

梁啓超：譚嗣同傳

## A Biography of T'an Ssu-t'ung

By Liang Ch'i-ch'ao

Translated by Chan Sin-wai



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T'AN SSU-T'UNG.

T'AN SSU-T'UNG, styled Fu-sheng and also called Chuang-fei, was a native of Liuyang County in Hunan. In his youth, he was unconfined in spirit and set his mind on great things. He was well versed in all branches of learning, an able essay writer, given to acts of chivalry, and skilled in swordsmanship.<sup>1</sup> His father, T'an Chi-hsun, was the Governor of Hupei. T'an lost his mother when he was young and was maltreated by his father's concubine. Having undergone every kind of hardship that a motherless child is likely to suffer, he conducted himself with the greatest of caution and was constantly on guard against all possible hazards. As a result, he developed rapidly in character and intelligence with the passage of time. When he came of age, he joined the army in Sinkiang, serving as an officer under Governor Liu Chin-t'ang. Liu was so impressed with his talents that he decided to recommend him to the court. Filial obligations, however, soon forced Liu to resign his governor-

<sup>1</sup>Other than swordplay, T'an was also interested in martial arts, archery and horseback riding. This is revealed in "Letter to Chen Hsiao-che, No. 1" (Yü Chen Hsiao-che shu i 與沈小沂書一, *TSTCC*, p. 431), written in the autumn of 1893. Ou-yang Yü-ch'ien 歐陽予倩, the grandson of T'an's closest mentor, Ou-yang Chung-ku 歐陽中謁, also vividly described in his preface to the *Letters of T'an Ssu-t'ung* (*T'an*

*Ssu-t'ung shu-chien* 譚嗣同書簡, Shanghai: Wen-hua kung-ying-she, 1948, pp. 3-4), his personal impression of T'an's proficiency in martial arts. T'an's teacher in pugilism was Ta-tao Wang-wu 大刀王五. For a more elaborated account of T'an's sporting activities, see Yang T'ing-fu 楊廷福, *A Chronological Biography of T'an Ssu-t'ung* (*T'an Ssu-t'ung nien-p'u* 譚嗣同年譜, Peking: Jen-min ch'u-p'an-she, 1957), pp. 32-33.

ship, and he did not get to carry out this intention. For the next ten years, T'an travelled in the provinces of Chihli, Sinkiang,<sup>2</sup> Kansu, Shensi, Honan, Hunan, Hupei, Kiangsu, Anhwei, Chekiang and Taiwan,<sup>3</sup> visiting sights, studying local customs and mores, and scouting about for talents. But in the end, due to the cautious nature of his father, he was not allowed to travel too far afield and was unable to realize fully his ambition to explore the length and breadth of the country.

After the Sino-Japanese War of the year Chia-wu [1894], he became more and more determined to promote new learning. As a start, he established a study society at Liuyang, gathering friends with kindred interest to promote the endeavour. This was in fact the inception of new learning in the entire Hunan province. At that time, K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927) had just established the Society for the Study of National Strengthening in Peking and Shanghai. Patriotic men from all over the country came together to pledge their support. T'an then went down the Yangtze River from Hunan to Shanghai, visited the capital in Peking and was about to go to see K'ang, who, however, had just left for Kwangtung. T'an therefore did not succeed in meet-

<sup>2</sup>This account of T'an's Sinkiang experiences is so highly condensed that it leads to confusion and wrong dating. It is true that T'an did refer to Sinkiang in a parenthetical note appended to a funeral scroll "Mourning the Death of Liu Ch'in-t'ang" (Wan Liu Hsiang-ch'in kung 輓劉襄勤公), in *TSTCC*, p. 509. There T'an said that when Liu was the Governor of Sinkiang, both his brother and himself were repeatedly recommended by him. But this does not indicate that they made their acquaintance at Sinkiang, nor does it say that T'an worked under Liu as an officer. Indeed, whether or not T'an actually went to Sinkiang is still a puzzle. If he did, when did that take place? From T'an's "Autobiography Written at the Age of Thirty" (*TSTCC*, pp. 205-206), a source which is surely more reliable than Liang's biography of T'an, he did not mention Sinkiang in his itinerary. Liang's account, however, has prompted some biographers, notably Ch'en Nai-ch'ien 陳乃乾 (*Collected Works of T'an Ssu-t'ung (T'an Liu-yang ch'üan-chi* 《譚劉陽全集》), Shanghai: Wen-ming shu-tien, 1925, which is reprinted in Taipei Wen-hai ch'u-pan-she, 1962, p. 16) and Yang T'ing-fu (*op. cit.*, p. 45) to assert that T'an went to Sinkiang in 1884. But facts seem to go against such an assertion. Liu was appointed as the Governor of Sinkiang in late November of 1884. And according to T'an's autobiography, he left Lanchou in the spring of 1885 to return to Hunan for taking part in the provincial examinations. Since it took sometime for Liu to travel from Peking to Sinkiang, by the time he arrived there, T'an must have gone to Hunan. The chance of T'an serving under Liu in Sinkiang in 1884 is at best slim, if not at all impossible. Furthermore, it is unlikely that T'an would have preferred to work as a minor staff in Liu's camp in the remote Sinkiang instead of spending his time on preparation for the provincial examinations which he participated in for

the first time. Remaining totally open-minded on this question, I would suggest the period between the spring of 1886 and the summer of 1888 as the possible time during which T'an went to Sinkiang, that is, if he ever did. This period is left blank in T'an's autobiography. He may have regarded the Sinkiang experience as an exile from frustration following failure in examination and for that reason avoided mentioning it in his account.

