightly and breaking his pledge.⁹⁴ Eventually, Hong Sheng makes him ill and willing to die if he can be reunited with Lady Yang. Only then are the two lovers granted reunion in heaven.

Besides the concept of repentance, other popular religious ideas were employed to mold the stream of thought in the play. The concept of the Daoist *shijie* 尸解 (resurrection), for instance, guides the development of the thirty-seventh scene, rightly called "Shijie."⁹⁵ The concept of the Daoist *zhaohun* 召魂 (the summoning of the spirit by a necromancer) carries out the forty-sixth scene "Mihun 覓魂" (The Search for Lady Yang's Spirit) and the final scene "Chongyuan 重圓" (The Lovers' Reunion).⁹⁶ Needless to say, the popular legend of the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd, which is one of the central themes in the entire play, is ever-present in this second half, together with a host of high and low religious—mostly Daoist—conceptions of transmigration, magic power, gods, spirits, and fairies.

With the exception of the idea of *zhaohun*, none of these concepts are found in the precursors of the *Changsheng dian*—"Changhen ge zhuan" by Chen Hong, "Changhen ge" by Bo Juyi, and *Wutong yu* by Bo Pu.⁹⁷ This displays the strong influence of religion as a creative force on Hong Sheng as a playwright. The final ending and the general tone of the play further reveal the working of religious determinism and the Daoist ideal of transmigration of man to *xian* 仙 (immortal).

The background for Hong Sheng's supernatural world was the worship of Heaven and its pantheon of subordinate deities, which together with the worship of ancestors constitute the core of classical religions that have reigned over China for thousands of years. In *Changsheng dian*, Hong Sheng conceives the world of man as a subterranean structure of the world of Heaven, where its

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 71b-72a.

⁹⁵ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (2 parts in 4 volumes; Shanghai: Saoye shanfang, 1928; reprint with collations of the 1919 Mengfeng lou 夢鳳樓 — Nuanhong shi ed.), Pt. II, pp. 24a-27b.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 44b-49b, 54b-57b.

⁹⁷ It seems that the *zhaohun* idea might have received some attention in another play of Bo Pu's, entitled *Tang Minghuang you* (or *xing*) *Yuegong* 唐明皇遊 (或行) 月宮 (Tang Minghuang Visits the Moon). But the play disappeared, perhaps even in Hong Sheng's time, and has been mentioned only in various catalogues of dramas under varied names. In any event, Hong Sheng never made any reference to the play. For the listing of the play in the catalogues of dramas, see Fu Xihua 傅惜華, *Yuandai zaju chuanmu* 元代雜劇全目 (Beijing: Zuoja chubanshe, 1957), p. 9. According to Yan Dunyi 嚴敦易, the *Tang Minghuang you Yuegong* did not deal with the idea of *zhaohun*. See Yan Dunyi, *Yuanju zhenyi* 元劇斟疑 (2 vols; Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), pp. 595-602.

degraded citizens are banished for specified terms. The two central characters of the play, Minghuang and Lady Yang, for example, were originally Kongsheng *zhenren* 孔昇真人 (immortal) and Penglai *xianzi* 蓬萊仙子 (fairy) respectively, before their degradation.⁹⁸ Hong Sheng further portrays the practical life—such as eating and drinking—in the world of Heaven as being like that in the world of man, with the rules of life in both worlds resting in the hand of one master—the Heavenly Emperor. Implied in this perception is the strong religious determinism of life. But it is a conception of determinism qualified by Confucian optimistic humanism. As degraded supramundane beings, men of this world still have in their mundane lives the freedom to do things of their own liking, to choose the lifestyle they consider desirable and enjoyable. Good moral and religious deeds, however, will redeem their sins and allow them to return to the world of Heaven, as Minghuang and Lady Yang have experienced, and deeds to the contrary will sink them further and give them more miserable and mundane lives. But life in this world is, on the whole, both meaningful and full of high hopes; it is an achievement-oriented life.

