THE HISTORICAL KNIGHT-ERRANT

The knight-errant first appeared on the Chinese historical scene during the Warring States period (403–221 B.C.), against a background of political instability, social unrest, and intellectual ferment. Politically, the royal house of Chou had long lost control over its nominal vassals, who now called themselves kings and engaged in constant warfare with one another in their struggle for power. Socially, the old aristocracy had declined, so that many impoverished nobles, as well as men of special talent and skill (ritualists, musicians, astrologers, etc.) formerly retained by the aristocracy, now became socially displaced persons who roamed from one state to another, offering their services to the feudal lords. Intellectually, it was a time of unprecedented and unsurpassed florescence, which saw the emergence of various schools of thought, such as Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism, and Mohism, each offering a different remedy for the prevailing chaotic conditions. Briefly, the Confucians advocated a return to the way of the legendary sage-kings of remote antiquity, who reputedly ruled by moral influence; the Taoists recommended non-action and the abolition of all political and social institutions; the Legalists emphasized the rule of law and the use of punishment as a deterrent to crime; the Mohists preached pacifism and universal love. While the thinkers were busy arguing with one another and trying to convert the feudal rulers to their respective ways of thinking, the knights-errant simply took justice into their own hands and did what they thought necessary to redress wrongs and help the poor and the distressed. They did not hesitate to use force, nor did they have much regard for the law. On the other hand, the major powers of the period were the states of Ch'in, Ch'u, Yen, Ch'i, Han, Chao, and Wei.
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hand, they usually acted on altruistic motives and were ready to die for their principles. Such was the beginning of knight-errantry in China.

THEIR SOCIAL ORIGINS

Regarding the social origins of the knights-errant, modern scholars have different opinions. One view is that they were of purely plebeian origin. Professor Feng Yu-Ian suggested that the knights-errant were unemployed peasants and artisans who became professional warriors, and Professor Lao IS:.an, in an article on the knights-errant of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), remarked that they were commoners who took up knighthood as a profession. Another view is that they were men without property but not exclusively of lower social origin. Mr. T'ao Hsi-sheng described the rise of knights-errant thus:

Bankrupt warriors, merchants, and craftsmen, together with unemployed peasants, formed a large social class. This class had no property, but it would not be accurate to call it the proletariat. These wandering men without property despised labour. They formed the habit of wandering and idling. Among them were many impoverished members of the old warrior class, who still had the tendency to fight, as well as ambition, organizing ability, and capacity for leadership.

According to him, this warrior class (shih) originally formed a middle class between the aristocracy and the serfs, a class that corresponded to the knighthood of mediæval Europe. Thus, in T'ao's view, the knights-errant were not all of plebeian origin. Professor Yang Lien-sheng's view is similar to T'ao's, as can be seen from these remarks:

The knights-errant may have been nobles themselves. But, since they had lost their old status, they tended to identify themselves with the commoners.

These people were first recognised as a group during the period of the Warring States. At that time, the old feudal order had disintegrated, and many hereditary warriors had lost their positions and titles. As brave and upright individuals, and joined by strong sons of lower origin, they scattered throughout the country and made a living by offering their services (and even their lives) to anyone who could afford to employ them.

A third view is that the knights-errant were not a special social group, but simply men of chivalrous temperament. This view was expressed by Professor Tatsuo Masubuchi. Personally, I am inclined to the last view, and I believe that being a knight-errant was more a matter of temperament than of social origin and that knight-errantry was a way of behaviour rather than a profession. My reasons are as follows. In the first place, the historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien (c. 145–86 B.C.), in the section entitled 'Biographies of Knights-errant' of his Records of the Historiographer (Shih Chi), repeatedly used phrases like 'plebeian knights (literally, knights who wore coarse clothes)', 'knights from the villages', and 'knights from humble alleys', all of which imply that there were other knights who were not commoners and did not come from the villages or humble alleys, for if all knights-errant had been commoners, there would have been no need to specify their social origins. Secondly, the historian compared the feudal princes who retained knights as their 'guests' (k'et) with the plebeian knights, and pointed out that the latter deserved more praise because what they did was more difficult. This shows that he regarded the former also as knights-errant of a sort, though it was the latter that he particularly admired. Moreover, Pan Ku (A.D. 32–92), author of the History of the Han Dynasty, referring to the same feudal princes, said that 'relying on the influence of kings and dukes, they all became knights-errant'. It is therefore evident that scholars of the Han dynasty did not confine the term 'knights-errant' to a group of commoners. Even if we exclude these feudal lords as patrons of knights-errant rather than knights themselves, it would still not be true to say that all knights-errant depended on their chivalrous deeds for a living. As Mr. Masubuchi pointed out, one of the knights-errant described by Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Chu Chia (third century B.C.), bought slaves to work on his land and therefore must have been a landowner. Another man, Ning Ch'eng (second century B.C.), after purchasing land and accumulating considerable wealth, began to behave as a knight-errant. It is true that his biography appears not among those of knights-errant but among those of harsh officials in the Records of the Historiographer, but the significant fact is that he acted as a knight-errant after he had become rich, which means he did not enrich himself by being a knight-errant, but rather used his wealth

1 See below, p. 16.
2 See below, p. 36.
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acquired by other means to carry out chivalrous deeds. In fact, it was more common for a knight-errant to give money away than to receive payment for his chivalry. Though he might receive cash gifts from friends and followers, these were in the nature of voluntary contributions rather than payment for service rendered. In short, the knights-errant, or at least some of them, did not depend on chivalry for a living. They cannot, therefore, be considered professionals. Nor were they necessarily professional warriors. Men like Chu Chia were famed not for expert swordsmanship or military genius but for altruism and sense of justice. For these reasons, I suggest it is best to regard the knights-errant not as a social class or a professional group but simply as men of strongly individualistic temperament, who behaved in a certain way based on certain ideals.

