

Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women

ANTIQUITY THROUGH SUI
1600 B.C.E.-618 C.E.

Editors-in-Chief
Lily Xiao Hong Lee
and A. D. Stefanowska

Assistant Editor-in-Chief
Sue Wiles



AN EAST GATE BOOK

M.E. Sharpe
Armonk, New York
London, England



An East Gate Book

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Biographical dictionary of Chinese women / Lily Xiao Hong Lee and A.D. Stefanowska, editors
p. cm.

“An east gate book.”

Includes bibliographical references (p.).

The Qing Period: ISBN: 0-7656-0043-9

The Twentieth Century: ISBN: 0-7656-0798-0

Antiquity Through Sui, 1600 B.C.E.–618 C.E.: ISBN: 978-0-7656-1750-7

1. Women—China—Biography—Dictionaries. 2. China—Biography—Dictionaries.
I. Lee, Lily Xiao Hong. II. Stefanowska, A.D.

HQ1767.5.A3B56 1998
305.4’092’251—dc21

98-11262

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z 39.48-1984.



BM (c) 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Contributors

AU Chi Kin, Hong Kong Community College, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

AU YEUNG Ka Yi, Department of History, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

BAO Shanben, Nanjing, Jiangsu, PRC

CHAN Yuk Ping, Department of Chinese Studies, University of Sydney, Australia

CHAN, Hui Ying Sarah, Department of History, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

CHANG Sun Kang-i, Department of East Asian Languages and Literature, Yale University, USA

CHILDS-JOHNSON, Elizabeth, Old Dominion University, Departments of Art History and Asian Studies, Diehn Fine and Performing Arts Center, USA

CHING-CHUNG, Priscilla, Department of History, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

COOK, Constance A., Department of Modern Languages and Literature, Lehigh University, USA

DE CRESPIGNY, Rafe, Faculty of Arts, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

EDWARDS, Louise, Institute for International Studies, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

FARMER, J. Michael, Department of History, Brigham Young University, USA

HE Tiancheng, Sichuan University, Chengdu, PRC

HENDRISCHKE, Barbara, Sydney, Australia

JAY, Jennifer W., Department of History and Classics, University of Alberta, Canada

KUCERA, Karil, Departments of Asian Studies and Art and Art History, St. Olaf College, USA

xiv CONTRIBUTORS

LAI Ming Chiu, Department of History, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

LAU Lai Ming, Department of History, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

LEE, Lily Xiao Hong, Department of Chinese Studies, University of Sydney, Australia

LI Yu-ning, Institute of Asian Studies, St. John's University, New York, USA

LONG, Laura, Wollongong, Australia

MU Meichun, College of Art, Nanjing Normal University, PRC

NG Kwok Leung, Department of History, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

NISHIMURA Fumiko, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mie University, Japan

SHEN Jian, Department of Chinese, Dongnan University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, PRC

SHEN Lidong, Center for Educational Information, Nanjing Agricultural University, PRC

SU Zhecong, Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Wuhan University, PRC

SUN Kuo Tung, New Asia College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

TAI Po Ying, Department of History, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

TAO, Chia-lin Pao, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Arizona, USA

TSAI, Kathryn A., San Jose, USA

WANG Bugao, Dongnan University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, PRC

WANG Lihua, Jiangsu Art & Literature Publishing House, PRC

WANG Shu-hwai, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taiwan

WANG Xiaowen, Dean's Office, Jiangsu Lianyungang Economic School for Cadres, PRC

WILES, Sue, Department of Chinese Studies, University of Sydney, Australia

WONG Shiu-hin, Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Hong Kong Shue Yan College, Hong Kong

WONG Yin Lee, Department of History, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

WU Jin, Nanjing Normal University, Jiangsu, PRC

The late WU Tiaogong, College of Art, Nanjing Normal University, PRC

XIA Chunhao, Department of Language & Literature, Huai Hai Institute of Technology, PRC

YANG Haiming, Faculty of Arts, Suzhou University, PRC

YAO Weidou, China Women Publishing House, Beijing, PRC

YEH Chia-ying, Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia, Canada

YIM Chi Hung, Institute of Chinese Literature & Philosophy, Academia Sinica, Nankang, Taiwan

ZANG Jian, Center for the Study of Ancient Chinese History, Peking University, PRC

ZHANG Qi, Sichuan University, Chengdu, PRC

ZHENG Bijun, Department of History/Center for Women's Studies, Peking University, PRC

ZHU Xiaofeng, Beijing, PRC

Translators

CHE Wai-lam, William, Department of English Language and Literature, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

HE Tiancheng, Sichuan University, Chengdu, PRC

LEE, Lily Xiao Hong, Department of Chinese Studies, University of Sydney, Australia

LU Huici, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Arizona, USA

SHEN Jian, Department of Chinese, Dongnan University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, PRC

TAM Chui Han, June, Freelance Translator

WILES, Sue, Department of Chinese Studies, University of Sydney, Australia

WONG Tse Sheung, Freelance Translator

A

The Abiding Wet Nurse of Wei

The Abiding Wet Nurse (Wei Jie Rumu) for the children of King Xia of Wei (Wei Wang Xia; one source gives his name as King Jia), fl. 661 B.C.E., was killed while protecting the last royal son of the state of Wei (in present-day Shanxi Province) after invaders from the state of Qin (present-day Shaanxi Province) had put the king and his other sons to death. Rather than accept a large monetary reward, she risked the punitive extermination of her own family to flee with the remaining prince. A turncoat Wei minister revealed her hiding place to the Qin, and although she covered the child with her own body in an attempt to protect him they were both killed, at least a dozen arrows piercing her body. Impressed with her loyalty and maternal instincts, the Qin king rewarded her brother with money and gave her a lavish burial. It was said that her kindness came from a good conscience, while she herself is quoted as saying that “all who nourish men’s children have a duty to keep them alive and not to kill them” (O’Hara, 145). Her biography is included in “Biographies of the Chaste and Righteous” in *Biographies of Eminent Women* (Lienü zhuan).

Constance A. COOK

Liu Xiang. *Lienü zhuan*. Sibubeiyao ed., 5.8a–9a.
O’Hara, Albert R. *The Position of Woman in Early China According to the Lieh Nü Chuan*, “*The Biographies of Chinese Women*.” Taipei: Mei Ya, 1971; 1978, 144–47.

Accomplished Woman of the Jiang Clan: see Wen Jiang, Wife of Duke Huan of Lu

Ah-liao: see Yue Woman

Ai Chiang of Duke Chuang of Lu: see Ai Jiang, Wife of Duke Zhuang of Lu

Ai Jiang, Wife of Duke Zhuang of Lu

Ai Jiang, or Mournful Woman of the Jiang Clan, d. 659 B.C.E., was a daughter of the royal house of Qi (in the north of present-day Shandong Province); she was also known as Furen Jiang Shi and as Minor Ruler (*xiao jun*). In 670, she was married to Duke Zhuang (Zhuang Gong, r. 692–661 B.C.E.), the ruler of Lu (in present-day Shandong Province) and son of Wen Jiang (*q.v.*). The marriage arrangements and exchange of gifts had begun three years earlier, the year of Wen Jiang’s death, and one source says Ai Jiang frequently had “illicit relations” with her future husband before she went to Lu. Ai Jiang had no children, but her younger sister, Shu Jiang, who had accompanied her when she went as a bride to Duke Zhuang, had a son named Kai whom Ai Jiang wished to appoint heir apparent. Ai Jiang was forced to flee, however, when her sexual liaison with her brother-in-law, Qingfu, was dis-

covered. Qingfu nevertheless fulfilled Ai Jiang's plan by killing the original heir apparent, which allowed her nephew, Kai, to inherit the title of Duke; he became known as Duke Min. Ai Jiang is said to have continued her affair with Qingfu, who was plotting with her to kill her nephew Duke Min and to usurp his position. When their plot was revealed they fled, Ai Jiang to Zhu and Qingfu to Qu. Duke Huan of Qi (Ai Jiang's home state) intervened at this point, installing Duke Xi as the ruler of Lu, and in 659 the men of Qi caught Ai Jiang, killed her, and took her body back to Qi. However, at the request of Duke Xi her body was returned to Lu, where it was buried. In 652, her ancestral tablet was placed in the Grand Temple during the *di* sacrifice, an act that later commentators claimed was improper due to the circumstances of her death and burial. The author of the *Zuo zhuan* commented that Qi had been "too severe" in killing Ai Jiang because she should have been dealt with by her husband's house of Lu, not her natal house of Qi.

In *Biographies of Eminent Women* (Lienü zhuan), where her biography is included in "Biographies of Pernicious and Depraved Women," Ai Jiang is described as proud, lustful, corrupt, evil, and perverse.

Constance A. COOK

Chunqiu and *Zuo zhuan*. Zhuang 22, 24, Min 2, Xi 1, 2, 8. Taipei: Fenghuang chubanshe, 1977. Vol. 1, 3.59, 70–71; 4.8, 14; 5.1, 4–5, 45.

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Takikawa Kametarō. *Shiki kaichū kōshō* [*Shi ji*]. Taipei: Hongshi, 1977, 33.31–34.

Aliao: see **Yue Woman**

B

Bao Si, Wife of King You of Zhou

Bao Si (the Woman of the Si Clan of Bao), fl. eighth century B.C.E., was the favored wife of King You (You Wang, r. 781–771 B.C.E.) of Zhou, in central China. She is blamed for the downfall of the Zhou house.

Legend has it that Bao Si was responsible for King You setting aside his Queen Shen, a daughter of the Marquis of Shen, and replacing the legitimate heir apparent with Bao Si's son, Bo Fu. Bao Si's evil nature was attributed to her natal house of Bao (in the southeast of present-day Shaanxi Province), which originated at the end of the Xia dynasty (c. 2100–1600 B.C.E.) when the spit of two dragons, named The Two Lords of Bao, was sealed in a vessel. It was not until the reign of King Li of Zhou (r. 878–841) that someone dared open the vessel, causing spit to flow out and fill the room. King Li had women undress and shout at it, believing this would stop its flow, but to no avail, for it changed into a dark tortoise (one source says a black

snake), which entered the women's quarters and impregnated a virgin concubine of about seven years of age. She did not become pregnant immediately: *Biographies of Eminent Women* (Lienü zhuan) says she became pregnant when she was about fifteen ("when she fixed up her hair as marriageable"), but places this event at least fourteen years after her impregnation at seven. Nevertheless, she bore the child during the time of King Xuan (Xuan Wang, r. 827–781), but fearing it, she cast it out onto the road to die; this infant was Bao Si. Two fugitives saved the infant and took her with them to Bao, where she grew into a very beautiful young woman. Because of her beauty, a prince of Bao who had committed some crime gave her to King You to avoid punishment.

King You was warned against Bao Si but he nevertheless took her as his wife and was, in the words of later commentators, "led astray" by her. In an effort to make her laugh, he repeatedly lit beacon fires to summon the lords to come to protect Zhou from supposed invaders. When the Marquis of Shen joined forces with western barbarian tribes and finally did attack in revenge for the improper dismissal of his daughter, Queen Shen, the house of Zhou was defeated because the protecting lords did not believe King You's signals were genuine and were no longer prepared to respond. King You was killed in the attack, Bao Si was captured, and the nobles were reconciled with Zhou. Bao Si's name is forever associated with beautiful women and the fall of dynasties, and her biography is included in "Biographies of Pernicious and Depraved Women" in *Biographies of Eminent Women*.

Constance A. COOK

Guoyu. "Jinyu" 1. Sibubeiyao ed., 7.2b.

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Bo Ji, Wife of Duke Gong of Song

Bo Ji, the Older Woman of the Ji Clan (Song Gong Bo Ji), fl. early sixth century B.C.E., was the daughter of Duke Xuan (Xuan Gong, r. 608–591 B.C.E.) and Mu Jiang (*q.v.*) of the small state of Lu (in present-day Shandong Province) and a younger sister of Duke Cheng (Cheng Gong, r. 590–573). She is credited with unwavering obedience to the rules of propriety for women.