To sum up, Hong Sheng's religious views as expressed in the *Changsheng dian* convey (1) the existence of a personal God of Heaven and with Him a "mundane-like" World of Heaven; (2) a basic, practical conception of evil and its expression; (3) the strong orientation of life toward the other world; and (4) the grave conflict between the temptations of this world and the ethical demands of the other. The overall religious tone of the play displays a firm belief in religious prophecy.⁹⁹

Religion as a whole serves as a superstructure of the music drama *Changsheng dian*. It guides the development of its plots. The religious views exhibited in the play clearly reveal the religious self-perception of a Confucian intellectual in an age of dynastic transition. This religious self-perception manifests to a considerable measure the world view and personal feelings of Hong Sheng, and also reflects equally the general pathos of the intellectuals, and probably also the masses, of his time.

Realism is, in the sense of "accurate representation," a significant part of the intellectual foundations of the *Changsheng dian*. This is true even for the second half of the play, for it is generally recognized that during various periods of political disorder and social upheaval in Chinese history, people were inclined to take refuge in religion. This same trend prevailed during the Ming-

⁹⁸ Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (Shanghai: Saoye shanfang, 1928), Pt. II, p. 56b. Yue Shi's "Yang Taizhen waizhuan" is the earliest story that mentions Minghuang's being immortalized as Kongsheng *zhenren*. But it is only after Minghuang's death that the Heavenly Emperor made him a *zhenren*. He is not portrayed in the story as an immortal banished to earth from heaven. See Lu Xun, *Tang Song chuanqi xuan*, pp. 232-49, esp. p. 249. In the original stories of the "Changhen ge zhuan" and "Changhen ge," Lady Yang is said to have lived on the Penglai Fairy Mountain after death.

⁹⁹ The religious views outlined here contrast with those of traditional China as analyzed by Max Weber. For the latter, see Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, translated by Hans H. Gerth (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951), esp. pp. 226-49, and Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber, An Intellectual Portrait* (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), esp. pp. 135-40.

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Qing transition, in which religious converts and temples had made rather noticeable increases.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, Hong Sheng's presentation of these religious concepts manifests not only his own religious attitude but also that of the intellectuals and the masses of his day. It is a general understanding that the traditional Chinese religious attitude was non-sectarian and eclectic—tolerant toward the practice of various teachings of different religions.¹⁰¹ Hong Sheng's religious world as expressed in the *Changsheng dian* mirrored this attitude. It is an amalgamation of Buddhism, Daoism, and numerous popular cults, and shows no religious tensions in its intellectual outlook.

Hong Sheng demonstrates remarkable imaginative powers in the second half of the *Changsheng dian*.¹⁰² In this part, through artful use of religious and mythological ideas and beliefs, he patiently and exhilaratingly brings to an end the play and gives a true and profound meaning to the title "*Changsheng dian*," which literally means "the palace of eternal life," or more idiomatically "the

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Ming ji Dian Qian fojiao kao* 明季滇黔佛教考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), esp. pp. 1–2 (Chen Yinke's foreward), pp. 285–95; Kenneth K. S. Chen 陳觀勝, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 452; and *Wuxi Jingui xianzhi* 無錫金匱縣誌 (1881 ed.), *juan* 29, pp. 28 and 33.

¹⁰¹ For further analysis of this characteristic of the Chinese religious mind, see Laurene G. Thompson, *Chinese Religion: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 1–2; and C. K. Yang 楊慶堃, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 3–6.