THEIR IDEALS

The ideals which formed the basis of knightly behaviour may be discussed under the following headings:

(a) Altruism One of the most remarkable characteristics of the knights-errant is their altruism. They habitually helped the poor and the distressed, and often risked their own lives to save others. Their unselfishness extended not only to their friends but even to total strangers, so much so that the word hsia ('knightly' or 'chivalrous') has become associated in usage with the word yi, which is usually translated as 'righteousness' but, when applied to knights-errant, has quite a different meaning and comes close to 'altruism'. As Feng Yu-lan pointed out, yi, in the sense understood by the knights-errant, means doing more than what is required by common standards of morality, or in other words behaving in a 'supermoral' way. For instance, 'to bestow a kindness and not to expect a reward is moral; to bestow a kindness and to reject any reward is supermoral'. Such behaviour is typical of the knights-errant, as we shall see later.

(b) Justice The altruistic behaviour of the knights sprang from a sense of justice, which they placed above family loyalty. For example, the knight-errant Kuo Hsieh let go the killer of his nephew because he thought the nephew had been in the wrong. This respect for justice and insistence on 'fair play', together with

See Additional Note 2.

See below, p. 38.

See below, p. 35.

See Additional Note 3.

See below, p. 25.

See below, p. 37. Also see Additional Note 3.

See below, pp. 21-2, 32-3.

See below, p. 14.
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suicide so as to show he would not betray a secret trust. Thus, Chi Shae-kung committed suicide so as not to reveal the whereabouts of Kuo Hsieh, who was being sought by the officials; Tien Kuang did the same to show he would not divulge the secret entrusted to him by Prince Tan of Yen.

(g) Honour and fame The knights’ concern for truthfulness is connected with their sense of honour. Ssu-ma Ch’ien remarked that ‘they disciplined their action and cherished their honour so that their fame spread all over the empire’.

Even Han Fei Tzu, the Legalist thinker who condemned them, said they ‘established standards of integrity to distinguish their names’. If it be contended that the knights-errant were not entirely motivated by altruism in their action, then their only selfish motive was their desire for fame.

(b) Generosity and contempt for wealth In contrast to their desire for fame is their contempt for wealth. A knight-errant might receive handsome sums from friends without any embarrassment, as Kuo Hsieh did; or refuse an offer of household effects worth several million cash, as Chi Chang did. It was not that they had no use for money; they simply did not have a strong sense of proprietorship, and either lived lavishly while sharing their luxury with friends, or lived modestly themselves while giving money to the poor.

Naturally, not all those who claimed to be knights-errant actually lived up to these ideals, no more than those who call themselves Confucians or Christians have lived up to their respective ideals. This can only be attributed to human frailty, but cannot be held against knight-errantry as such. On the other hand, I do not mean the knights-errant were by any means perfect. Even those who did live up to these ideals had serious shortcomings. For one thing, they were too eager to fight and too quick to take offence. Sometimes they would take measures of revenge out of all proportion to the offence, real or imagined. There is a story in the Hsin-nan Tzu (a philosophical work compiled in the second century B.C.) about a group of knights-errant who passed a tall building where a rich man and his friends were having a party upstairs. It so happened that a kite flew past and dropped a dead rat which hit one of the knights on the head. The knights immedi-
to the Confucian way of thinking, was not only unnecessary but also undesirable, for if one died for a stranger, what should one do for one's parents?

This difference between the Confucians and the knights-errant was connected with the former's emphasis on moderation in contrast to the latter's tendency towards extremism. The Confucians held up the 'golden mean' as the ideal of human conduct, while the knights-errant often went to extremes in their feeling and action. The latter's generosity, even their self-sacrifice, would have been condemned as excessive by the Confucians.

Another difference is that the Confucians taught 'forgiveness' (shu) and 'yielding' or 'deferring' (jia), whereas the knights-errant made revengefulness a virtue and were usually too proud to yield to anyone.

Furthermore, the knights-errant had an absolute conception of truthfulness, while the Confucians had a relative one. The former insisted one must always be true in word and in action; the latter regarded such men as 'little men' (hsiao-je), as pointed out by Professor Yang.

Next, whereas the Confucians aimed at order and stressed the need for the individual to conform to a rigid pattern of behaviour and to subjugate himself to the family, the knight-errant valued personal freedom above family solidarity. Consequently, the former attached great importance to ritual and social manners, but the latter paid scant attention to outward forms of conduct.

Finally, the Confucians were against the use of force, while the knights-errant often resorted to violence in their attempts to achieve justice. However, a word of warning may not be out of place here: though the Confucians were against violence, they were not physical cowards. The 'Six Liberal Arts' (Li-ye) pursued by the ancient Confucian gentleman included archery and charioteering as well as ritual, music, writing, and arithmetic. The popular image of a Confucian scholar as an over-refined and effeminate bookworm came into being centuries later, and is in any case not true of all Confucian scholars even in later periods.

The differences mentioned above were due, I believe, not so much to social status as to temperament. It would be an oversimplification to say that Confucianism represented the morality of the gentlemen and knight-errantry that of the commoner.

More colloquially, one might say 'one-downmanship'.

Rather, we might say that the former represented a type of men naturally inclined towards conservatism, moderation, and conformity, and the latter, a type of men naturally inclined towards individualism, revolt, and extravagance.

In spite of these differences, the Confucians and the knights-errant did have certain similarities. As Feng Yu-lan pointed out, both were faithful to the tasks entrusted them, even to death, and both showed personal loyalty based on a principle of reciprocity. To these may be added that both cherished honour and belittled wealth. We have already seen the knights' concern for honour and fame. The Confucian gentleman, too, thought it a cause for worry if he should end his days without achieving fame. And like the knights-errant, the Confucians also despised wealth. Confucius praised those who cared little for the material comforts of life but lived cheerfully in poverty, such as his favourite disciple Yen Hui. Indeed, Mencius's definition of a great man as one 'whom wealth and rank cannot corrupt, poverty and humble position cannot change, and authority and power cannot bend' would apply to the ideal Confucian scholar as well as the ideal knight-errant.

2. Knights-errant and Legalists

If the contrast between the Confucians and the knights-errant is great, that between the Legalists and the knights is even greater. The Legalists advocated the supremacy of the state and the suppression of the individual, while the knights-errant valued personal freedom above social security. The Legalists tried to maintain social order by governmental authority; the knights-errant had little respect for official authority. Furthermore, the Legalists stressed the importance of the law and the necessity for its strict enforcement: all those who transgressed against the law must be punished. This left little room for human sympathy and understanding in individual cases. The knights-errant, on the other hand, judged each case from a personal angle, not a legal one. Their sense of justice was based on human sympathy, not on an abstract concept of law.