The first instance of her devotion to propriety related to her marriage in 582 to Duke Gong (Gong Gong, r. 588–575) of Song, a state that was slightly larger than and just to the south of Lu. Her intended husband did not come personally to welcome her when she arrived as a bride and, perceiving this to be a slight and a breach of protocol, she later refused to attend the ancestral temple for the completion of the marriage rites. Only after her widowed mother intervened did she comply. The second, fatal, instance took place in 543. The house in which she was staying caught fire one night, but she refused to leave until the matron and the governess arrived to

accompany her out of the building, as required by the rules of righteousness. The matron arrived in time, but the governess did not and Bo Ji chose to remain and die in the fire, thereby attaining glory in the eyes of later Confucian scholars like Liu Xiang, author of *Biographies of Eminent Women* (*Lienü zhuan*). The fact that Liu Xiang praised this kind of extreme behavior on the part of women must surely have contributed to the appearance in late imperial China of the chastity cult. It is said that the state of Song was indemnified for Bo Ji's death while she herself was immortalized when her biography was included in "Biographies of the Chaste and Obedient" in *Biographies of Eminent Women*.

Bo Ji's death in the fire is also recorded in the *Zuo zhuan*, where the comment is made that in insisting on waiting for instructions at a time of crisis she had behaved more like a young girl than a married woman. In other words, she would have been justified in leaving the burning house alone: she had been a widow for nearly thirty years and must have been in her fifties at the time of her death.

Constance A. COOK

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Bo Ying, Wife of King Ping of Chu

Bo Ying (Chu Ping Bo Ying), fl. sixth century B.C.E., belonged to the Ying clan and was the daughter of a duke, possibly Duke Ai (Ai Gong, r. 538–501 B.C.E.), of Qin (present-day Shaanxi Province). She was married out to King Ping (Ping Wang, r. 528–516 B.C.E.) of Chu, a large state in what is now central China north of the Yangzi River, and her son became the ruler of Chu as King Zhao (Zhao Wang, r. 515–489 B.C.E.) upon the death of his father. When Wu (a state in the eastern region of present-day Jiangsu and Anhui provinces) captured the Chu capital of Ying (in present-day Hubei Province), King Zhao fled to his mother's homeland of Qin in the northwest. Upon entering the capital, the victorious king of Wu took for himself all of King Zhao's concubines and was about to take King Zhao's mother as well. With great courage, however, she took up a sword and threatened suicide: "All you desire to get from me is pleasure; if you draw near to me, I will die. What pleasure will you have, if you first kill me?" Admonishing the king of Wu for having cast aside his principles, she told him that for a woman to "have one husband is to be exalted, to have two husbands is to be disgraced" (O'Hara, 116), and that she would die if necessary to preserve her chastity. The shamed victor placed her under guard in the women's quarters for a month, by which time her son had returned with reinforcements. She is praised for being constant in her devotion to one husband and is certainly to be admired for her courageous

refusal to submit meekly to what would now be considered rape. Her biography is included in “Biographies of the Chaste and Obedient” in *Biographies of Eminent Women* (Lienü zhuan).

Constance A. COOK

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The Bow Artisan of Jin's Wife

The Wife of the Bow Artisan of Jin (Jin Gonggong Qi), fl. sixth century B.C.E., was the daughter of an official in the state of Jin (in the north of the present-day provinces of Shanxi-Hebei). She saved her husband, who was the bow-maker for Duke Ping (Ping Gong, r. 557–532 B.C.E.), from execution by explaining to the duke that it was not because of the quality of the bow her husband had made that the Duke's arrows did not pierce the target but because of the duke's poor technique. She taught the duke proper technique, and so pleased was he with his subsequent success that he rewarded her with money and released her husband. Her biography is included in “Biographies of Those Able in Reasoning and Understanding” in *Biographies of Eminent Women* (Lienü zhuan).

Constance A. COOK

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Bow-Maker of Chin, The Wife of the: see The Bow Artisan of Jin's Wife

C

Cai Ren zhi Qi: see Man of Cai's Wife

Cao Xi zhi Qi: see Xi Clan Head's Wife

Chao She, The Wife of: see General Zhao Gua's Mother

Chao, Wife of the King of Tai, The Lady née: see Zhao, Wife of the King of Dai

Charioteer of the Minister of Ch'i, Wife of: see Wife of the Chariot Driver for Yanzi, Minister of Qi

Zhang Lu's Mother

Zhang Lu's Mother (Zhang Lu Mu), fl. late second century, was active in the region of today's Chengdu in Sichuan Province and played an important role in the creation of the Daoist Way of the Celestial Masters, although she is rarely granted the status of Master on her own behalf. In his discussion of Daoist celibacy, Michel Strickmann cites a fourth-century text edited by Tao Hongjing (*vide* Xu Baoguang) in which "the Three Masters are enumerated as the Celestial Master, the Lady-Master (*nü-shih*), and the Inheriting Master (*hsi-shih*: the usual designation of Chang Lu . . .). A female figure, though mysterious, is still prominent. She may well have been Chang Lu's mother, whose liaison with the governor of the province was noted by the historians." Zhang Lu's Mother is generally assumed to have been the wife of the son of Zhang Daoling (fl. 140), the legendary founder of religious Daoism, thus making her son Zhang Daoling's grandson. However, the only son of Zhang Daoling that sources ever refer to is Zhang Heng, and his name has never been linked with Zhang Lu's Mother. It therefore seems possible that Zhang Lu's Mother was a practitioner of early Daoism in the Way of the Celestial Masters tradition and that historians have preferred to grant her son kinship with Zhang Daoling than credit her with independently passing her tradition on to her son.

Zhang Lu's Mother is described in the *History of the Later Han Dynasty* (Hou Han shu) as a licentious woman, not unprepossessing in appearance, who practiced sorcery, or the Way of Demons (*guidao*). Her son, Zhang Lu (fl. 188–220), created a state-like Daoist community in northwestern China that was administered according to the principles of Celestial Master Daoism, involving faith healing and welfare measures. The priesthood was hereditary and women were expected to participate in religious and administrative tasks and in particular in the conversion of new adepts.

Zhang Lu's Mother played an important role in establishing this community due to her personal contacts with Liu Yan (d. 194), provincial governor of Yi and a member of the Han imperial clan. The *History of the Later Han Dynasty* tells us that she was a frequent visitor to Liu Yan's home by virtue of her beauty and knowledge of the magic arts. Through her influence her son obtained official rank and the Daoist community developed for some thirty years, largely without interference from the Han dynasty state apparatus. When Liu Yan died, however, his son Liu Zhang attempted to rein in Zhang Lu, using Zhang Lu's Mother and other relatives as hostages, and eventually having them put to death. Zhang Lu continued to increase the independence of his Daoist community in the Hanzhong area (present-day Shaanxi Province), thus strengthening its historical relevance as the point of origin for China's only indigenous religion. The Celestial Master tradition is still practiced today, with the sixty-fourth Celestial Master ensconced in Taiwan and his nephew practicing in mainland China, where official tolerance of Daoism has allowed a comparatively recent resurgence of interest in this religion.

Barbara HENDRISCHKE and Sue WILES

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Zhang Tang Mu: *see* Zhang Tang's Mother

Zhang Tang's Mother

Zhang Tang's Mother (Zhang Tang Mu), c. 165–110 B.C.E., was a native of Duling, in Chang'an (the present-day city of Xi'an); her given names and surname are not known. Her husband was an aide to the governor of Chang'an; their son, Zhang Tang (d. 115 B.C.E.), rose to the position of censor-in-chief (*yushi dafu*) during the reign of Emperor Wu (r. 140–87 B.C.E.). Zhang Tang was a strict official and in executing the law he could be cruel, but he excelled at implementing economic reforms.

For some ten years, between 129 and 119 B.C.E., Emperor Wu sent expensive military expeditions against the Xiongnu people who roamed China's northern frontier. Also during this period, however, Shandong in the northeast was devastated by floods and then a drought that eventually forced the poor to leave their homes and seek help from local magistrates, who were in turn unable to sustain such a drain on their resources. Fearing a financial disaster, the emperor saw the necessity of implementing economic reforms. He therefore entrusted Censor-in-Chief Zhang Tang with the tasks of minting silver and *wuzhu*-denomination coins, collecting the salt and iron revenues, preventing rich merchants from making excessive profits, issuing money in small denominations, and stopping powerful families from acquiring land from the poor. Zhang Tang became so influential that all matters of importance were brought to him for decision instead of being submitted to the Counselor-in-Chief (*chengxiang*) Qing Zhai. Not surprisingly, while Emperor Wu approved of Zhang Tang's handling of the economy, those who stood to lose by these reforms did all they could to hamper him. District magistrates, for instance, did not benefit from the emperor's reforms and this led some court officials to resort to robbing the poor by forcing them to borrow. Zhang Tang was not to be diverted from his task, however, and he punished offenders according to the letter of the law, thereby leaving himself open to public criticism.

After seven years in the post of censor-in-chief, Zhang Tang was finally brought down by the slander of the counselor-in-chief's three trusted aides, Zhu Maichen (*vide* Zhu Maichen's Wife), Wang Chao, and Bian Tong, whose words eroded Emperor Wu's trust in Zhang Tang. Apparently believing his cause to be lost, Zhang Tang committed suicide in 115. The three aides had accused Zhang Tang of offering privileged information to a colleague who had thus been able to corner certain markets and share the profits with Zhang Tang. After Zhang Tang's death, however, it was discovered that he had not profited in any such way, his total assets being some 500 cash, all of which he had derived from his salary and perfectly proper gifts from the emperor.

With Zhang Tang cleared of all impropriety, his male relatives wanted to give him an extravagant funeral. His mother opposed this, however, saying: "He was a minister of the state working for the emperor and slanderous rumors forced him to take his own life. What good is it now to bury him with grand ceremony?" Thus Zhang Tang was buried simply, in a single coffin, not in a coffin within an outer coffin in the customary way. Emperor Wu is reported to have said, upon hearing of this, "Like mother, like son," indicating his admiration for their integrity. Some time later, the three aides who had slandered Zhang Tang were executed and the counselor-in-chief committed suicide. Zhang Tang's Mother, who had been upright, discreet, and strict in raising her children, is credited with the stern and righteous behavior of Zhang Tang when he was censor-in-chief. These same virtues were seen in Zhang Tang's son Zhang Anshi (d. 62 B.C.E.), whose wife continued to weave at home and whose young servants all pursued a trade even when Zhang Anshi had become Marquis of Fuping, a fief town of 10,000 households.

XIA Chunhao

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Zhang Yan, Empress of Emperor Hui

Zhang Yan (Xiao Hui Zhang Huanghou), d. 163 B.C.E., was the imperial consort of her maternal uncle Emperor Hui (Liu Ying, 210–188 B.C.E., r. 194–188 B.C.E.). The year of her birth is not recorded and she is little known in history; hers was a difficult life, yet she lived through the reigns of the first four rulers of the Han dynasty.

Zhang Yan's father, Zhang Ao, was Prince of Zhao and her mother, Princess Yuan of Lu, was the eldest daughter of Emperor Gaozu and Empress Lü (*q.v.* Lü Zhi, Empress of Emperor Gaozu). Her royal heritage, however, did not protect her as her family suffered changes and upheaval from the time she was a small child. Emperor Gaozu passed through the state of Zhao at the end of 200 B.C.E. while on a military expedition against the northern Xiongnu. As a dutiful son-in-law, Zhang Ao humbly received the emperor according to the traditional rites, but the emperor's arrogant behavior so angered the two counselors-in-chief (*chengxiang*) of Zhao that they plotted rebellion. Although Zhang Ao had steadfastly refused to be part of their plan, when the plot was uncovered in 198 B.C.E. he was among those arrested. Empress Lü pressed for the release of her son-in-law, to no avail, but an official investigation finally confirmed Zhang Ao's innocence and he was set free. Despite this, Emperor Gaozu rescinded the title of Prince of Zhao and demoted Zhang Ao to Marquis of Xuanping. Her parents' caution and display of deep respect to her grandfather appear to have been the source of Empress Zhang's timidity and the submissiveness she exhibited throughout her life.

Three years after Zhang Ao's downfall, Empress Lü's son Liu Ying (Emperor

Hui) ascended the throne. Emperor Hui was a kind and gentle young man and his mother's barbaric murder of Consort Qi (*q.v.* Qi, Concubine of Emperor Gaozu) and the consort's son Ruyi in the pursuit of palace politics so shocked him that he fell ill. From that time on he abstained from affairs of state, indulging instead in alcohol and sex, and allowed his mother, now Empress Dowager Lü, to hold the reins of power. To consolidate her son's reign, Empress Dowager Lü attempted to unseat the feudal princes belonging to her husband's Liu clan who might be pretenders to the throne. At the same time, she sought a suitable empress for her son, finally deciding to marry her granddaughter Zhang Yan to her son in order to create an intricate network of kin to strengthen her political power.

