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FREER GALLERY OF ART  
OCCASIONAL PAPERS

VOLUME ONE

NUMBER ONE

THE GRAND EMPRESS DOWAGER WÊN MING  
AND THE  
NORTHERN WEI NECROPOLIS  
AT  
FANG SHAN

By  
A. G. WENLEY



PUBLICATION 3861

WASHINGTON  
FEBRUARY 1, 1947

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CARL WHITING BISHOP  
1881-1942

## FOREWORD

It seems most fitting that the first number of Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers should be dedicated to the memory of Carl Whiting Bishop, who was associated with the Freer Gallery for 20 years and whose work in Chinese archeology did so much to advance our knowledge in that field. The writer of this paper was closely associated with Bishop and his work in China from 1923 to 1926, and owes what grounding he has in Chinese archeology to him. It was Bishop's idea, among others, that we should investigate certain Northern Wei dynasty imperial mausolea said to be located on a mountain, called Fang Shan, some miles to the north of Ta-t'ung-hsien in Shansi, and it was on April 25, 1925, that, after many false leads, we had our first glimpse of the object of our search through field glasses. Owing, however, to factors beyond our control it was not until October that we were able to visit the site and make a survey. Unfortunately, as will be related below, Bishop became ill and returned to Peking, leaving the preliminary survey to the writer. Years later, at Bishop's request, the investigation of literary sources relating to the site was undertaken in order to ascertain what connection could be established between them and our survey. The literary material used is set forth in the bibliography and needs no further explanation here except to say that the translation of Wên Ming T'ai Hou's biography was made from the *Pei shih* and this text was checked against those in the *Wei shu* and the *T'ai p'ing yü lan*. Differences do occur in these texts, but the general outline of the biography is the same in each.

This work then was Bishop's idea and would probably not have been undertaken had he not requested it. Thus any information of value which may lie herein is really due to him.

A. G. WENLEY

Freer Gallery of Art  
September 1946.





# THE GRAND EMPRESS DOWAGER WÊN MING AND THE NORTHERN WEI NECROPOLIS AT FANG SHAN

BY A. G. WENLEY

*Director, Freer Gallery of Art*

[WITH 7 PLATES]

On the northern side of Yün-chung<sup>1</sup> stands Fang Shan,  
Where the famous Yung-ku tumulus hides the gates of night.<sup>2</sup>  
The soul erewhile has melted into the yellow earth,  
The neglected grave still remains upon the grassy hill.  
Late in spring at midnight the flowers vie in falling.  
At autumn's end before the shrine the grasses take on varied hues.  
But I wish to ask of other years and where shall I inquire?  
Of old stelae broken and fallen and the river flowing by.

(Lines on the Yung-ku tomb of the Toba Wei dynasty,  
by Nien Fu [c. 1451]. See 17, ch. 20, pp. 12b-13a.)

The tomb which inspired the above effusion from His Excellency Nien Fu<sup>3</sup> is that of one of China's several strong-minded Empresses who have wielded the imperial power at various times. This formidable lady was the Grand Empress Dowager Wên Ming, widow of the Northern Wei Emperor Wên Ch'êng (452-466). In March 466, some 9 months after her husband's death, she caused the destruction of the Minister of State, I Hun, and from that time on until her death 24 years later she was the power behind the throne, and ruled with a hand of iron. It was through her express wish that the Fang Shan necropolis came into being. The following account of her life is taken from *Pei shih*, or *Northern History*, chapter 13, pages 10b-13a.

<sup>1</sup> Literally, "In the Clouds," an old name for the city of Ta-t'ung in northern Shansi. Now a euphemism. (Characters for Chinese names and terms will be found in the alphabetical list on pages 23 to 26.)

<sup>2</sup> I.e., the doors of the tomb.

<sup>3</sup> Nien Fu, the author of the poem, was a Ming dynasty, 15th-century President of the Board of Revenue. He visited Ta-t'ung in 1451. (See 13, ch. 177, pp. 4b-8a.) (Bold-face numerals refer to bibliography at end of paper.)

Wên Ch'êng's <sup>4</sup> Empress Wên Ming, née Fêng, was a native of Hsin-tu in Ch'ang-lo.<sup>5</sup> Her father Lang was Governor of the two provinces Ch'in-chou and Yung-chou,<sup>6</sup> and Duke of Hsi-ch'êng-chün.<sup>7</sup> Her mother was of the Wang family of Lo-lang.<sup>8</sup> When the Empress was born at Ch'ang-an there was an extraordinary supernatural brilliance. Her father Lang became involved in an affair and was put to death.<sup>9</sup> The Empress then entered the palace as a daughter to T'ai Wu's Honorary Empress.<sup>10</sup> She continually had the Mother's <sup>11</sup> favor and was fondly brought up and taught. When she was 13 years old,<sup>12</sup> and Wên Ch'êng was on the throne,<sup>13</sup> she was made a concubine. Later she rose to be Empress.<sup>14</sup>

Wên Ch'êng died,<sup>15</sup> and for this reason the state was in great mourning. After three days the imperial robes and

<sup>4</sup> Kao Tsung Wên Ch'êng Ti, Emperor of the Northern Wei dynasty from 452-466.

<sup>5</sup> The Empress' biography in 18, ch. 139, p. 4b, does not mention this place. It was in the present Chi-hsien in the Province of Chihli now Hopei. (See 9, pp. 559 and 579.)

<sup>6</sup> The areas covered by these names did not remain static even during the Northern Wei period, but roughly, Yung-chou embraced parts of the present Shansi and Shensi Provinces while Ch'in-chou took in part of the modern Province of Kansu. (See 9, pp. 744 and 1073-1074.)

<sup>7</sup> 18, ch. 139, p. 4b, gives this title as Duke of Hsi-chün, omitting the character *ch'êng*. Hsi-chün was to the southeast of the present Shan-tan-hsien in Kansu, while Hsi-ch'êng-chün seems to have been near the present An-k'ang-hsien in Shensi. (See 9, pp. 352-353.)

<sup>8</sup> The modern Phýöngyang in Korea. (See 9, p. 1168.)

<sup>9</sup> The biographies of Fêng Hsi, the Empress' brother, 19, ch. 32, p. 8a, and 14, ch. 80, p. 8a, say that he was involved with the Duke of Liao-hsi. (See 14, ch. 15, biography of Liao-hsi Kung I-lieh.)

<sup>10</sup> This seems to refer to the foster mother of the Emperor Wên Ch'êng. Her family was Ch'ang. She was given the title *Pao T'ai Hou*, or Guardian of the Empress Dowager, in 452, and in 453 was made Empress Dowager. (See 14, ch. 2, pp. 28b, 29a.)

<sup>11</sup> Honorific term for older women, hence here it refers to the foster mother.

<sup>12</sup> According to the biographies she died in 490 at the age of 48, hence she was 13 years old in 455.

<sup>13</sup> He succeeded in 452.

<sup>14</sup> This occurred on the *i mao* day of the 1st month of the 2d year of T'ai An, or February 456. (See 19, ch. 5, p. 5a, and 14, ch. 2, p. 24a.)

<sup>15</sup> On the *kuai mao* day in the 5th moon of the 6th year of Ho P'ing, or June 20, 465. (See 14, ch. 2, p. 28b, and 19, ch. 5, p. 12a.) Thus the Empress was 23 years old at the time of her bereavement.

utensils were all taken and burned. The hundred officials and the bereaved Empress, all wailing and weeping, approached the [pyre]. The Empress, overcome with grief, flung herself into the flames. Everyone to right and left came to her rescue. It took a long time to revive her. Hsien Wên then honored her with the title Empress Dowager.<sup>16</sup>

When I Hun, a minister of state, planned rebellion, Hsien Wên was 11 years old and living in mourning.<sup>17</sup> The Empress Dowager secretly formed a great stratagem and put Hun to death. Thereafter he [the Emperor] came to court and administered the government. When Hsiao Wên was born<sup>18</sup> the Empress Dowager personally took charge of his upbringing.

