

Li Chou, a Forgotten Agnostic of the Late-Eighth Century

The presence in the commentary to the funerary section of Chu Hsi's 朱熹 (1130-1200) *Family Rituals* (*Chu tzu chia li* 朱子家禮) of a brief passage of quotation from a letter stated to be of T'ang date poses a challenge to historians of the dynasty. The quotation, which will have been read by the many thousands of Chinese who used the *Chia li* and its standard commentary in late-imperial times, describes a resolutely agnostic attitude to the Buddhist notion of the afterlife and the idea of heaven and hell. It reads:

If heaven does not exist, then that is that. If it does, then the true gentleman will ascend there. If hell does not exist, then that is that; if it does, then the petty man will enter there.

The Confucian moral categories of the true gentleman (*chün tzu* 君子) and the petty man (*hsiao jen* 小人) and the conduct of the individual in this life are, the author argues, all that could influence one's fate in the afterlife, if indeed the afterlife exists. Already by the eleventh century this statement was understood by implication to condemn the practice of praying to Buddha for salvation by individuals or by their descendants for the deliverance of their ancestors from hell. The quotation was incorporated in the commentary to the *Ssu-ma shih shu-i* 司馬氏書儀 by Ssu-ma Kuang 司馬光 (1019-86) to reinforce Ssu-ma's argument for expunging Buddhist prayers for the dead from the Confucian funerary sequence.¹ From there it was imported as commentary to Chu Hsi's funerary prescriptions in the *Chia li*. The

¹ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, "The Response of the Sung State to Popular Funeral Practices," in Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory, eds., *Religion and Society in Tang and Sung China* (Honolulu: U. of Hawaii P., 1993), p. 213, and n. 19 on p. 232; *Ssu-ma shih shu-i* (TSCC edn.) 5, pp. 54-55. For an overview of Buddhist influence on Chinese burial practice, and specifically on cremation, which increased in popularity in Sung times and inspired strong hostility from neo-Confucian critics, see also Ebrey, "Cremation in Sung China," *American Historical Review* 95.2 (April 1990), pp. 406-28.

information about its author in both the *Shu-i* and the *Chia-li*, however, is misleading, and, probably because of this and because of its brevity, the quotation has not been cited in standard histories of T'ang Buddhism or Confucianism. Yet when fully explored, the letter and its author provide a worthwhile footnote to the late eighth century political, religious and scholarly world.

In the Chinese text of the *Chia-li* the author is given as Li Chou 李舟, governor of Lu-chou 盧州, and in the English translation of it recently published by Patricia Buckley Ebrey, as Li Tan 李丹, governor of Lu-chou.² The reading Li Tan also occurs in the *Ssu-ma shih shu-i*. These are, however, corruptions of the author's real name and title, which was Li Chou 李舟, governor of Ch'ien-chou 虔州. This much is made clear by a range of sources: the letter is described in summary form by the early-ninth-century anecdotalist Li Chao 李肇 in his *Kuo-shih pu* 國史補.³ The modern edition of the *Kuo-shih pu* confirms the reading Ch'ien-chou as the place of Li's governorship. The great early-Sung collection of medieval lore, *Tai-p'ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記, which incorporates the *Kuo-shih pu* entry, also reads Ch'ien-chou.⁴ The readings Li Chou rather than Li Tan and Ch'ien-chou as the place name of his final posting recur in several other late eighth and early ninth century sources.⁵

Li Chao in excerpting from a provocative composition and entering it

² Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals: A Twelfth Century Chinese Manual for the Performance of Cappings, Weddings Funerals and Ancestral Rites* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1991), pp. 79-80. The Chinese text is reproduced as appendix B; see p. 196A; but Professor Ebrey is likely to have been following the text of the *Ssu-ma shih shu-i*. This passage of the *Shu-i* is reproduced, with minor variants, by Yü Wen-pao 俞文豹 (c. 1200-1260) in *Ch'ui chieh lu* 吹劍錄 (Shanghai: Ku-tien Wen-hsüeh, 1958), pp. 12-1-23, and by Hsieh Ying-fang 謝應芳, in *Pien huo pien* 懋德編 (TSCC edn.), 2, pp. 25-26, where it is stated as taken from Ssu-ma's *wen-chi*. See also n. 7, below.

³ Li Chao 李肇, *Kuo shih pu* 國史補 (Shanghai: Ku-tien Wen-hsüeh, 1957) A, p. 24. Fang Chi-liu 方積六, *Tang Wu-tai wen-shih-erh chung pi-chi hsiao-shuo jen-ming so-yin* 唐五代五十二種筆記小說大名索引 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1992), p. 266, n. 2. Fu Hsian-t'ung 傅璇琮, *Tang Wu-tai jen-wu chuan-chi tzu-liao tsung-ho so-yin* 唐五代人物傳記資料綜合索引 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1982), p. 437, n. 1.