Thus, in late 191 B.C.E., the adolescent Zhang Yan became empress to her uncle Emperor Hui, who was then twenty-one years old. Although the traditional rites did not forbid marriage between a man and his maternal niece, this was indeed verging on incest. Nobody dared raise this objection to Empress Dowager Lü.

The histories give no insight into this imperial marriage that lasted only three years. According to her biography in the *History of the Han Dynasty* (Han shu), however, Empress Zhang "did not produce a son, after trying every means, and therefore adopted the son of a palace woman [*meiren*]." The Song dynasty *Zizhi tongjian* is more explicit: "Empress Dowager Lü ordered Empress Zhang to adopt a boy and to kill the boy's mother; the boy was made heir to the throne." When Emperor Hui died, the infant heir apparent, Liu Hong (Emperor Shao, d. 184 B.C.E.), ascended the throne and Empress Dowager Lü remained de facto ruler, taking complete charge of affairs of state. Empress Zhang continued to live in the imperial palace but remained aloof from court politics.

Empress Dowager Lü retained control of the court for eight years. When the young emperor became discontented upon discovering the truth of his mother's execution, the empress dowager had her grandson secretly assassinated. Another son of Emperor Hui, Prince Yi, was placed upon the throne but the real power remained in the hands of Empress Dowager Lü, who proceeded to grant the title of prince to male members of her natal Lü clan. While this aroused the ire of many senior officials, it had little effect on Empress Zhang, who had no political power and had never been involved in politics.

In the internecine strife that followed the death of Empress Dowager Lü, the Liu clan princes joined forces to kill her Lü kin. Emperor Gaozu's son Liu Heng (Emperor Wen) was chosen for the throne and was installed as emperor. Empress Zhang's relationship to Empress Dowager Lü placed her in a dangerous position. She was not executed, however, but was sent instead to a palace in the north, where she spent her remaining sixteen years. No record exists of her later life, but she died in the spring of 163 B.C.E., bringing to a close the life of an unremarkable empress of Han.

ZANG Jian

(Translated by TAM Chui-han June)

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Sima Guang. *Zizhi tongjian*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956, vol. 1, 12.418.

Zhangdi Dou Huanghou: see Dou, Empress of Emperor Zhang

Zhao E

Zhao E, the mother of Pang Yu (Pang Yu Mu Zhao E), fl. 179, also known as Eqin, was the daughter of Zhao An (or Jun An) of Fulu District (present-day Jiuchuan in Gansu Province). She is known by her *zi*, E, her given name being unknown. Her son, Pang Yu, was appointed Marquis of Guannei (*guannei hou*) during the reign of Emperor Wen (Cao Pi, 187–226; r. 220–226) of the Wei dynasty.

According to the biography of Pang Yu in the *History of the Wei Dynasty* (Wei shu), the *Record of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo zhi), and Huangfu Mi's *Biographies of Eminent Women* (Lienü zhuan), Zhao E's father was killed by a man named Li Shou of the same district. Li Shou was so well protected, however, that none of Zhao E's three younger brothers was able to avenge their father's death before they themselves died in a plague. Overjoyed at the news of their deaths, Li Shou invited his clansmen to a celebration where he announced: "All the strong ones of the Zhao clan are now dead and only a weak daughter remains. I need worry no longer." He therefore began to let his guard down. Zhao E was enraged when she heard from her son what Li Shou had said and tearfully she vowed: "Li Shou, don't you be happy. I will not let you live, for that would bring shame on the three sons of our family. How can you be so sure that Eqin cannot kill you with her own hands? You are not as lucky as you think."

Harboring vengeance for her father's death, she secretly bought a famous sword and sharpened it day and night, even as she honed her hatred for Li Shou. Hearing of this, Li Shou resumed his old habit of vigilance, wearing his sword at his belt when he rode out on his horse. He was a vicious man of whom the villagers were terrified. A neighbor of Zhao E, a Madame Xu, tried to dissuade her from her mission, saying: "Li Shou is a man accustomed to violence. He is also on his guard. No matter how great your determination, you are no match for him and catastrophe will befall you when you find yourself unable to kill him. He will wipe out your entire household, causing untold pain and humiliation. For the sake of your family, I ask you to reconsider your plan." To this Zhao E replied: "It is wrong to share the same heaven and earth, sun and moon with the murderer of one's parent; if Li Shou lives, I cannot. Now that all my male siblings are dead, I must seek revenge. If I did as you say, no one would kill Li Shou, and I would not be able to live with myself." Her family and neighbors scoffed at these words, but Zhao E continued: "Well may you laugh at me, a mere woman, vowing to kill Li Shou, but you will see when I stain this blade with the blood of Li Shou's neck."

Zhao E became obsessed with Li Shou, abandoning all else to stalk him from a small cart in which she rode. On a fine day early in the second month of 179, she finally confronted him at the metropolitan post-house in Jiuquan. Descending from her cart, she grabbed the bridle of his horse and began to abuse him. When Li Shou

tried to yank his horse away, Zhao E lashed out with her sword, wounding both him and the horse. Li Shou was thrown from his horse and landed in the gutter, where Zhao E fell on him, stabbing him repeatedly with her sword. She did not manage to kill him, however, and in her wild haste she broke her sword on a tree. She tried to grab Li Shou's sword, but he continued to resist, all the while calling loudly for help. He attempted to get up but Zhao E held him down with her left hand, hitting him repeatedly across the throat with her right fist. When he finally stopped struggling she chopped off his head with his sword.

Having killed Li Shou, Zhao E went straight to the district office to give herself up and then started walking toward the jail. The magistrate, however, could not bring himself to sentence her and was ready to hang up his seal and resign from his position, allowing Zhao E to abscond. One version of the story has Zhao E and the magistrate running away together at this point.

But Zhao E was determined to pay for her deed. "Having killed my enemy, I should die. Clearly, this is my lot. As a magistrate, you are responsible for administering the laws and meting out punishment; I dare not treasure my life at the expense of the law." News of Zhao E's integrity attracted a crowd of awed onlookers and even her guards were moved, to the extent that they intimated to her that they would look the other way were she to run away. An emotional Zhao E told them: "It is not my wish to escape death at the cost of contravening the law. Now that I have wrought vengeance it is right that I die. I beg you to let me bear the full force of the law so that good government will not be jeopardized. I would rather give my life ten thousand times than destabilize the law." When the guards still would not listen, she said: "I may be just a humble woman, but I do understand the law, and I know that the crime of murder is not pardonable. I do not want to run away, I want to receive the punishment due for my crime and be executed in the marketplace in order to uphold the emperor's law." She showed no sign of fear but grew increasingly fervent, so the guards stopped arguing and simply bundled her into a carriage and took her home. Another version is that she did go to jail but was granted amnesty and was able to go home.

Several people, including Zhou Hong, the regional inspector of Liangzhou, and Liu Ban, the governor of Jiuquan, memorialized the emperor about Zhao E's integrity, and her story was inscribed on a stone stele so that her family might be glorified. Zhang Huan, who held the position of chamberlain for ceremonies (*taichang*), presented her with twenty bolts of silk out of admiration for her actions. Zhao E's act of revenge was recorded in official histories and spread far and wide by word of mouth, while men of letters of later ages immortalized her in biographies and poetry. Liang Kuan of late Eastern Han, for instance, wrote her biography, and Zuo Yannian of the Three Kingdoms period praised her integrity in his ballad *Qinnü xiu xing*. *Qinnü xiu xing* is also the title of a poem written by Fu Xuan of Western Jin telling of a woman who braved the powerful to avenge her father, and then gave herself up. In this latter poem the woman is called Pang's wife and one line runs, "One good daughter is worth one hundred sons."

Huangfu Mi (215–282) had this to say of Zhao E in his *Lienü zhuan*: "It is expected of a man that he not share heaven and earth with his parents' murderer, yet Eqin, a

mere woman, also experienced the hurt and humiliation of the murder of her father. Paying no mind to the danger she placed herself in, in an unprecedented deed she killed both her enemy and his horse with her own hands, thus pacifying the wronged spirit of her father and wiping away the regret of her three younger brothers. Those words found in *The Book of Songs* [Shi jing], ‘Prepare my lance and my spear, I will fight with you,’ apply to Eqin.”

The Tang poet Li Bai (702–762) also praised Zhao E’s chivalrous deed in a poem also titled *Qinnü xiu xing*.

SHEN Lidong

(Translated by Lily Xiao Hong LEE and Sue WILES)

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Hou Han shu. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965, vol. 5, 84.2796–97.

Huangfu Mi. *Lienü zhuan*, quoted in *Sanguo zhi*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959, 18.548–50,

Pei Songzhi’s commentary.

Sanguo zhi. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975, vol. 2, 18.548.

Zhao Feiyan, Empress of Emperor Cheng

Zhao Feiyan (Xiao Cheng Zhao Huanghou), 43–1 B.C.E., said to have come from Jiangdu (present-day Yangzhou in Jiangsu Province), was originally named Feng Yisheng. She first became famous as a dancer and a singer, and then as empress to Emperor Cheng (Liu Ao, 51–7 B.C.E.; r. 32–7 B.C.E.). Her younger sister Zhao Hede (*q.v.* Zhao Hede, Concubine of Emperor Cheng) also became a favorite of Emperor Cheng and, according to some sources, she too excelled as a singer and dancer.

Left to die at birth, Feng Yisheng was fortunate that she survived long enough for her impoverished parents to relent and decide to raise her. Her father, Feng Wanli, was a musician and he died when she was still quite young, leaving her and her sister stranded in the city of Chang’an. There they were adopted by Zhao Lin, housekeeper for a rich family, who gave them a good education. The girls took their benefactor’s surname and initially made their living at embroidery. However, through Zhao Lin they had the opportunity to serve as maidservants in the house of the Princess of Yang’e, where they learned singing and dancing. Lithe and slim, Zhao Yisheng was as agile as a swallow when she danced and people began calling her *feiyan*, “flying swallow,” so that eventually she came to be known as Zhao Feiyan. She came to the notice of Emperor Cheng when she danced at a feast given by the Princess of Yang’e. Captivated by her graceful figure, he summoned her to the imperial palace, where she became his favorite concubine, and he promoted her to the rank of Lady of Handsome fairness (*jiayu*).

The imperial distaff clans had become increasingly influential during the reigns of Emperor Yuan and Emperor Cheng, with the Huo, the Xu, and the Wang clans each gaining power in turn. Of lowly birth and with no powerful family behind her, Zhao Feiyan maintained her position by recommending her younger sister to the emperor, who was entranced by Hede’s beauty and charm. By 20 B.C.E., Empress Xu (*q.v.* Xu, Empress of Emperor Cheng) had become a victim of the volatile political climate and

had fallen into disfavor, being held responsible for the emperor not having sired a son and heir. Disasters such as serious floods in the capital and unusual phenomena around 30 B.C.E. were also cited as inauspicious omens. The Zhao sisters became involved in court intrigues and in 18 B.C.E., with the support of the Wang family, including Empress Dowager Wang (*q.v.* Wang Zhengjun, Empress of Emperor Yuan), they laid accusations that Empress Xu and Ban Jieyu (*q.v.* Ban Jieyu, Concubine of Emperor Cheng) had practiced witchcraft (*wugu*) to invoke curses on the women's quarters and on the emperor himself. Empress Xu was deposed, while Ban Jieyu wisely requested to be allowed to serve the empress dowager, effectively retiring from court life. Empress Dowager Wang hesitated to consent to the installation of Zhao Feiyan, a woman of extremely humble origins, but gave her approval after her nephew Chunyu Chang interceded. Zhao Feiyan was made empress in 16 B.C.E. and her benefactor, Zhao Lin, was honored with the title of Marquis of Chengyang.

After she became empress, Zhao Feiyan was largely replaced in the emperor's affections by her sister Zhao Hede, with whom she resided in the opulent Zhaoyang Palace. Zhao Hede remained loyal to her sister, however, speaking well of her to the emperor so that Zhao Feiyan's position was unaffected. Nevertheless, Zhao Feiyan did her best to retain the emperor's favor, a famous example being that, on learning of the emperor's voyeuristic tendencies—he apparently liked peeping at Zhao Hede when she was bathing—Zhao Feiyan invited him to watch her sister bathe. In another attempt to regain Emperor Cheng's favor she told him, untruthfully, that she was pregnant. Although they monopolized the emperor for over ten years, neither of the Zhao sisters became pregnant. They were both well aware that unless they could bear a son for the emperor, who was approaching middle age, their position at court would become increasingly perilous. It is said that Zhao Feiyan tried to become pregnant by having relationships with men other than the emperor, and that Zhao Hede bribed the eunuchs to keep a close watch on the other concubines. In 12 B.C.E. a palace woman named Cao Gong bore the emperor a son. Although of as humble origin as the Zhao sisters, Cao Gong had learned to read and had at one stage instructed Zhao Feiyan in the classics. Now Zhao Hede compelled Emperor Cheng to have this infant put to death. A year later, Beauty (*meiren*) Xu bore the emperor a son, but this child too was murdered. A children's song thought to satirize the behavior of the Zhao sisters had long circulated among the people:

Wooden gates
 gray-green fixtures
 Swallow comes flying
 pecks imperial grandsons
 Imperial grandsons die
 swallow pecks turds. (Watson, 277)

Emperor Cheng died suddenly one morning in 7 B.C.E. He had not been ill and suspicion immediately fell on Zhao Hede, with some saying his death was caused by sexual indulgence. As soon as Empress Dowager Wang announced there would be an investigation, Zhao Hede committed suicide.