¹⁰² This part of the play has been continuously criticized by Chinese and Japanese dramatic critics such as Ye Tang and Aoki Masaru. They hold that the main shortcoming of the latter half of the play is its lack of historical or other solid sources. For they have wrongly assumed that the artistic and literary consideration of a drama hardly merits attention. Hong Sheng is basically an imaginative playwright, not a historian. He writes historical plays, but historical plays are very different from history because it is a literary creation based on imagination and ideas. Therefore, the artistic and literary merits of a historical drama (or fiction) far outweigh the documentation and authenticity of the story in the drama (or fiction). For the views of Chinese and Japanese critics, see, for example, Ye Tang, *Nashu ying qupu*, Vol. I, *juan* 4, *mulu*, pp. 1b–2a; Aoki Masaru, *Zhongguo jinshi xiqu shi*, Vol. I, p. 380. Aoki evidently followed the views of traditional Chinese scholars. There has been a controversy over the definition of "historical drama" in the West. Definition is a problem in our study of Chinese historical drama. But what can be applied, and hence has caused the controversy, to the analysis of Western historical play can hardly be applied to the Chinese situation, because the Chinese historical-play genre was developed in a different literary and cultural context. On the basis of our understanding of the history of Chinese drama, we define Chinese "historical drama" as a play which is either fictionized history or historicized fiction in its contents. The earlier Chinese historical dramas were more of the first definition and the late Ming and early Qing ones befit more the second definition. For discussions of "historical drama" in the West, see, for example, George Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, Chap. Two; Lion Feuchtwanger, *The House of Desdemona or the Laurels and Limitations of Historical Fiction*, translated by Harold A. Basilius (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), Pt. Two, Chap. II; Herbert Lindenberger, *Historical Drama: The Relation of Literature and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), esp. chaps. 1 and 5.

palace of eternal youth.” In a narrow and direct sense, the title refers to the palace, The Palace of Eternal Youth (built in 742), where Emperor Minghuang and Lady Yang made their secret vow of eternal love (based on Bo Juyi’s tradition) which is witnessed by the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd. But in a more dramatic sense it means “love” itself, in the sense that love is the palace of eternal life for two devoted lovers. On a religious level, “*Changsheng dian*” means the palace on the moon where the two lovers, Minghuang and Lady Yang, finally enjoy their reunion and live together eternally; it can also mean, in a larger sense, the process from real life to immortality in Daoist transmigration—that is, without death one can become an immortal. In the final analysis, the title “*Changsheng dian*” can refer to the total existence of this world and the other world, and that life is eternal in this “Palace of Eternal Life” regardless of the form it assumes. Because of the rich intellectual and literary allusions and implications that it readily radiates, “*Changsheng dian*” can mean all these and more. In the play *Changsheng dian*, Hong Sheng uses the title to mean all of these and leaves other possibilities to the reader’s imagination. The creative genius of Hong Sheng has fully manifested itself just in the choice of the title of his immortal play.

The Great Tradition and the Little Tradition

The achievements of the *Changsheng dian*, from the viewpoint of an intellectual historian, are twofold. First, it is a conscientious piece of work which reveals the spirit and radiates the emotion of a transition period; Hong Sheng not only recreates a historical drama describing the decline of an empire, but expresses his profound concern over the causes of its fall. Second, the *Changsheng dian* is also a lively and delightful play which not only comes out of the rich Ming *chuanqi* tradition but also creates a world of fantasy by adopting folktales and popular religious beliefs into the play. As fully discussed earlier, Hong Sheng was basically a playwright by his literary achievements (although he was known as a poet, he was never regarded as a top one). Therefore, in the former case, he was a playwright to write or judge history; and in the latter case, he was a playwright to labour on intellectual and religious ideas. In the *Changsheng dian*, we have thus seen two Hong Sheng at work: the playwright as historian and the playwright as popular thinker.

Our study of the *Changsheng dian* shows that Hong Sheng drew inspiration for his play from two sources: the dominant ideas and convictions of the high culture of Chinese civilization and popular beliefs and practices of the low culture of the same civilization. The former is the great tradition and the latter the little tradition, to borrow two terms from the cultural anthropologist. The merit of applying the anthropologist concepts to our study of intellectual history lies in its providing a comparative angle to explore the Chinese mind. Through the anthropologists’ contextual studies of the various cultures and civilizations of the world, we gain a deeper and richer understanding of the uniqueness of Chinese traditions. We shall use Hong Sheng’s *Changsheng dian* as an example to elaborate this point.

