

翠踏光韜



Treading the Emerald Shade to Hidden Light Hermitage

Hidden Light Hermitage is at the foot of the Northern Peak. It is built against a steep precipice, and seems to float in mid-air. Behind the hermitage there is a cave and by the side of the cave a two-storeyed building looking down to where the Ch'ien-t'ang River joins the sea. A famous couplet by the poet of the Early T'ang, Sung Chih-wen 宋之問, runs:

The tower beholds the sun on the sea,
The door faces the tide on the river.

From this comes one of the names of the building: "Sea Prospect." The path through the bamboos is equal to that at Cloud Nest Temple.

Once I went on a pleasure trip to the No-Whence Peak⁸³ with my maternal uncle Chieh-chih, my cousin Tzu-shang, and my two younger brothers Chung-wen and Chi-su. We rested at the Pavilion of the Cold Spring, went through the Hall of the Arhats of the Ling-yin Temple, and then turned west to proceed along a serpentine path, that wound its way through thick luxuriant bamboo groves. We walked in emerald shade and never saw the sun nor any ray of sunlight, but just turned and turned and climbed higher and higher without ever being able to see a way out ahead of us. As we progressed we saw large bamboo pipes made and installed by the monks to conduct water from the springs and streams all along this winding route to their various abodes. The gentle gurgling of the water was as pleasing to the ears as music played on the lute. Climbing thus for about three or four *li* we reached the hermitage with its windows facing the hills and its door looking onto the ghyll;⁸⁴ it was a place absolutely bright and clean without spot. Whenever I recollected this scene afterwards I felt a yearning to leave this dusty world.

Hidden Light⁸⁵ was a monk from Szechwan who came here to build his hermitage in the Ch'ang-ch'ing Reign of the T'ang dynasty [821–4]. He was a friend of the monk Bird's Nest⁸⁶ and the acolyte Cloth Hair.⁸⁷ The poet Po Chü-i was Governor of this region at the time and once ordered the preparation of a dinner and summoned Hidden Light with a specially composed poem, which read:

The fragrant rice is cooking in my white thatched cot,
No pungent⁸⁸ taste or rancid smell within my door.
Filtered spring water to cleanse the bean-powder,⁸⁹
Washed hands to dress the wistaria flowers;
Dark green mustard shorn of its yellowing leaves,
Red ginger with its purple shoots intact;
I beg the Master to partake of my fare,
And to enjoy a flagon of tea after the Attic⁹⁰ repast.

The monk replied in similar vein:

⁸³ (YTH) Literally, the 'peak that flew here from nowhere'.

⁸⁴ (Ed) The translator first wrote "ravine," then substituted "ghyll," a fanciful spelling for 'gill', no doubt taken from Wordsworth, who used it in his verse and also in a guidebook to the Lake District. Professor Yang was fond of quoting Wordsworth, and continued to enjoy rambling in the hills well into his eighties.

⁸⁵ (Ed) T'ao-kuang 韶光, literally 'light in a scabbard'. From a poem by K'ung Jung 孔融 (153–208).

⁸⁶ A monk from Ch'in-wang Hill, also called Tao-lin 道林

⁸⁷ A monk from the Chao-hsien Temple, also called Hui-t'ung 慧通.

⁸⁸ (YTH) *Hun* 葷 in Classical Chinese meant vegetable tasting like onion, leek, garlic, pepper etc., never animal flesh: the latter was a subsequent misconception of the word. Its morphology (the 'grass' radical) indicates its true meaning.

⁸⁹ (YTH) The scientific name of this plant is *pueraria thunbergiana*. The root is made into an arrowroot-like preparation.

⁹⁰ (Ed) Professor Yang's choice of word perfectly conjures up the simple elegance implied by Po Chü-i's *chai* 齋.

⁹¹ (YTH) Figurative expression for VIPs.

⁹² (YTH) The Golden Lotus is an important item in Buddhist lore. (1) It refers to the seat, or 'lotus-throne', of Buddha. (2) At the dying moment of an ascetic devotee, Amitābha will come to welcome him with this flower.