Emperor Ai (Liu Xin, 25–1 B.C.E.; r. 6–1 B.C.E.) promoted Zhao Feiyan to empress dowager in 6 B.C.E., and enfeoffed her adopted brother Zhao Qin as Marquis of Xincheng. A few months later, however, the emperor relieved the male members of the Zhao family of their titles and demoted them to the rank of commoner when the results of the investigation into Emperor Cheng's death implicated Zhao Hede. He protected Zhao Feiyan, however, because she had helped him become heir apparent. Zhao Feiyan also found allies in Emperor Ai's grandmother Empress Dowager Fu (*q.v.* Fu, Concubine of Emperor Yuan) and his mother, Lady Ding, but the ultimate winner in this grand power struggle was Empress Dowager Wang.

Upon the death of Emperor Ai, the nine-year-old Liu Kan (Emperor Ping, 8 B.C.E.–5 C.E.; r. 1–5 C.E.) was placed on the throne. Commander-in-Chief Wang Mang immediately approached Empress Dowager Wang (his aunt) about Empress Dowager Zhao (Zhao Feiyan) and within a short time Zhao Feiyan had been demoted to Empress of Emperor Cheng and moved to the Northern Palace. A month later an imperial edict was issued describing Zhao Feiyan as “lacking in the proper ways of a woman, failing to wait on her superiors according to ritual, she possesses the malice of a wolf or a tiger” and demoting her to the rank of commoner. She committed suicide the same day, after having been empress for sixteen years.

AU Chi-kin

(Translated by CHE Wai-lam William)

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Zhao Gouyi, Concubine of Emperor Wu

Lady of Handsome Fairness Zhao Gouyi (Xiao Wu Gou Yi Zhao Jieyu), 113–88 B.C.E., was born in Hejian (in the east of present-day Xian District, Hebei Province);

her surname was Zhao but her given name is not recorded. Her father was castrated at some stage as punishment for an offense and served in the capital, Chang'an, in the minor eunuch position of palace attendant (*zhong huangmen*).

Emperor Wu (Liu Che, 156–87 B.C.E.; r. 141–87 B.C.E.) was on a hunting expedition in Hejian when an astrologer told him that there was “a person of significance” in the northeast, describing this person as a young woman of the Zhao family. When the emperor had her summoned, Zhao came into his presence with both fists clenched. As soon as Emperor Wu caressed her hands, however, her fingers relaxed and unfolded. The emperor took her as his favorite, naming her Consort Gouyi (Consort of the Fists). She was quickly promoted to the rank of Lady of Handsome Fairness (*jièyù*) and installed in Gouyi Palace within Ganquan Palace outside the city. After a pregnancy said to have lasted fourteen months, she gave birth to a son, Liu Fuling (Emperor Zhao, 94–74 B.C.E.; r. 87–74 B.C.E.). Because the legendary monarch Yao was also said to have been born after fourteen months in the womb, Emperor Wu named the gate where Liu Fuling was born the Gate of the Mother of Yao.

Soon after the birth of Liu Fuling, the court was thrown into a state of crisis that saw hundreds of people executed on what may well have been false accusations of witchcraft and necromancy. Court politics saw the heir apparent, Liu Ju, and his mother, Empress Wei (*q.v.* Wei Zifu, Empress of Emperor Wu), both implicated, and although they were innocent of either treachery or witchcraft they were both driven to suicide in late 91. With the death of the heir apparent, Consort Gouyi's son became a contender for the throne. Two of Emperor Wu's sons—Liu Hong (d. 109 B.C.E.), the son of Lady Wang, and Liu Bo (d. 88 or 86 B.C.E.), the son of Consort Li (*q.v.* Li, Concubine of Emperor Wu)—had already died. Two other sons—Liu Dan and Liu Xu—born to a Lady Li were excluded from consideration because of their dissolute behavior and misdeeds. Liu Fuling, however, was already sturdy and knowledgeable by the age of six. Emperor Wu believed the boy to be much like him and loved the child because of his unusually long gestation period.

However, Emperor Wu hesitated to appoint Liu Fuling heir apparent because Consort Gouyi was still young and he feared she might seize power through her son. Desiring instead that Huo Guang (d. 66 B.C.E.) should assist the boy once he ascended the throne, Emperor Wu commissioned a painting of the legendary Zhou Gong carrying his nephew King Cheng on his back and receiving the other feudal lords; he then gave the painting to Huo Guang. The officials and Consort Gouyi understood from this that the emperor intended that Liu Fuling be his successor. A few days later the emperor fell ill and, still concerned about the power he might be releasing into the hands of Consort Gouyi, he summoned her and berated her. Bewildered, Consort Gouyi removed her hairpins and earrings and kowtowed to the enraged emperor, begging forgiveness. Emperor Wu, however, ordered that she be taken to the prison in the women's quarters. As Consort Gouyi turned to look at the emperor he said: “Out, quickly! You cannot be saved!” In her biography, the almost contemporaneous *History of the Han Dynasty* (Han shu) records that she died of anxiety, while in his *Zizhi tongjian*, Sima Guang reports that she was “ordered to die” (*ci si*).

After the death of Consort Gouyi, Emperor Wu asked his retinue what people

were saying about it. His attendants replied that people could not understand why the emperor had killed the boy's mother, since he had already decided to appoint Liu Fuling as his successor. The emperor explained that his actions may well have been misunderstood by "children and fools," but that a young emperor with a young mother had always led to political unrest. It was inevitable, he said, that, wielding power as empress dowager, the mother would "behave in a willful, unlicensed, and wanton way, and nothing [would] check her" (Watson, 253, n. 3). He cited as evidence for his view the example of Empress Lü (*q.v.* Lü Zhi, Empress of Emperor Gaozu). People have never ceased taking sides about the death of Consort Gouyi, either accusing Emperor Wu of cruelty or admiring him for his foresight. No one, however, ever charged him, as they should have, with hypocrisy, given that he himself had behaved as wantonly and willfully as any empress dowager.

Many stories have been told over the centuries about the death of Consort Gouyi. One is that her corpse gave off a fragrance that wafted more than ten *li* and that persisted for a month, from the time of her death until her burial. Another, recorded in the Song dynasty *Taiping yulan*, is that Consort Gouyi told Emperor Wu that she was destined to bear him a son and to die when the son was seven. "I will die this year," she said. "The palace is full of evil humors that are harmful." And then she died. It is also said that her coffin in Yunyang was empty after she died. The *Yunyang ji* records that to communicate with Consort Gouyi's spirit, Emperor Wu built in Ganquan Palace a rostrum on which a blue bird would often perch. After Liu Xun (Emperor Xuan, 91–49 B.C.E.; r. 73–49 B.C.E.) succeeded to the throne, however, the bird was never seen again.

In the seventh month of the year he succeeded to the throne, Consort Gouyi's son conferred on her the posthumous title of empress dowager. He then mobilized 20,000 soldiers to build a grave mound for her at Yunling and established a township of 3,000 households to tend the grave. Emperor Zhao bestowed upon his maternal grandfather the title of Marquis of Shuncheng, and presented his maternal great-aunt with gifts of money, slaves, and several houses. The emperor rewarded other male relatives of his mother's clan with gifts but, apart from Consort Gouyi's father, did not confer any office or title on any member of the family.

WONG Yin Lee

(Translated by Che Wai-lam William)

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Zhao Hede, Concubine of Emperor Cheng

Lady of Bright Department Zhao Hede (Xiao Cheng Zhao Zhaoyi), d. 7 B.C.E., said to have come from Jiangdu (present-day Yangzhou in Jiangsu Province), became notorious as a favorite concubine of Emperor Cheng (Liu Ao, 51–7 B.C.E.; r. 32–7 B.C.E.). She was the younger sister of Zhao Feiyan (*q.v.* Zhao Feiyan, Empress of Emperor Cheng) and, according to some sources, excelled as a singer and dancer.

Zhao Hede was born into an extremely poor family—her father, Feng Wanli, was a musician—and her original name was Feng Hede. However, after her father died, she and her sister were adopted in Chang’an by Zhao Lin, housekeeper for a rich family, who gave them a good education. The girls took their benefactor’s surname and initially made their living at embroidery. Through Zhao Lin they had the opportunity to serve as maidservants in the house of the Princess of Yang’e, where they learned singing and dancing. While Zhao Feiyan, the older sister, was lithe and slim, Zhao Hede was fair-skinned and plump.

Zhao Feiyan was the first to enter the palace, summoned by Emperor Cheng after he saw her dance at a feast given by the Princess of Yang’e. She became his favorite concubine, and he promoted her to the rank of Lady of Handsome Fairness (*jieyu*). Not long afterward, she recommended her younger sister Zhao Hede to the emperor who, entranced at Hede’s beauty, promoted her to the rank of Lady of Handsome Fairness as well. So besotted was the emperor by Zhao Hede that he chose to ignore the warning of the Court Tutor Nao Fangcheng (Lady Nao) when she predicted: “This is a source of trouble. She will certainly destroy Han.” In 18 B.C.E., the Zhao sisters accused Empress Xu (*q.v.* Xu, Empress of Emperor Cheng) and Ban Jieyu (*q.v.* Ban Jieyu, Concubine of Emperor Cheng) of practicing witchcraft (*wugu*) to invoke curses on the women’s quarters. Empress Xu was deposed, while Ban Jieyu requested to be allowed to serve the empress dowager, effectively retiring from court life. After some hesitation, Empress Dowager Wang (*q.v.* Wang Zhengjun, Empress of Emperor Yuan) approved Emperor Cheng’s request that Zhao Feiyan be made empress (16 B.C.E.), but from this time on Zhao Hede was the emperor’s favorite. He appointed Zhao Hede as a lady of bright deportment (*zhaoyi*) and installed her in Zhaoyang Palace, a residence of unprecedented opulence whose “courtyards were painted vermilion and its halls lacquered, with sills of bronze coated with a layer of gilt. It had steps of white jade, and where the laths of the walls were exposed to view they were studded at intervals with golden rings inlaid with decorations of Lan-t’ien jadeite, shining pearls, or pieces of kingfisher feather” (Watson, 266).

For over ten years the Zhao sisters, and Zhao Hede in particular, monopolized the emperor’s affections, even though neither of them bore him a child or even became pregnant. This inability to bear a son placed them in a perilous situation, and Zhao Hede became extremely jealous of any concubine who bore Emperor Cheng a son. She is believed to have orchestrated the deaths of concubines and of at least two infant boys, one born in 12 B.C.E. to a palace woman named Cao Gong and one born a year later to Beauty (*meiren*) Xu. The official *History of the Han Dynasty* (Han shu) contains an unusually detailed account of an investigation that incriminated Zhao Hede in the murders of these babies and their mothers. Emperor Cheng died suddenly one

morning in the spring of 7 B.C.E. He had not been ill and suspicion immediately fell on Zhao Hede, with some saying his death was caused by sexual indulgence. As soon as Empress Dowager Wang announced there would be an investigation, Zhao Hede committed suicide.

Not long after Liu Xin (Emperor Ai, 25–1 B.C.E.; r. 6–1 B.C.E.) succeeded to the throne, a report was submitted detailing the results of the investigation into Emperor Cheng's untimely death. Of Zhao Hede it said that she had "brought danger and chaos to our sacred dynasty and is personally responsible for wiping out the line of succession—her family and associates deserve to suffer the punishment of Heaven!" (Watson, 273). The male members of Zhao Hede's adoptive family were accordingly reduced to the rank of commoner, but because Zhao Feiyan had helped Emperor Ai become heir apparent, he did not allow her to become implicated. However, almost immediately after the nine-year-old Liu Kan (Emperor Ping, 8 B.C.E.–5 C.E.; r. 1–5 C.E.) ascended the throne, Empress Dowager Wang issued an edict downgrading Zhao Feiyan to mere Empress of Emperor Cheng. The Zhao sisters, the edict proclaimed, had "replaced all the other palace ladies in the ruler's affections [and monopolized his bedchamber]. But they turned to schemes of violence and disorder, destroying and wiping out the line of succession and thereby betraying their duty to the ancestral temples. A profaner of Heaven and offender against the former rulers, [Zhao Feiyan] is not fit to act as mother of the empire" (Watson, 276). When, a month later, Zhao Feiyan was demoted to the rank of commoner, she committed suicide like her younger sister before her.

