

The *Hu-chi* 胡姬, mainly Iranian Girls, found in China during the T'ang Period*

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I

We find frequently in the poems of the T'ang period the wording *hu-chi* 胡姬, *lit.* foreign girl, as the waitress at the bar or restaurant in the cities of China. So far we know the *hu-chi* was seldom mentioned before the middle of the eighth century. Since then the word *hu-chi* often appears in the verses of the day. In his *Ode to Youth* (*Shao-nien hang* 少年行), Li Po 李白 (701-761) tells us of the *hu-chi* attending on customers in a tavern of Ch'ang-an the metropolis.¹⁾ The poem reads as follows: 五陵年少金市東, 銀鞍白馬度春風, 落花踏盡遊何處, 笑入胡姬酒肆中. We have two other poems by the same poet,²⁾ each of which

* Summarized with a few additions from my paper in Japanese *Tōro no koki* 當墟の胡姬 (in the *Chōan no haru* 長安の春, Tōkyō, 1940, pp. 53-75).

- 1) *Fên-lei pu-chu*, *Li T'ai-po shih-chi* 分類補注李太白詩集 (Ed. *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* 四部叢刊), ch. 6. Wu-ling 五陵, literally five mausolea of the Han emperors distributed in the neighbourhood of Ch'ang-an, hence Ch'ang-an itself. Chin-shih 金市, literally metal market, means the West Market 西市 of the T'ang capital, chin denoting the direction of the west in the *wu-hang* theory 五行說 of ancient China. If not so, the chin-shih alludes to that of Ch'ang-an of the Han. Cf: Ts'ui Hao 崔顥, *Wei-ch'êng shao-nien hang* 渭城少年行 (*Ch'üan T'ang-shih* 全唐詩 lithographic edition, Shanghai, 1887), ch. 2. The chin-shih in the story of Wang ssu-lang 王四郎 in the *Chi-i-chi* 集異記 by Hsieh Yung-jo 薛用弱 (cited in the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記, lith. ed. of *Sao-yeh shan-fang* 掃葉山房, ch. 36), is not the West Market, but the goldsmiths' shops in that market. (Ssu-lang denotes the order of the *p'ai-hang* 排行, not his *ming* 名). Some Chinese traditional interpretations that the Li Po's poem is alluding to a verse by Hsin Yen-nien 辛延年 (Later Han) containing the passage 胡姬年十五, 春日獨當墟 seem to me too much far-fetched.
- 2) *Li T'ai-po shih-chi*, chs. 17 and 12 respectively. The title of the first is *Sung Fei shih-pa T'u-nan kwei Sung-shan* 送裴十八圖南歸嵩山, and the second *Tsui-hou tsêng Wang Li-yang* 醉後贈王歷陽. Shi-pa is not the *ming* 名, but shows the order of the *p'ai-hang*, T'u-nan being his personal name; Wang Li-yang: Wang, the governor of Li-yang.

The *Ch'ing-chi mên* 青綺門 in the first is the third gate from the north of the east wall of Ch'ang-an in the Han time. This name, or in its abbreviated form *Ch'ing-mên* 青門, was used to even in later days as a poetical expression of the *Ch'un-ming mên* 春明門 although it is really the second gate and not the third. Cf. Li Tao-yüan 酈道元, *Shui-ching chu* 水經注, ch. 19. Cf. also Li Po's poem entitled *Hsiang-fêng hang* 相逢行 (*Li T'ai-po shih-chi*, ch. 6) and Liu Chia's 劉翺 *Ch'ing-mên lu* 青門路 (*Ch'üan T'ang-shih*, ch. 6). In the vicinity of this gate and Yen-hsing mên 延興門 the third of the east wall, there were found not a few restaurants and taverns, where the farewell meetings were often held. Cf. the *Jên-shih chuan* 任氏傳 attributed to Shên Chi-chi 沈既濟 and *Yen-hsing mên-wai tso* 延興門外作, a poem by Wei Chuang 韋莊. (*Ch'üan T'ang-shih*, ch. 26.)