In short, the Legalists and the knights-errant were diametrically opposed in basic outlook. The former looked at society from the ruler's point of view; the latter, from the private citizen's point of view. The Legalists were preoccupied with the art of government; the knights-errant were not only uninterested in government
but also too impatient to be governed. In emphasizing individual dignity against the authority of the state and in preferring a humanistic conception of justice to a legal one, the knights-errant were at one with the Confucians. Both placed a moral code above the law, though the moral code of each was different. That is why the Legalist Han Fei Tzu included both in what he called the 'Five Vermin' of state and condemned them both: 'The Confucian scholars confuse the law with their writings, while the knights-errant violate the prohibitions by force. Yet the rulers of men treat both with courtesy. That is why there is disorder.' By contrast to the Legalist, the Confucian would now appear more congenial to the knight-errant, while the Legalist stood for everything that the knight abhorred.

3. Knights-errant and Mohists

The knights-errant and the Mohists, the followers of Mo Tzu, whose life span fell between 479 and 381 B.C. and who preached universal love, obviously had much in common. Indeed, it has been suggested by Professor Feng Yu-lan that the Mohists originated from the knights-errant. His theory may be summarized as follows. After the collapse of aristocratic government about the time of Confucius (551-479 B.C.), a new class of professional men came into being, known as the shih. At first this word simply meant any man of special talent or skill, and such men were kept by the aristocracy. After they lost their employment, they became what we may call free lances. Those who specialized in ritual, music, and education were the 'scholars' (ju), of whom Confucius was one, and their moral code developed into Confucianism (ju-chia, literally, 'scholasticism'). Those who specialized in warfare were the knights (hsia), and their moral code developed into Mohism.

Later, Feng modified his theory a little when he realized that there was no mention of the 'knights' (hsia) before the Warring States period and suggested substituting the term 'military experts' (wu-shih) for 'knights'. But his basic view remained unchanged. As he himself put it, 'What we need is some proof that before or during the time of Mo Tzu there were such men [whose profession was to help people in warfare]. . . As for whether these men were called "knights", that is a separate question which has no great bearing on our main view [that the Mohists derived from professional warriors]. He then gave various examples of men who may be considered military experts. Thus, he succeeded in showing that there were professional warriors before and during the time of Mo Tzu, but did not succeed in showing that these warriors were the same kind of men as the 'knights-errant'. In fact, there is some evidence to the contrary. Su-ma Ch'ien remarked, 'About the plebeian knights-errant of antiquity, we have no means of obtaining information.' This suggests he did not regard the warriors mentioned by Feng as knights-errant. Moreover, the historian also said, 'both the Confucians and the Mohists rejected them [the knights-errant] as being unworthy of mentioning.' This could hardly have been the case had the Mohists been the spiritual heirs of the knights-errant. It seems safer, therefore, to regard the professional warriors before the Warring States period as the kind of men whose moral code may have influenced both the knights-errant and the Mohists, than to confuse these warriors with the knights-errant and say that Mohism derived from knight-errantry.

Although we cannot accept the view that the Mohists originated from the knights-errant, we can still acknowledge the similarities between the two. Both were inspired by an altruistic spirit and a strong sense of justice, and both acted on a universalistic principle, as against the Confucian principle of degrees of love and duty. Both belittled wealth and shared what they had. Both were absolutely truthful and trustworthy.

On the other hand, there are considerable differences between the two. Professor Feng himself mentioned three differences: first, the knights-errant were professional fighters (who fought for anyone), while the Mohists fought for principles and would only fight for a weak state against a strong one; secondly, the Mohists were interested in government, while the knights-errant only had personal courage; thirdly, the knights-errant merely practised a kind of morality, while the Mohists not only practised it but also systematized, theorized, and universalized it. Since we do not accept the view that the knights-errant were professional warriors,

1 This account of the shih is somewhat different from Tao Hsi-sheng's, as mentioned above on p. 2.

2 See below, p. 16.

3 Mo Tzu's conception of yi, as seen in Mo Tzu, 47, is closer to 'altruism' and 'justice' than 'righteousness'.
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we may disregard the first difference. The second one is certainly one of the main distinctions between the knights-errant and the Mohists. As for the last one, again it would probably be better to say that the Mohists inherited from the warriors of Pre-Warring-States times certain moral ideals which may have also influenced the knights-errant, rather than that the Mohists systematized the morality of the knights.

Further differences between the Mohists and the knights may be discerned. The Mohists led an austere and disciplined life; the knights-errant were often free and easy. The Mohists were a highly organized body of men, whose leader had the authority of life and death over the members; the knights-errant were only loosely associated on a voluntary basis. The Mohists, though they helped weak states in self-defence, were against fighting in principle; the knights were always ready for a fight. Basically, the Mohists were concerned with political and social equity, but the knights-errant were only concerned with personal justice.

4. Knights-errant and Taoists

It may seem at first sight rather far-fetched to link the quick-tempered, swashbuckling knights-errant with the other-worldly, contemplative Taoists, yet they did have certain things in common. Professor Lao Kan mentions several knights-errant of early Han, namely Ch'en P'ing, T'ien Shu, Chi An, and Cheng Tang-shih, who are said by Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku to have studied Taoism. This shows there was some connection between Taoism and knight-errantry. However, when Professor Lao goes on to say that this connection arose because both the knights and the Taoists were commoners, I find it hard to agree. We have already seen that not all knights-errant were commoners, and even if they all had been, that would still not have been sufficient reason for them to embrace the teachings of Taoism, granted that Taoism is a philosophy of the commoners, which is rather begging the question. It seems to me one cannot account for a man's ideas and ideals entirely by his social origin. What is more likely is that certain aspects of Taoist philosophy appealed to the same temperament that found expression in chivalry.

What are these aspects of Taoism then? First, Taoism is individualistic and against conformity to social conventions. The Taoists advocated the principle of following Nature, instead of forcing oneself to fit some Procrustean bed. Thus, Chuang Tzu said, 'The duck's legs are short, but if we try to stretch them, the duck will feel pain. The crane's legs are long, but if we try to shorten them, the crane will grieve. Therefore, we should not shorten what is naturally long, nor stretch what is naturally short.' The knights-errant were actually practising this principle of following one's natural inclinations whether they fully realized its Taoist implications or not.

