

HE Zhizhang (659-744).

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He Zhizhang (*jinsi* 695) is generally remembered as a poet: he was one of Du Fu's "Eight Immortals of the Winecup," and the originator of his friend Li Bo's famous byname, "Banished Immortal" (*zhexian*). In the standard histories, however, He appears primarily as a statesman, whose fifty-year career spanned numerous posts (*Jiu Tangshu* 15.5033-35; *Xin Tangshu* 18.5606-7). In 725/726, the emperor Xuanzong sought his advice about performing the imperial *feng* ceremony. Despite a brief scandal concerning mismanagement of an imperial funeral, He was soon elevated to noble rank, and charged with supervising Xuanzong's heir, the future emperor Suzong. At the age of 85, He received permission to retire, took ordination as a *daoshi*, and returned to his native village. He soon died, and was lauded in a memorial edict by Suzong.

Despite his solid record of government service, and enduring admiration for his calligraphy, the standard histories portray He as an eccentric, whom contemporaries called "Crazy Zhang." They depict his late-life decision to retire and take ordination as having resulted from a dream (*Xin Tangshu*) or a mental disorder (*Jiu Tangshu*). The *Xin Tangshu* adds that he asked that a palace lake be converted into a pond for liberating living things (*fang-sheng*).

Although He's writings and numerous biographies reveal no other Taoist activities before his retirement, He appears as a character in several later Taoist texts. In the *Taiping guangji* (42.263), He appears as a man who learns moral/spiritual lessons. In Jia Shanxiang's *Gaodao zhuan* (ca. 1086), He is said to have retired after having receiving an elixir (*dan*) from a mysterious Elder. Based on that story, a 13th-century local history presents He as a seller of drugs who lived hundreds of years, then "ascended to immortality."

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Kirkland 1989: 101-133; Kirkland 1992: 201-14; Kirkland 1993: 160-65

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