THE CHINESE SOUTH-POINTING CARRIAGE

BY

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In *Adversaria Sinica*, 1906, pp. 107—115, Professor Giles published versions of what he believed to be "all the available information" relating to the south-pointing carriage, still under the impression that the device was, or might be, the mariner's compass. No sooner was this printed than the Professor came upon the account of the vehicle in c. 149 of the *Sang shih*, and printed a version of a specification from that chapter, together with a letter from the late Professor B. Hopkinson of Cambridge to whom the specification had been submitted. This was in *Adversaria Sinica*, 1909, pp. 219—222, and established the fact that during the Christian era, at least, the south-pointing chariot was a mechanical contrivance, "its mechanism involving an arrangement of wheels which, as described above, cannot be made to work". Professor Hopkinson, who evidently divined how the thing was intended to work, was obliged to say that the specification before him did not clearly or completely describe the mechanism required. He would have been able to speak quite differently, if it had not been for the accidental omission of one clause, and the misunderstanding of one word, and if two important gaps in the specification itself had been filled in from the second more detailed specification which Professor Giles does not translate or even mention.
In order to carry forward Professor Giles’ work another step, I give a version of the whole paragraph from the Sung shih c. 149, fol. 6 v°—7 v° (omitting the last few words), from which it will be seen that the first description (that given by Professor Giles) is of a carriage made by 燕肃 Yen Su and presented to the throne on 6 December, 1027, and the second is of one made by 吳德仁 Wu Tê-jên in 1107.

“指南車 Chih nan chü (south pointing carriage), also called 司南車 Ssū nan chü. It has a red body, with two compartments, painted with blue dragons and white tigers, the four sides painted with flowers and birds, two tiers of platform, balustrades, carved tilt, and bags of incense hanging from the four corners. On the top is a fairy, whose hand always points south though the carriage may turn. There is one pole, with a phoenix head. The carriage is drawn by four horses. The escort were formerly eighteen. In the fourth Yung-hsi year of T'ai Tsung (987) they were increased to thirty men. In the fifth T'ien-shêng year of Jên Tsung (1027) 燕肃 Yen Su, Secretary of the Board of Works, made at last a south-pointing carriage. Su presented a memorial saying: When Huang Ti was fighting with 虬尤 Ch'ih-yu in the country round 涌鹿 Cho-lu, Ch'ih-yu raised a great fog, and the soldiers did not know in what direction they were facing. [Huang] Ti therefore made a south-pointing carriage. In the days of king Ch'êng (1115—1078) of the Chou remote foreigners of the 越裳 Yüeh-shang tribe came to present [a white pheasant, etc.]. The envoys were afraid that they would lose the way. Chou kung gave them carriages to point to the south. Later the method was altogether lost. 張衡 Chang Hêng of the Han dynasty (A.D. c. 130) and 馬鈞 Ma Chün of the

1) Sung shih, c. 9, fol. 1 v°: 王寅 (6 Dec., 1027) 復作指南車. 圖畫見閻志

On Yen Su (+ 1040), cf. also T'oung Pao, 1923, p. 141, and T'ên hsü chien wên chih (in Ch'iu tai pi shê), III, fol. 3 v°.