Afterwards there was the affair of the Emperor abdicating<sup>19</sup> and ceasing to administer the government. The Empress Dowager had a dishonorable affair with her favorite, Li I. On account of this Hsien Wên put him to death,<sup>20</sup> and the

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<sup>16</sup> Neither the *Wei shu* nor the *Pei shih* records the incident of the pyre in the annals. They record the accession of Hsien Wên as having occurred on the *chia ch'ên* day in the 5th month of the 6th year of Ho P'ing, or June 21, 465. The Empress' elevation to the rank of Empress Dowager is the second official act recorded after the accession. (See 14, ch. 2, p. 28b; 19, ch. 6, p. 1a.) If this is correct the Empress received her new rank some time before the pyre incident, since Wên Ch'êng died on June 20 and Hsien Wên mounted the throne the next day.

<sup>17</sup> 18, ch. 139, p. 4b, and 19, ch. 13, p. 6b, give his age as 12. 13, ch. 2, p. 28b, and 18, ch. 6, p. 1a, give the date of his birth as the 7th moon of the 1st year of Hsing Kuang, or June 454. The day of his birth is not given. 14, ch. 2, p. 29b, and 19, ch. 6, p. 2a, give the date of this incident as the *kêng shên* day in the 2d moon of the 1st year T'ien An, or March 4, 466. Hence either account might be considered right. The Emperor lacked about 3 months of being 12 years old when I Hun rebelled.

<sup>18</sup> 19, ch. 6, p. 4a, and 14, ch. 2, p. 30a, give the date of his birth as the *wu shên* day in the 8th moon of the 1st year of Huang Hsing, or October 13, 467.

<sup>19</sup> 19, ch. 6, p. 6b, and 14, ch. 2, p. 31b. He abdicated in the 8th moon of the 5th year of Huang Hsing, or September 471.

<sup>20</sup> 19, ch. 36, p. 6a-b, and 14, ch. 33, p. 15a, assign this incident to the 4th year of Huang Hsing, or 470. The annals, 19, ch. 6, p. 6a, and 13, ch. 2, p. 31b, content themselves with a mere reference to the execution of Li I's brother Fu, who was put to death at the same time. The incident is further alluded to in 19, ch. 46, p. 6b, and 13, ch. 27, p. 13a, which contain the biography of Li I's accuser, Li Hsin.

Empress Dowager did not attain her purpose. In consequence of this she killed the Emperor.<sup>21</sup>

In the 1st year of Ch'êng Ming she was honored with the title Grand Empress Dowager and returned to court to administer the government.<sup>22</sup>

The Empress [Dowager] was very clever, and since entering the harem had assiduously studied calligraphy and mathematics, and when she was honored with the highest office she investigated and decided the myriad affairs [of government]. Hsiao Wên issued an edict<sup>23</sup> dismissing the Falcon Master Ts'ao and taking his land for the Empress Dowager to establish a Pao-tê Monastery.

When the Empress Dowager and Hsiao Wên were strolling on Fang Shan<sup>24</sup> gazing at the hills and streams, she had a desire for a final resting place. Because of this she spoke to the assembled officials saying, "When Shun was buried at

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<sup>21</sup> 18, ch. 139, p. 5a, and 19, ch. 13, p. 6b, both have the following in place of this sentence, "When Hsien Tsu, i.e., Hsien Wên, met a violent death it was said that the Empress Dowager did it." The annals, 14, ch. 2, p. 32a, is more euphemistic; it says, "In the 1st year of Ch'êng Ming [476] the Dowager Empress was resentful and the Emperor died in the Palace of Everlasting Peace."

<sup>22</sup> 14, ch. 3, p. 5b, and 19, ch. 7a, p. 8a-b, give the date of her elevation and return as *wei yin* day in the 6th moon of the 1st year of Ch'êng Ming or the 27th day of July 476, or just 7 days after she is said to have murdered the abdicated Emperor. He died on the *hsin wei* day of the 6th moon of the 1st year of Ch'êng Ming, or July 20, 476.

<sup>23</sup> 18, ch. 139, p. 5a, and 19, ch. 13, p. 7a, give the edict thus: "Kao Tsu (i.e., Hsiao Wên) issued an edict, saying 'When We were friendless and alone in Our youth We succeeded to the Precious Succession and relied upon the Maternal Brilliance to maintain peace within the Four Seas [Hence] We long to recompense Her, for Her virtue truly and clearly is proven. All birds of prey are species which waste life and it would be suitable to release them in the hills and woods. Let us take land in order to lay out and begin a spirit pagoda for the Grand Empress Dowager.' Thereupon he dismissed the Falcon Master Ts'ao and took his land for a Pao-tê Monastery." In regard to the building of this monastery the annals (14, ch. 3, p. 9a, and 19, ch. 7a, p. 14a) say that on the *ting ssü* day in the 1st moon of the 4th year of T'ai Ho, or February 16, 480, the falcon aviary was discontinued and the land taken for this monastery. (See also 7, pp. 151-153, for this attitude in regard to birds of prey and the building of the Pao-tê Monastery.)

<sup>24</sup> About 20 miles NE. of the present city of Ta-t'ung above the confluence of the Yü Ho and Chên-ch'uan Ho.

Ts'ang-wu his two concubines did not follow him.<sup>25</sup> If one must go afar to worship at a royal tomb will it be honored afterwards? One hundred years after me, may my spirit rest here!"

Thereupon the Emperor ordered the civil officers to build a tomb at Fang Shan, and also to erect a *Yung-ku* (everlasting) stone chamber,<sup>26</sup> and, when that was completed, to make a *Ch'ing Miao*. The work was begun in the 5th year of T'ai Ho [481] and completed in the 8th year. They cut stone and raised a stela extolling the virtue and merit of the Empress Dowager.<sup>27</sup>

The Empress Dowager, because the Emperor was "rich in Springs and Autumns,"<sup>28</sup> then wrote more than 300 songs of "exhortation and caution."<sup>29</sup> She also wrote 18 imperial orders. Her writings, though many, are not recorded.

The Empress Dowager established a Wên-hsüan-wang Miao (Confucian Temple) at Ch'ang-an, and raised a Ssü-yên stupa at Lung-ch'êng. At both of these places they carved

<sup>25</sup> This seems to come from the *Shih chi* (15, ch. 1, p. 29a). Shun died while on a trip to the south. The commentary referring to the *Li chi* speaks of the two concubines and the burial at Ts'ang-wu, but the *Li chi* gives him three concubines (see 4, tome I, p. 132). 5, vol. III, pt. I, p. 27, speaks of Yao giving his two daughters in marriage to Shun.

<sup>26</sup> In connection with this construction of a "stone chamber" for burial purposes among the Wei people, there is an interesting entry in the *Pei shih*. It is to the effect that in 443 an embassy from the Wu-lo-hou barbarians came to court and stated that to the northwest of their country there was a ruined stone chamber belonging to a former Wei Emperor. This chamber they declared was haunted and they wished an official to be sent to make a sacrifice. An official was sent there and he carved an exorcising prayer upon the chamber wall. This place would appear to have been somewhere in eastern Mongolia since the locality of the Wu-lo-hou tribe is given as 20-days travel southeast of Lake Baikal. (See 14, ch. 94, pp. 24a-b.)

<sup>27</sup> 14, ch. 3, p. 10a, and 19, ch. 7a, pp. 16b-17a, record the *Yung-ku* stone chamber, and an engraved golden tablet commemorating the Empress Dowager, and the building of a *Chien-hsüan Tien* on the day *chi hai* in the 4th moon of the 5th year of T'ai Ho, or May 23, 481.

<sup>28</sup> A euphemism for the youthfulness of the Emperor, i.e., he was young and had many "Springs and Autumns" of life ahead of him. The expression is used with this meaning in 11, ch. 73, p. 17b.

<sup>29</sup> This is an allusion to the "Nine Songs," the counsel given by the Great Yü in regard to government. (See 5, vol. II, pt. II, p. 7.)

stone and set up stelae.<sup>30</sup> The Empress Dowager also made regulations for the imperial relatives. For the grandsons of the five preceding Emperors and the six relatives by marriage there was 3 months' mourning, and all were exempted from *corvée*. By nature economical, she did not like to adorn herself in a flowery manner, and used plain silk, and that is all. When the steward served food the table was reduced 1 foot in diameter. The seasoning of the food was reduced to eight-tenths of the old manner. When the Empress Dowager was unwell she swallowed *Artemesia keiskiana* seeds.<sup>31</sup> The steward was careless and offered her congee having a lizard in it. The Empress raised her spoon and removed it. The Emperor, at the time, attended at one side and in great anger wished to inflict the extreme penalty. The Empress Dowager laughed and released the steward.