Secondly, the Taoists, like the knights-errant, also had an anarchistic attitude towards government and law. For instance, Lao Tzu says, 'The more restrictions and prohibitions there are in the world, the poorer the people will be. . . . The more laws and ordinances are promulgated, the more thieves and bandits there will be.' Similarly, Chuang Tzu admonishes us: 'Reject saintliness and discard wisdom, and great bandits will cease; throw away jades and destroy pearls, and petty thieves will no longer rise; burn official tallies and seals, and the people will be plain and honest; break measures and weights, and the people will no longer quarrel.' This antipathy towards legal control and governmental authority would have appealed readily to the chivalrous temperament.

Of course, there are differences between the Taoists and the knights-errant. The Taoists recommended non-action, while the knights were only too eager for action. The Taoists sought a kind of absolute, spiritual freedom; the knights only strove for social freedom. The more mystical aspects of Taoism were altogether beyond the knights-errant: there is no evidence they were interested in Taoist metaphysics.

To sum up: the knights-errant had certain affinities with various schools of thinkers, but no actual affiliations with any. They were neither intellectuals nor politicians, but men of strong will and simple faith, who lived and died the way they wanted.

Knights-errant of the Warring States
And Early Han Periods (c. 300–120 B.C.)

Having considered the social and intellectual backgrounds of knight-errantry, we may now look at some examples of knights-errant of the Warring States and early Han periods. Our best
and glory. At heart he admires neither, but keeps his admiration for the knights-errant:

However, some commoners established mutual faith and were praised a thousand miles around for their altruism. They would meet death without caring what the world thought of them. These men had their own good points, and what they did, they did not do lightly. Therefore, when a man was in trouble, he could entrust his life to such men. Are these not what we call ‘virtuous, worthy, outstanding men’? If the knights-errant from the villages had been asked to compete with scholars like Chi-tz’U and Yuan Hsien in wielding power to serve the world they lived in, their achievements would have been less great. But if it is considered necessary for men to accomplish what they set out to do and mean what they say, then how can one do without the principles of knight-errantry?

Having thus justified the knights-errant, the author expresses his regret that little is known about the knights-errant of antiquity. He then singles out for admiration knights who were commoners, as distinct from chivalrous noblemen who harboured knights as their guests. On the other hand, he carefully distinguishes knights-errant from mere local bullies:

About the plebeian knights-errant of antiquity, we have no means of obtaining information. In more recent times, the princes of Meng-ch’ang, Ch’un-shen, P’ing-yuan, Hsin-lin, and others, being royal kinsmen and relying on their landed wealth and high ranks, attached to themselves worthy men from all over the empire and spread their fame among the feudal lords. One cannot say these princes were not worthies. Yet what they did was like shouting in the direction of the wind: it is not that the sound travels faster than normal, but the speed of the wind carries it on. As for the knights-errant who came from humble alleys, and who disciplined their action and cherished their honour so that their fame spread all over the empire, what they did was truly difficult. However, both the Confucians and the Mohists rejected them as being unworthy of mentioning. Consequently, the names of plebeian knights-errant who lived before Ch’in times have vanished—a fact that I deeply regret.

As far as I know, since the rise of the Han dynasty, there have been many knights such as Chu Chia, T’ien Chung, Wang Kung, Chü Meng, and Kuo Hsien. Although they often offended the laws of the times, in their private lives they showed unselfishness, integrity, and modesty, which well deserve our praise. Their fame was not built on nothing, and men did not follow them for no reason. As for those who formed cliques among their friends and clansmen, plotting together to enrich themselves and exploiting the poor, using force to bully the weak and indulging their desires to satisfy themselves, the knights-errant too regarded them as shameful. I am grieved that the ordinary people of the world do not realize this but hastily condemn men like Chu Chia and Kuo Hsien with the bullies.

After this preamble, Ssū-ma Ch’ien gives an account of the lives of several knights-errant. Moreover, in other sections of the Records of the Historiographer, there are more examples of men who acted in a chivalrous way, even if they are not always called ‘knights-errant’ in so many words. The following accounts are translated from various parts of this monumental work. I have telescoped paragraphs from different biographies to make a more coherent story when necessary, and have omitted some minor details.

Prince Wu-chi (ob. 243 B.C.), Hou Ying (326–257 B.C.), and Chu Hai

Prince Wu-chi of Wei was the youngest son of King Chao of Wei (reigned 295–277 B.C.) and half-brother of King An-hsi (reigned 276–243 B.C.). When King Chao died and King An-hsi came to the throne, the latter enfeoffed Wu-chí as Prince of Hsin-lin (in modern Honan province).

The Prince was kind by nature and humbled himself before knights. No matter whether they were worthy or not, he would treat them all with courtesy, and would not dare to behave haughtily because of his wealth and noble rank. However, both the Confucians and the Mohists rejected them as being unworthy of mentioning. Consequently, the names of plebeian knights-errant who lived before Ch’in times have vanished—a fact that I deeply regret.

As far as I know, since the rise of the Han dynasty, there have been

1 In the original text, the name (Prince of) Yen-ling appears after the four princes. Since he belongs to an earlier age and is not particularly famous for retaining knights, the inclusion of his name here is probably a textual error. I have therefore omitted it in the translation.

2 This is paraphrased from the Hsin T’ang, Chapter 1.
of Chao was invading Wei. The King of Wei put down his pieces and was about to summon the ministers for discussion, but the Prince stopped him, saying, 'The King of Chao is hunting, not coming to invade us.' And he went on playing as before. The King was afraid and could not keep his mind on the game. After a while, news came again from the north that the King of Chao was hunting, not invading Wei. The King of Wei was greatly astonished and asked the Prince, 'How could you know it?' The Prince replied, 'One of my guests can obtain the secrets of the King of Chao. Whatever he does, my guest reports to me. That is how I knew.' After this incident, the King of Wei was jealous and afraid of the Prince, and would not entrust State affairs to him.