According to the anthropologist Robert Redfield, in a civilization there are two traditions, the great tradition of the reflective few and the little tradition of the largely unreflective many. The former is cultivated in schools or temples and the latter works itself out and keeps itself growing in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities. The two traditions are interdependent and can be thought of as two currents of thought and action, but they have long affected each other and continue to do so by flowing into and out of each other. In fact, the two-way interaction between the little and

great traditions is the norm among the great world civilizations, though in some less advanced societies separations of the two traditions do exist.¹⁰³

In the case of transmission of traditions, the Chinese experience confirms the anthropologist's initial observation. In Hong Sheng's *Changsheng dian* the great tradition and the little tradition are distinguishable: the great tradition is represented by Confucian ethics, Buddhist ideas, and Daoist religious concepts; and the little tradition, by the mythology, folklore, and various popular religious beliefs and practices. It is especially interesting to note how little traditions exercised their influence on Hong Sheng who absorbed many elements of folk belief and practice and, by incorporating them in his reflective statements of Confucian orthodoxy, universalized those elements for all who thereafter come under the influence of his *Changsheng dian*. It is equally notable how great traditions exerted their influence on Hong Sheng who reflected on the conditions of the state, society, and culture of his time and was searching for a new meaning of life in the face of great political and social upheavals. Through his conscientious effort to revitalize the orthodox values, elements of high tradition are communicated to the common people—the enthusiastic audience of *Changsheng dian* includes, as discussed earlier, both the educated and the uneducated; at the same time, his great enthusiasm and admiration for the folk tradition inspired him to write about the common people, to praise them constantly, and to see them as the true believers and preservers of Chinese moral values.

It becomes clear that there is something unique about the Chinese experience in regard to the great and little traditions represented by the way in which Hong Sheng wrote his *Changsheng dian*.

¹⁰³ In his essay "The Folk Society," social anthropologist Robert Redfield formulated, based on his own study and others' studies, the important theory that the folk society is characterized by "a culture" — an organization or integration of conventional understandings. From his study of the folk society, together with others' studies in the same field, Redfield developed in the 1930s the theory of Little Tradition and Great Tradition. A detailed exposition of this theory is given in Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago and London: Phoenix Books, 1960), pp. 40–59, esp. pp. 40–41. For Redfield's important essay, "The Folk Society," see *Readings in Anthropology* edited by Morton H. Fried (2nd ed.; New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), pp. 497–517. Redfield also made a distinction between "primary civilizations" (like those of India and China) and "secondary civilizations" (such as the Mexican and Peruvian civilizations). The former are indigenous and the latter hybrid. In the primary civilizations, according to Redfield, both peasant and philosopher are indigenous and representatives of local culture; they both are the makers of their own civilization. Our study of the little and great traditions in imperial China agrees with this observation. For a different approach to the two cultural traditions, see Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1978), pp. 1 (Prologue), 23–29, 58–64. Burke criticizes Redfield's definition of the little tradition as "the tradition of the non-elite" as being too narrow on one hand and too wide on the other hand (p. 24), and defines "popular culture" (Redfield's "little tradition") as the "unofficial culture, the culture of the non-elite" that also includes elite participation and the participation of the "mediators" (the group who stood in between the elite and the nonelite). In our study, Redfield's definitions of the little and great traditions befit the original structure of China's cultural traditions and Burke's the process of transmission of the two cultural traditions.