Since the Empress Dowager had come to court to take part in the government, Hsiao Wên with courtesy and filial respect had no desire to decide affairs without minutely reporting all to the Empress Dowager.<sup>32</sup> The Empress Dowager was very wise, suspicious, and hard, and was able to deal with great affairs. The death sentence and rewards and punishments were decided [by her], and after a little, nothing concerned the Emperor. Thus both her punishments and favors made people quake at home and abroad. Thus Ch'í Tao-tê, Wang Yü, Chang Yü, Fu Ch'êng-tsu, and others were promoted from obscure eunuchs, and in a year became princes and dukes. Wang Jui<sup>33</sup> went in and out of the bedroom, and in several years became a minister of state. His rewards were calculated in hundreds of thousands, [and he received] an iron document with golden writing promising that there should never be a death edict [for him].

<sup>30</sup> 9, pp. 1268, 1284. Lung-ch'êng was in the modern Jehol Province.

<sup>31</sup> 2, p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> In view of the fact that Hsiao Wên was only 9 years old when the Empress Dowager began to take part in the government, the above remarks have their amusing side.

<sup>33</sup> 14, ch. 92, pp. 2b-5b. A favorite of the Empress Dowager and very influential. 14, ch. 3, p. 10b, and 19, ch. 7a, p. 17a, record his death on the *chia ch'en* day in the 6th moon of the 5th year of T'ai Ho, or August 27, 481.

Li Ch'ung for his capacity and ability received office, and since he had the imperial favor there were countless additional rewards. The Empress had a severe nature, and those who hypocritically waited upon her favor were not tolerated. Left and right for trifling offenses she inflicted floggings amounting to as many as a hundred [strokes] or more, and at least several tens [of strokes]. But it was not her nature to remain angry; moreover, she employed [the culprits] to wait upon her as before. Sometimes on account of this there was additional honor and wealth, and so everyone cherished hopes of gain until death, and did not think of retiring.

The Empress Dowager with Hsiao Wên had made an imperial progress to Ling-ch'üan Pool. There was a company of officials from Yen and an embassy from the Fan country, and the chiefs of both places were ordered to do their local dance. Hsiao Wên offered birthday congratulations [to the Empress Dowager]. The Empress Dowager with joy made a song. The Emperor also responded in song. Then he ordered the company of officials each to speak his wishes. Thereupon there were 90 men replying in song. The Empress Dowager was outwardly courteous toward the men's desires. Yüan P'ei, Yu Ming-kên,<sup>34</sup> and others distributed the imperial gifts. There were gold, silk, chariots, and horses. All praised them to the utmost degree. Jui<sup>35</sup> and others led, and [Yüan] P'ei joined them in order to show his unselfishness. Also since he was in error he feared people might discuss it, for if there was the smallest suspicion, then one was put to death.

<sup>34</sup> 14, ch. 15, pp. 10a-13b; Yüan P'ei (422-503), a man of imperial lineage, became Prince of Tung-yang, and helped in putting down the rebellion of I Hun. When his own son rebelled he himself escaped the death penalty through having one of the imperial patents promising that he should never be put to death. He was a minister of state and had much to do with government during the Empress Dowager's time. 14, ch. 34, p. 1b; 19, ch. 54, p. 1a; Yu Ming-kên, 419-499, an influential and loyal minister of state.

<sup>35</sup> The only mention I find of a visit to Ling-ch'üan Pool during the Empress Dowager's period of power was on the 8th of July 489. (19, ch. 7b, p. 5a.) If this be the same occasion, the Jui mentioned here could not be Wang Jui who died in 481. There was, however, another minister of state named Lu Jui who was active at this time.

Until the death of the Empress, Hsiao Wên did not know who his mother was. Even such people as the followers of Li Hsin and Li Hui<sup>36</sup> were suspected and disliked. Of them more than 10 households were destroyed, and the number of people killed was several hundreds. Great numbers were wronged and all the Empire hated her.

In the 14th year [the Empress Dowager] died in the T'ai-ho Tien at the age of 48.<sup>37</sup> On that day there was a gathering of cock pheasants at the T'ai-hua Palace. The Emperor poured out wine but could not drink. For five days he fasted and grieved. After the ceremonies he gave her the posthumous title Wên Ming T'ai Huang T'ai Hou. They buried her in the *Yung-ku Ling*. When it was midday, then they held the sacrifice for turning away evil influences at the Chien-hsüan Tien [see note 27]. The imperial edict said, "It was Her honored will that We should be economical and not prolong Our infinite distress. But in accordance with Our affection, and in deference to the proprieties, We have, with all due respect, done violence to the virtue of Her economical instructions. For, as We have gone back and forth, Our thoughts have been but increasingly concerned with Our feeling in regard to Her Imperial Highness' death. Again, as to the plans for Her mountain tomb there also were complete instructions. Accordingly it was to be 10 feet square within, and without it should just cover the pit. But, casting away Our feelings of filial piety, here is a place where We have not fulfilled [Her wishes]. [We thought] that the tomb chamber could be 20 feet [square] within, and that [there could be] a mound not exceeding 30 paces. Now We are making this tomb to last for 10 thousand generations, and so with all due respect We have again enlarged it by 60 paces.<sup>38</sup> If We have disregarded Her

<sup>36</sup> Respectively, Hsiao Wên's cousin and maternal grandfather. No doubt the Empress Dowager was afraid of their possible influence on the Emperor.

<sup>37</sup> 14, ch. 3, p. 17a, and 19, ch. 7b, p. 6a, recorded her death on the *kuei ch'ou* day in the 9th moon of the 14th year of T'ai Ho, or October 17, 490, and her burial upon the *kuei yu* day of the 10th moon, or November 6.

<sup>38</sup> Judging from the size of the tomb as it stands today, these pace measurements seem to refer to the diameter.



will it is really because of the sharpness of Our pain. For the great outer and small inner coffins of Her sepulcher We promised to arrange no funerary offerings such as plain curtains, plain silk cushions, and objects of pottery and tile, and so none of those has been placed there. Thus in this We have followed Her first wishes, and have conformed to Her written orders. Altogether, We have respectfully received Her testament, and some of it We followed, and some of it We did not, and some of it We did not comprehend. Perhaps on this account there may be evil influences, and so behind the coffin within the tomb We have established a place for Her sainted spirit. One by one We have respectfully received and obeyed Her orders, and with all due respect We make manifest Her economical virtues. For the rest, beyond these affairs there are some which We have not followed because of Our feelings of sorrow and affection. Let this be published near and far and instruct the company of officials in the first place to make clear the beauty of Her economical teachings, and in the second place to explain Our error in disobeying Her orders.”

When the [period of] lamentations was ended Hsiao Wên [still] wore mourning clothes. The officers close to the throne followed suit. Those below the three chief ministers of state, and the foreign officials in mourning changed their clothes to “coarse apparel.” Those below the 7th rank discarded it altogether. Then on an auspicious day they held a sacrifice to the ancestors in the Palace of Great Harmony. The first [imperial] relatives below the dukes and ministers managed the public affairs. The Emperor fasted. He cut off wine and meat, and had no connection with the women of the harem for 3 years.

In the beginning the Emperor, in order to show his filial piety to the Empress Dowager, had built [himself] a tomb one *li* or more to the northeast of the Yung-ku Ling, conforming to her revered idea in regard to death. However he moved [the capital] to Lo-yang and designated the west of the Ch’an River as a place to make a mountain garden (i.e., imperial

mausoleum), and so there is an empty "palace" at Fang Shan which is known by the title, Wan-nien T'ang (Hall of Ten Thousand Years).

Thus it came about that the Grand Empress Dowager was left alone to occupy her final resting place on Fang Shan. It was during her lifetime that the Wei rulers began to take over Chinese customs, and, although little indication of it is left today, the necropolis seems to have been built with all the ostentation and poor taste that might be expected of a barbarian horde trying to copy and outdo a highly cultured but vanquished people. Some idea of its magnificence is given in the *Water Classic Commentary*.<sup>39</sup> This account was compiled by Li Tao-yüan, a Northern Wei scholar who died in 527, or 37 years after the death of the Grand Empress Dowager.

