

**YANG CHU'S  
GARDEN OF  
PLEASURE, PP.7-63**

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Yang Chu's Garden of Pleasure, pp.7-63 by Hugh Cranmer-Byng

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**HUGH CRANMER-BYNG**

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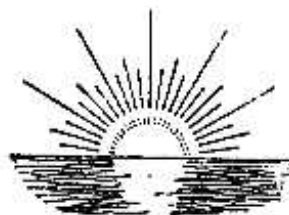


WISDOM OF THE EAST

// YANG CHU'S GARDEN  
OF PLEASURE

TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY  
PROFESSOR ANTON FORKE, PH.D., ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
HUGH CRANMER-BYNG



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## EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the Editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West—the old world of Thought and the new of Action. In this endeavour, and in their own sphere, they are but followers of the highest example in the land. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

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# YANG CHU'S GARDEN OF PLEASURE

## INTRODUCTION

THE period of the Warring States of the Western Chinese Empire, 480 to 230 B.C., embraces practically (almost) all of the philosophies of China, and is curiously coincident with the rise of philosophy in Greece under somewhat similar conditions.

To the capital of Liang, in the State of Wei, came all the philosophers, just as they came to Athens. Here came Mencius, perhaps one of the greatest of the exponents of Confucianism, a veritable St. Paul of the Confucian movement, and the chief opponent of Yang Chu. Here came Chuang-tzū, most subtle among the Taoist sophists, Li Kuei the great statesman and law-giver, Hsün-tzū the philosopher of the doctrine of original evil, Wënt-zu the able follower of Lao-tzū, and Mo-Ti the apostle of brotherly love, whose name is frequently bracketed with Yang Chu in condemnation by Mencius. Seldom had any capital in the world attracted so many profound original and subtle thinkers as the capital of the State of Wei, in the third and second centuries before Christ. The spread of Christianity in Eastern Europe, and Confucianism in China, ultimately



destroyed or diverted the philosophic spirit, substituting religious dogma and rites for philosophic inquiry and reason, and for centuries the philosophies lay buried or perished altogether in the great burning of the books in 213 B.C., or passed, like Taoism, into the realms of rites and worship, or were preserved only in fragmentary form, like the single chapter of the philosophy of Yang Chu, that remains imbedded in the Taoist teachings of Lieh Tzu. But in the third and fourth centuries B.C., the golden period of Chinese philosophy, the minds of men were turned to the critical examination of life. Philosophers rose, exploring boldly the motives and mysteries of existence, gathered around them disciples, and went from court to court, gaining fresh adherents and disputing with rival teachers on the most diverse and subtle of subjects.

At the Court of Liang at the period of Yang Chu, about 300 B.C., the philosophers were treated as guests of the reigning king, who reserved for them lodging and maintenance, and encouraged all who had any pretence to the pursuit of truth and wisdom. Whether or not Yang Chu was actually a native of the Wei State, or whether he came there drawn by the attraction of a critical and unrivalled audience, it is at least certain that he settled there as small proprietor, probably in the reign of King Hwei, and continued there till his death, about 250 B.C. One

may imagine a condition of life in many respects somewhat analogous to the life of Epicurus in his famous Athenian Garden. To the philosopher of pleasure and contentment came pupils and disciples, discourses were held in much the same way as at an identical period discourses were held in the garden at Athens, and it is to these discourses, memorised and recorded by his favourite pupil Meng-sun-Yang, that we most probably owe the single fragment of the teaching of Yang Chu that remains, a fragment complete and explicit enough to enable us to form a clear estimate of his teaching and philosophy.

Of his personal life, a little is to be gathered from Chapter XIV., where in an amusing interview with the King of Liang, the philosopher states the simple truth that what is possible and easy to some men is difficult and impossible of attainment to others, and that there is no more real merit in ruling a kingdom well than in guiding a flock of sheep. From this chapter we learn that he lived the customary life of the Chinese gentleman of his day. A wife, a concubine and a garden are mentioned, and in surroundings quite simple and unpretentious he found, one may imagine, something of the pleasure and contentment of his philosophic ideal.

From the few authentic anecdotes contained partly in the book of Chuang Tzu and Lieh Tzu, one may gain but little more: that he had a

brother called Yang Pu, the hero of the delightful story of the dog who failed to recognise his master; and that, like other philosophers of the period, he travelled frequently through other States, taking with him a few chosen disciples, putting up at wayside inns, expounding his philosophy in strange courts, or commenting wittily on the passing adventures of the journey. These few facts present to us a life in no way differing from the lives of the majority of philosophers of his time, both in Greece and China. They tell us little, but they tell us sufficient. They disclose a personality at once profound, even cynical, witty and singularly clear-sighted.

That his philosophy failed to find permanent foothold is hardly to be wondered at. His ideas were too daring, too subversive of the accepted order of things, to attract the mass of people, who came, no doubt, to listen to the suave and witty philosopher of happiness and the cult of the senses, but returned, one may imagine, with a satisfied readiness to their rites of ancestor worship or the cultivation of their Taoist superstitions. His philosophy had no place for rites. It denied a ruling spirit, it was anti-deistic. It could disclose no signs and marvels. To the seekers after the Taoist secret of passing invisibly through the air he offered nothing but the most material and mundane of views. To the seekers for guidance he offered happiness in its most simple form,