SHEN Jian

(Translated by SHEN Jian and CHE Wai-lam William)

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Zhao Ji

Zhao Ji (The Woman from Zhao), c. 280–228 B.C.E., whose name is not recorded, was the mother of Ying Zheng (259–210 B.C.E.), the man who unified China and became its first emperor (Qin Shihuangdi, r. 221–210 B.C.E.). She was also instrumental in putting her son on the throne.

By the mid-third century B.C.E., during the Warring States period, the powerful state of Qin was on the point of swallowing up the other six states occupying what is now China proper. According to the second-century B.C.E. *Historical Records* (Shi ji), the first comprehensive history of China, Zhao Ji was a singer and dancer from the

state of Zhao and she became the mistress of a wealthy merchant named Lü Buwei (d. 239 B.C.E.). At that time, a grandson of the Qin ruler (Zhao Wang, 324–251 B.C.E.; r. 306–251 B.C.E.) was living as a hostage in Zhao and, not one to let an opportunity slip, Lü Buwei approached this man—Prince Zichu (Zhuangxiang Wang, r. 249–247 B.C.E.)—with a plan designed to assure him his place in the line of Qin succession. Lü Buwei told the prince he was willing to invest his wealth in this project, whereby he would provide sufficient funds for the prince to return to Qin while the prince was to show deference to the childless but official wife of his father (the heir apparent). For his part, Lü Buwei was to ply the official wife with gifts in an effort to persuade her to adopt the prince.

Lü Buwei then introduced his mistress Zhao Ji to the prince, who was taken by the girl and asked Lü Buwei to give her to him. Zhao Ji lived with Prince Zichu in Zhao for several years and bore him a son, Ying Zheng, the future Qin Shihuangdi. For a time this child, born in Zhao, was known as Zhao Zheng (the ancestral name of the Qin kings was Ying). *Historical Records* even goes so far as to say that Zhao Ji was already pregnant with Lü Buwei's son when she was given to Prince Zichu. Modern scholars, however, and especially Western scholars, suspect this story to have been fabricated to discredit Ying Zheng's legitimacy because during his lifetime he was much hated for conquering the other six of the Warring States. However, this suspicion remains that: merely a suspicion.

With Qin making repeated incursions into Zhao, the Zhao court planned to kill their hostage Prince Zichu, but as promised Lü Buwei helped him escape and return to his home state of Qin. Prince Zichu eventually became heir apparent, whereupon the Zhao court released Zhao Ji and her son, presumably as a show of good will toward Qin, so that they could rejoin Prince Zichu. *Historical Records* states that the reason Zhao Ji and her son were not killed was because she came from a powerful family, but this does not sit well with the fact that she had once been a dancing girl.

Prince Zichu succeeded his father as ruler of Qin in 249, rewarding Lü Buwei with a large fief and appointing him chief minister entrusted with affairs of state; but the prince died three years later. His son Ying Zheng ascended the throne in 246, whereupon Zhao Ji became queen dowager (*taihou*). Since her son was still a minor—he was in his thirteenth year—Zhao Ji held the reins of power in conjunction with Lü Buwei, who retained his position as chief minister. The young monarch addressed Lü Buwei respectfully as Uncle (*zhong fu*, literally “second father” or “younger father”), and *Historical Records* maintains that Lü Buwei continued his affair with Queen Dowager Zhao Ji. However, as the king grew older Lü Buwei apparently had qualms, later proven to be well founded, about his relationship with the young man's mother. He installed a man named Lao Ai in his place as Zhao Ji's lover; she became obsessed with him but while he is said to have exercised excessive power, he lacked Lü Buwei's intelligence.

When the scandal of Zhao Ji's relationship with Lao Ai broke, as it was bound to, Ying Zheng killed his mother's lover and sent her to an old palace in Yong (present-day Fengxiang District in Shaanxi Province). She was later recalled, however, and welcomed back to Ganquan Palace in Xianyang after a visitor from the state of Qi

argued that exiling the ruler's mother might reflect badly on him at a time when Qin was attempting to unify the nation. Zhao Ji was thus allowed to live out her life in comfort and security; she died of illness in 228.

Lü Buwei was also implicated in the scandal of Zhao Ji's affair with Lao Ai but was spared because of the contribution he had made in helping Ying Zheng's father gain the throne; a further reason may have been the large number of retainers he had at his disposal. However, suspecting that he would eventually be eliminated, Lü Buwei killed himself, in 239 B.C.E.

Lily Xiao Hong LEE

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Zheng Ce: *see* **Zheng Sisters**

Zheng Er: *see* **Zheng Sisters**

The Zheng Sisters

The Zheng Sisters Zheng Ce and Zheng Er (Zheng Ce Zheng Er Zimei), d. 43, were born during Eastern Han in Jiaozhi, northeast of present-day Hanoi in Vietnam. They are regarded as heroines of the Han dynasty, although in recent times Vietnamese historians have come to look upon them as pioneers of early Vietnamese nationalism.

The Zheng Sisters were from a wealthy aristocratic Vietnamese family. Their father had been a Luo general in Fenling District, and Zheng Ce's husband, Shi Suo, was also the son of a Luo general. The people in the Jiaozhi region had been known as Luo tribes before they were incorporated into the Chinese empire under Qin and Han rule. Each territory had its own army with a military chief similar to the Han system, and the gallantry of Zheng Ce may have had its source in the martial training she received from her military chieftain father.

The Zheng Sisters led a revolt in the year 40, during the reign of Han Emperor Guangwu (r. 25–57). The *History of the Later Han Dynasty* (Hou Han shu) records that Zheng Ce launched the rebellion to avenge the killing of her dissident husband, Shi Suo, by Su Ding, the Chinese governor of Jiaozhi. This revolt, in which Zheng Er joined, was echoed by insurrections elsewhere in other southern border commanderies, including Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen, Rinan, and Hepu. So widespread was resistance against Chinese rule that the whole Red River delta area was affected. Having successfully taken the surrounding sixty-five towns, Zheng Ce proclaimed herself queen, with her capital in her native place. The regional inspector of Jiaozhi and the Chinese governors in other commanderies were barely able to defend themselves against the local forces.

The following year, Emperor Guangwu mobilized over 10,000 troops and dispatched General Pacifying the Waves (*fubo jiangjun*) Ma Yuan and Towered Warships Gen-

eral (*louchuan jiangjun*) Duan Zhi on a punitive campaign against the Zheng Sisters. General Duan, who was in charge of the naval fleet, fell ill and died soon after the first Chinese troops arrived in Hepu. Now in sole control of land and sea forces, General Ma began to advance along the coast. By 42, he had covered thousands of miles before engaging with and defeating the sisters at Langpo. More than 1,000 of the women's supporters were executed, some by decapitation, and over 10,000 were taken prisoner, but the Zheng Sisters managed to pull back to Jinxi. In the rugged valleys of this area military maneuvers were seriously hampered by toxic vapors (*zhangqi*). However, increasingly isolated and cut off from supplies, the two women were unable to sustain their defense and in 43 they were captured and executed. Their heads were taken back to the Chinese capital, Luoyang.

The Zheng Sisters' revolt marked a brilliant epoch for women in ancient southern China and reflected the importance of women in early Vietnamese society. *Nanyue zhi* tells of another Vietnamese woman, named Zhao Yu (or possibly Trieu Au), who led rebels during the campaigns of General Ma Yuan. The Zheng Sisters were also seen as pioneers of Vietnamese nationalism. During the reign of Emperor Guangwu, the farmlands of Vietnam came under the control of autocratic regional inspectors and governors who abused their privilege and practiced favoritism. The indigenous population was subjected to a program of assimilation, and Chinese studies, language, customs, clothing, farming methods, and marriage systems were introduced. The Vietnamese people had long resisted this cultural imperialism that accompanied China's increasing colonization and relentless Sinicization of that region, however, and it is believed that it was cultural conflicts rather than economic factors that spurred the Zheng Sisters to rebellion.

The significance of the Zheng Sisters' rebellion was not their exposing the suffering of their people at the hands of oppressive Han Chinese officials, nor should it be seen as an example of a peasant uprising. Its real significance was that the social status of women throughout the Jiaozhi region was very high and they wielded great influence, in sharp contrast to the sociocultural environment of China proper at that time.

LAI Mingchiu

(Translated by WONG Tse-sheung)

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S

Seng Ji: *see* An Lingshou

Sengjing

Sengjing, 402–486, surnamed Li, was from Moling, in the vicinity of Jiankang (the present-day city of Nanjing); her secular given name is not known. She is remembered as a Buddhist nun who spent thirty years in the remote southern region of China serving as an example and teacher of Buddhism. Her biography in *Lives of the Nuns* (Biqiuni zhuan) says, “Her manner gradually changed the hearts of the barbarian peoples of the south.”

Buddhism flourished during the Southern Dynasties in the valley of the Yangzi River and districts surrounding the capital city of Jiankang; the strong missionary impulse that has always characterized Buddhism also carried it to districts far from the capital. Sengjing’s family had dedicated her to the monastic life before she was born, and at her birth gave her as a disciple to a nun at Jian’an Convent in the capital. By age six she was well established in her education, being able to repeat several scriptures from memory.

During the reign of Emperor Wen (Liu Yilong, 407–453; r. 424–453) of the Liu Song dynasty, Sengjing accompanied an official to Guangzhou (present-day Guangdong Province) in south China as part of his retinue. There, in 433, she happened to meet up with the group of nuns led by the nun Tessara who had come by ship from what is now Sri Lanka and were on their way to the capital. The most likely place for this meeting to have taken place was Panyu, the site of the modern city of Guangzhou, which had long been a port of call along Southeast Asian sea-lanes. The easiest route between Sri Lanka and China for Buddhist travelers at that time was by sea.

With the help of these nuns from Sri Lanka, Sengjing went through the ceremony of receiving the monastic obligations from both the assembly of monks and the assembly of nuns, thus becoming a fully ordained nun (*vide* Huiguo).

Pilgrimages to India were popular in the fifth century, and Sengjing wished to take a ship “to seek out the holy traces of the Buddha’s life on earth.” The people among whom she lived, however, persuaded her not to leave them. They joined together to buy land and build a convent for her, and she remained with them for more than thirty years. Eventually her good reputation reached the ears of Emperor Ming (Liu Yu, 439–472; r. 465–472), who summoned her back to the capital. This probably took place in 465, the year of his accession to the throne and the year he placed other nuns in favored convents by imperial decree (*q.v.* Baoxian; Fajing).

Sengjing served as a model and teacher for both monastics and laity during the Liu Song dynasty, and was later equally revered by members of the royal family of the Qi dynasty. At her death in 486, the well-known official and poet Shen Yue (441–513) composed the eulogy that was inscribed upon her memorial stone.

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Shanyin, Princess: *see* Liu Yingyuan

Shenwu Ming, Empress: *see* Lou Zhaojun, Empress of Emperor Shenwu of Northern Qi

Song, Lady Xuanwen

Lady Song, also known as Lady Xuanwen (Xuanwen Jun), 283–after 362, was a scholar specializing in the Confucian classic *Zhou li*, also known as *Zhou guan*. Her given name is not known, nor is her native place, but she may have been from one of the northern provinces, as her biography in the *History of the Jin Dynasty* (Jin shu) notes that her homeland was occupied by Shi Hu (*zi* Jilong, 295–349; r. 334–349), a warlord of Jie nationality who ruled the Later Zhao dynasty almost to its close.

Lady Song was quite young when her mother died, and she was raised by her father, who appears not to have remarried. Her family had for generations been Confucian scholars, so when she was older her father taught her the pronunciations and meanings of the text *Zhou guan*. This work is a comprehensive collection of documents relating to the administration of the state, and to the various officials and their respective responsibilities. According to her father, it had been formulated by the sagely Duke of Zhou (Zhou Gong), who was the brother of the founder of the Zhou dynasty and whom Confucius greatly admired. Lady Song's father also told her that knowledge of *Zhou guan* was a family specialty that was passed from generation to generation. He is quoted as saying: "Now I do not have a son to pass it on to, you can receive it. Do not let it be lost to the world." There were great disturbances in the north at that time as the Western Jin dynasty collapsed under the onslaught of non-Han invaders, but in spite of this instability Lady Song continued to recite the classic ceaselessly, so that it would not be forgotten.