<sup>3</sup>In T'an's autobiography, the provinces of Sinkiang, Chekiang and Taiwan were not mentioned. The case of Sinkiang has just been considered. As to T'an's visit to the provinces of Chekiang and Taiwan, no historian has ever attempted to demonstrate when he went there and thus whether or not he actually did. If T'an did go to Taiwan, possibly via Chekiang, it could have taken place in 1889 or early 1890 when his brother died there and someone was needed to get the remains back to Hunan. He indeed mentioned that he collected the remains and laid them in the plain of Ling-shui-ching 冷水井 in his biography of his elder brother (*TSTCC*, p. 204). But this task could have easily been done by T'ang Ching-sung 唐景崧, their relative in Taiwan. And it is not clear from the biography of his elder brother whether T'an collected his brother's remains from somebody or actually went to Taiwan himself for that purpose. Whichever was the case, it is unlikely that T'an should be so remiss as not to mention this in his autobiography. All things considered, it appears rather doubtful that T'an ever went to Taiwan, or for that matter to Chekiang, either. See also Huang Te-shih 黃得時, "T'an Ssu-t'ung and Formosa" (T'an Ssu-t'ung yü Tai-wan 譚嗣同與台灣), in *Chuan-chi wen-hsüeh* 傳記文學, Vol. 10, No. 5 (May 1956), pp. 72-75.

ing him.<sup>4</sup> As I [Liang] was at that time in the capital serving as a secretary for the society, I met T'an for the first time. When I told him of the basic tenets of K'ang's teaching and the latter's systematic ideas about statecraft, he was moved to great joy and proclaimed himself K'ang's disciple.<sup>5</sup> From then on, his knowledge advanced by leaps and bounds. At that time, the Treaty [of Shimonoseki] had just been agreed upon between China and Japan. The nation smarted under its ignominious defeat, and public morale was beginning to be aroused. T'an, for his part, was highly indignant over the agreement, and raised a loud outcry against it. Patriots everywhere, upon seeing his impressive mien and hearing his opinions, realized that he was a man quite out of the ordinary. In deference to his father's wishes, he entered officialdom as a Prefect Candidate, and waited a year in Nanking for posting. During this time, he immured himself in study and self-cultivation, delving into the profundities of the teachings of Confucius and the Buddha, and ranging wide over the thinking of the philosophers. He wrote a book entitled *Jen-hsueh (An Exposition of Benevolence)* in which he elaborated on the principles propounded by K'ang Yu-wei. He often went to Shanghai to discuss scholarly matters and current affairs with friends who shared his interests, but never consorted with the common run of government functionaries. He often said, "My year of official life was no different from a year spent as a recluse in a mountain."

At this time, Ch'en Pao-chen (1813-1900) was the Governor of Hunan, and, with the assistance of his son, San-li, he took as his own mission the opening up of Hunan to new ideas. In August 1897, Huang Tsun-hsien (1849-1905) was appointed Acting Judicial Commissioner for Hunan. In October Hsu Jen-chu (1863-1900) came

<sup>4</sup>According to the investigation of Chang Te-chun 張德鈞, Liang's account of T'an's inability to meet K'ang in Peking is untenable. Chang, quoting from Liang's *Collected Writings of the Ice-drinking Studio (Yin-ping-shih wen-chi 飲冰室文集)* and his "Reflections at the Age of Thirty" (San-shih tzu-shu 三十自述), notes that Liang came to know T'an through the introduction of Wu T'ieh-ch'iao 吳鐵樵 whom he only knew in 1896. According to Chang's examination, T'an in 1895 was in Hupei and Liuyang while concurrently K'ang was in Peking in the summer and autumn of the same year. If T'an had gone to Peking in the summer of that year, he could have met K'ang. So Liang must have, perhaps deliberately, made a wrong dating. See Chang Te-chun, "Clearing up the Inaccuracies in Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's Biography of T'an Ssu-t'ung" (Liang Ch'i-ch'ao chi T'an Ssu-t'ung shih shih-shih pien 梁啟超記譚嗣同事失實辨), *Wen-shih wen-shih*, Vol. 1 (1962), pp. 81-85. See also Huang Chang-chien 黃彰健, *Studies on the Reform Movement of 1898 (Wu-hsu pien-fa shih yen-chiu 戊戌變法史研究)*, (Taipei: Chung-yang yen-chiu-yuan li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu-so, 1970), pp. 346, 390.