On the ridge is the tomb of the Grand Empress Dowager Wên Ming. To the northeast of this tomb is that of Kao Tsu. To the south of the two tombs is the Yung-ku Hall. All around the hall the corner pieces rising (*chih*) to a height of 10 feet,<sup>40</sup> the balustrades on the steps leading up to the planted terrace, also the lintels of the leaf doors, and the tiles on the rafters of the walls are all of figured stone. At the front part of the eaves, there are four pillars;<sup>41</sup> they brought black stone from the Valley of the Eight Winds in Lo-yang to make

<sup>39</sup> 10, ch. 13, pp. 5b-6a.

<sup>40</sup> 8, ch. 6, p. 48, defines *chih* as a section of wall 30 feet long and 10 feet high, but goes on to point out that this character may be used to indicate just one of these measurements. It is so used here and since it refers to "corners" (*yü*), it could hardly mean length.

<sup>41</sup> The character *yên* seems to be a somewhat loose term. I infer that here it refers to a long projection of the eaves or roof, beyond the wall of the building, used to form a covered porch, and with supporting pillars (*chu*) in front.

them.<sup>42</sup> They are carved in low relief with gold and silver in the interstices, [forming] a cloud design like brocade. Within and without the hall on the four sides are built double stone footings, and they set up a blue stone screen with figured stone for a border.<sup>43</sup> [On this] Furthermore, in low relief are the countenances of the Loyal and Filial,<sup>44</sup> and there is a carved inscription with the names of the Virtuous and Obedient. Before the shrine they carved stone to make stelae and animals. Stelae and stones of surpassing beauty are ranged at the right and left, while cypress trees on all sides attract the birds and shut out the sun. Outside the enclosure on the west side is the Ssü-yüan Monastery. To the west of the Monastery is the refectory. Outside the southern gate are two stone towers. Beneath the towers cleaving the hill they piled up stones and built the imperial road. Below may be seen the pool of the Ling-ch'üan Palace glistening like a round mirror.

To the south on the Ju-hun Shui one comes to the Ling-ch'üan Pool. A branch stream flows southeast into the pool. From east to west the pool is 100 paces, and from north to south 200 paces. There is an island in the pool. Formerly it was named Poplar Spring (Po-yang Ch'üan). Above the

<sup>42</sup> 10, ch. 15, p. 22a, speaks of a Mountain of the Eight Winds and a stream of the same name issuing from it and flowing south past Lun-shih-hsien. The site of this *hsien* is described (see 9, p. 1118), as being to the southwest of the modern Têng-fêng-hsien in Honan. The latter place is about 2½ miles south of Hei-shih-kuan and about 5 miles southeast of Lo-yang. The Valley of the Eight Winds may have been somewhere in this locality. De Groot (see 3, vol. II, book I, p. 440) takes the passage to mean "black stone obtained from the valleys on the eight sides of Loyang." If this is correct it seems strange that stone from valleys all around Lo-yang was needed to make only 4 pillars.

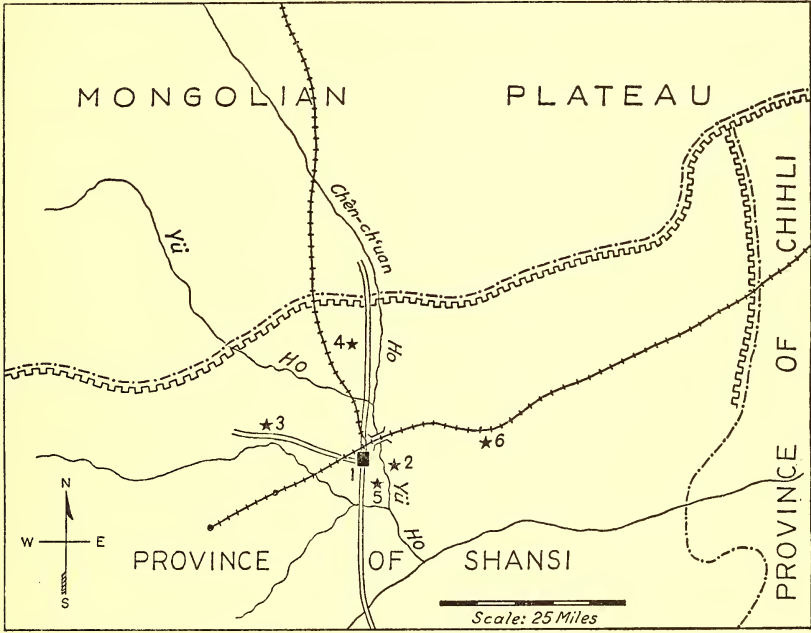
<sup>43</sup> *Wên shih* which I have rendered "figured stone" may be used to describe a variety of decorative stones such as marble, granite, agate, etc. (see 1, pp. 159-169). The "blue stone" (*ch'ing shih*) of which the screen was made might possibly be lapis lazuli; at least, 1, p. 12, identifies this term with it. It is also quite possible to obtain it in large slabs. Can it be possible that lapis lazuli for this screen was obtained from the Lake Baikal deposits, which are, of course much nearer to Ta-t'ung than those of Badakshan? See 1, pp. 1-21, for an interesting discussion of the mention of the stone in Chinese literature and its distribution.

<sup>44</sup> This recalls such places as Wu Liang Ssü where the walls have scenes carved on them relating to subjects of this nature.

spring grew poplar trees, hence the name. It was also known as the stream of the Tall Poplars (Ch'ang-yang) and the Five Oaks (Wu-tso). On the south it faces the old capital, and behind it to the north is Fang Ridge [i.e., Fang Shan]. To the left and right are hills and plains. Pavilions and [Taoist] temples decorate the mountainous places. The view reflected in the lake is as if three hills had tipped over into the water beneath.

In the autumn of 1925 a joint expedition of the Freer Gallery of Art and the National Historical Museum (Kuo Li Li Shih Po Wu Kuan) in Peking proceeded to Ta-t'ung with what seemed then to be the plausible belief that they were to be permitted to excavate the Fang Shan site. The Freer Gallery was represented by the late Carl Whiting Bishop, heading the expedition, and assisted by K. Z. Tung and the writer. The Historical Museum was represented by the Vice Director of that institution, our good friend S. Y. Ch'iu. During the inevitable delay which seemed to be the axiomatic accompaniment to all our negotiations with various provincial powers in China, Mr. Bishop became ill and, following the advice of Dr. G. A. M. Hall of the Mosse Memorial Hospital at Ta-t'ung, returned to Peking to recuperate. Messrs. Ch'iu and Tung remained in Ta-t'ung to keep in touch with the local officials who had assured us that the formal permission to excavate which had been promised us would shortly be forthcoming from the Governor. During this period it seemed wise for me to go to Fang Shan and make a survey of the site preparatory to digging. Dr. Hall very kindly offered to accompany me and help. He thought that a few days of exercise away from the hospital would do him good. I am indebted to him for his help and companionship, although perhaps he got more exercise than he needed, for my diary tells me that I worked him 9 hours a day, and the blazing sun beating down on the Fang Shan plateau was anything but cool.

The plateau is an upheaval of volcanic rock lying about 20 miles northeast of the modern city of Ta-t'ung. It rises steeply from the west bank of the Chên-ch'uan River. At some distance to the west of the plateau flows the Ju-hun Shui, given on modern maps as the Yü River. Well to the south of Fang



- |                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. TA-T'UNG     | 4. FANG SHAN        |
| 2. P'ING-CH'ENG | 5. ANCIENT CEMETERY |
| 3. YÜN-KANG     | 6. CHIN-SHAN Ssŭ    |
- - - - - GREAT WALL  
 - - - - - PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES  
 + + + + + RAILWAY  
 = = = = = ROADS

FIGURE 1.—Area surrounding site.

Shan these two streams converge, and the fact that the mountain commands this confluence makes it an ideal burial site in the light of the Chinese geomantic science known as *fêng shui*. To the northeast side of the mountain clings the little terraced village Hsi-ssŭ-êrh-ts'un. In the temple of the village the expedition had its living quarters. This temple is locally known by the name of the village itself, but a map in the district

gazetteer seems to show it as Hui-ch'üan Ssü.<sup>45</sup> These gazetteer maps, however, are often very misleading, and the temple itself does not appear to be mentioned in the body of the work.