When Shi Jilong occupied her homeland, Lady Song and her husband fled to the area east of Mount Taishan in present-day Shandong Province. They traveled by foot, he pushing a small cart and she carrying on her back the books her father had handed down to her. After reaching Jizhou (present-day Hebei Province) they lived under the protection of Cheng Anshou, a wealthy man who was kind enough to support them and give them protection.

Lady Song's son Wei Cheng was still a child at that time. She would cut firewood in the daytime and teach Wei Cheng at night, yet she never stopped spinning and weav-

ing. Cheng Anshou would sigh in admiration, saying, “It is said that a scholar’s house produces many officials. Can this be what the saying refers to?” Wei Cheng completed his studies and became well known, eventually becoming an official in the government of Fu Jian (338–385; r. 357–385), third ruler of the Former Qin dynasty. Former Qin, in the north of China, was one of the many states into which China was divided during this period, now known as the Sixteen Kingdoms. Fu Jian, a non-Han of Di nationality, nevertheless admired Chinese culture, and especially the teachings of Confucius, and did much to promote it in his domain. Once he visited the National University (*taixue*) and conversed with the erudites (*boshi*) regarding the classics, saying he was saddened by the disappearance and loss of the rites and music. The erudite Lu Kun said:

Learning has long been neglected and the texts of many classics and commentaries were lost for a time, but after years of piecing them together the texts of the authentic classics are all here as best we know them. The commentary on rites in *Zhou guan* is the only one for which we lack a teacher. I know that Lady Song, mother of Chamberlain of Ceremonials (*taichang*) Wei Cheng, is from a learned family. Her father passed on to her knowledge of the pronunciations and meanings of the text of *Zhou guan*. She is eighty years old but her eyesight and her hearing are fine. She is the only one who could teach younger scholars.

Fu Jian therefore ordered that a lecture hall be established in Lady Song’s home and 120 students were assigned to study under her. She sat within a red gauze curtain when she taught and was given the title Lady Xuanwen; she was also given ten maidservants to wait on her. Lu Kun wrote: “The study of *Zhou guan* was again undertaken in the age.” To her contemporaries, she was Mother Song of the Wei Family.

In primers for women in traditional China, Lady Song was held up as a role model of both a wise mother and a learned woman. Her prestige derived mainly from her learning, with little mention of her morality, especially chastity, a virtue so much admired in later centuries. This is a refreshing departure from tradition.

Lady Song was one of two women credited with passing on the Confucian classics. The other was the daughter of Fu Sheng, who lived during the reign of Han Emperor Wen (Liu Heng, 202–157 B.C.E.; r. 179–157 B.C.E.). Fu Sheng was the only surviving scholar of *Book of Documents* (*Shu jing*) at that time, but he was so old that his speech was not clear. His pupil Chao Cuo was a native of Yingchuan (present-day Henan Province) and, because the dialects of the two places were quite different, he was able to understand only 70 or 80 percent of what Fu Sheng said. One source says it was Fu Sheng’s daughter Xi’e, a native of Zouping (or Jinan, according to another source; both places were in present-day Shandong Province), who relayed her father’s words to his pupil Chao Cuo. Whereas Fu Xi’e was a mere mouthpiece for her father, Lady Song was actually a link in the chain of learned scholarship, and thus was by far the more significant of the two women. In later ages, scholars of women’s learning have often compared Lady Song with the Eastern Han scholar Ban Zhao (*q.v.*). However, the Qing dynasty female scholar Li Wanfang considered Lady Song superior to Ban Zhao, saying, “Of all women, from earliest antiquity, she was the most outstanding. We should worship her and never forget her.”

It must be remembered that Lady Song was allowed to pass on her father's learning only because he did not have a son. That is a large part of the reason why, from early antiquity, she was the only woman in a position to achieve what she did.

Lily Xiao Hong LEE

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South Marchmount, Lady of: see Wei Huacun

Su Boyu Qi: see Su Boyu's Wife

Su Boyu's Wife

Su Boyu's Wife (Su Boyu Qi), fl. 220–280, was a poet of the Jin dynasty; her native place is unknown. One anthology places her in the Eastern Han dynasty, but most other anthologies, as well as the authoritative *Siku quanshu tiyao*, place her in Jin.

Su Boyu was sent to Shu (present-day Sichuan Province) as a junior official. His wife remained in Chang'an and during their long separation she wrote *Poem on a Tray* (Panzhong shi). She wrote it on a tray in the normal fashion of rows of characters forming a square, but the poem was a palindrome and has thus been described as a spiral poem. In this poem she told how much she missed her husband. Su Boyu had already formed a liaison with another woman at his distant post but was so moved by his wife's poem that he returned home to her. This is Anne Birrell's translation of the poem, whose title she translates as *Palindrome*:

In a hillock tree a bird sings of sorrow.
 In spring water deep carps are sleek.
 Swallows in empty barns always feel pangs of hunger.
 An officer's wife rarely meets her husband.
 She leaves the gate to watch, sees a white robe,
 Says, "That must be him!" But then it isn't,
 She goes back indoors sad at heart,
 Up the north hall, along the west stairs.
 Swift her loom winds silk, the shuttle sounds urgent.
 She sighs long sighs, who will she speak to?
 "I remember your going away.
 There was a day of departure, no promise of return.
 You tied my inside belt, saying, 'I'll always love you.'
 If you forgot me only Heaven would know,
 If I forgot you punishment is sure to follow.
 You ought to know I am being virtuous."

What's yellow is gold, what's white is jade,
 What's tall is a mountain, what's low is a vale.
 "Your name is Su, courtesy name Po-yü.
 As a man you're gifted, quite intelligent.
 Your family lives in Ch'angan, your body is in Shu.
 How I regret your horse's hooves come home so seldom!
 One thousand pounds of mutton, one hundred vats of wine.
 You make your horse fat on wheat and millet.
 Men today are not wise enough,
 Give them a letter—they can't read it!
 Start mine from the middle then out to the four corners."

This poem is a mixture of forms. It has forty-eight lines with twenty-seven rhymes and consists mainly of lines of three characters, but with some lines of seven characters. It starts with the *xing* literary device used in folk songs expressing a wife's desperate longing for a husband who has been away a long time. However, the poem also reflects the unequal relationship between husband and wife in traditional Chinese society whereby the husband could take a lover or remarry while the wife could not: "If you forgot me only Heaven would know, If I forgot you punishment is sure to follow." The language of the poem is simple and fluent, almost colloquial, and the feelings expressed are sincere and unaffected, straight from the heart.

Much has been made of how to read this very special poem, whose last line suggests it should be read from the center out to the four corners. This indicates that the tray on which Su Boyu's wife wrote the poem was rectangular, but someone of a later age tried to recreate her poem, writing it on a circular tray. The critic Hu Yinglin writes of the poem: "Su Boyu's Wife's *Poem on a Tray* is said to have been written on a tray in a circular manner and thus should be categorized as *huiwen* (palindrome). This poem is unequalled. 'Swallows in empty barns always feel pangs of hunger. An officer's wife rarely meets her husband.' 'What's yellow is gold, what's white is jade.' 'Your name is Su, courtesy name Po-yü.' 'Your family lives in Ch'angan, your body is in Shu.' All of these are a mixture of three-character or seven-character lines. The shape of the tray on which the poem was written remains unknown. There must be other ways of reading it but this cannot now be known."

Literati of different periods have shown overwhelming admiration for Su Boyu's Wife's poem. These are some of their comments: "*Poem on a Tray* is a wonderful poem with wonderful content from a wonderful idea. The marvelous artistry in this superb writing has never been matched." "This poem is like a folksong or a ballad (*yuefu*). It is written in mixed form yet the thoughts it conveys are sincere and candid. It is an incomparable masterpiece." "*Poem on a Tray* is an excellent piece of writing based on an excellent idea. It is the very peak of poetic perfection. This intelligent, sensitive woman perhaps had the original idea [of a spiral poem]. However, in terms of literary value, the elegant, straightforward diction, the frequent transitions and brilliant inspiration are not found in the work of any literati of any age."

Others have not thought so highly of the poem, considering it a kind of word game. "In the transition period between Han and Wei, intellectuals were fond of witty and

cryptic writing, as, for example, Cai Yong's *Inscription for Cao E* and Cao Cao's *Chicken Ribs*. This trend lasted into the Jin dynasty. A natural development of the play on word combinations was the play on word position, as in *Poem on a Tray*. It was also natural that the word games further developed into writings with a complicated way of reading them, such as Su Ruolan's *Huiwen Poem*."

Mao Zedong liked *Poem on a Tray* very much, marking the whole piece for special attention in his copy of *Gushi yuan*. He even marked the editor's annotations: "The touching force that saddened Su Boyu came entirely from tenderness rather than from grievance. This is deep love. Learn it well."

SU Zhecong

(Translated by CHE Wai-lam William)

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Su Hui

Su Hui, b. c. 360, *zi* Ruolan, was the third daughter of Su Gong, magistrate of Chenliu (present-day Chenliu District, Henan Province), and the wife of Dou Tao, regional inspector of Qinzhou (present-day Gansu Province). A poet, she perfected the skill of writing palindromes (*huiwenshi*) and wove her work on a piece of brocade in successive squares, one inside the other, so that no matter where one started to read and whether one read clockwise, counter-clockwise, or diagonally, it read as a poem.

Su Hui is said to have been an elegant beauty of clear and sharp perception. Modest and quiet, she did not seek to stand out among her peers. When she was in her sixteenth year, she married Dou Tao. He was from an old family and is said to have been tall, handsome, and high-spirited, excelling not only in the classics but also in martial arts. His contemporaries held him in high esteem. Dou Tao regarded his young wife highly even though, despite her modest and quiet nature, she is said to have been quick-tempered and jealous. He kept his favorite concubine, Zhao Yangtai, a skilled singer and dancer, in a separate residence but Su Hui eventually found out about Zhao Yangtai; she grabbed her and beat her, greatly humiliating her. Not surprisingly, this displeased Dou Tao, and Zhao Yangtai made things worse by exaggerating Su Hui's weaknesses, making Dou Tao even angrier with his wife.

The ruler of Former Qin, Fu Jian (338–385; r. 357–385), looked upon Dou Tao as a trusted assistant, appointing him to a series of important positions in which he served

with distinction. In 379, Fu Jian took the city of Xiangyang (present-day Xiangyang District, Hubei Province) in preparation for his plan to invade Eastern Jin, south of the Yangzi River. Worried that the area was not entirely secure, he appointed Dou Tao as General Pacifying the South, to be stationed at Xiangyang. Dou Tao asked Su Hui to go with him to his new post but, still smarting from the Zhao Yangtai incident, she refused. Dou Tao therefore took his concubine Zhao Yangtai with him to Xiangyang and stopped communicating with Su Hui.

Su Hui was twenty-one when her husband left her; she greatly regretted her decision and was filled with remorse. She wove a brilliant brocade palindrome; it was of five colors and beautiful to look at. When someone complained at being unable to read it, she said, “Only my beloved can understand it.” She then sent it with a servant to Xiangyang. Dou Tao was impressed by Su Hui’s ingenuity when he saw the brocade, but was even more taken with the feelings expressed in the poems. He let Zhao Yangtai go and prepared a carriage with many servants to have Su Hui brought to him. It is said that when they were reunited they loved each other even more than before.

The piece of brocade is eight *cun* square (about 26 cm, or 10.5 inches, square) and woven on it are 841 characters from which poems can be made. No matter which way it is read, a poem can be formed. It is so fine that every dot and stroke of every character is clearly visible. Su Hui called it *Xuanji tu*, which can tentatively be translated as *Picture of the North Star*. To Empress Wu Zetian (r. 684–704, *q.v. Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: Tang to Ming*), this name later suggested it could be read like the heavenly bodies revolving in the sky. The poet Zhu Shuzhen (c. 1135/38–c. 1180, *q.v. Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: Tang to Ming*) also wrote an exposition of this work. Through the ages it has been regarded as an ingenious masterpiece, both of literature and of handicraft, and is admired by both men and women.

Su Hui is said to have written more than 5,000 words of prose and poetry but all her works were lost during the upheavals of the Sui dynasty; only *Xuanji tu* survived. Empress Wu Zetian considered her poems the earliest examples of the “boudoir resentment” (*guiyuan*) genre.