<sup>5</sup>Chang Te-chun, in the article quoted above, proceeds to scrutinize T'an's attitude towards K'ang and the Society for the Study of National Strengthening and comes to the conclusion that it was not as simple nor as unequivocal as Liang represents it. Chang quotes a passage from "Letter to My Teacher Ou-yang

Chung-ku, No. 25" (Shang Ou-yang Pan-chiang shih shu, erh-shih-wu 上歐陽潘疆師書二十五) (*TSTCC*, pp. 334-335) in which T'an told his teacher that he had nothing to do with the Society at Shanghai and other branches; nor was he interested in or being invited to join it. If T'an was one of those who "pledged their support," there is no reason why he should remain aloof and said that "whether they (the Society and its branches) were open or closed originally did not concern me in the least." (*ibid.*) In fact, according to Chang's investigation, K'ang came to know T'an by name before the latter even heard of K'ang. This is revealed in "On Administration of Affairs" (Chih-shih pien 治事篇) of the *Collected Works from the Ch'iu-yü nien-hua Studio (Ch'iu-yü nien-hua chih kuan ts'ung-ts'ao shu 秋兩年華之館叢書)* (*Hu-nan li-shih tzu-liao 湖南歷史資料*, Vol. 1 (1960), p. 96.), where T'an said that he did not know K'ang's name until he saw it in the *Peking Gazette* where K'ang was mentioned. During the winter of 1895, Liu Shan-han 劉善涵 returned from Shanghai and handed him a book presented by K'ang to him. T'an went on to say that in the spring of 1896 he went to Shanghai with the purpose of seeing K'ang who, however, had already returned to Kwangtung. Later, he met Liang Ch'i-ch'ao who told him a full version of K'ang's ideas. From the above account, it is evident that T'an apparently did not meet Liang until 1896 and that at no time was he a slavish disciple of K'ang.

and took up the post of the Commissioner of Education. Certain members of the Hunanese gentry were aroused and determined to work for the advancement of their native place. Patriots gradually assembled in Hunan. Ch'en Pao-chen and his son, and the former Commissioner of Education Chiang Piao (1860-1899) therefore planned to assemble many outstanding men in Hunan and work towards making it the leading reform force among the provinces of China. A number of people, including myself, were invited to teach in the Academy of Current Affairs, while others were asked to come back and train troops. Urged by Ch'en Pao-chen, T'an immediately resigned his position as a Prefect Candidate and returned to Hunan. After settling his family in his native village in Liuyang, he stayed behind in Ch'angsha to devote himself, with other patriots, to the work of reform. Things introduced in Hunan—such as inland river steamers, private mining enterprise, the Hunan-kwangtung Railway, the Academy of Current Affairs, the Military School, the Defence Bureau, and the Reform Society of South China—were all proposed by him. The most successful among them was the Reform Society of South China. The Society was founded with the purpose of uniting likeminded people of the southern provinces, providing a forum for the discussion of patriotism, and finding out ways to save the country. We undertook to launch all these programs in Hunan province because here we already had the makings of both a study society and a provincial assembly. Toward the goal of an assembly, all provincial matters were first publicly resolved and then carried out; while the idea of a study society was embodied in weekly lectures before a large audience on international relations and political theories. At this time, T'an was in fact the head of studies and was responsible for the lectures. Those who came to the meetings to hear him numbered a thousand or more. None of them failed to be moved by his passionate analysis of world affairs. That the conservative atmosphere of the entire Hunan province was swept aside was due in no small measure to T'an's efforts.

IN THE FOURTH MONTH OF this year [June 1898], with the promulgation of the Reform Decree, T'an was summoned for an audience with the Emperor [Kuang-hsü] upon the recommendation of Hsu Chih-ching, a fellow of the Han-lin Academy. At that time, however, he was seriously ill and was unable to make the journey. It was not until the Seventh Month [August] that T'an, still not fully recovered, went to have an audience during which his views were found to be congenial with those of the Emperor. He was appointed a fourth-rank secretary in the Grand Council, and joined Yang Jui, Lin Hsu and Liu Kuang-ti as "Participants in the Reform". At that time, they were known as the "Four Secretaries of the Grand Council". "Participants in the Reform", like "Participants in State Affairs" in the T'ang and Sung dynasties, actually had the power of a prime minister. Intimidated by the Empress Dowager, the Emperor did not dare to place great responsibilities on Mr. K'ang as he had originally intended. For the past several months, when there was any need for consultation, the Emperor would make it known through the Tsungli Yamen; and when Mr. K'ang had recommendations, he could only write them down on the memorials presented to the Emperor. Only after the "Four Secretaries" joined the Grand Council was the exchange of ideas between the Emperor and Mr. K'ang facilitated. As a result, the Emperor became very determined to carry out far-reaching reforms. But this incurred even greater enmity

from the Empress Dowager and her evil ministers, which led to a *coup d'état* in less than ten days' time. When T'an first arrived at the capital, he dismissed it as incredible when told about the Emperor's lack of power in the face of obstructions from the Empress Dowager. On the 27th of the Seventh Month [September 13], the Emperor intended to reopen the Mou-ch'in Hall and appoint official advisors, and he asked T'an to prepare a draft decree. Prior to that, the Emperor commanded eunuchs to deliver to T'an the imperial instructions of the previous Ch'ing emperors, together with his message to the effect that precedents in the reigns of K'ang-hsi, Ch'ien-lung, and Hsien-feng for opening the Mou-ch'in Hall were to be found and cited in the draft. This would then be personally presented by the Emperor to the Empress Dowager at the Summer Palace the following day for her approval. When T'an retired from court, he told his friends that he now knew that the Emperor was truly powerless. On the 29th [September 15], the Emperor summoned Yang Jui and gave him a secret edict in which it was said, "My position is insecure, ask K'ang Yu-wei, the 'Four Secretaries' and other patriots to find quickly some means to save the situation." T'an and Mr. K'ang held the edict in their hands and wept bitter tears. But the Emperor had not a scrap of power, and there was nothing on which to base any plans.