refers to the *hu-chi* in a drinking house, but we do not exactly know the location, except in the first one. The text of the first informs us as follows: 何處可爲別, 長安青綺門, 胡姬招素手, 延客醉金樽· · · · ·, and the second: · · · · ·雙歌二胡姬, 更奏遠清朝, 舉酒挑朔雪, 從君不相饒. Ts'ên Ts'an 岑參 (715-770), a contemporary poet with Li Po, also furnishes us a poem in which a *hu-chi* is described as a barmaid outside the Ch'un-ming gate 春明門 of Ch'ang-an.³⁾ Its title and the beginning lines are: 青門歌, 送東臺張判官: 青門金鎖平旦開, 城頭日出使車回, 青門柳枝正堪折, 路傍一日幾人別, 東出青門路不窮, 驛頭官樹灞陵東, 花撲征衣看似繡, 雲隨去馬色疑驄, 胡姬酒壚日未午, 絲繩玉缸酒如乳, 灞頭落花殘馬蹄, 昨夜微雨花成泥, 黃鸝翅濕飛轉低, 關東尺書醉癡題, 須臾望君不可見, 揚鞭飛鞞疾如箭, · · · · ·.

The *hu-chi* was usually beautiful. Li Po's two other poems with the same title (*Ch'ien yü tsun-chiu hang* 前有樽酒行)⁴⁾ are the best evidences on her personal appearance. In one of these poems the poet describes the *hu-chi* as beautiful as flowers, and in the other he says explicitly that she is a beauty. In one of them, we read: 琴奏龍門之綠桐, 玉壺美酒清若空, 催絃拂柱與君飲, 看朱成碧顏始紅, 胡姬貌如花, 當壚笑春風, 笑春風舞羅衣, 君今不醉將安歸; and in the other one,⁵⁾ we see such lines as: 春風東來忽相過, 金樽滌酒生微波, 落花紛紛稍覺多, 美人欲醉朱顏酡, · · · · ·. Thus the *hu-chi* gradually became popular to the Chinese, especially to the youths of the upper classes and the men of letters of the time. We have a few more poems referring to the foreign girls serving the customers in a bar or shop of similar nature. A ballad by Ho Chao 賀朝 (later 8th century), entitled *To a hu-chi of a tavern* 贈酒店胡姬,⁶⁾ has it that 胡姬春酒店, 絃管夜鏘鏘, 紅氍鋪新月, 貂裘坐薄霜, 玉盤初鱸鯉, 金鼎正烹羊, 上客無勞散, 聽歌樂世娘. In the *Song on the hu-chi* 胡姬詞⁷⁾ by Yang Chü-yüan 楊巨源 (770-?) says that 妍艷照江頭, 春風好客留, 當壚知妾慣, 送酒爲郎羞, 香渡蕉蕉扇, 妝成上竹樓, 數錢憐皓腕, 非是不能留. Shih Chien-wu's 施肩吾 (791-?) piece *To Mr. Ch'eng, holding the post of shên-fu for fun* 戲贈鄭申府,⁸⁾ reads as follows: 年少鄭郎那解

3) *Ch'üan T'ang-shih*, ch. 7.

4) *Li T'ai-po shih-chi*, ch. 3.