It may be interesting to note in passing that the mausoleum site gives little indication to the uninformed observer of the erstwhile "more than oriental splendor" indicated by the *Water Classic Commentary*. Indeed, a perusal of the district gazetteer leaves one with the strong impression that the identity of the site was at one time completely lost. There are various conflicting accounts throughout the gazetteer, as well as quotations from the *Water Classic Commentary* and the *Northern Wei History*. For example we find that the Fang Shan plateau contains all the North Wei tombs, and that the site is called by common tradition Ch'i Huang Mu.<sup>46</sup> This designation was the popular one at the time of the expedition's visit. Elsewhere we find the Ch'i Huang Mu mentioned as near Ku Shan, some 30 *li* north of Ta-t'ung. Again we find this name as possibly referring to the unrecorded tomb of Ch'i Wang, son of the Sung dynasty Emperor Hui Tsung. The name is again identified with Ch'i Huang Hou, the Empress of Hsüan Ti, whose name was I-i, one of the pre-invasion chieftains of the Toba Tartars. Finally the *hsien* gazetteer quotes the *fu* gazetteer as saying the two tumuli are unidentified Northern Wei tombs and may be the Ch'i Huang Mu!<sup>47</sup> However this confusion may have arisen, a plane-table survey of the site coincides so well with the accounts in the *Pei shih* and the *Water Classic Commentary* that there can be little doubt that we have here the site of the tomb of the Empress Dowager Wên Ming.

The plane-table survey covered an area of 1 mile in length by a width varying from about 500 yards in the northern portion to about 300 yards in the southern part. On the plateau itself the survey runs three-quarters of a mile north from the southern escarpment. The whole plateau is from

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<sup>45</sup> 17, leading chapter, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> 17, ch. 4, p. 12b.

<sup>47</sup> 17, ch. 5, p. 34a-b.

2½ to 3 miles in length with very steep sides which give it a roughly rectangular appearance. No doubt the name Fang Shan, or Square Mountain, derives from this fact. The whole area has been under cultivation for a long period and the sides are much eroded. Despite this, certain obvious surface indications plus the disposition of contours make it possible to give the probable locations of the buildings, etc., mentioned in the *Water Classic Commentary*. With this in mind it may be well to follow the order of that work in the following description.

We begin then with the tomb of the Grand Empress Dowager Wên Ming. This huge earthen mound stands some 500 yards to the north of the southern escarpment about half-way between the eastern and western slopes. The mound is 72 feet high, roughly dome-shaped, and stands on a rectangular earthen platform 3 feet high. This platform measures about 133 yards from east to west by 116 yards from north to south. It is not possible to give the diameter of the base of the mound proper since time and erosion have caused the slope of the mound to begin almost from the edges of the platform. However, some idea of it may be gained by taking the diameter at a point 12 feet above the base where the slope becomes abrupt. At this point the diameter is approximately 100 yards. It will be recalled that an imperial edict in the Empress Dowager's biography in the *Pei shih* (see supra, page 8) mentions the size of the tomb, saying that the Emperor had thought to make it 30 paces square and later decided to enlarge this by 60 paces, making 90 in all. This would seem to refer to the dimensions of the square platform. Taking, roughly, the Wei dynasty pace<sup>48</sup> as 4½ English feet, this gives us a measurement of 135 yards. Considering all the factors involved, such as the havoc wrought by time and erosion, and the evidence that the cultivation of the plateau has encroached upon the edges of the platform, this measurement and that

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<sup>48</sup>The Wei foot measure actually varied from 10-39/48, to 10-41/48, to 11-13/24 English inches. See "Chinese Foot Measures of the Past Nineteen Centuries," by Wang Kuo-wei, J.R.A.S. N.C.B. vol. 59, p. 115.

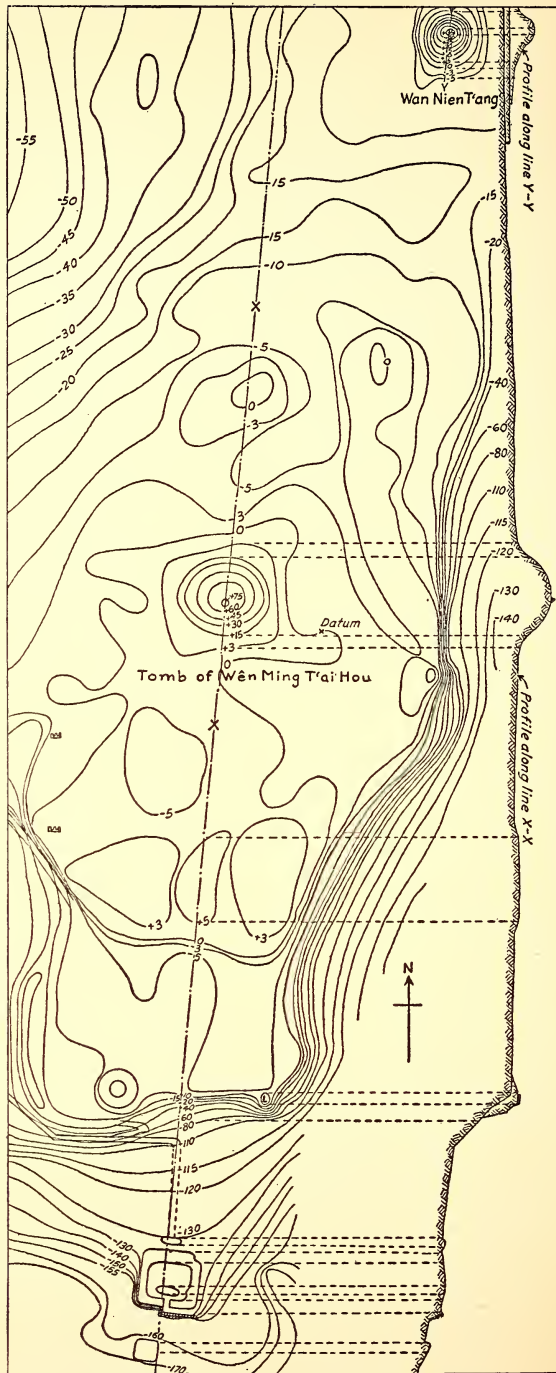


FIGURE 2.—Map of total area surveyed at Fang Shan.



made in the survey have a very reasonable degree of coincidence. On top of the mound stands a cairn of loosely piled stones about 6 feet high. Possibly this has something to do with a Mongol tribe thought by local people to be descendants of the Toba Tartars. They are said to come periodically to worship at the tomb which they believe to be that of the Empress Ch'i Huang, heretofore mentioned. Another local tradition has it that the tomb was once covered with rocks but no direct evidence of this now appears. On the southern slope of the mound is a small excavation. In regard to this a local story has it that in 1923 an attempt was made to open the tomb. The excavators are said to have got as far as uncovering two stone doors which they were unable to force and so gave up the attempt. This story seems unlikely, at least so far as the stone doors are concerned, in view of the account in the biography which indicates that the tomb chamber was beneath the surface of the ground (see *supra*, page 8).

To the north the ground gradually slopes away, dropping 15 feet below the level around the mound. In this area there are no evidences of potsherds, tiles, or building materials, and it may be from here that the earth was taken to form the tumulus. Some 600 yards to the northeast of the tumulus stands another smaller one. This, no doubt, is the empty Wan-nien T'ang mentioned in the biography as being 1 *li* or more to the northeast. Taking the *li* as one-third of a mile the two measurements tally very well (see *supra*, page 9). This mound is much smaller. It rises to a height of 43 feet above the ground surrounding it, but that ground is 8 feet below the level of that which surrounds the tumulus of the Empress Dowager. It is also built upon an earthen platform about 240 feet square. The mound itself is conical rather than dome-shaped and has numbers of loose stones spread over its surface. We heard no local legends in regard to it, the people dismissing it lightly with the name "Small Mound."