Among all the generals at that time, Yuan shih-k'ai was the one who had served in Korea for a long time, who knew about China and foreign relations and who was also a champion of reform. T'an secretly sent a memorial to the Emperor, urging in emotional and pressing terms the winning of Yuan's support by granting him special favours, hoping that by so doing Yuan might render help in case of emergency. On the First of the Eighth Month [September 16], the Emperor summoned Yuan for an audience and specially granted him the position of a vice-minister. The next day, Yuan was again summoned. On the evening of the Third [September 18], T'an went straight to the Fa-hua Temple,<sup>6</sup> where Yuan lodged, and asked him bluntly, "What

<sup>6</sup>Two accounts of this meeting exist. This version by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao is the shortest and a recount of his recollections told to him by T'an after the visit. Another version is by Yuan Shih-k'ai himself. His version, entitled *Diary of the 1898 Coup d'état (Wu-hsü jih-chi 戊戌日記)*, was published in four instalments in the *Shen-pao* 申報 in 1926. This version is considerably more complicated and was written several years after the event. It is likely to be a faked diary. Analysis of the authorship of Yuan's diary and the reliability of its content has been carried out by Liu Feng-han 劉鳳翰, "A Critical Examination of Yuan Shih-k'ai's *Diary of the 1898 Coup d'état*," in his book *Yuan Shih-k'ai and the Coup d'état of 1898 (Yuan Shih-k'ai yü Wu-hsu pien-fa 袁世凱與戊戌變法)*, Taipei: Chuan-chi wen-hsüeh she, 1969), pp. 139-189. Liu gives an extremely detailed analysis of the authorship of Yuan's diary and fairly well substantiates that the diary was most likely written by Chang I-lin 張一麟. He further indicates that Chang probably wrote exactly what Yuan wanted him to write and that the diary was composed after extensive consultation with Yuan.

Apparently both accounts are highly suspect. They

are, however, the only documents available and still remain worthy of some consideration. Comparing them, one can find several points of similarities. First, it was T'an who initiated the idea of enlisting Yuan's help, and for that purpose, paid a nocturnal visit to Yuan on September 18, 1898. Second, it was also T'an who suggested to Yuan to use the latter's army to counterattack the planned conspiracy at the military review. Third, both accounts record that Yuan needed time to prepare himself for the military operations. Fourth, they both reveal the intentions of eliminating Jung Lu and neutralizing the influence of the Empress Dowager. Finally, both accounts reveal that the military review at Tientsin was to be the main field of operation in the scheme of things.

Discrepancies, however, exist clearly in the two accounts. Liang's version, for instance, does not mention the project of surrounding the Summer Palace while Yuan's version specifically mentions both killing Jung Lu and surrounding the Summer Palace. It is difficult to decide which account comes closest to the truth. Until more sources are made available, it is not opportune to make any conclusive remarks at this stage.

is your opinion of the Emperor?" Yuan replied, "He is, in my opinion, an unequalled sage-ruler." T'an then asked him, "Have you learnt anything about the plot in connection with Tientsin military review?" Yuan answered, "Yes, I have heard something about it." T'an then showed him the secret edict straightway and said, "Now you are the only person who can save our sage-ruler. If you intend to do so, go ahead." T'an then stroked his own neck and said, "If you don't, please go to the Summer Palace and inform on me and have me killed. By doing this, you will gain wealth and honour." Yuan, with an upright expression and raising his voice, said, "What kind of a person do you take me to be? The sage-ruler is the lord we all serve, and both you and I have received his special recognition. The task of saving him is not yours alone. If you have any suggestions, I would like to hear it." T'an then said, "Jung Lu's plot rests entirely on the military review in Tientsin. Your troops and those of Tung Fu-hsiang and Nieh Shih-ching are all controlled by Jung who intends to use this force to execute his plot. Tung and Nieh are negligible, you are the only strong man in the Empire today. If the rebellion is to take place, your one army can defeat the other two, and you will be able to protect the sage-ruler, restore his authority, purge the court of evil men and put the palace in order. It is within your power to bring all this about and accomplish a great deed for posterity." Yuan then said, "If the Emperor will hasten into my camp during the review and give the order to kill the cunning rebel Jung Lu, I will certainly follow you gentlemen and do my utmost to help." T'an then asked him, "Jung Lu has always treated you well. How are you going to deal with him?" Yuan smiled and did not say anything. A certain secretary in Yuan's entourage said,<sup>7</sup> "The villain Jung Lu does not treat our commander with all sincerity. Once someone suggested an expansion of our commander's forces, Jung Lu was heard to have said that the Chinese should not be given too much military power. What he has been doing all along is just playing tricks to appease the Chinese. The year before last, for instance, there was the matter of the impeachment of our commander by Hu Ching-kuei. Hu was Jung Lu's man. Jung made use of the chance to bestow a favour upon our commander by personally taking on the investigation of the case and acquitting him of all charges. Shortly afterwards, Hu was appointed to the post of the magistrate of the Ninghsia Prefecture in Kansu, and was soon promoted to the position of *tao-t'ai*. This shows how treacherous and clever Jung Lu is in his machinations. How can our commander be unaware of it?" After hearing this, T'an asked Yuan, "Jung Lu, with the talents of Ts'ao Ts'ao and Wang Mang, is a genius in his own right. I am afraid he will not be easy to deal with." Yuan eyed T'an indignantly and said, "If the Emperor will come to my camp and give the order, I shall kill Jung Lu like a dog." They then discussed in detail ways and means of saving the Emperor. In the end, Yuan said, "All munitions at camp are now in the hands of the rebel Jung Lu, while the patrol officers are mostly his former subordinates. There is no time to lose in this matter! As our plans have been settled, I have to go back immediately to my headquarters, select replacements and try to store up the necessary munitions." After repeated