5) *Ibid.*, ch. 3. But rarely there were some ugly-looking *hu-chi* who were also poor singers, especially in the out-of-way corners of the country. A poem by Lu Yen-mêng 陸叢夢, cited in the *Yün-ch'i yü-i* 雲溪友議 compiled by Fan Lu 范攄 (ninth century), entitled *Kwei-chou yen-shang tsêng hu-tzu-nü* 桂州筵上贈胡子女, will show this fact. It says as follows: 自道風流不可攀, 那堪蹙額更頽頽, 眼睛深似湘江水, 鼻孔高於華嶽山, 舞態固難居掌上, 歌聲憑不遶梁間, 孟陽死後欲千載, 猶有桂人覓往還 (*T'ang-jên shuo-hui* 唐人說薈, lithogr. ed., f. 2r°-v°). At present I cannot identify who Mêng-yang 孟陽 is. If it were Chang Mêng-yang (張孟陽, *ming*: 載) who wrote the famous inscription of Chien-kê 劍閣 in Szechwan, the expression that since his death it has elapsed one thousand years is too exaggerated, for he lived in the fourth century. Nor I know about the historical fact alluded to this passage.

6) *Ch'üan T'ang-shih*, ch. 4.

7) *Ibid.*, ch. 12.

8) *Ibid.*, ch. 18.

愁，春來閑臥酒家樓，胡姬若擬邀他宿，挂却金鞭繫紫驄。 We can cite one more poem by Chang Hsiao-piao 章孝標 (785- ?), of which the title is *Shao-nien hang* 少年行⁹⁾ (*Ode to the youth*) and the text goes on thus: 平明小獵出中軍，異國名香滿袖薰，畫榼倒懸鸚鵡嘴，花衫對舞鳳凰文，手攜白馬嘶春雪，臂竦青骹入暮雲，落日胡姬樓上飲，風吹蕭管滿樓聞。

Further two more poems both of the same theme *Po-pi-kua* 白鼻騮 (White muzzled *kua* horse) may be cited here. The one¹⁰⁾ was done by Li Po, and the other by Chang Hu 張祜 (792-? 853).¹¹⁾ The former runs as follows: 銀鞍白鼻騮，綠地障泥錦，細雨春風花落時，揮鞭直就胡姬飲 and the latter has the following paragraphs: 爲底胡姬酒，長來白鼻騮，摘蓮拋水上，郎意在浮花。 These may amplify the evidences and show the popularity of the *hu-chi* in China.

II

Then, where were the native countries of those *hu-chi* referred to above? *Hu* meant originally the Hsiung-nu in Mongolia,¹²⁾ and then widened its sense to include the northern and western foreigners in general. The peoples of Central Asia and the Middle East were called *hu* without racial distinction. Sometimes the Hindus were also called *hu*. In the T'ang period, however, this appellation was occasionally applied exclusively to those aliens whose homeland was Sogdiana and its neighbouring districts.¹³⁾ Thus owing to the vague usage of the word, we have no strict standard to identify the native country where the *hu-chi* came from to China. Judging solely from the appellation we cannot distinguish one from other. But practically the *hu* girls who were so

- 9) *Ibid.*, ch. 19. Besides the above cited poems we may mention one more piece among the works of Wên T'ing-yün 溫庭筠, *tzu* 字: Fei-ch'ing 飛卿 (812-?872). Its title is: *Tsêng Yüan ssu-lu* 贈袁司錄 and the text runs thus: 一朝辭滿有心期，花發楊園雪壓枝，劉尹故人諳往事，謝郎諸弟得新知，金釵醉就胡姬盡，玉管閑留洛客吹，記得襄陽舊語，不堪風景峴山碑。 (*Ch'üan T'ang-shih*, ch. 22). I know nothing about Yen who was holding the post of the *ssu-lu*, secretary of the Pi-shu shêng 祕書省, except that he was a nephew of the Duke of Huai-an 淮安公 and a friend of Wên's, according to the author's own comment on the title of the poem. By consulting the *Tsai-hsiang shih-hsi piao* 宰相世系表 of the *Hsin T'ang-shu* 新唐書 (ch. 62) we may suppose that the Duke was Yüan Tzu 袁滋. The whole sentence, however, is considerably hard to understand, but the commentaries by Ts'êng I 曾益 and Ku Yü-ch'êng 顧予成 (both of the Ch'ing dynasty) added to the text in the *Wên Fei-ch'ing shih-chi* 溫飛卿詩集 published by Hsiu-yeh ts'ao-t'ang 秀野草堂 will help us to make out the meaning. An ancient variant gives 蠶 instead of 盡 in the above cited line, but I prefer the latter to the former.
- 10) *Li T'ai-po shih-chi*, ch. 6. *Po-pi kua* had been a favourite theme of the *Yüeh-fu* 樂府 since the Six Dynasties.
- 11) *Ch'üan T'ang-shih*, ch. 2.
- 12) SHIRATORI Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉, *Tōko minzoku kō* 東胡民族考, 1 (Shigaku Zasshi 史學雜誌, Vol. XXI, No. 4, Apr. 1912, pp. 369-392).
- 13) LAUFER, B., *Sino-Iranica*, Chicago 1919, pp. 194-195; CHAVANNES, E. et PELLIOU, P., *Traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine*, Paris 1913, p. 231; LEVI, S., in *BEFEO*, iv, pp. 559-563.