⁹³ (Ed) For the Ch'ien-t'ang Bore, see A. C. Moule, "The bore on the Ch'ien-t'ang river in China," *T'oung Pao* 22 (1923), pp.135-86.

⁹⁴ (YTH) Where the river flows into the sea. (Ed) Moule, "Bore," p.146, quotes a thirteenth-century text as saying that the Sea Gate was formed by the two hills K'an and Che facing one another.

⁹⁵ (Ed) "At every mid-autumn full moon when the fury of the tide is specially great, the people of Hangchow swim in the water with flags in their hands to meet Tzu-hsu. This is the origin of the performance called 'sporting the tide'." Moule, "Bore," p.153, quoting the same source. For these "acts of bravado," see also Jacques Gernet, *Daily life in China* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), pp.195-6. Gernet comments (n.35): "It looks suspiciously as if these vainglorious acts contained an echo of ancient religious rites."

⁹⁶ (YTH) An early Han dynasty literary figure. (Ed) See John Scott's *Love and protest* (London: Rapp & Whiting, 1972), pp.36-48, for a spirited translation. See also *Mao Tse-tung ssu-bsiangwan-sui*, reprinted. (Tokyo, 1974), pp.310-12, for a more recent reference to this Rhapsody.

⁹⁷ (YTH) Our author seems to have confused Hangchow with Yangchow. In Chinese tradition Hangchow has never been called Kuang-ling, which has always referred to Yangchow. Lest the Gentle Reader may suppose that the translator is being too harsh on, or even antagonistic towards, the Author, the translator should point out that this thorny question has involved many renowned scholars through the ages; the gist of the irrefutable truth is as I have stated it, but if any reader should be interested in this debatable question, he is requested to consult the summaries given on pp.494 and 648 of the *Tz'u Hai* (one volume edition, Hong Kong, 1947).

The mountain monk loves forest and spring—
wild his nature;
Forever sleeps against the ravine,
pillowed on a stone.
Knows not how to plant pines
or receive jade bridles,⁹¹
Can only guide water to a pond
to plant the golden lotus.⁹²
The white clouds may drift
to the blue slopes of the hills,
But the brilliant moon is loth
to descend from the azure sky.
I will not fly with my tin staff
to city and mart;
Lest my presence hinder the lark
from warbling before the emerald tower.

One can imagine the lofty refinement and elegance of the man! To this day the hermitage enjoys his name (and fame).

Watching the Ch'ien-t'ang Bore

At Ch'ien-t'ang, legend has it that the eighteenth day of the eighth month is the birthday of the God of the Bore, the Marquis of Chiang 蔣, and for this reason the Bore is particularly high at this time.⁹³ In the autumn of the year *ping-yin* [1806], when my illness was partially cured, I went with my maternal uncle Chieh-shih to the Palace of the Autumnal Waves, to wait for the Bore. Arriving there, we saw in the far distance, at the Sea Gate,⁹⁴ a long white ray of light. Then the wind began to roar and the water "stood up." The braver souls went punting out⁹⁵ and beat the surf with their poles, then swung their craft round to ride the crest of the Bore, down to the west, arriving instantly at Fu-ch'un; here they turned back again to the middle of the Sea Gate, where another wall of water rose up and went surging to the front of the Temple to the Marquis Chiang, the two colliding with a thun-dering crash, the flying spume filling the upper air and the earth seeming to shake. In the whole Empire there is no sight to rival the wonder of this!

All rivers meet the sea, but the mouth of the Che River is unique: it is formed like the character *chib* 之, bending three times; and where the outward-flowing river meets the incoming tide stand two hills, the K'an 龕 and the Che 楮, which constrain the free movement of the tide; the tide being constrained, the water struggles with the hills and produces mighty waves. Mei Sheng 枚乘⁹⁶ in his "Seven Exhortations to Rise" 七發 writes that "in order to witness the wonder of the Tidal Bore one must go to the river with the twisting mouth at Kuang-ling."⁹⁷

Nowadays, people who have been to Chekiang say that the Bore is not