<sup>7</sup>Yuan's diary records that nobody was in the room when Yuan and T'an conversed. Liu Feng-han maintains that if there were somebody there, he must have been Hsu Shih-chang 徐世昌. But according to

Liu, nobody other than Yuan and T'an could have been present during the meeting as Yuan was of very suspicious character. See Liu Feng-han, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-158.

exhortations, T'an left at the third night-watch of the same day.

On the Fifth [September 20], Yuan was again summoned to audience with the Emperor, and it is believed that he, too, was given a secret edict. The next day, the *coup d'état* took place. At that time I was just paying a visit to T'an at his house, we sat opposite to each other on a couch and were about to draw up our plans to save the Emperor. In the midst of this, reports of the seizure of K'ang Yu-wei's residence reached us out of the blue, and shortly after we learned of the edict declaring Empress Dowager's resumption of reign. T'an calmly said to me, "I wished to save the Emperor and had no way of doing so; now I wish to save K'ang Yu-wei and again have no way of doing so. There is nothing for me to do except to await death. Nevertheless, in this world there are things we have to attempt even though we know there is no hope of success. You try to go to see Mr. Ito Hirohumi at the Japanese Embassy. T'an stayed in for the whole day waiting to be arrested, but no one came. The next day he came to the Japanese Embassy to see me, urging me to take refuge in Japan and entrusting me with some of his written works, which included several manuscript volumes of poems and essays, and a trunkful of family letters. He said, "Unless there are some who will flee, there will be no one to work for the future; unless there are some who will stay to die, there is no way to repay the sage-ruler.<sup>8</sup> Now, as K'ang's life is hung in the balance, you and I therefore will have to share the tasks as did Ch'eng Ying and Kung-sun Ch'u-chiu, Gesso Tsukiteru and Saigo Takamori."<sup>9</sup> We then gave each other a hug and parted. For the next three days [September 22, 23, and 24], T'an again planned with patriotic swordsmen to rescue

<sup>8</sup>Liang's statement, "Unless there are some who will flee, there will be no one to work for the future; unless there are some who will stay to die, there would be no way to repay the sage-ruler," is apparently not in keeping with T'an's political thinking as elucidated in *An Exposition of Benevolence*. Interpretations thus vary. Chien Mu, in his article "A Critical Account of the Thought of K'ang Yu-wei" (K'ang Yu-wei hsüeh-shu shü-ping 康有為學術述評), in *Tsing-hua hsüeh-pao* 清華學報, Vol. 2, No. 3 (July 1936), pp. 583-656, maintains that T'an did not die for the emperor because it simply did not conform to his character. While Hsiao Kung-chuan 蕭公權 in his *A History of Chinese Political Thought (Chung-kuo cheng-chih ssu-hsiang shih* 中國政治思想史 Taipei: Chung-hua wen-hua ch'u-pan shih-yeh wei-yüan-hui, 1954, Vol. 11, pp. 354, 362) points out that T'an did die for the emperor and this should be seen as the most grievous tragedy of the event. Professor Wang Teh-chao provides another interpretation. In his article, "T'an Ssu-t'ung and the Political Movement of the Late Ch'ing Period," (in Lawrence G. Thompson, ed., *Studia Asiatica*, San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, Inc., 1975, p. 142), he writes, "Of Liang's account, the first part could be an overstatement intended to give a noble reason and great importance to his, and also K'ang Yu-wei's, flight from danger when the *coup d'état* took place. But the remaining part is in accord with T'an Ssu-t'ung's known

character and his ideological preparedness expressed in his earlier writings." Professor Wang's view is reasonably sound and should have clinched the argument. In addition, one should be aware of the fact that Liang, being a member of the Society for Protecting the Emperor Kuang-hsu (Pao-huang hui 保皇會) in Japan, was inclined to depict T'an as a 'sage' or an 'idol' of the Society so as to draw the support of the loyalists. Moreover, it is necessary to take into account T'an's fervent interest in Buddhism after 1896. Thus one of the main considerations seems to be that T'an, deeply convinced of the Buddhist concept of fearlessness engendered by the notions of "without birth and death" and "reincarnation," died as a martyr with his deep commitment to the cause of reform and his love for China. His martyrdom was also partly due to his idealistic character and partly to his determination to arouse his countrymen's sense of national consciousness.