attractive and popular among the Chinese youths and men of letters must have immigrated from Sogdiana or neighbouring countries, and not from Mongolia or Kirgiz Steppe where the people were following a cattle-breeding and hunting life. Of course some Northern girls of nomad stock might have been found in China in those times; though very few, some women from such remote and desolate regions in the North were taken to China as hostages to the T'ang court or as victims of expedient marriage between the T'ang imperial family and its tributary nations.¹⁴⁾ But they would probably not have been the sort of beauties that would have attracted the attention of the wealthy youths leading fashionable lives in the great cities of the T'ang, since the Mongols or Turks were leading a very wretched life under the tents of the steppes or deserts. The *hu-chi* usually alluded to in the poems in the T'ang period were probably the Iranian or Central Asian girls of Indo-European origin. They were not only waitresses, but also musicians, dancers and acrobats who excelled in, for example, the *hu-hsüan* 胡旋,¹⁵⁾ *hu-t'êng* 胡騰,¹⁶⁾ or *po-t'i* 白題,¹⁷⁾ all peculiar to Sogdiana, Tokharestan and their vicinity.

As for the meaning of the word *hu* in *hu-chi*, its usage in the expression *hu-ch'u* 胡雛 (*lit.* foreign lad) will supply us with more clues to explain it. According to a poem by Li Po¹⁸⁾ there was at a restaurant in Li-yang 溧陽 (near Chinkiang) a *hu-ch'u*, who was blue-eyed and skilful in playing on flute (..... 溧陽酒樓三月春, 楊花茫茫愁殺人, 胡雛綠眼吹玉笛, 吳歌白紵飛梁塵.....). He must have been a boy of Indo-European origin. Liu Yü-hsi 劉禹錫 (772-842) compared the hollows on the *t'ai-hu shih* 太湖石 (garden stone favourite to the Chinese) with the deep-set eyes of the *hu-ch'u* 狡穴胡雛貌.¹⁹⁾ The word *hu* in the above passage clearly signifies that the young man came from Central or Western Asia, for the natives of these regions were almost all of Iranian blood with blue eyes. Rarely the expression *hu-ch'u* was used to mean not only the *hu* lad or *hu* boy, but also the aged *hu*. The K'ang-lao *hu-ch'u* 康老胡雛,