When Hong Sheng consciously drew his inspiration from the folk traditions, he was not doing anything new on his own. In fact, he merely followed an age-long intellectual tradition. Under this intellectual tradition, the scholar, or philosopher, or statesman, or literary man not only recognized the existence of a little tradition among the illiterate (in contrast with the great tradition among the learned), they actually pursued actively a conscientious search of wisdom and virtue among the people in the countryside. The classical statement that the ceremonial practices have been lost and could only be found in the countryside testifies to this intellectual tradition. The tradition was set in the late Shang 商 (ca. 1580–ca. 1027 B.C.) and early Zhou 周 (ca. 1027–256 B.C.) times by the process of the secularization of the folk religious beliefs and practices into the written text of the *Yi* 易 (later *Yi ching* 易經, *Book of Changes*). Thus part of the little tradition was transformed into a cardinal component of the great tradition. The inclusion of folk songs in China's earliest anthology of poetry, *Shi* 詩 (later *Shi jing* 詩經, *Book of Poetry*), set another pattern of this long-lasting tradition. As a result, the Chinese traditionally believed that only in these folk songs could the true colour of the original culture and customs be seen. Throughout the literary tradition, Chinese poets have often turned to folk songs in their search for livelier and broader metrical patterns and greater freshness of expression. This resulted in the emergence of such new poetic genres as the *yuefu* 樂府 (Music Bureau songs) of the Han 漢 period (202 B.C.–A.D. 220), the *ci* 詞 (lyric) of the Song period, and the *qu* 曲 (songs) of the Yuan period. At the same time, folktales also became the raw materials of refined literary creation in various fictional forms. Some of the most fundamental cornerstones of traditional Chinese political culture were also of folk origins. Take the concept of "Mandate of Heaven," the basis of the theory of Heaven-derived imperial sovereignty which was the core ideology of the Chinese imperial system until 1911. The origin of the concept was in the two "folktales" in the *Book of Poetry* concerning the births of the ancestors of the Shang and the Zhou rulers in high antiquity. It becomes quite clear from these examples that unlike other world civilizations where the little traditions were left unattended for the most part, the folk tradition in China had been an important source for the development of the high culture through time.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, in traditional China, since the imperial government used ideological education of the masses through all available communication techniques as a vital means of political control in the vast empire, the culture of the great tradition had skillfully been imparted upon the little tradition to achieve universal ideological uniformity. A good example of this was the issuance and teaching through both written and verbal communications of the so-called *shengyu* 聖諭 (injunctions or maxims on moral conduct) to the entire

¹⁰⁴ There is a vast amount of literature on the various issues discussed here. We can only cite a few general references to illustrate some of the essential points. Huang Jie 黃節, *Shi shuo* 詩說 (reprint, Hong Kong, 1964); Gao Heng 高亨 *et al.*, *Shijing yanjiu lunwen ji* 詩經研究論文集 (Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 1959), pp. 79-132 (article by Liu Yaomin 劉堯民); Zheng Zhenduo, *Zhongguo su wenxue shi* 中國俗文學史 (Beijing: Wenxue guji kanxing she, 1959); Hu Shi 胡適 (Hu Shih), *Baihua wenxue shi* 白話文學史 (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1934); Liu Xianting 劉獻廷, *Guangyang zaji* 廣陽雜記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1957), p. 107; *Shi jing* 詩經 (*Wujing duben* 五經讀本 ed.), pp. 129-31, 167-68.

populace in Ming and Qing times.¹⁰⁵ Thus we have seen the continuing interaction of the great and little traditions in traditional China.

Although the great tradition represents the philosophical and theological reflections of many of the best minds of history over a period of centuries, it is the popular effusions of these high traditions, together with added ideas and values arisen out of simple people in the countryside, that preserve and reinforce the vitality of these traditions. Since parts of the little tradition represent what have seeped down from the higher level of thought, it shares the same world view and basic values as the great tradition. However, it is a similar and yet notably different tradition,¹⁰⁶ for the teachings of the high culture are understood by the common people of the low culture in ways often not intended by the teachers. The result is a modified and simplified set of beliefs (in the nature of slogans) added by ideas and values arisen from the simple and straightforward common people of the low culture. In time some elements of this little tradition have attracted the attention of the philosophers and literary men and have been the subject of thought by their reflective minds. The folktales adopted by Hong Sheng in his *Changsheng dian* are such examples; these folktales, after being incorporated in the play, then return to the people in refined new forms and with acquired new meanings. At the same time, elements of the great tradition, such as the Confucian ethic of "loyal subject and filial son," were also revitalized and given new life when they were adopted by the folk heroes, such as the two musicians Lei Haiqing and Li Guinian in the *Changsheng dian*.