<sup>9</sup>Gessho Tsukiteru 月照 and Saigo Takamori 西郷隆盛 were both friends and Japanese nationalists of the nineteenth century. Gessho was a monk of the Shimitzu Monastery 清水寺 at Kyoto. He advocated honouring the emperor and repelling the barbarians and was thus pursued by Bokfu 幕府. He at last committed suicide in 1859. Saigo Takamori was a close friend of Gessho.

the Emperor, but in vain. And on the Tenth [September 25], he was arrested. The day before his arrest several Japanese friends urged him to take refuge in Japan, but he would not consent to it. When they repeatedly urged him, T'an said, "In all nations, no reform has ever been achieved without bloodshed. Today in China no one is yet known to have shed blood for the cause of reform and that is why this nation does not prosper. Let it begin with me!" He did not leave, and then disaster struck. When T'an was in jail, he wrote a poem on the wall of the cell which runs:<sup>10</sup>

*Seeking a night's lodging from door to door  
reminds me of Chang Chien;  
Comparing myself to Tu Ken, I bear the pain of  
impending death for yet a while.  
With the sword across my throat,  
I look up to heaven and laugh;  
Going or staying, courageous both the K'un-lun  
friends.<sup>11</sup>*

This poem expressed his regard for K'ang Yu-wei. T'an was beheaded at the Ts'ai-shih-k'ou on the Thirteenth of the Eighth Month [September 28, 1898], aged thirty-three. On the day of his martyrdom, spectators amounted to ten thousand. T'an was dauntless, and there was not the least change in his demeanour. The Grand Councillor Kang I was supervisor of the execution. T'an shouted to him to come near, saying: "I would like to have a word with you." Kang turned away and would not listen. Thereupon, T'an met his death with serene composure. Alas, how

<sup>10</sup> A serious challenge to the authenticity of this poem attributed to T'an Ssu-t'ung as transmitted by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao is posed by Huang Chang-chien in his *Studies on the Reform Movement of 1898*. This, of course, is by no means the first attack on Liang's historicity. Huang attempts first to establish that T'an did not, in fact, give vent to his emotions in verse, either before his arrest, or while in prison. He next suggests that Liang had sound political motives for altering T'an's poem in conformity with the strategy of agitation on behalf of saving the emperor. Finally, he argues that the meaning of the second version more nearly corresponds to T'an's thinking and historical role. The second version suggested by Huang is:

望門投止憐張儉  
直諫陳書愧杜根  
手擲歐刀仰天笑  
留將公罪後人論

These lines appeared in a historical novel published in 1911 entitled *Hsiu-hsiang K'ang Liang yen-i* 繡像康梁演義 and said to have been pronounced by Lin Hsu just prior to the arrest of the reformers. Lo Lung-chih 羅龍治 in his article "Wang Wu and T'an Ssu-t'ung" (Wang Wu yü T'an Ssu-t'ung 王五與譚嗣同),

*Chung-yang jih-po* 中央日報, 1st December 1971) suspects the reliability of the novel and refutes Huang's idea that T'an's poem was forged by Liang. Huang replied in the same newspaper on 7th December, maintaining the validity of his argument.

<sup>11</sup> The allusion of "liang K'un-lun" has been the subject of much speculation and debate. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao believes that "the so-called 'liang K'un-lun' refer to, one, K'ang Yu-wei and, the other, the knight-errant Great Sword Wang the Fifth." (*Collected Writings from the Ice-drinking Studio*, Vol. 16, p. 12.) T'ao Chü-yin 陶菊隱, on the other hand, thinks that they refer to Hu Chih-ching 胡致靖 and Wang Wu. T'an Hsün-ts'ung 譚訓聰, T'an Ssu-t'ung's step-grandson, however, holds that they allude to T'an's two servants Hu Li-chen 胡理臣 and Lo Sheng 羅升. Lastly, Lo Lung-chih 羅龍治 finds that there is some kind of connexion between "liang K'un-lun" and a story by Pei Hsing 裴絳 of the T'ang dynasty, entitled "K'un-lun nu" 崑崙奴 in which an escape was effected despite great difficulties. It was made possible with the aid of a courageous and able slave. See Lo Lung-chih, "Wang Wu and T'an Ssu-t'ung," *Chung-yang jih-pao*, 1st December 1971.