⁴ *Tai-p'ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記 (Peking: Jen-min Wen-hsüeh, 1959, hereafter *TPKQ*) 101, p. 681.

⁵ There are, however, variants: in the two commemorative texts by Liang Su 梁肅, he is made governor of Ch'ü-chou 虔州, again a graphic error for Ch'ien-chou. See below, n. 9. On the other hand, the letter by Li Kuan 李觀, entitled "Letter to Governor Li of Ch'ü chou" ("Yü Ch'ü-chou Li shih-chün shu" 與虔州李使君書), is almost certainly not to Li Chou; see *Li Yüan-pin wen chi* 李元賓文集 (TSCC edn.), 3, pp. 23-24, and Ts'ên Chung-mien 岑仲勉, *Tang jen hang ti lu* 唐人行第錄 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1962), p. 46.

in his miscellany was following a convention among late T'ang anecdotalists.⁶ His quotation, in turn, was admired and repeated by Sung and later anthologists.⁷ His wording, moreover, corresponds closely with the text contained in the *Ssu-ma shih shu-i* and the *Chia-li*. He also includes, however, two sentences from Li Chou's "Letter" that are missing from Ssu-ma Kuang's quotation. In these, Li Chou intended to suggest that Confucianism and Buddhism are equivalent as teachings, but that each is suited to, and by implication should be restricted to, the region in which it originated. His message was therefore one of balance and moderation:

If Sakyamuni had been born in China, he would have founded a teaching like that of [the Duke of] Chou and Confucius. If [the Duke of] Chou and Confucius had been born in the west, they would have founded a teaching like that of Sakyamuni.

Ssu-ma Kuang, whose attitude to Buddhism in other contexts was by no means always negative, probably omitted these sentences from his *Shu-i* commentary because, in the context of his resolutely anti-Buddhist funeral prescriptions, their cultural relativism appeared too favourable towards Buddhism.

Who was Li Chou, and what sort of context may be reconstructed for his "Letter"? He is mentioned in positive terms by some of the leading literary and intellectual figures of the mid- and late eighth century. The great poet Li Po may have dedicated two poems to him.⁸ He was commended by Tu Fu 杜甫 (712-770), by Lu Chih 陸贄 (754-805), Ch'üan Te-yü 權德輿 (759-818) and Liu Tsung-yüan 柳宗元 (773-819). When

⁶ See for example Feng Yen 封演 (fl. late 8th-c.), *Feng shih wen chieh chi* 封氏聞見記 (Harvard-Yenching Inst. Sinol. Index Ser. edn.) 9, p. 1, quoting phrases from a despatch by Ti Jen-chieh 狄仁傑 (630-700). See David McMullen, "The Real Judge Dee: Ti Jen-chieh and the Tang Restoration of 705," *AM* 3d ser. (1993) 6.1, p. 6.

⁷ A partial quotation of the *Kuo-shih pu* extract was made, approvingly, by Ch'ên Shan 陳善 (fl. late-12th c.), in *Men shih hsin hua* 扞謫新話 (TSCC edn.), 2, p. 68. See also, for example, *Pai shih hui pien* 聖史彙編 (edn. of 1610) 67, p. 6b, and the two further instances quoted in n. 2, above.

⁸ *Li Tai-po wen chi* 李太白文集, in Hiraoka Takeo 平岡武夫, ed., *Rihaku no sakuhin: shiryô* 李白作品資料 (Kyoto: Jimbun Kagaku Kenkyûsho, 1958) 15, p. 1b. The destination for Li Chou, Ch'ien-chou 虔州 in modern Hunan, fits in with his career; but this is an alternative title for the two poems, and the attribution is questionable. Hiraoka, in the title list of Li Po's works, nos. 536-37, cites Chu Chien 朱諫, *Li shih pien i* 李詩辨疑 B, p. 5a, which I have not seen.

he died, the influential intellectual and literary figure Liang Su 梁肅 (753–793) wrote two commemorative texts for him.¹⁰ From these references, and from other sources that mention him, a brief biography may be constructed. It is the argument of this article that, placed in context by this biography, his “Letter to My Younger Sister” shows him, however laconically, to have formulated an attitude to Buddhism that not only Ssu-ma Kuang and other Sung thinkers found sympathetic. Much nearer to Li’s own time, Li’s outlook may be shown to have represented a significant strand in the religious and intellectual climate of the late eighth century. His outlook was fed into the Confucian debate on man’s moral identity and on the nature of the afterlife that took place at the turn of the century, and may even have influenced its terms. This was a debate between those who explored a Buddhist and Taoist influenced understanding of the nature and the afterlife and those who, falling back defensively on traditional Confucian moral categories, reserved an agnostic position on Buddhist ideas of the survival of the soul. There is some evidence that, of the latter thinkers, the great Confucian revivalist Han Yü 韓愈 (768–824) found Li Chou’s stance especially sympathetic. The letter in its wider context thus suggests the remarkable diversity of T’ang attitudes towards the afterlife. In so far as the neo-Confucian movement was later to perpetuate just the sort of defensive attitude towards Buddhism that Li Chou expressed, his position is also of some longer term historical interest.