The *Water Classic Commentary* takes us now to the south of the great tumulus. It has nothing to remark on the area to the north between the two tumuli, and indeed the expedition

noted nothing extraordinary. To the south of the tumulus, however, for a distance of some 200 yards the space is comparatively level save for a 5-foot depression in the westerly part of this area. This may be accounted for by the presence of two rammed-earth beacon towers on the western edge of the plateau just opposite the depression. These are later structures and concern us only as the probable explanation of the depression from which the earth for their construction may well have been taken. Furthermore, this area is marked by many rectangular outcroppings of stone, some of which bear tool marks, and may well have been part of a pavement. Hence the supposition is that this space was originally all level forming an appropriate connection between the tumulus and the Yung-ku T'ang which the *Commentary* mentions next.

The *Commentary* does not state how far to the south of the tumulus this building stood, but at the distance of 200 yards there occurs a fairly abrupt rise of 5 feet in contour level. This area is about 100 yards long from north to south, by 50 yards from east to west, quite large enough for a good-size building. Furthermore, in the middle of the southern edge of this space is a flat, square, worked stone which would have been suitable for a column base. To the east and west, extending to the edges of the plateau, the ground drops to a level 3 feet above that before the tumulus. Thus we have in the center the 5-foot level indicating the possible position of the Yung-ku T'ang, and on either side the slightly lower 3-foot level which seems to mark the remains of the planted terrace mentioned in the *Commentary*. Scattered over this area are numerous fragments of pottery, roofing tiles, worked stone, and stone fragments of various kinds carved in low relief, which indicate the former existence of a building.

To the south of this terrace the ground drops rapidly down about 13 feet, and here one may suppose were the steps leading up to the planted terrace. From here southward to the edge of the escarpment for some 300 yards the slope drops gradually for about 5 feet. It seems highly likely that down this slope ran a road with "stelae and stones of surpassing

beauty ranged at the right and left, while cypress trees on all sides attracted the birds and shut out the sun." Of all this grandeur nothing is left today save small fragments of tile, carved stone, etc. Even the "old stelae broken and fallen" mentioned by Nien Fu are gone. Evidences of the limits of the enclosure, the Ssü-yüan Monastery, and the refectory of which the *Commentary* tells us are not apparent.

At the west corner of the southern escarpment is a circular area of slightly raised ground suggestive of a much washed-down tumulus. It seems possible that this may mark the site of one of the two stone towers outside the south gate. The construction of these two towers was no doubt of the usual Chinese type, that is, a rammed-earth core faced with stone. With the removal of the stone such a structure may well have subsided both through the action of the elements and of the peasantry who often use the earth from such structures as a top dressing for their fields. Opposite this rise on the eastern edge is a corresponding rise on which stands a huge pile of rock forming part of a wall suggesting cyclopean masonry, which may mark the site of the other tower.

From the southern end of the plateau the ground drops sharply for 100 feet. The whole slope is covered with loose stones. About 20 feet down the slope occur the remains of an old road built to zigzag up the slope and held in place by a retaining wall of stones, on some of which tool markings may yet be seen. At the 100-foot level what seems to be a later road connects with this, winding around the southwest corner of the hill and so to the summit at a point between the two beacon towers mentioned before. The older road continues its zigzag course downward until lost in a cultivated field below. This may mark what is left of the imperial road described in the *Commentary*. From this point the slope becomes more gradual, and at a distance of some 100 yards occurs a small oblong mound, directly behind which a large mound of three terraces, some 66 yards square, is built on the side of an abrupt slope which occurs at this point. This also is held in place by a stone retaining wall, and is approached

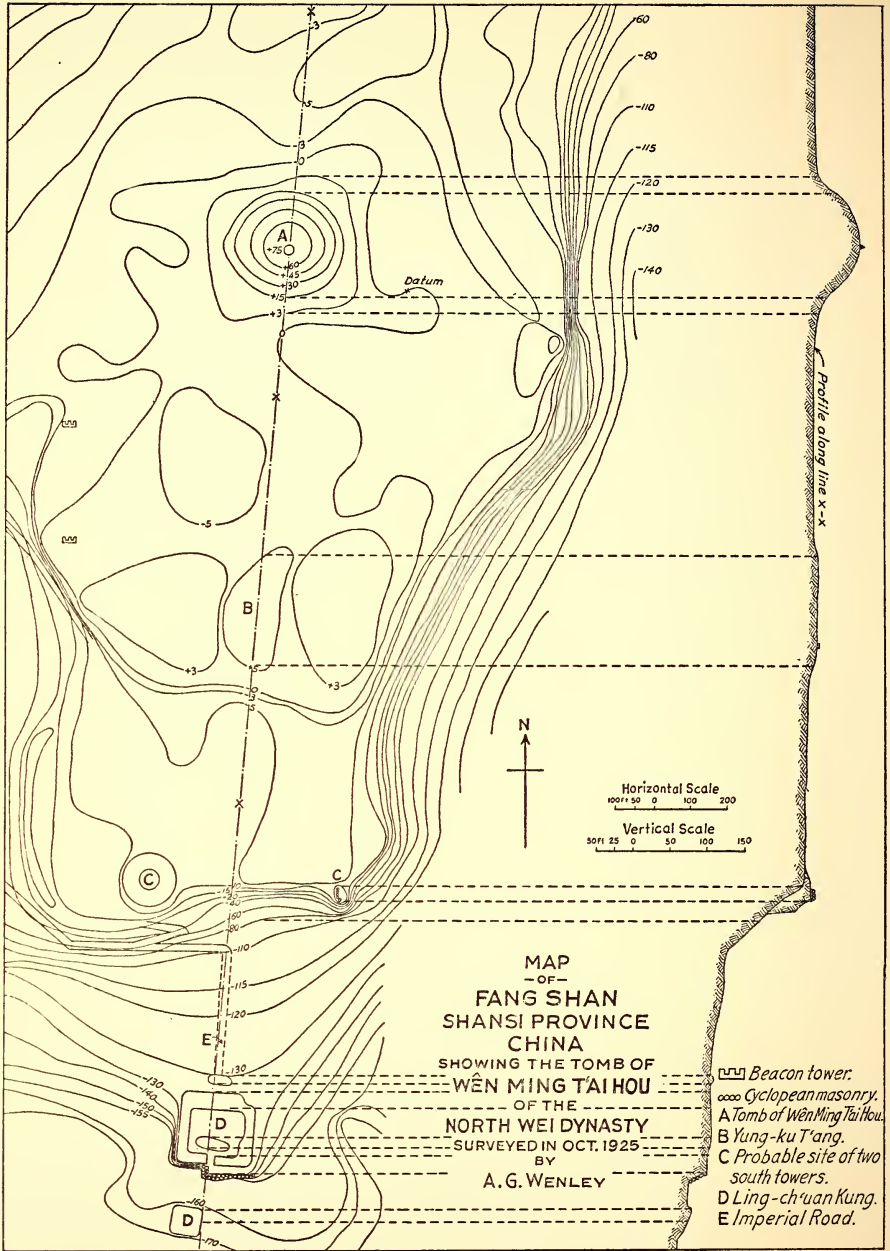


FIGURE 3.—Map of Fang Shan.

by a similarly built ramp running up its southern side from east to west. Some 60 yards beyond this is a much smaller single-terraced mound.

These then are the salient features of the site as we saw it. A glance at the map will show that the centers of the great tumulus, the elevation marking the probable site of the Yung-ku T'ang, the edge of the southern escarpment, the imperial road, and the tri-terraced mound below are all on the same axis. The fact that this axis does not exactly parallel the magnetic north and south line, but runs about north-northeast to south-southwest, does not seem important. Variations in either compasses or magnetic north itself might account for this. It may be that true north in this area lies along this line, but I do not know what the declination is in northern Shansi. The important point is the axis which seems to indicate that these five points have an intentional relation to each other. It will be remembered that the *Commentary* tells us that looking southward from the plateau there "may be seen the pool of the Ling-ch'üan Palace glistening like a round mirror." Thus it seems likely that the tri-terraced mound marks the palace site.