It is this constant two-way interaction between the little and great traditions that makes the popular literature—fiction and drama—especially interesting to students of ideas.¹⁰⁷ Instead of viewing them as just another sounding board for the orthodox teachings of the great tradition, as they have been treated by traditional scholars, we are reminded by them of the existence of two currents of thought and action. These two currents were very much distinguishable, yet they were ever flowing into and out of each other.

The *Changsheng dian* has exerted considerable influence on the populace through the ages. This influence can be measured by the various regional dramas which have adopted scenes of the play and spread them all over the country. A check of the repertoire of the play reveals a wide range of the regional dramas which adopt scenes of the play; besides Beijing Opera these regional dramas include *Chuanju* 川劇 (Sichuan 四川 drama), *Hanju* 漢劇 (Hubei drama), *Xiangju* 湘劇 (Hunan 湖南 drama), and *Dianju* (Yunnan 雲南 drama), to name only a few. Since regional dramas represent the grassroots

¹⁰⁵ For a systematic exploration of this issue, see Chun-shu Chang, "Emperorship in Eighteenth-Century China," pp. 558–59; Kung-chuan Hsiao, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle, WA, 1967), pp. 168–88.

¹⁰⁶ An elaborate analysis of this subject is given in Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *History and Legend: Ideas and Images in the Ming Historical Novels* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), pp. 1–32.

¹⁰⁷ As popular fiction and drama play a central role in the broad process of construction and transmission of tradition, they serve as channels of institutionalization, and at times even as creators of new types of symbols of cultural orientations, of traditions, and of collective and cultural identity. For a theoretical discussion of the social construction of traditions, see S. N. Eisenstadt, "Intellectuals and Tradition" in *Intellectuals and Tradition*, edited by S. N. Eisenstadt and S. R. Graubard (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), pp. 1–19; esp. p. 18.

theatrical movement, their patrons are, for the most part, the common people. Thus it is clear that the *Changsheng dian* has not only been fully appreciated by the elite of the high culture, it has also been well received by the less-cultivated people of the low culture. It is this rare ability to appeal to both simple and sophistic tastes that marks Hong Sheng's genius as a great playwright in Chinese literary history.

The *Changsheng dian* is really a composite drama—its first half is a historical play and its second half a drama of ideas. While Hong Sheng demonstrates his remarkable imaginative powers in the second half, he treats himself with the dignity and moral integrity of a historian in the broad sense of the word. In China's great tradition, history is viewed as a mirror of the past, and writing history is a task almost of divine regard. Hong Sheng clearly understood his mission in the first half of *Changsheng dian*; as discussed earlier he tried to use the Little Way (*xiaodao*) to fulfill his aspiration for achievement in the Great Way (*dadao* 大道). But historical drama is not history; it is something between literature and history. On the other hand, it is more interesting to read and may command greater influence than dry history. Being a poet by training and a playwright by experience, Hong Sheng probably did not have the interest, nor the sufficient knowledge and technical skills to be an authentic historian. So he wrote history in theatrical garb. Although he draws on as many historical facts as possible, he is interested only in presenting his point of view, his interpretation of what happened in the past in the framework of his present world. As playwright, he is more concerned with literary effort and beauty than with historical factuality; he aspired not so much to tell the whole truth about the past as to tell a moving imaginative story based on some parts of historical truth. So, if the historian's history is intended to be a mirror of the past, the playwright's historical play can be at best taken as a "stained" mirror. It cannot show and is not intended to show the whole picture. The degree of historicity in a historical drama corresponds to the nature and shape of the stain on the mirror. And that varies with individual playwrights. Therefore, a historical play is essentially a beautiful and creative masterpiece of art. Hong Sheng's *Changsheng dian* is just that. But as a historical play, the *Changsheng dian* is unique in its blending together the great and the little traditions, the former being the clear part of the historical mirror and the latter the colored part. As the blending of the two traditions in Hong Sheng's play proves to be an ingenious and exciting literary device, the value of the existence of two similar and equally enduring yet notably different traditions in the Chinese civilization is fully realized and reinforced. It is a tradition dating to ancient times, but its value and vitality continue to grow with time. Hong Sheng's historical play *Changsheng dian* serves to prove this appraisal.