Because of the challenges inherent in Su Hui’s palindrome, many attempts have been made over the centuries to decode it. Empress Wu Zetian was the first to tell the story of Su Hui and she found more than 200 poems in the brocade. Eight centuries later, the lyric poet Zhu Shuzhen surpassed this, further refining the technique of decoding it, and was able to find poems of three- and four- as well as five- and seven-character (syllable) lines. Finally, the contemporary literary historian Xie Wuliang crowned all earlier efforts by finding over 3,800 poems of different lengths; he has reproduced the *Xuanji tu* and examples of his readings in his *History of Chinese Women’s Literature* (*Zhongguo funü wenxueshi*).

Su Hui might have been inspired by Su Boyu’s Wife (*q.v.*), an earlier poet who wrote palindromes on a rectangular tray; her work is known as *Poems on a Tray* (*Pan zhong shi*). Modern literary taste may not value such word games, but from the point of view of handicraft design and execution, Su Hui’s *Xuanji tu* is undeniably a unique masterpiece.

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Xie Wuliang. *Zhongguo funü wenxueshi*. Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1916; Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1992, reprint, Section II, 25–68.

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Su Ruolan: *see* **Su Hui**

Sun Ce Mu Wu Furen: *see* **Wu, Wife of Caitiff-Smashing-General Sun**

Sun Luban

Sun Luban, c. 215–c. 258, *zi* Dahu (Big Tiger), was the eldest daughter of Lady Bu (*q.v.* Bu, Consort of Sun Quan) and of Sun Quan (Great Emperor, 182–252; r. 222–252), founding emperor of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu. She had been betrothed to Zhou Xun, a son of Sun Quan’s old friend Zhou Yu (175–210), but when he died she was married, possibly in the late 220s, to General (*weijiangjun*) and Grand Administrator (*taishou*) Quan Cong (d. 247 or 249), hence her title Princess Quan (Quan Gongzhu or Quan Zhu). Quan Cong was governor of Xuzhou (present-day Jiangsu Province) and, like his father before him, was one of Sun Quan’s closest allies and brightest commanders.

Sun Luban and her younger sister Sun Luyu (d. 255) became deeply involved in court politics, supporting opposing sides in the lethal struggle to secure a successor to their aging father from among their half-brothers. Their mother, Lady Bu, had been their father’s most loved consort but she had not given him a son and heir. Sun Quan initially appointed his eldest son, Sun Deng (209–241), as heir apparent, but after the latter’s death he appointed his next surviving son, Sun He (c. 226–253). This young man was the son of Lady Wang, Sun Quan’s second-favorite consort and the woman he intended to install as empress. Sun Luban was apprehensive about these appointments because she had earlier slandered her half-brother Sun He and his mother, Lady Wang, and feared retribution; her husband had also at some stage made an enemy of Lady Wang. A struggle ensued between Sun Luban’s faction, which was attempting to have her younger half-brother Sun Ba (c. 232–250) installed as heir apparent, and Sun Luyu’s faction, which was attempting to retain Sun He as heir apparent. Exasperated by these machinations, which had already led to the death “from grief,” of Lady Wang, Sun Quan finally banished Sun He in 250 and ordered Sun Ba to commit suicide.

Sun Luban immediately transferred her support for heir apparent to her seven-year-old half-brother Sun Liang (243–260), the youngest son of Sun Quan, and arranged a marriage for the boy with a daughter of her husband’s nephew. This girl therefore became empress when Sun Liang assumed the throne in 252. The regent appointed for the boy emperor, Chief Minister (*chengxiang*) Sun Jun (d. 256), was a second cousin of Sun Quan and he became extremely powerful, though never widely liked; at least two attempts on his life are recorded in *Record of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo zhi). However, determined not to stray far from the center of power, the now-widowed Sun Luban took her clansman Sun Jun for her lover. He is presented in a most unattractive light in the *Record* (as translated by Achilles Fang): “Sun Jun never enjoyed high reputation. He was arrogant and haughty, insidious

and malicious. He had a large number of men sentenced to death, and the people were in a commotion. He furthermore had illicit relations with the palace ladies, and committed adultery with Princess Luban. In [254] . . . Sun Ying planned to assassinate Sun Jun. The thing leaked out, and Sun Ying died.” The following year there was another unsuccessful attempt on Sun Jun’s life and when this unraveled as well, Sun Luban incriminated her sister Sun Luyu. Sun Jun then killed Sun Luyu.

Sun Jun died the following year and his cousin Sun Lin (232–259) took up the reins of power as regent. However, as the young emperor began to take more interest in affairs of state, Sun Lin feared his excesses would be revealed and he attempted to avoid attending court. The emperor conspired with his half-sister Sun Luban to unseat Sun Lin but was himself dethroned, in 258. Sun Luban protested that she knew nothing of the plot against Sun Lin, shifting the blame onto her sister Sun Luyu’s two stepsons, who were duly executed. Sun Luban appears to have been banished.

Sun Luban had at least one son, Quan Wu, who was the youngest son of her husband. Quan Cong had died before the deadly intrigues at the Wu court came to a head. His sons by another daughter of Sun Quan later transferred their allegiance by surrendering en masse to the northern state of Wei.

Sun Luyu, the younger sister of Sun Luban, bore the echoing *zi* Xiaohu (Little Tiger). Her first marriage, in 229, was to Cavalry General (*piaoji jiangjun*) Zhu Ju (174–250), whom her father had appointed to office because he possessed both literary and military talent, so she was known as Princess Zhu (Zhu Zhu). In 250, at the height of the heir-apparent debacle described above, Zhu Ju was flogged and demoted before being ordered to commit suicide. Sun Luyu then married Liu Zuan. This was a second marriage for both of them, Liu Zuan having been married to Sun Quan’s (unnamed) second daughter, who had died. Sun Luyu had at least one child, a daughter who became empress to her own maternal uncle Sun Xiu (Emperor Jing, 236–264; r. 258–264).

Sun Luyu’s body, which was placed in an unmarked grave after she was murdered in 255, was later re-interred. The last ruler of Wu, Sun Hao (Marquis of Wucheng; r. 264–280), sought the help of two shamans to find her grave, apparently in acknowledgment of the assistance she had earlier extended to his father, the heir apparent Sun He.

It is worth noting that neither Sun Luban nor Sun Luyu was chaste in the Confucian sense, both having more than one sexual partner, and that this was not considered unusual in the Three Kingdoms period, even (or perhaps especially) for women of the imperial family. Sun Luban and Sun Luyu are remembered, however, for the active roles they played in politics. Sun Luban appears to have been more influential and more ruthless, perhaps because she outlived her sister and engineered her sister’s murder. However, in those rugged times there may have been no other way to survive than to assume the role of the aggressor; few people died a peaceful death from old age.

Priscilla CHING-CHUNG

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Sun Luyu: *see* Sun Luban

Sun Polu Wu Furen: *see* Wu, Wife of Caitiff-Smashing-General Sun

Sun Quan Mu: *see* Wu, Wife of Caitiff-Smashing-General Sun

Sun Quan's Mother, Lady Wu: *see* Wu, Wife of Caitiff-Smashing-General Sun

T

Tanbei: *see* Tanluo

Tanluo

Tanluo, fl. late fourth century, was a Buddhist nun. She was responsible for the construction of many Buddhist buildings during the Eastern Jin dynasty but little else is known about her, not even her native place.

Tanluo was a disciple of the nun Tanbei (d. 396), who gained the support of Emperor Mu (Sima Dan, r. 344–361) of Eastern Jin and his empress née He. Emperor Mu is said to have suggested that Tanbei was probably the most distinguished nun in the capital, Jiankang, and in 354 Empress He sponsored the building of the Yong'an Monastery for her. Tanbei's fame grew after that, yet she is said to have remained modest, entirely lacking in arrogance.

Nothing is known of Tanluo's background, but she is said to have been widely read in Buddhist sutras and the monastic rules (*vinaya*). She was richly blessed with wit and talent, while her thinking was precise and thorough. On the death of Tanbei, Emperor Xiaowu (Sima Yao, 362–396; r. 372–396) ordered Tanluo to assume her teacher's responsibilities as abbess. She added to the monastery a four-story pagoda as well as lecture halls and living quarters; she also had an image of the reclining Buddha and a hall with a shrine of seven Buddhas built.

To construct these buildings and images, Tanluo would have required planning skills as well as the ability to manage the finances for such large projects. She may also have needed some knowledge of building and construction as well as image making. We know of no other examples of women in control of such large projects at that time, but the example she set may have helped other nuns or even secular women enjoy

similar opportunities. Tanluo was therefore a woman who not only had a say in her own life but whose life and work touched many others.

Lily Xiao Hong LEE

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W

Wang Shuying's Wife: *see* Liu Lingxian

Wang Yan Qi: *see* Guo of Western Jin

Wang Zhenfeng, Empress of Emperor Ming of Liu Song

Empress Wang (Mingdi Wang Huanghou), 436–479, whose name was Wang Zhenfeng, was the principal consort of Emperor Ming (Liu Yu, 439–472; r. 465–472), sixth emperor of the southern Liu Song dynasty. She was born into the elite Wang family of Linyi, in present-day Shandong Province; her great-great-grandfather Wang Dao had helped found the Eastern Jin dynasty and had served its three first emperors as grand chancellor. Her great-grandfather Wang Shao had also served Eastern Jin, as imperial secretary (*shangshu*), as did her grandfather Wang Mu, as prefect of Linhai. Her father, Wang Senglang, was posthumously honored as one of the Three Dignitaries (*sansi*) for his services to the Liu Song dynasty. Her brother, Wang Jingwen (d. 472), had held the powerful position of prefect of Yangzhou until his death; he was ordered by Emperor Ming to commit suicide lest the emperor's young son and heir was no match should Wang Jingwen attempt to seize power after Emperor Ming's death.

Wang Zhenfeng was twelve years old in 448 when she married Liu Yu, who, as the eleventh son of Emperor Wen (Liu Yilong, 407–453; r. 424–453), was not in the direct line of succession to the throne. Liu Yu was installed as King of Xiangdong, with Wang Zhenfeng his consort, and she gave birth to two daughters, Princess Lingchang and Princess Ling'an. In 465, however, a palace coup removed Liu Yu's nephew (Liu Ziyue, known to history as the Former Deposed Emperor [Qianfeidi]; r. 464–465) from the throne and Liu Yu's foster mother, Lady Lu (412–466), formally installed him on the throne. Wang Zhenfeng thus became Empress Wang. Historians appear to have held

Empress Wang in higher esteem than they did her husband. We are told that Emperor Ming enjoyed looking at naked women; he would order palace women to strip naked as his consorts looked on, deeming this entertainment. Empress Wang, however, is said to have refused to look, covering her eyes with a fan. This enraged Emperor Ming, who claimed that she should not refuse to be entertained now that they were finally in a position to enjoy themselves. Clearly, he believed that humiliation of other women, which he found entertaining, should also entertain her.

Emperor Ming's eldest son succeeded him and is known to history as the Later Deposed Emperor (Houfeidi, 463–476; r. 472–477). This emperor was the son of a secondary consort, Lady Chen, but upon his ascension to the throne Empress Wang was given the title Empress Dowager Wang and she assumed responsibility for his moral education. The young emperor refused to be led in the ways of righteousness and instead plotted to poison her. Apparently aware of his destructive nature, Empress Dowager Wang secretly lent her support to the many princes who were scheming to be rid of him. Their plot succeeded and after this emperor was killed in a coup, Emperor Ming's third son, the eleven-year-old Liu Zhun, was installed as emperor (Emperor Shun, r. 477–479). The appointment of this boy emperor presaged the demise of the Liu Song dynasty, for the man appointed his regent—Xiao Daocheng—overthrew the dynasty in 479, establishing the Qi dynasty and declaring himself emperor (Emperor Gao, r. 479–482).

With the collapse of Liu Song, Empress Dowager Wang was demoted to Consort of Ruyin; she died the same year, at the age of forty-four, and was posthumously honored as Empress Gong. The judgment history has passed on Empress Wang is that though she was a good empress she was powerless to save a dynasty that was already in decline.