- 14) HANEDA Tōru 羽田亨 *Tō no motono Sanjussei kagan kijo Ana-shi no boshi ni tsuite* 唐故三十姓可汗貴女阿那氏の墓誌に就いて (Tōyō Gakuhō Vol. III, No. 1; PELLIOT, P., La fille de Mo-tch'o Qaghan et ses rapport avec Kül-Tegin (T'oung Pao, 1912, pp. 301-6).
- 15) Cf. my *Etudes sino-iraniennes, I: A propos du hou-süan-wou* (Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyo Bunko, No. 6, 1932).
- 16) *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 17) Ku Yen-wu 顧炎武, *Jih-chih lu* 日知錄, ch. 27: "Tu Tzu-mei shih-chu" 杜子美詩注, where cited is a paragraph of Tu Fu's poem with the expressions 馬驕朱汗落, 胡舞白題斜. *Po-t'i* (**pak-di*) 白題 is likely the transcription of Bakhdi (Balkh), ancient capital of Bactria (Tokharestan).
- 18) *Li T'ai-po shih-chi*, 6. This poem, entitled *Mêng-hu hang* 猛虎行, was sometimes disputed as not Li Po's work, but I do not approve the negative opinion (Cf. *Ri Taihaku shishū* 李太白詩集 in the *Kokuyaku Kanbun Taisei* 國譯漢文大成, ch. 上, pp. 621-624).
- 19) *Liu Mêng-tê wên-chi, wai-chi* 劉夢得文集, 外集 (Ed. *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an*), ch. 6. The verse has the title: 和于相公題自姑蘇所寄太湖石兼寄李蘇州.

mentioned in the *Shang-yün-yüeh* 上雲樂 by Li Po,²⁰ was an old *hu* from Samarkand and stated as having the brilliant pupils like blue jade and red curled side-locks. In this case the *hu* signifies Iranian or similar people. The *hu-ch'u* was sometimes called *hu-êrh* 胡兒 in the T'ang poetry. In this instance the *hu* meant the same as that in *hu-ch'u*. In the verse entitled *Lung yeh-yin* 龍夜吟²¹ (*The dragon sings at night*), by Li Ho 李賀 (790-816) we read the following paragraphs: 鬢髮胡兒眼睛綠，高樓夜靜吹橫竹，一聲似向天上來，月下美人望鄉哭，直排七點星藏指，暗合清風調宮徵，蜀道秋深雲滿林，湘江半夜龍驚起，玉堂美人邊塞情，碧窓皓月愁中聽，寒砧能搗百尺練，粉淚凝珠滴紅線，胡兒莫作隴頭吟，隔窓暗結愁人心。 Here the *hu-êrh* is described as having curled hair and blue eyes, and playing a sad air on the flute. Self-evident is the home-land and racial affiliation of the *hu-êrh*.

III

Throughout the T'ang period, exoticism was in vogue in the urban life of the Chinese, especially after the Kai-yüan 開元 and T'ien-pao 天寶 era, and Ch'ang-an was the centre of this tendency. The *Chiu T'ang-shu* 舊唐書 says in its *Chapter on Vehicles and Costume* 輿服志 that clothes, caps and hats, foot-gears, meals, and music, all of *hu* style, were in fashion. In like manner, the *An Lu-shan shih-chi* 安祿山事蹟²² by Yao Ju-nêng 姚汝能 tells us that at the beginning of the T'ien-pao era, both the nobles and common people were fond of wearing *hu*-style dresses and *hu*-style caps or hats; the hair ornament *pu-yao* 步搖 (of foreign origin) was a favourite of the ladies; clothes with narrow neck and tight sleeves prevailed. In the concluding passage of a verse with the title *Fa-ch'ü* 法曲²³ written by Yüan Chên 元稹 (779-831), a friend of Po Chü-i 白居易 (772-846), we read a good summary of the *hu* taste in vogue in his time. The passage informs us, "Since the rebellion of An Lu-shan (755), the cities of Hsien-yang 咸陽 and Lo-yang 洛陽 have been filled up with the tents of the *hu* troops and the bad smell of meat for their food", and in this way the *hu* taste flew into China. "The women," he continues "have married the *hu* people, and followed the *hu* style of cosmetics; the singers appreciated the *hu* music very high and were diligent to learn it. The three currents of fashion, *i.e.*, the *hu* music, the *hu* soldiers, and the *hu* cosmetics, have been striving to retain their supremacy for these fifty years." 自胡騎起煙塵，毛毳羶滿咸洛，女成胡婦學胡妝，伎進胡音務胡樂，胡音胡騎與胡妝，五十年來競紛泊。 Similarly Po Chü-i tells us in his poem *Shih-shih-chuang* 時世妝 (*Current mode of life*),²⁴ "Bear in mind that

20) *Li T'ai-po shih-chi*, ch. 3.