There was a recluse in Wei named Hou Ying. In his seventieth year, because of poverty, he worked as the gate-keeper of Yi Men, the Eastern Gate of the capital Ta-liang (modern K'ai-feng). When the Prince heard of him, he went to visit Hou and wished to give him a handsome sum of money. Hou refused, saying, 'I have cultivated my personal integrity for several decades, and I will never receive money from Your Highness, poor gate-keeper as I am.' Thereupon the Prince prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. When they were seated, the Prince left with some attendants. He kept empty the seat of honour on the left in his carriage and went personally to the Eastern Gate to request Hou's presence. Holding his tattered clothes, Hou went straight to the carriage and took the seat of honour, without even making a show of declining, so as to test the Prince. The Prince, holding the reins, looked even more deferential. Then Hou Ying said to the Prince, 'I have a friend who is a butcher at the market-place. May I bother you to drive your carriage there?' The Prince drove the carriage to the market-place, and Hou came down to see his friend Chu Hai. He deliberately looked arrogantly left and right, and stood there talking for a long time, while secretly observing the Prince's reaction. The expression on the Prince's face became even milder. At that time, the generals, ministers, and royal clansmen of Wei, who were the Prince's guests, were all waiting for him to start the banquet. Simultaneously, the people in the market-place saw the Prince holding the reins for Hou Ying, while all the attendants privately cursed Hou. Seeing that the Prince still did not change his expression, Hou said good-bye to his friend and took to the carriage. On arriving home, the Prince led Hou to the seat of honour and introduced him in flattering terms to the guests. All the guests were astonished. When they became high-spirited with wine, the Prince rose and toasted Hou, wishing him long life. Hou took this opportunity to say to the Prince, 'Today I have made you suffer enough. I am only the gate-keeper of the Eastern Gate, yet Your Highness came personally in your carriage to fetch me before a crowd. It was not proper for you to visit me, yet you purposely visited me. However, I wished to make your name for you, so I kept you waiting for a long time at the market-place, and went to see my friend to observe your reaction. You became even more respectful. All the people in the market-place thought me a petty man and you a worthy lord who could humble himself before men.' So they stopped drinking, and from that moment Hou Ying was treated as a guest of honour.

Hou said to the Prince, 'The butcher I visited, called Chu Hai, is a worthy man, but the world cannot appreciate him. That is why he hides his light among butchers.' The Prince went several times to visit Chu, but the latter never returned the courtesy. The Prince wondered why.

In 217 B.C., King Chao of Ch'in defeated the troops of Chao and besieged the capital of Chao, Han-tan (in modern Hopei). Prince Wu-chi's elder sister was married to the Prince of Ping-yuan, younger brother of the former King of Chao. She wrote several times to the King of Wei and the Prince for help. So the King of Wei sent General Chin Pi with an army of a hundred thousand men to come to the rescue of Chao. The King of Ch'in sent a messenger to the King of Wei, saying, 'I am attacking Chao and expect the capital to fall any moment. If any other feudal lord dares to come to the rescue of Chao, I will divert my forces to attack him as soon as Chao is conquered.' The King of Wei became afraid and sent someone to stop Chin Pi, telling him to encamp at Yeh (on the border between Chao and Wei), thus nominally coming to aid Chao but actually waiting to see which side would win. The Prince of Ping-yuan sent one messenger after another to Wei and reproached Prince Wu-chi: 'The reason why I attached myself in marriage to your family was that I thought you were full of noble altruism and could save people in

1 The state of Chao occupied parts of modern Hopei, Honan, and Shansi.

1 The state of Ch'in occupied what is now Shensi province.
distress. Now, Han-tan may surrender to Ch'in any moment, yet no aid has come from Wei. Where is the proof you can save people in distress? Besides, even if you do not think much of me and will abandon me to surrender to Ch'in, have you no pity for your sister? Prince Wu-chi was worried and several times spoke to the King. He also sent sophists to try to persuade the King with every possible argument, but the King, frightened of Ch'in, would not listen. The Prince reckoned that he could never get the King's consent to act, but resolved he would not remain alive alone and let Chao perish. So he asked some of his guests to follow him, gathered together over a hundred carriages, and was about to go to meet the Ch'in army and perish with Chao.

When the Prince passed the Eastern Gate, he went to see Hou Ying and told the latter why he was going to meet the Ch'in army in this suicidal manner. Hou said, 'Courage to Your Highness! Your old servant cannot follow.' After the Prince had gone a few miles, he was unhappy and said to himself, 'I have treated Hou Ying with every possible kindness, as the whole world knows. Now I am about to die, yet he did not say anything to me as a farewell message. Could it be I have missed something?' So he turned his carriage back and went to see Hou again. Hou laughed and said, 'I knew Your Highness would come back! Your Highness is fond of keeping knights, as is known all over the empire. Now, faced with a disaster, you have no better plan than going to meet the Ch'in army, like throwing meat to a hungry tiger: what is the use? And what is the use of having guests then? However, Your Highness treated me with great kindness, but I did not send you off properly; that is why I knew you would come back.' The Prince bowed twice and asked his advice. Hou Ying then asked all attendants to be dismissed and said, 'I hear that half of the tally that gave Chin Pi control over the army is constantly kept in the King's bedroom. Now Lady Ju is the King's favourite and often goes in and out of his bedroom. She should be able to steal it. I have heard that Lady Ju's father was murdered, and she grieved for three years, but no one, from the King downwards, could find the murderer and avenge her father's death. At last she told you in tears, and you sent a guest to kill her enemy. He succeeded and presented the enemy's head to her. Lady Ju would be willing to die for you; only she has not had a chance. If you will but say the word, she will certainly do what you wish. Then, with the 'tiger tally', you can take over the army from Chin Pi, save Chao in the north, and repel the Ch'in troops from the west. This is an enterprise worthy of the Big Five.' The Prince followed his advice and asked Lady Ju, who did steal the King's half of the tally and give it to the Prince.