Priscilla CHING-CHUNG

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Wei Furen: *see* Wei Shuo

Wei Huacun

Wei Huacun, 251 or 252–334, of Rencheng (in present-day Shandong Province), is revered in the Highest Clarity (*shangqing*) sect of Daoism under various titles, including Lady Wei of the Southern Peak (Nanyue Wei Furen), Lady of South Marchmount (Nanyue Furen), and Primal Mistress of Purple Barrens (Zixu Yuanjun). She is de-

scribed as the “Shangqing preceptress” for her role in revealing thirty-one scrolls of Highest Clarity scriptures to the medium Yang Xi (b. 330) between 364 and 370. While there is some doubt that she was a historical figure, it is possible that she was modeled on a practicing Daoist, as she is said to have held the rank of libationer (*jijiu*), or wise elder, in Zhang Daoling’s Way of the Celestial Masters (*vide* Zhang Lu’s Mother). Members of this Daoist sect spread throughout north China in the early third century and with the collapse of the Western Jin dynasty in 316 many migrated to the south, where an indigenous shamanistic religion flourished. In what some historians see as an attempt by the southern gentry to combat the religious and political dominance of these northern émigrés, a new form of Daoism emerged that incorporated both shamanistic elements and aspects of the Way of the Celestial Masters.

In 364, the southern medium Yang Xi received the first of a series of visitations from perfected beings (*zhenren*) who descended to him from the Heaven of Highest Clarity. As instructed, he recorded the dictations of these deities, and it is in Yang Xi’s written record that Lady Wei is first mentioned, as a director of destinies (*siming*) and as Yang Xi’s teacher. A purely spirit figure, she spoke of and quoted scriptures, most of which were concerned with practical matters such as cleanliness, hygiene, and rituals. She offered advice to Yang Xi’s gentry employers on spiritual and medical matters and was the divinity whose aid it was necessary to enlist, by means of written petitions, for curing serious illnesses (*vide* Xu Baoguang).

More than a century after Yang Xi recorded these visitations, the scholar-official and Daoist Tao Hongjing (452–536) retired to Maoshan (near present-day Nanjing) and collated them into a text he named *Declarations of the Perfected* (Zhengao), adding his own commentary. To Yang Xi’s portrait of Lady Wei, his commentary added a partly revealed biography that had been compiled by the perfected. In this biography were intimations of prior mortality in the form of a name (Wei Huacun), two sons, an implied husband surnamed Liu, skill in a technique of long life (eating peach skins), and earthly status as a libationer. Her given name, Huacun, literally means “Blossom Visualization,” an inescapable reference to the alchemical drugs favored by Tao Hongjing on Maoshan and the Highest Clarity meditation practice of visualizing divinities within one’s body. Tao Hongjing also noted that Lady Wei had transmitted sacred scriptures to Yang Xi and that one of her sons had given Yang Xi a sacred text.

As Edward Schafer has noted in his article “The Restoration of the Shrine of Wei Hua-ts’un,” the rulers of the Tang dynasty (618–907) sponsored Daoist priests and priestesses, erecting friaries on mountains and in major cities throughout China. Shrines were established on the sacred mountains and Highest Clarity Daoism enjoyed increasing status. At the end of the seventh century, the Daoist priestess (*nüdaoshi*) Huang Lingwei (c. 640–721; she is also known as Huagu, or Miss Flower) discovered an overgrown shrine dedicated to Lady Wei Huacun at Linchuan, in the northeast of present-day Jiangxi Province. Her restoration and subsequent tending of the shrine, which according to tradition Lady Wei herself had erected, prompted the scholar-official Yan Zhenqing (709–784) to compose a eulogy to which he prefaced a biography of the Lady. In this biography Lady Wei gained a fully documented mortal life, complete with a birthplace, year of birth, and names and dates of father, husband, and sons, the moral and spiritual rectitude of which

accounted for her deification. Described as possessing the marks of transcendence—“a woman of crystal lit from within, her vital organs shining like luminescent gems”—she did not die but escaped her mortal form through “sword release” (*jianjie*). After sixteen years of posthumous study on a holy mountain, she was visited by Queen Mother of the West (*q.v.*), who accompanied Lady Wei to her permanent dwelling on Great Huo Mountain (in present-day Zhejiang Province; some sources place Mount Huo in Fujian Province, others have her on Mount Heng in Hunan Province). This became the standard hagiography of Lady Wei, Wei Huacun.

Wei Huacun is very possibly a case of reverse euhemerization, whereby a purely imaginary figure gradually acquires the trappings of a previous human existence until it is generally accepted that she was a mortal who achieved divine status. It is equally possible that she had genuine earthly origins in the female libationers of the Way of the Celestial Masters. All that can be said with any certainty is that while she was revered initially as a master healer, in the Way of the Celestial Masters tradition, by Tang she had become a divine beauty—“she was luminous and pure, fresh and pelucid” (Schafer)—who had dominion over the sacred southern mountain.

Sue WILES

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Wei, Lady: *see* Wei Huacun; Wei Shuo

Wei of the Southern Peak, Lady: *see* Wei Huacun

Wei Shuo

Wei Shuo, 272–349, *zi* Maoyi, more popularly known simply as Lady Wei (Wei Furen), was China’s earliest known female calligrapher; she also taught the famous male calligrapher Wang Xizhi (309–c. 365).

Wei Shuo was born during the Western Jin dynasty into a family of distinguished officials and scholars native to Anyi County in Hedong (present-day Xia County in Shanxi Province). Her ancestors had been known for their Confucian scholarship since the Han dynasty. Although her relationship with him has not been established

absolutely, there is strong circumstantial evidence that she was the granddaughter of Wei Yi, imperial secretary (*shangshu puye*) of the Wei dynasty and the first member of the Wei family to be known for calligraphy. He is said to have loved various styles of writing and to have been skilled in all of them. Wei Shuo's brother Wei Zhan was chamberlain for law enforcement (*tingwei*) during Western Jin and his contribution to the legal practices of Jin have been noted in the histories. Her uncle Wei Guan (220–291) was a close and important adviser of Emperor Wu (Sima Yan, 236–290; r. 265–290), the founder of Western Jin, and held a number of important positions at both the Wei and the Jin courts. His expertise in the cursive (*cao*) style of calligraphy was overshadowed only by his political importance. Wei Shuo's cousin Wei Heng (a son of Wei Guan) was skilled in the cursive style and the clerical (*li*) style and wrote a treatise on calligraphy entitled *The Trend Towards Four Styles of Calligraphy* (*Si ti shu shi*). This is included in his biography in the official *History of the Jin Dynasty* (*Jin shu*) and became a classic in its field. While Wei Shuo married into an important family, her husband's family was not as prestigious as her own. Her husband, Li Ju, rose to the position of regional inspector (*cishi*) of Jiangzhou (the area covered by present-day Jiangxi Province) and their son Li Chong was also known for his calligraphy. We know that Li Chong held the position of magistrate (*ling*) of Shan District and editorial director of the Palace Library (*da zhuzuo*) and he is credited with creating the Four Bureaux (*sibu*) system of classifying books, which was used from the Liu Song dynasty until early modern times.

There is no biography of Wei Shuo in the official history of Jin and the little we know about her life has been pieced together from various sources, including the biographies of her male relatives and works on calligraphy. From the biography of her son, Li Chong, we know that he lost his father early in life and the family was in extremely straitened circumstances. Li Chong worked as an aide and a secretary for important officials of the central government, which probably did not bring him much financial reward, until he eventually begged one of his employers to give him a better-paid post as a local official. Not long after this, however, he met with bereavement when his mother died. This suggests that Wei Shuo raised her son under difficult financial circumstances and that she was unable to enjoy this improvement in the family's finances. Her son's biography also states that he was skilled at the regular (*kai*) style of calligraphy, one of the styles his mother was famous for, and that his skill matched that of Zhong You and Suo Jing, both famous calligraphers of the Han-Wei period. His biography makes no mention of his mother having influenced his calligraphy, yet says that his contemporaries lauded him as a calligrapher.

While her name is not found in the official history of Jin, despite the fact that her teaching and influence should have been evident from the fame her son achieved for his calligraphy, Wei Shuo is frequently mentioned in early works on calligraphy dating from the Tang dynasty (618–907). It is through these works that she is known, even though the information provided is brief and often contains mistakes. She is said to have inherited the style of Zhong You (d. 230); given that he died almost fifty years before she was born, it is clear that she could not have learned from him personally. However, her grandfather Wei Yi served in the same court as Zhong You and it is pos-

sible that the two families were friendly, so that Wei Shuo could have learned from younger members of Zhong You's family, possibly a woman. In any case, Zhong You was such a renowned calligrapher that many people would have seen and collected his works. As lovers and practitioners of calligraphy themselves, the Wei family would certainly have possessed copies and rubbings of his works. Calligraphers traditionally began their studies by copying famous works, and Wei Shuo could have copied Zhong You's works extensively, thus becoming an unofficial heir of his style.

There are no extant examples of Wei Shuo's calligraphy. One piece attributed to her was forged by Li Huailin in the Tang dynasty. However, because critics compared her with Zhong You and characterized her style as "lean," we may deduce that she had a forceful and "bony" style, perhaps not conforming to the typically feminine style, which is soft and graceful. It is said that she was very attentive to natural phenomena and applied her observations to her work: she would strive to capture in certain strokes the fall of a stone from a cliff, or the curve of clumps of old rattan resting against a tree. The styles she was known for were the clerical, the regular, and the running (*xing*) styles.

Two things stand out in Wei Shuo's career as a calligrapher. One is that she authored the treatise *Illustrated Formation of the Writing Brush* (*Bi zhen tu*). This treatise is only about 1,000 words long, and while the title suggests it originally included illustrations only the text survives. In this text, Wei Shuo criticizes her contemporaries for wishing to become great calligraphers overnight. She offers practical advice about the choice of brush, ink stone, ink stick, and paper, and then proceeds to describe the correct posture for doing calligraphy. She continues with an exposition of the basic strokes and the method and principle of executing them. Her treatise does not use flowery language and vague expressions, as some other works on calligraphy do; everything she says is precise and practical, helpful especially to beginners. This work influenced many later works on the use of the brush.

The second thing for which Wei Shuo is well known is that she was the teacher of Wang Xizhi, arguably the greatest calligrapher of China and East Asia. Wei Shuo was a cousin of Wang Xizhi's father, Wang Kuang. This familial relationship, in addition to the more than thirty-year age difference between them, made their female teacher/male student relationship more plausible at a time when there was a fairly strict segregation of the sexes. One source, written much later, has Wang Kuang obtaining Cai Yong's calligraphic method from Wei Shuo and teaching it to his son, Wang Xizhi. Also, in a work traditionally considered as Wang Xizhi's own, he admitted being Wei Shuo's pupil, but virtually said that learning from her was a waste of time. This particular work is not found in Wang Xizhi's collected works; it is in a collection on calligraphy compiled later, in the Tang dynasty, by Zhang Yanyuan and recent scholarship has questioned its reliability. Another Tang work on calligraphy tells the unlikely story that Wang Kuang gave calligraphers' treatises on the use of the brush to the twelve-year-old Wang Xizhi to study. Lady Wei noticed a sudden improvement in the boy's calligraphy and suspected that he had read old treatises. She burst into tears and said, "You will certainly eclipse my fame one day!" This sounds as if it were fabricated after Wang Xizhi's reputation had far exceeded that of his teacher.

Wei Shuo taught at least two more students besides Wang Xizhi. One was her son

Li Chong and the other was her husband's nephew Li Shi. The former was adept in the regular style and the latter in the clerical style, both of which were considered to have been Wei Shuo's special skills. Her other specialty, the running style, was also one of Wang Xizhi's specialties.

Whatever Wang Xizhi thought of his old teacher, it is undeniable that he once studied under Wei Shuo. Being a woman in pre-modern China, Wei Shuo did not have the opportunities Wang Xizhi had and was possibly therefore not able to develop her potential to the full. Wang Xizhi became a cult figure during the Tang dynasty and continues to be popular today, while Wei Shuo is mentioned less and less frequently in works on calligraphy after Tang. Today, we should acknowledge Wei Shuo as at least a bridge between Zhong You and Wang Xizhi, two great calligraphers of early China.

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Wei Taizu, Consort of: see Ding, Consort of Cao Cao, King of Wei

Wencheng Wenming Huanghou: see Feng, Empress of Emperor Wencheng of Northern Wei

Wende Guo Huanghou: see Guo, Empress of Emperor Wen of Wei

Wendi Yuan Huanghou: see Yuan Qigui, Empress of Emperor Wen of Liu Song

Wenming née Feng, Empress Dowager: see Feng, Empress of Emperor Wencheng of Northern Wei

Wenxian Dugu Huanghou: see Dugu, Empress of Emperor Wen of Sui

Wenzhao, Empress: see Zhen, Empress of Emperor Wen of Wei