塵中明鏡
洪昇《長生殿》中之歷史、思想與宗教世界

(中文摘要)

張春樹 駱雪倫

在中國歷史上，朝代轉換常是文化發展之轉變關鍵點，因為在這轉變期間新政治制度與統治階級、新經濟政策、新社會方針、新軍事組織方式、新思想種子、與新道德規範等都逐漸蛻變而出。新舊制度、思想之替換常需要很長之時間去調節與適應。在這一段調整時期，最受影響者無過於知識分子，因為他們不但在政治與物質環境方面需要調節適應，在思想方面——尤其是「忠」的歸屬問題——更面臨極為複雜與多變的諸多挑戰；另外，他們還要檢討前朝亡因與本朝興由以盡他們所崇信的歷史責任與指出當朝應走之道途。正因如此，知識分子在這段時期內多透過史學上的、文學上的、一般隨筆性的著作來描述分析他們所感受和經驗到的問題與抒想的議論。這些著作在一方面是研究中國歷史最豐富的文獻之一，在另一方面又是研究某一朝代轉換時期內思想發展與一般問題之最有價值的材料。

十七世紀間之明清朝代轉換是上述這類朝代轉換情況的一個最具代表性者之一。其一般歷史重要性與所關係中國近代一切發展者已是眾皆熟知，但在思想方面它也是關係中國傳統思想方法與範疇之演變的一個轉捩點，而在文獻資料方面又是一個最豐富的時期。基於這諸多原因，我們撰述了一部研究明清朝代轉換期間的文化、思想、社會與經濟的專著，共分三冊，用英文寫成，時間起自明朝崇禎初年，止於清朝康熙末年：第一冊為《明清時代之社會經濟巨變與新文化》，於1992年由密西根大學出版社刊印；第二冊為《清初士人教育與通俗文化》，於1997年由密西根大學出版社刊印；第三冊為《明清時代之歷史、傳統與文學》，尚在最後階段，而本文便是其中之一章。

本文以清初詩人與戲劇家洪昇與其最負盛名之劇作《長生殿》為研討中心，共分六部分：首先簡論洪昇的家庭背景、一生經歷、師承與交遊、思想淵源，以及著作成就；最後乃討論洪氏一生之重大問題，如其愛國思想之問題、對「忠」的觀念與看法之問題、所謂「家難」的問題、其父為洪起蛟（字武衛）的問題、演《長生殿》致禍的問題等等。

洪昇為浙江錢塘人，生於清初順治二年七月一日（1645年8月21日），卒於康熙四十三年六月一日（1704年7月2日），與同時代之孔尚任（山東曲阜人，1648-1718）為清初劇壇之「雙璧」。洪氏之《長生殿》成書於康熙二十七年（1688），孔氏之《桃花扇》寫成於三十八年（1699），兩劇前後相隔半年，而皆於成書後即傳唱極甚，轟動京

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師。然二人皆於其劇成之翌年即因之「罷官」，其後兩劇卻又盛行於世，「南洪北孔」遂成清代曲家之代表，即於當時已如二人之知友金壇（1663-1740）所云：「兩家樂府盛康熙，進御均叨天子知。縱使元人多院本，勾欄爭唱孔、洪詞。」（見《巾箱說》）洪、孔兩家之詞主題有基本相同之處，故兩家之命運亦如一途，實為治史者所可深思細會者。孔尚任與其《桃花扇》我們已作詳細討論（見《香港中文大學中國文化研究所學報》九卷下冊，1978年，頁307-37），今再以同樣之分析方法與歷史研究觀點來論洪昇與其《長生殿》，是即本文之第二部分。