The Prince was about to leave, when Hou Ying said, 'When a general is leading an army outside, he can refuse to obey an order from the King in the national interest. Now, even if you show Chin Pi your half of the tally and it fits, he may refuse to obey but ask for further orders from the King. Then things would be dangerous. You had better take my friend, the butcher Chu Hai, with you. He is a very strong man. If Chin Pi will obey, all is well; if not, let Chu kill him.' On hearing this, the Prince wept. Hou asked, 'Is Your Highness afraid of death? Why are you weeping?' The Prince replied, 'Chin Pi is a tempestuous old general. I am afraid he will not obey and I shall have to kill him. That is why I am weeping. How can I be afraid of death?'

The Prince then asked Chu Hai to go with him. Chu laughed and said, 'I am a mere butcher, but Your Highness has visited me several times. The reason why I never returned the courtesy was that I thought petty courtesy was useless. Now you have an emergency; this is the time for me to repay you, even with my life.' So he joined the Prince.

Once more the Prince came to take his leave of Hou Ying. Hou said, 'I should follow you, but cannot because of my age. Allow me to count the days of your journey, and on the day you should reach the army, I will look towards the north and cut my throat to bid you farewell.' Thereupon the Prince left.

When he reached Yeh, he pretended to have an order from the King to replace Chin Pi. Chin Pi put the two halves of the tally together, but still had his doubts. Raising his hands and looking at the Prince, he said, 'I am leading an army of a hundred thousand men on the border. This is a heavy responsibility to the country.'
The Historical Knight-Errant

Now you come all alone to replace me: how can that be?' He was about to refuse, when Chu Hai, who had hidden an iron hammer weighing forty catties in his sleeve, killed Chin Pi with it. The Prince then took control of the army and issued the following order: 'If father and son are both in the army, let the father go home; if two brothers are in the army, let the elder one go home; if only son, go home to look after your parents!' Thus he had eighty thousand choice soldiers left, with whom he attacked the Ch'in forces. The Ch'in army withdrew, so the siege of Han-tan was raised and the kingdom of Chao saved. The king of Chao and the Prince of P'ing-yuan came personally to the border to welcome Prince Wu-chi. The Prince of P'ing-yuan, carrying the bow-case and the quiver, led the way before Prince Wu-chi. The King of Chao bowed twice and said, 'Since ancient times, there has been no worthy man comparable to Your Highness!' At that time, the Prince of P'ing-yuan (who formerly was known as one of the four princes who retained knights) dared not compare himself with the others.

Prior to this, on the day when the Prince reached the army, Hou Ying really cut his throat while looking towards the north. The King of Wei was angry with the Prince for having stolen the tally and killed Chin Pi, and the Prince knew this. So, having saved Chao, he sent a general to lead the army back to Wei, while he himself with his guests stayed in Chao. The King of Chao, out of gratitude, wished to enfeoff Prince Wu-chi with five towns. When the Prince heard this, he was proud and showed signs of self-satisfaction. Thereupon one of his guests advised him: 'Some things one must not forget, same things one must forget. If someone else has done Your Highness a kindness, you must not forget it; if Your Highness has done someone else a kindness, then I wish you would forget it. Moreover, what you did—forging the King's order and taking over the army from Chin Pi by force—was a meritorious deed to Chao, but hardly loyal to Wei. Yet Your Highness seems to be proud of it and to regard this as your merit. In my humble opinion, this is not worthy of you.' The Prince at once felt as ashamed of himself as if there had been no place to hide. When the King of Chao received the Prince, he swept the road and personally welcomed the Prince. Observing the duties of a host, the King led the Prince to the western stairway (the guest's approach to the hall). The Prince, walking sideways in humility, declined the honour and ascended the hall by the eastern stairway (the host's approach). Then he reproached himself, saying that he had betrayed Wei without having done anything meritorious for Chao. The King of Chao entertained him with wine till evening, but was too embarrassed to bring up the subject of offering the Prince five towns, since the latter was so humble. Eventually the Prince stayed in Chao, and the King of Chao offered him the town of Hao (in modern Hopei) as his 'bathing place.' The King of Wei also offered Hsin-ling back to the Prince, but he remained in Chao.

The Prince had heard that in Chao there were two men of ability who chose to remain in obscurity. One was called Grandfather Mao, who lived among gamblers; the other was known as Grandfather Hsüeh, who worked in a wine shop. The Prince then went on foot to see them. On meeting each other, they became great friends. When the Prince of P'ing-yuan heard of this, he said to his wife, 'At first I heard your brother was a paragon of virtue, now I hear he is associating with gamblers and wine-sellers. He is only a rash person!' When she told the Prince this, the latter asked permission to leave, saying, 'At first I heard the Prince of P'ing-yuan was a worthy man, and that is why I betrayed the King of Wei to save Chao, so as to satisfy the Prince. Now I see he makes friends merely to show his generosity, not to seek worthy men. Ever since I was in Ta-liang, I had already heard of these two men. When I came to Chao, I was afraid I could not get to know them. Even with someone like me, I was afraid they would not want to know me. Now the Prince of P'ing-yuan thinks it a shame to know them! He is not worthy to be a friend.' Thereupon Prince Wu-chi started to get his luggage ready for departure. When his sister told her husband, the Prince of P'ing-yuan, with hat off, apologized to Prince Wu-chi, and firmly asked him to stay. When the guests of the Prince of P'ing-yuan heard this, half of them left him to join Prince Wu-chi, and knights from other parts of the empire also came to follow the Prince.

The Prince stayed in Chao for ten years without going back.
The Historical Knight-Errant

When the King of Ch'in heard the Prince was in Chao, he sent troops eastward to attack Wei day and night. The King of Wei was worried and sent a messenger to ask the Prince back. The Prince, for fear the King was still angry with him, warned his retainers: 'If anyone dares to speak on behalf of the King's messenger, he dies.' Since all the retainers had disobeyed the King of Wei and followed the Prince to Chao, none of them dared to advise him to return. At that time, Grandfather Mao and Grandfather Hsueh went to see the Prince and said, 'The reason why Your Highness is so much esteemed in Chao and so famous among the feudal lords is simply the existence of Wei. Now Ch'in is attacking Wei, yet you show no pity for Wei in this emergency. If the Ch'in army should take Ta-liang and raze your ancestral temple to the ground, how could you face the world again?'