heroic!<sup>12</sup>

T'AN WAS GIFTED far above the average. He delved into every aspect of learning and took daily renewal as his guiding principle; he was therefore unconfined and was always prepared to give up his own views in favour of those of others. As a result, he was constantly making progress in his knowledge. Whenever we would meet after a lapse of ten days, his ideas and scholarship would have advanced. In his youth, he did work in textual research and commentaries of the classics, bronze and stone tablet inscriptions, poetry, and ancient linguistics, and was also interested in the military strategies of ancient China. After the age of thirty, he relinquished all these and concentrated on the study of Western astronomy, mathematics, science, politics, and history, attaining insight into each of the subjects. He also made searching studies in religion; when we first met, he was a great admirer of the teaching of universal love by Jesus Christ, and displayed no knowledge of the teachings of the Buddha and Confucius. But he was immediately won over upon hearing Mr. K'ang's new interpretations of the *Book of Changes* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, his thorough mastery of the principles of the Great Unity and the Great Peace, and of the subtleties in the ruling of Heaven by the Ultimate Source of the first hexagram *ch'ien*. And when he learned of the ubiquity of thusness from the *Garland Sutra*, it began to dawn on him that the worlds are infinite, and the Buddha's manifestations are infinite, that there are neither others nor the self, neither going nor staying, neither defilement nor nondefilement, and that apart from saving others, nothing else makes sense. He was even more captivated when he learned of the doctrine of the waves of consciousness of the Wei-shih School, which made him realize that as the natural capacities of the sentient beings are widely different, the methods of preaching Buddhism should also vary accordingly; that there are all sorts of distinctions; and that thusness is unobstructive. As a result, he was thoroughly enlightened and was able to unite All into One and derive One from All. Free from any shackles and hindrances, he became more and more courageous in assuming responsibility for action. During the year he served as a Prefect Candidate in Nanking, he devoted all his time to the study of the writings of Confucius and the Buddha. There was a Buddhist layman in Nanking by the name of Yang Wen-hui

<sup>12</sup>A slightly different version is given by Timothy Richard who writes in his recollections, *Forty-five Years in China* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1916), p. 2:

Other Reformers fled to Japan, Macao, and America, but some did not attempt to escape. On September twenty-eighth, six of them were summarily executed without trial. The most notable of these was T'an Ssu-t'ung, a promising official of about thirty-three years of age. A native of Hunan, and son of a former Governor of Hupei, he had been recommended by several officials and given a position as one of the under-secretaries of the Grand Council. He was

instrumental with K'ang Yu-wei in drawing up of the Emperor's famous edicts. . . . As they were being led to the execution ground, Lin Shio asked for permission to say a few words, but it was refused. T'an Ssu-t'ung, however, boldly spoke out, ignoring permission, that he had heard how many Reformers in other lands had die for their country's good. "I am willing to shed my blood, if thereby my country may be saved." "But," he cried to the judges, "for every one that perishes today a thousand will rise up to carry on the work of Reform, and uphold loyalty against usurpation." Thus died the martyrs of Reform.

瀏陽譚壯飛先生著

仁學

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THE TITLE PAGE of the Jen-hsüeh, T'an Ssu-t'ung's major work, published in 1901 by the Kuo-min pao 國民報 in Japan.

who was widely versed in Buddhist texts and history. He regarded popularizing Buddhist literature as his task. T'an spent much time with him and was thus able to delve into all Buddhist books, acquiring a better understanding with the passage of time. The gist of his thinking is revealed in his book *An Exposition of Benevolence*, and expounded here and there in the letters he wrote to friends in which scholarly matters are discussed. Besides *An Exposition of Benevolence*, his other works include two volumes of *Essays from the Liao-tien-i-ko Studio*, two volumes of *Poems from the Mang-ts'ang-ts'ang Studio*, one volume of *A Supplement to [My Elder Brother's] Collected Works of the Yüan-i Studio*, one volume of *Reading Notes*, one volume of *A Proposal to Promote the Study of Mathematics*, one volume of the already published *A Letter from the Sze-wei-i-yün Studio*, ten chapters of *On the Administration of Affairs from the Chuang-fei Chamber*, four volumes of *Essays from the Ch'iu-yü nien-hua Studio*, an essay on "Redundancies in the *Book of Swordplay*," and one volume of *A Collection of Seal Imprints*. All these and a copy of *An Exposition of Benevolence* were entrusted in my care. There were also dozens of political essays which appeared in the *Hunan Daily* and other dozens of letters discussing scholarly matters and world affairs with his teachers and friends. I worked

with T'an's close friend X X X and others in the compilation of the *Posthumous Works of T'an Ssu-t'ung* in several volumes. As for *An Exposition of Benevolence*, I chose its more comprehensible parts for publication in the journal *Ch'ing-i pao* (*China Discussion*) so as to make it known to the world. T'an did not take to any particular vices in his life. He held himself with dignity and always wore an air of austerity. He left no children and his wife Li Jun (daughter of Li Shou-jung of Ch'angsha) was one of the founding directors of the Chinese Women Study Society.