As we have said, the tri-terraced mound is built on the side of an abrupt slope. To the west of this mound is a gully running from northwest to southeast into this depression. The *Commentary* speaks of a branch stream which ran southeast from the Ju-hun Shui into the pool. It is possible then that this gully formed from the bed of that stream and that the depression is the remains of an artificial pool, which may be identified with the Ling-ch'üan Pool. This is further indicated by the presence of the single-terraced mound. It will be recalled that the *Commentary* speaks of an islet in the pool and also gives the length of the pool from north to south as 200 paces. Again taking the pace as equal to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  English feet we get a measurement of 300 yards. The significance of this is that the center of the single-terraced mound is just about half this distance from the tri-terraced mound, and although its center is not on the axis, its eastern side touches it. The *Com-*

*mentary* does not mention the position of the islet, but as this one terrace is the only possible elevation which might account for it, it may be identified with it. This puts the island a little to the west of the center of the pool, or perhaps the palace was not directly in the center of the north shore. Of these relative positions we are not told.

Unfortunately the abrupt termination of our visit to Fang Shan, engendered by the opposition of the local people and the failure of the authorities to keep their promise, made it impossible to make a complete and more detailed examination of all the topographical and other surface indications. Perhaps the southern end of the site suffered most in this respect. There is no doubt, however, that a good deal more information might be obtained by a further examination of the whole area, even without excavation, and, of course, if we consider the description in the *Water Classic Commentary*, there is no telling what a scientific excavation might reveal.