Before they had finished talking, the Prince changed colour and hastily gave orders to get the carriages ready for his return. When the King of Wei and the Prince saw each other, they both wept, and the King gave him the seal of the generalissimo. In 247 B.C., the Prince sent messengers to all the other feudal lords, informing them of his appointment. On hearing this, they all sent generals with troops to help. The Prince, as Commander-in-Chief of the allied forces of five states, defeated the Ch'in army south of the Yellow River and drove the enemy out of the Han-ku Gate. The Ch'in troops dared not come out again, and the Prince's heroic fame spread all over the empire.

The King of Ch'in then bribed a former retainer of Chin Pi's with ten thousand catties of gold and made him slander the Prince before the King of Wei: 'The Prince was an exile abroad for ten years. Now he is the generalissimo of Wei, and the generals from the other states are all under his command. The other feudal lords have only heard of the Prince but not the King of Wei. The Prince himself wants to take this opportunity to ascend the throne, and the other feudal lords, who fear his authority, will support him.' Moreover, the King of Ch'in repeatedly sent messengers to Wei, pretending to have come to congratulate the new King and asking if the Prince had ascended the throne yet. The King of Wei, hearing such slander daily, could not help believing. Later, he ordered someone else to replace the Prince.

The Prince knew that he had been deprived of his power because of slander, so he asked for sick leave and refused to come to court. He had long drinking bouts with his guests at night, taking strong wine and dallying with many women. After indulging in wine, women, and song and day and night for four years, he actually died of alcoholism. In that year (243 B.C.) the King of Wei also died. The King of Ch'in, on hearing of the Prince's death, sent an army to invade Wei and occupied twenty towns, which formed the new Eastern Prefecture of Ch'in. Eighteen years later, Ch'in captured the King of Wei of that time and slaughtered the people of Ta-liang.

Ching K'o (ob. 237 B.C.), T'ien Kuang (ob. 232 B.C.), and Kao Chien-li (ob. c. 221 B.C.),

Ching K'o was a native of the state of Wey.1 He was fond of reading and swordsmanship, and offered his services to Prince Yuan of Wey, who did not make use of him. Later, when Ch'in invaded Wei (of which Prince Yuan of Wey had become a vassal) and established the Eastern Prefecture,2 Prince Yuan was forcibly moved to another place. (If Prince Yuan had made use of Ching K'o, he might have been able to save his country.)

Once, while travelling through Han-tan, Ching K'o quarrelled with another knight called Lu Kou-chien while playing backgammon. Lu scolded Ching angrily. Ching K'o said nothing and left.

After further travelling, Ching K'o arrived in the state of Yen,3 where he was commonly called Master Ching. He became very fond of a dog butcher and a musician named Kao Chien-li, who was an expert player of the zither (chu).4 Being addicted to the cup, Ching K'o drank daily with these two at the market-place. When they became high-spirited with wine, Kao Chien-li would play his zither, which Ching K'o would echo with singing. Thus they enjoyed themselves together. But soon they would start to weep,

1 I have spelt this name Wey to distinguish it from the larger state of Wei. The state of Wey was originally situated in modern Honan, later moved to Hopel.
2 See last paragraph.
3 The state of Yen occupied parts of modern Hopel, Manchuria, and northern Korea.
4 A string instrument that came into being about this time and apparently passed out of use not long afterwards. It is variously described as having 5, 13, or 21 strings, and was played with the left hand and a bamboo stick held in the right hand.
continuity of the tradition of knight-errantry in popular literature, and the interrelations among history, prose fiction, and drama. No mention has been made of contemporary 'spoken drama' (hua-ch'iu), because this is largely an imitation of Western realistic drama and is principally concerned with contemporary social problems, though there are a few modern plays about ancient knights-errant.

SOME CONCLUSIONS AND COMPARISONS

We have followed the development (and degeneration in some cases) of knight-errantry in Chinese history and literature during the course of some twenty-four centuries, and observed the changes that have taken place in its nature, both in fact and in fiction. We have seen such a varied gallery of characters, real or fictitious, to whom the term 'knight-errant' has been applied, that the reader may question the justification of its use. However, on reflection he might be convinced that there are in fact certain common denominators among those who have been graced with the appellation, such as their sense of justice, their loyalty to friends, their courage, and their impetuosity. Historically, knight-errantry is a manifestation of the spirit of revolt and nonconformity in traditional Chinese society, sometimes lying underground and sometimes erupting to the surface. Its ideals are admirable, though these have not always been realized in practice, and may have even provided excuses for mere lawlessness. It is further possible that the ideals of knight-errantry inspired the moral codes of secret societies of a subversive kind. As for chivalric literature, it is a moot point whether it has incited rebellion or, on the contrary, has had a 'cathartic' effect on the readers. The popular Chinese saying, 'The young should not read Water Margin; the old should not read The Three Kingdoms,' seems to indicate that the former is generally believed to be the case, though there is of course no irrefutable proof of this.1 Whatever its social and political effects may have been, chivalric literature has certainly added to our enjoyment.

Our survey has shown the close interrelation between history

1 I find it hard to agree with those who seriously believe that Water Margin has had a profound influence on Mao Tse-tung.
and literature, for whereas historical personages and events provided material for imaginative literature, literary works in turn have thrown light on history—if not on the periods with which they are ostensibly concerned, then on those in which they were actually produced. For instance, chivalric tales written in late T'ang times, when war-lords were rampant, reflect the desire of readers and writers to be rid of these; stories and plays about the Liang-shan heroes that came into being during the Southern Sung and Yuan periods reveal the wish of a people suffering from corrupt government and foreign domination for champions of justice and patriotic warriors; tales and plays of the Ming and Ch'ing periods, in which the heroes are often on the side of the law, together with the attempt of some writers and editors to Confucianize rebellious heroes, indicate a change of attitude towards knight-errantry, a change possibly due to fear of the literary inquisitions carried out by several Ming and Ch'ing emperors; tales extolling physical strength and prowess written since the decline of Chinese power in the nineteenth century are the results of wishful thinking of an enfeebled nation, while contemporary tales depicting flying swordsmen afford a means of escape from the often harsh realities of modern life. These are of course broad generalizations to which exceptions can be found, but they remain basically true.

