

## A Look at the *Ch'e shang jen wen chi hsü*

—The Life of the poet-monk Ling-ch'e—

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The *Ch'e shang jen wen chi hsü* (The Preface to Ling-ch'e's Collected Works) was written by Liu Yü-hsi (772-843) for the poet-monk Ling-ch'e's (746-816) literary anthology. Today, however, although the *Preface* remains in Liu Yü-hsi's anthology, Ling-ch'e's anthology itself is no longer extant. The importance of this *Preface* lies in the fact that it constitutes the most basic material for the purpose of studying Lin-ch'e's biography. This thesis is an attempt to make some comments on his life based on this *Preface*, occasionally interposing materials from other sources.

Ling-ch'e was born at Kui-chi (in the Shao-hsing county of Che-chiang province). Being ordained at an early age, he was instructed in the teachings of various sutras and sastras by his master Shen-yung, while at the same time he studied poetry composition under the tutorship of Yen-wei. Others with whom he was associated through poetry at this time were such literary personalities as Ling-i, Lin Ch'ang-ch'ing, by whom he was greatly influenced.

When Yen-wei passed away, Ling-ch'e went to visit Chiao-jan at Wu-hsing (in Che-chiang province) and devoted himself to the art of poetry. It was at this time that they instructed Liu Yü-hsi in the art of poetry. Chiao-jan, who recognized Ling-ch'e's poetic talent, commended him to distinguished literati of the time such as Pao-chi, Li-shu, and Ch'üan Te-yü. Pao-chi and Li-shu were the literary leaders of the period. Being acquainted with them, Ling-ch'e's reputation rapidly soared.

Soon afterwards, Ling-ch'e, now a reputed poet, proudly took to the capital Ch'ang-an in high hopes. There he associated with

youthful literati such as Liu Yü-hsi, Liu Sung-yüan, and Lü-wen, and with the officials attending the Emperor as well.

Although his reputation spread through the capital, he nevertheless incurred the jealousy of his fellows. Slandered by those who were jealous of his fame, he was finally exiled to Ting-chou (in Fa-chien province). After years of exiled life, he was released. He returned to his native place, where he is said to have been invited with deep respect by the leading government officials of Che-chiang and Chiang-su provinces such as Yang-p'ing, Wei-tan, Fan Ch'uancheng. He died at the age of 71, the 11th year of Yüan-ho (A.D. 816) at the K'ai-yüan temple at Hsüan-chou (in An-hui province).

While the poems he composed throughout his life are believed to have exceeded 2,000, only 16 poems and 10 fragmentary phrases have remained to this day in the *Collected Poems in the T'ang Period*. A great many poet-monks representative of the T'ang period appeared in the middle of the period in the province of Che-chiang and Chiang-su. Commenting on them in his *Preface* Liu Yü-hsi rated Ling-i as their predecessor, Chiao-jan as the foremost among them, and Ling-ch'e as second only to Chiao-jan. On the other hand, there were at the time not a few people who leveled severe criticisms at their personal behavior, for there was a general tendency in the life of poet-monks at this time to disregard their legitimate, meditational practices and to seek the acquaintance of the leading intelligentsia by means of poetic fame. A glance at Ling-ch'e's life would make it clear that he was a poet truly worthy of high evaluation, and also that he shared the characteristics of the T'ang period poets who were the objects of such censure.