TO CONCLUDE, we can say that T'an's life and deeds were so open and so illustriously heroic that they are universally known and need no comment. I shall, therefore, confine my discussion to his scholarship. Ever since the T'ang and Sung dynasties, those petty rote-learning scholars, following a narrowly restrictive point of view, have been slandering the Buddha and his teachings. They are certainly not worth mentioning. On the other hand, Buddhism in China is in its period of decline, and for several hundred years, Buddhists indulge in Hinayana teachings and believe in erroneous notions. The wisdom of great bodhisattvas is rarely heard of. They believe that Buddhism is concerned only with freedom from defilement and with inactivity. Little do they realize that, on the contrary, the Mahayana Buddhism demands the cultivation of both compassion and wisdom, and this fits in perfectly with Confucius' teaching which combines benevolence with wisdom. Only with wisdom can one realize that this world is simply the same as the other world: apart from this, there is no pureland. Also, others and the self are the same and there is no such thing as the sentient beings. Since there is no pureland lying beyond this world, and no self other than sentient beings, therefore the only path to follow is to sacrifice ourselves for the salvation of the sentient beings. The Buddha said, "If I do not enter Hell, who will?" Confucius said, "If I am not one of these people, who am I?" [sic] "In a world where order prevails, I will not change places with them." Thus to be wise is to be benevolent. If there is a will to save the sentient beings, then there is surely a way to do so. That is why Confucius worked on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to formulate his system of Great Unity and Small Peace, and all his efforts were for the sake of the world and the sentient beings. Apart from this great undertaking there is nothing else worth doing. This indeed is the way of the bodhisattva as described in the *Garland Sutra*, namely, the vow not to attain Buddhahood until everyone has attained it. In the context of the Three Ages as expounded in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, whether it is to save the sentient beings of the past, or of the present, or of the future, the methods seem different but are in fact the same. Similarly, whether it is to save the sentient beings of this land, or of the other land, the methods seem different but are in fact the same. And whether it is to save the sentient beings of the entire world, or of one country, or of one single person, the methods seem different but are in fact the same. This is the mere-consciousness doctrine as taught in the Wei-shih School. Since the natural capacities of individual beings are not the same, the methods of teaching them would have to be different; nevertheless, what is taught remains the same. Since there is no pureland and no self, there would not be any clinging, any hindrance, or any fear. For once the pureland and the self are no longer coveted, what gains and losses, praise and blame, admiration and derision, joy and sorrow are there that can

affect the mind? Thus Confucius spoke of the absence of anxiety, perplexity and fear, and the Buddha talked of great fearlessness, because benevolence, wisdom and courage are all the same. Thoroughly grasping this principle, one can feel completely free and at ease wherever one is: one can go beyond the realm of life and death; one is capable of benevolence and of saving all sentient beings.

(For Chinese text see pages 198-200)

*This biography of T'an Ssu-t'ung first appeared in the China Discussion (Ch'ing-i pao 清議報, reproduced in facsimile in Taipei: Ch'eng-wen ch'u-pan-she, 1967), Vol. 4 (22nd January 1899), pp. 4-7, as the fifth chapter of An Account of the Coup d'état of 1898 戊戌政變記. The Account, when published in book form, went through three different versions. The earliest one was published in lead plate in Japan, bearing, however, no date of publication and publisher. It probably came out sometime after April 1899, but it is rarely seen today. The second version appeared in Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's Complete Works from the Ice-drinking Studio 飲冰室全集 (Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1916), Vol. 32, pp. 12a-16a. As far as the text of the biography is concerned, all subsequent printings from the same publisher remain the same. The third version was published by Yu-fang t'u-shu kung-ssu 友方圖書公司 in Hong Kong in 1958. It was reprinted as Vol. 92 of the Collected Historical Materials on Modern China 近代中國史料叢刊, edited by Shen Yün-lung 沈雲龍 and published by Taipei Wen-hai ch'u-pan-she 台北文海出版社 in 1967. According to Liu Feng-han 劉鳳翰, "Examining the Textual Differences of the Various Versions of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's An Account of the Coup d'état of 1898" 梁啟超戊戌政變記考異, an article collected in the author's book Yuan Shih-k'ai and the Coup d'état of 1898 袁世凱與戊戌政變 (Taipei: Chuan-chi wen-hsüeh she, 1969), pp. 1-57, the text of the three versions is different from one another and that changes amounting to distortion of facts are often found.*

*When we collate the text of the China Discussion with that of the Complete Works of T'an Ssu-t'ung 譚嗣同全集 (Peking: San-lien shu-tien, 1954, hereafter abbreviated as TSTCC), we indeed find that they differ in many places in punctuation, wording, and the division of paragraphs; and substantively in three places, as noted below. This translation is based on TSTCC (pp. 521-526) because of its wide circulation and evidence of careful editing.*

## TSTCC

p. 523, line 3:

皇上之真無權矣，二十九日皇上召見楊銳

p. 524, lines 5-6:

至初五日袁復召見，聞亦奉有密詔云，至初六日

p. 524, line 13:

日本志士數輩勸君東遊

## China Discussion

p. 5a, lines 20-11:

皇上真無權矣。至廿八日，京朝人人咸知懋勤殿之事，以爲今日諭旨將下，而卒不下，於是益知后與帝之不相容矣。二十九日……。

p. 6a, line 6:

至初五日，袁復召見，至初六日。

p. 6b, lines 1-2:

日本志士數輩，苦勸君東遊。