LIST OF CHINESE TERMS AND NAMES

An-k'ang-hsien 安康縣

Ch'an 瀟

Chang Yü 張祐

Ch'ang 常

Ch'ang-an 長安

Ch'ang-lo 長樂

Ch'ang-yang 長楊

Ch'ên-ch'uan Ho 鎮川河

*ch'êng* 城

Ch'êng Ming 承明

*chi hai* 己亥

Chi-hsien 冀縣

Ch'i Huang Hou 祁皇后

Ch'i Huang Mu 祁皇墓

Ch'i Tao-tê 杞道德

Ch'i Wang 祀王

*chia ch'ên* 甲辰

Chien-hsüan Tien 鑿玄殿

*chih* 雉

Chihli 直隸

Ch'in-chou 秦州

Ch'ing Miao 清廟

*ch'ing shih* 青石

Ch'iu, S. Y. 裘善元

*chu* 柱

Fan 蕃

Fang Ridge 方嶺

Fang Shan 方山

Fêng 馮

Fêng Hsi 馮西

*fêng shui* 風水

Fu 敷

Fu Ch'êng-tsu 符承祖

Hei-shih-kuan 黑石關

Honan 河南

Hopei 河北

Ho P'ing 和平

Hsi-ch'êng-chün 西城郡

Hsi-chün 西郡

Hsi-ssü-êrh-ts'un 西寺兒村

Hsiao Wên 孝文

Hsien Tsu 顯祖

Hsien Wên 獻文

Hsin-tu 信都

Hsing Kuang 興光

Hsüan Ti 桓帝

Huang Hsing 皇興

Hui-ch'üan Ssü 慧泉寺

Hui Tsung 徽宗

I Hun 乙渾

I-i 猗包

*i mao* 乙卯

Jehol 熱河

Ju-hun Shui 如渾水

Jui 叡

Kansu 甘肅

Kao Tsu 高祖

Kao Tsung Wên Ch'êng Ti 高宗文成帝

*kêng shên* 庚申

Ku Shan 孤山

*kuei ch'ou* 癸丑

*kuei mao* 癸卯

Kuo Li Li Shih Po Wu Kuan 國立歷史博物館

Lang 朗

Li Ch'ung 李冲

Li Hsin 李訴



Li Hui 李惠

Li I 李弈

Li Tao-yüan 酈道元

Liao-hsi, Duke of 遼西公

Ling Ch'üan Palace 靈泉宮

Ling Ch'üan Pool 靈泉池

Lo-lang 樂浪

Lo-yang 洛陽

Lu Jui 陸叟

Lun-shih-hsien 綸氏縣

Lung-ch'êng 龍城

Nien Fu 年富

Pao T'ai Hou 保太后

Pao-tê Monastery 報德佛寺

Phýöngyang 平壤

Po-yang Ch'üan 白楊泉

Shansi 山西

Shan-tan-hsien 山舟縣

Shensi 陝西

Shun 舜

Ssü-yên stupa 思燕佛圖

Ssü-yüan Monastery 思遠靈圖

Ta-t'ung 大同

T'ai An 太安

T'ai-ho Tien 太和殿

T'ai-hua Palace 太華殿

T'ai Wu 太武

Têng-fêng-hsien 登封縣

T'ien An 天安

*ting ssü* 丁巳

Ts'ang-wu 蒼梧

Ts'ao 曹

Tung, K. Z. 董光忠

Tung-yang, Prince of 東陽王

Wan-nien T'ang 萬年堂

Wang 王

Wang Jui 王叡

Wang Yü 王遇

Wên Ch'êng 文成

Wên-hsüan-wang Miao 文宣王廟

Wên Ming Huang Hou 文明皇后

Wên Ming T'ai Huang T'ai Hou 文明太皇太后

*wên shih* 文石

Wu Liang Ssü 武梁祠

Wu-lo-hou 烏洛侯

*wu shên* 戊申

Wu-tso 五柞

*wu yin* 戊寅

Yao 堯

Yen 宴

*yên* 檐

Yu Ming-kên 游明根

*yü* 隅

Yü, the Great 大禹

Yü Ho 御河

Yüan P'ei 元丕

Yün-chung 雲中

Yung-chou 雍州

Yung-ku 永固

Yung-ku Ling 永固陵

Yung-ku T'ang 永固堂

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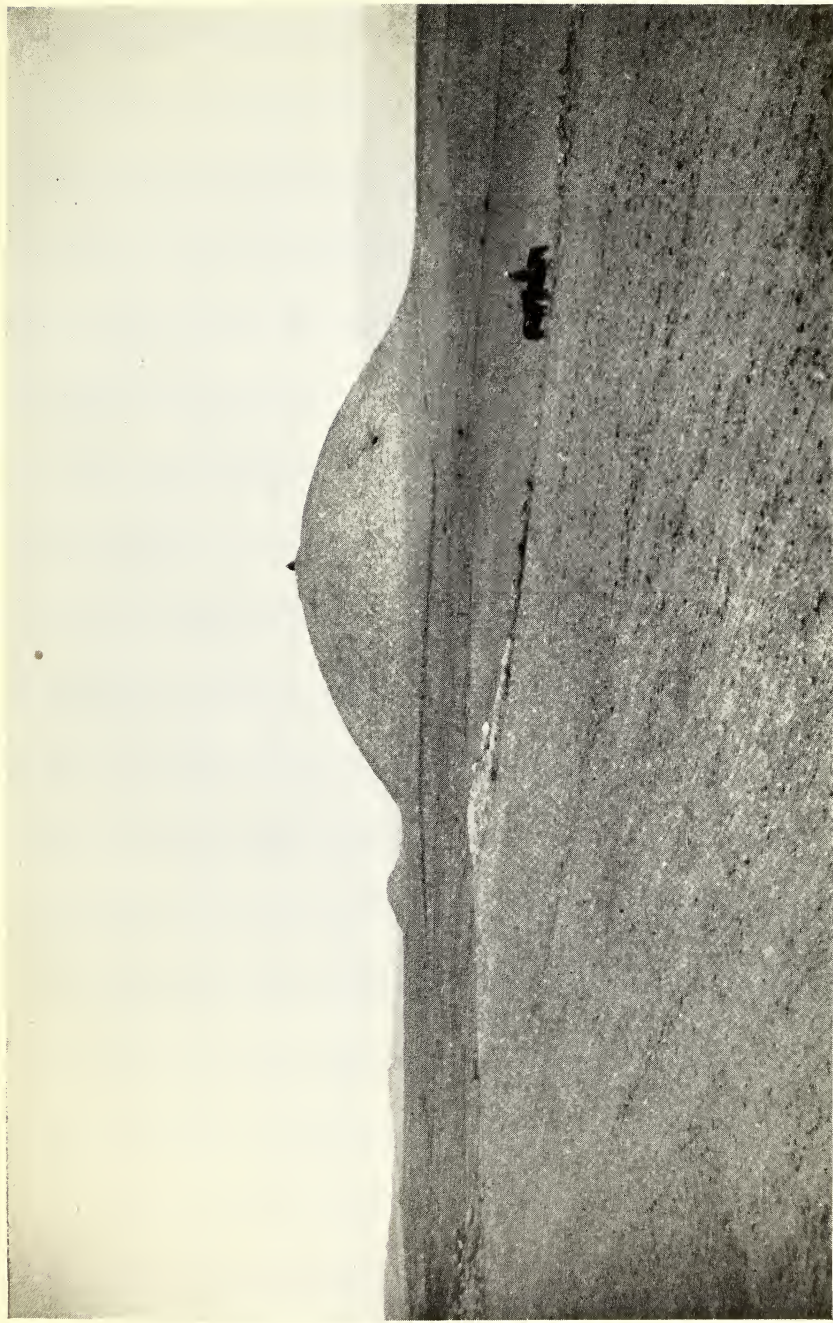
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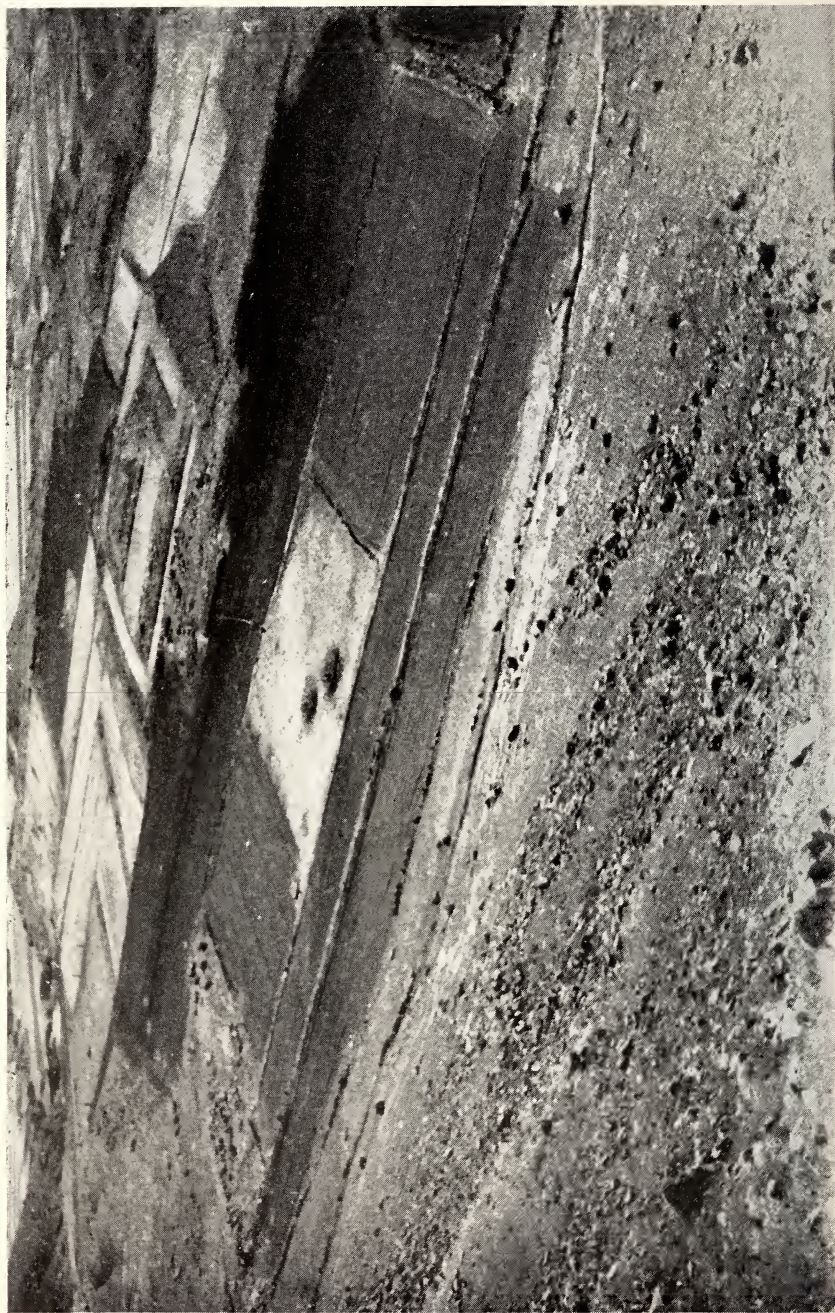
TOMB OF WÉN MING T'AI HOU FROM THE SOUTHWEST, SHOWING THE WAN-NIEN T'ANG IN THE BACKGROUND



TOMB OF WÉN MING T'AI HOU FROM THE WAN-NIEN T'ANG

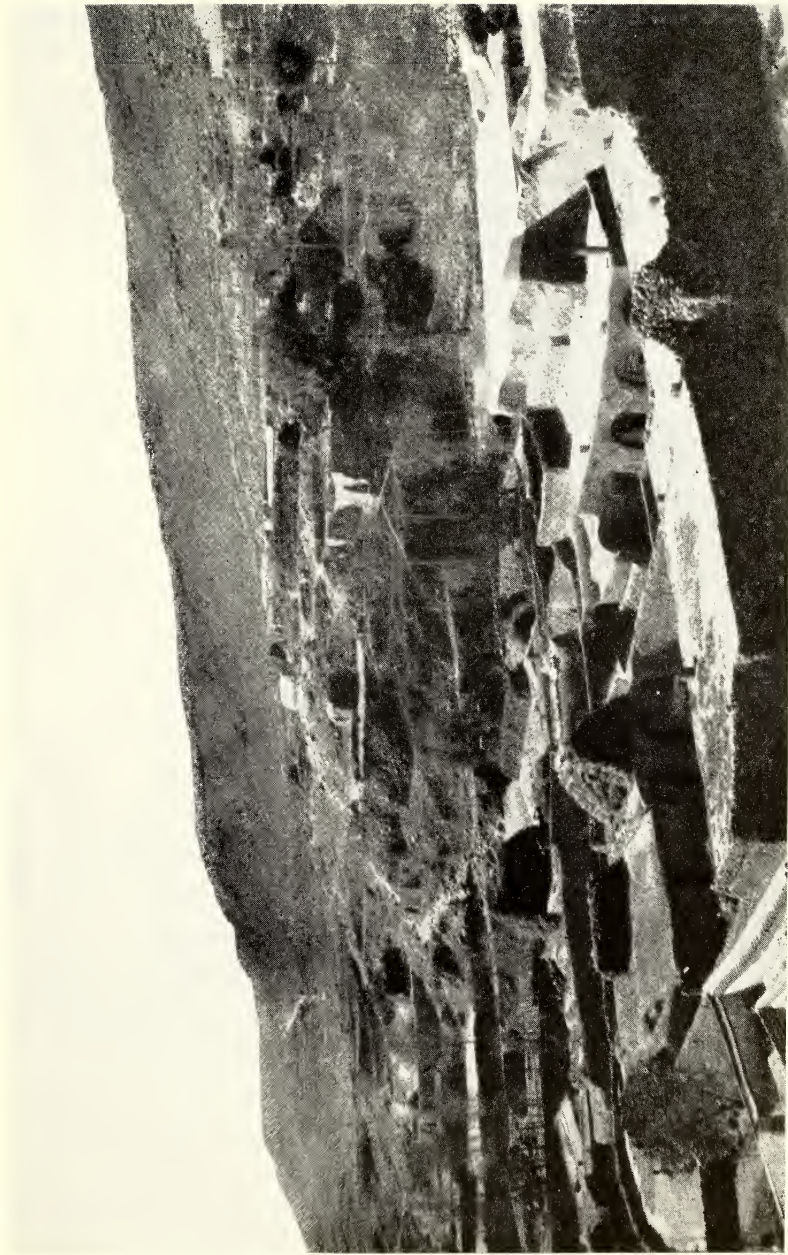


THE WAN-NIEN T'ANG



LOOKING DOWN FROM THE SOUTHERN ESCARPMENT ON WHAT REMAINS OF THE LING-CH'UAN PALACE





THE VILLAGE OF HSI-SSÜ-ÉR-H-TS'UN ON THE SIDE OF THE FANG SHAN PLATEAU FROM THE NORTHEAST



CHINESE PEASANTS THRESHING GRAIN AT HSI-SÜ-ÉRHS'UN



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