21) *Li Ch'ang-chi ko-shih* 李長吉歌詩, *wai chüan* 外卷 (Tokugawa Government edition); *Ch'üan T'ang-shih*, ch. 14.

22) Ed. *Ou-hsiang ling-shih* 藕香零拾; ch. 下.

23) *Yüan-shih ch'ang-ch'ing chi* 元氏長慶集 (Ed. 1552), ch. 24.

24) *Po-shih ch'ang-ch'ing chi* 白氏長慶集, (Ed. 1552), ch. 4.

the cosmetic mode, including hair-dressing and rouging, in the Yüan-ho 元和 era (806-820) is not Chinese style." 元和妝梳君記取, 髻堆面赭非華風. Wang Chien 王建 (? 768-? 830) writes in his ballad *Liang-chou hang* 涼州行²⁵⁾ (*Song of Liang-chou*), indicating the foreignization of the Chinese, that every family is learning the *hu* music in Lo-yang. 洛陽家家學胡樂. It is highly probable that Lo-yang was only selected as the representative of Chinese cities, other cities being under the same tendency.

Of course the *hu* taste does not always mean that from the western regions only. Some of them were introduced directly from the northern nomad people, as the women's custom of riding on horse-back, which might have been transmitted by the Altaic peoples. But the larger part of the exotic taste of those days which caught much popularity among the Chinese, must have been introduced from the West directly or passing through the North indirectly. The foreign music and dance, acrobatic feats, conjuring, polo contest, back-gammon game, technique of wood mosaic and so on, —these are all from the sphere of Iranian civilization.

From the foregoing facts, we may be permitted to conclude that the main currents of exotic taste and manners which modified the Chinese mode of life were of Iranian origin, more accurately, originated in the Sassanian culture and the heritage it left to its successors. That the *hu-chi* caught the public taste of the T'ang people may be counted as one of the remarkable tendencies of the time.

Additional Notes.

1. As for the *hu-chi* in China, there remains neither paintings nor sculptures exactly representing them, and we have no means to know about their precise feature. In this case the picture of a legendary Khotanese princess, for instance, recovered from a ruin of Khotan by Sir Aurel STEIN may supply us a clue to imagine the appearance of them. (Cf. STEIN, *Ancient Khotan*, II, Oxford, 1913, Pl. LXIII). The Iranian girls depicted in the Persian miniatures of later centuries are too far chronologically from the T'ang period.

2. As to the racial affinity of An Lu-shan, see KUWABARA Jitsuzō 桑原隲藏, *Zui-Tō jidai Shina ni raijū seshi Saiiki-jin ni tsuite* 隋唐時代支那に來住せし西域人に就いて (NAITŌ hakushi kanreki shukuga Shinagaku ronshū 内藤博士還曆祝賀支那學論集, Kyoto, 1926), pp. 624-626. I have been of the same opinion with him. Prof. PULLEYBLANK, with Prof. HENNING, compared An's personal name Lu-shan with Iranian *rošan* ("light"). An Lu-shan was often called *hu-ch'u* in several of the T'ang poems. If this word means "Iranian lad", it well suggests his racial characteristics and his Iranian origin. His family name An also deserves to mention here: An generally means that the families with this *hsing* 姓 are of the origin of Bokhara in Sogdiana. If Li Po's expression in one of his poems: 幽州胡馬客, 綠眼虎皮冠 denotes An Lu-shan, as Prof. KUBO Tenzui 久保天隨 supposes, he is surely of Iranian blood with blue pupils. (Cf. *Ri Taihaku shishū*, above cited, p. 436).

25) *Chüan T'ang-shih*, ch. 11.