清中葉曲論家梁廷柅（1796-1861）評洪昇之《長生殿》云：「錢塘洪昉思昇撰《長生殿》，為千百年來曲中巨擘。以絕好題目作絕大文章，學人、才人一齊俯首。自有此曲，毋論《驚鴻》、《綵毫》空慚形穢，即白仁甫《秋夜梧桐雨》亦不能穩佔元人詞壇一席矣。……讀至〈彈詞〉第六、七、八、九轉，鐵撥銅琶，悲涼慷慨，字字傾珠落玉而出，雖鐵石人不能不為之斷腸，為之下淚！筆墨之妙，其感人一至於此，真觀止矣！」（《曲話》，道光十年〔1830〕刻本，卷三）梁氏此論道盡《長生殿》之本事、動人之神筆，與其在詞曲史上之地位。《長生殿》寫自唐代中葉後即成中國文學創作主題之唐玄宗與楊貴妃故事，其文有小說、戲曲、詩歌等，至洪昇時所流傳熟知者已有百五十餘種以上，而其中最著名者亦在三十餘，梁氏文中所提及之元代白樸之《唐明皇秋夜梧桐雨》、明人吳世美之《驚鴻記》與屠隆之《綵毫記》即是。洪昇之創作《長生殿》為集各家之長而又獨出心思予以創新，故能超越前人之作而成「千百年來曲中巨擘」。梁氏於百餘年後仍見其傳唱之盛，故云：「《長生殿》至今，百餘年來，歌場、舞榭，流播如新。」（上引《曲話》中文）

洪昇作劇過程亦極複雜。其本人精通音韻詞曲，「年少即能吟絕妙詞」（柴紹炳語），負「英絕之才」（黃機序洪昇詩集《嘯月樓集》語），此皆為其創作之基礎所在，而他本人之寫《長生殿》亦是數易其作，先有《沈香亭》，再有《舞霓裳》，後乃成本劇，可見其創作構思之精審。故不僅文義使「學人、才人一齊俯首」，即詞采、結構、排場亦是超勝，而又「宮調合律、賓白工整，眾美悉具，一無可議」（王季烈語，見《螭廬曲談》，上海：商務印書館，1931年刊本，卷二，頁二）。此為洪昇之文學創作藝術，在本文尚為次端，因本文之主端在研討《長生殿》中之思想與歷史觀以及文化意識。

《長生殿》之作是以人世「情緣」為主線，以朝代興亡、國家治亂與個人道德操守為故事之深義所在。洪昇以唐玄宗與楊貴妃之情、安祿山之亂為其劇作結構發展之大綱，而實所寫者卻為個人之忠信、國家民族之興亡與士人之責任等等大問題，復以其本人身世之感受發而為至情之文。此劇之實在背景當為明亡清興之朝代轉換，而其深義則又為對文化精神與人生命運之神祕性之探索。故本文之重心亦在研討洪昇之歷史觀念（第三部分）、人本思想（第四部分）、宗教世界（第五部分），與其對文化傳統之體認與創新（第六部分）。總言之，洪昇《長生殿》之作是因文講史，以史論人與人性，復由人與人性而見天命；通言之，則是透過一部「鬧熱《牡丹亭》」（見洪昇《長生殿》例言），以見民族與文化之精神所在。

《長生殿》是清初一部卓越之文學創作，是一部「戲劇」，其優美之文字、感人之情節、醉人之音律、緊湊之演變過程，常使其思想世界不易為讀者、觀者所體見，正如釋家所謂一面「明鏡」因染塵反映偏差而難見全貌，有待學者拭塵還本，以見其「實相」。本文之目的是即以史學、心理學、人類學、社會學、考釋學與文學史之各種角度分析洪昇《長生殿》中明鏡原本，以見其文義與思想世界。最後，復由洪昇其人與其寫《長生殿》一劇之本義進而探討清初之士人與文化思想之世界。

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