Another fact which emerges from our survey is that the different treatments of the same characters and incidents in different literary genres bring out in relief the characteristics, the fortes, and limitations, of each genre. Thus, classical poetry, with its strict meters and concise language, excels in short pithy comments on historical knights or vivid vignettes of chivalrous life, but, due to the inherent danger of monotony of long narrative poems, has not produced a heroic epic. When popular writers tried to write long heroic poems, what they produced were merely ballads in doggerel (such as The Capture of Chi Pin). It was left to the prose romancers to produce something with epic qualities like Water Margin. Here, the relative freedom of prose, particularly colloquial prose, enabled the writers to create memorable characters in lively narrative, with the aid of convincing dialogue. However, these characters are observed as it were from the outside: they are revealed through their action and words, rather than their thoughts and feelings. By contrast, in poetic drama, the characters are seen from within, so that they are less individualized but more representative of universal experiences than those in prose fiction. For example, in Water Margin, the ordeals of Lin Ch'ung are those of one man, but in the Dramatic Romance The Precious Sword, Lin Ch'ung speaks for all those who have suffered oppression, injustice, and exile. When we read Water Margin and other prose romances, we know what the heroes look like, how they talk and behave, but we rarely enter into their thoughts and feelings; in poetic drama, since the characters are classified into conventional types, they cannot be highly individualized in appearance and manners, yet we feel we know them intimately because we share their innermost feelings which they reveal to us in speech or singing. In other words, 'characterization' in prose fiction and poetic drama does not mean quite the same thing; in the former, the author is intent on creating individuals in whom we can believe and for whom we can care; in the latter, characters exist only to 'give a local habitation and a name' to universal human emotions, and are only individualized in so far as the emotions to be expressed are particular and precise. Since the aim differs from one literary genre to another, not to mention the technique, it would be wrong to apply the same criteria to them all. While recognizing the limitations and compensations of each genre, we should judge a work in that genre in terms of its own purpose and technique.

CHINESE AND WESTERN KNIGHTS COMPARED

The reader must have been struck again and again by the similarities, and probably even more by the differences, between the Chinese knights and mediaeval European ones. Although, as I remarked in the introduction, it is beyond the scope of my knowledge and of this book to carry out thorough comparisons between Chinese and Western chivalry, we may note some interesting parallels and striking contrasts, with regard to both historical chivalry and chivalric literature. Let us consider the historical knights first.

Differences between the European and the Chinese knights are quite obvious. First of all, the former formed a definite social
Some Conclusions and Comparisons

class, while the latter, as we have seen, came from all classes of society. This naturally influenced their respective ways of behaviour. The Western knights were the backbone of the feudal system; the Chinese ones represented a disruptive force in feudal society. The former extended courtesy only to their social equals and had a strong sense of class solidarity; the latter made a point of breaking down social barriers and were entirely free from class consciousness and social snobbery, as can be witnessed by Prince Wu-chi’s treatment of Hoo Ying and Chu Hai, or Prince Tan’s of Ching K’o.

Another basic difference between the European and the Chinese knights is that the former had religious sanction and the latter had no religious affiliation. Though it may be an idealistic exaggeration to claim, as Léon Gautier did, that ‘chivalry is the Christian form of the military profession; the knight is the Christian soldier’, European knights did profess to be Christians and were supposed to defend the faith, while Chinese ones did not necessarily believe in any religion.

These two basic differences—the one regarding social status and the other religious sanction—led to further dissimilarities between the Western knights and the Chinese. Being a social class, the former naturally confined chivalry to members of their own class and applied strict rules for admission. When Christian moral standards were superimposed on these, they formed the rules of the various orders of knighthood. By contrast, the Chinese knights never organized themselves into orders and never possessed any monopoly over chivalry; anyone behaving according to the ideals of Chinese chivalry became ipso facto a knight. Furthermore, a Western knight owed loyalty to his king or over-lord; a Chinese knight only acknowledged personal loyalty to a chih-chi (‘one who appreciates you’), whatever his social status may have been. A Western knight had the duty of defending the Church; a Chinese one had no special obligations to any religious or social institution. Being noblemen and Christians, the Western knights were enjoined to be moderate, temperate, and refined in manners; indeed, their whole life was governed by

elaborate ritual. The Chinese knights, reacting against Confucian ritualism, had little patience with manners and often acted without restraint. Western chivalry (though not in its beginning) was associated with courtly love: the ideal knight was also the perfect lover; Chinese knights were generally either indifferent to the fair sex, regarding all amorous activities as unmanly (an attitude that may have been influenced by the popular belief that sexual abstinence would help to preserve one’s vitality), or light-hearted in their attitude towards love, taking women as an object of pleasure rather than adoration.

In spite of these differences, the Chinese and the Western knights did have certain common ideals. In fact, most of the ideals of Chinese chivalry were such as a Western knight would have readily subscribed to. It will be recalled that among the chief ideals of the Chinese knights were altruism and justice, especially with regard to the poor and oppressed. The Western knights, too, were expected to uphold justice and unselfishly protect the poor and the weak. For instance, John of Salisbury mentions as one of the duties of a knight the protection of the poor from injuries; William Caxton, in his Ordre of Chivalry translated from the French of Ramon Lull, also states, ‘Thofyce of a knight is to mayntene and defende wymmen wydowcs and orphanes and men dyseased and not puyssaunt ne stronge’. Further, the Chinese knights aimed at high courage and fame, preferring death to dishonour; so did the Western ones. The former were generous and regarded wealth with contempt; the latter also esteemed generosity, to the extent that largesse was considered by some the chief virtue of noble knights. Finally, the Chinese knights stressed mutual faith and truthfulness; the European knights were also told that ‘fals swerynge and vntrewe ofte be not in them that mayntene thorclre of chyualrye’. All these ideals shared by the knights Chinese and European represent universal human aspirations and create a spiritual bond between them across space and time and despite their differences. Our use of the words ‘knights’ and ‘chivalry’ throughout this book is therefore not without some justification.

1 For an extreme instance of this, see Sidney Painter, French Chivalry (Great Seal Books, New York, 1961), p. 19. 2 See above, pp. 18-9. 3 See above, pp. 28-9. 4 Sidney Painter, op. cit., p. 32. 5 Caxton, op. cit., p. 43.

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