LI CHOU’S CAREER

Li Chou lived in a time of central government weakness and provincial separatism, and his official career was effectively destroyed by involvement in harsh factional struggles at Ch’ang-an and by prolonged service in the provincial southeast. Eight prose compositions, including his “Letter to My Younger Sister,” are all that survive of his collected works. Though this must represent only a small fraction of what he wrote, it none the less points to a figure as fully engaged as his career permitted in the literary and religious world of the reigns of the post-rebellion emperors.

¹⁰ *Wen yüan ying hua* 文苑英華 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1966; hereafter *WYH*) 931, pp. 7a–8a, “Epitaph for His Excellency Li, Governor of Ch’u-chou” (“Ch’u-chou tz’u-shih Li kung mu-chih ming” 廣州刺史李公墓誌銘), and *WYH* 982, pp. 6b–7b, “Prayer of Offering for Li of Ch’u-chou” (“Chi Li Ch’u-chou wen” 祭李處州文).

Li, whose courtesy name was Kung-shou 公受,¹¹ was born probably in 739.¹² He was in the ninth generation of the Ku-tsang 姑臧 branch of the Lung-hsi 隴西 Li clan, and his choronym is given as Ch’eng-chi 成紀. His remote ancestor had been the eighth son of the emperor Hsing 興 of the Western Liang 涼 kingdom in northwest China in the Chin 晉 period (265–420). He could thus claim a very distant blood relationship with the imperial house, the sort of kinship connection that contemporaries described as “a distant descendant of an imperial branch.”¹³ Under T’ang rule, two collateral descendants of the Ku-tsang branch had held office as chief minister: one was Li I-yen 李義琰 (d. 688) in the sixth generation, under Kao-tsung, and the second was Li K’uei (李揆) in the eighth generation, the later stages of whose career coincided with that of Li Chou.¹⁴ His grandfather held office on the household staff of the prince of Ch’in 秦 and was granted the posthumous title of secretary to the crown prince (*t’ai-tzu she jen* 太子舍人). His father Li Shen 李岑 is entered in the *Hsin Tang shu* 新唐書 genealogical tables as secretary to the Water Board and governor of Mei-chou 眉州 in modern Szechuan, the latter being probably his final or highest posting.¹⁵ His mother was a daughter of Hsi Yü 席豫 (680–718), canonized Wen 文, a *chin-shih*, a grand secretary, rescript writer and later chief minister, who had earned a personal commendation from the emperor Hsüan-tsung 玄宗 for his skill in verse composition. His maternal grandfather was thus his most illustrious immediate forbear, a household

¹¹ *Lia Ho-tung chi* 柳河東集 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1958) 12, p. 187, gives his courtesy name as Kung-tu 公度.

¹² Tu Fu, writing in 758, implied that Li Chou was aged twenty *shih* at that time; see below, n. 20. Li was 38 when he died, which was in or after 787; see below, nn. 91 and 94. The year 739 for his birth also fits in with his Taoist examination success at the age of 16 in 754; see below, n. 19.

¹³ Chou Shao-liang 周紹良, *Tang tai mu-chih hui pien* 唐代墓誌彙編 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1992; hereafter *Mu-chih*) 2, p. 3811, “Tomb Inscription for the Late Li of Lung-hsi Commandery of the T’ang, with Introduction” (“T’ang ku Lung-hsi chün Li chün mu-chih ming ping hsü” 唐隴西郡李君墓誌銘序). Li Chia-chen 李嘉珍 (682–748, buried 778) was also a Lung-hsi Li, from Ch’eng-chi 成紀. There must be some doubt about the implication in Liang Su’s tomb text for Li Chou that the Ku-tsang line of descent of the Lung-hsi Li clan claimed Ch’eng-chi as their original domicile, since the Ku-tsang and Ch’eng-chi lines are described in the *Hsin Tang shu* as distinct branches of the Lung-hsi Li clan; see *Hsin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1973; hereafter *HTS*) 70A, pp. 1956–57.

¹⁴ Wang Kuo-wei 王國維, *Kuan T’ang chi lin 觀堂集林* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1959, 5th printing, 1991) 8, p. 375. For Li I-yen, see *Chiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975; hereafter *CTS*) 84, pp. 2756–57, and *HTS* 72A, p. 2447; for Li K’uei, see *CTS* 126, pp. 3559–61, and *HTS* 72A, p. 2448.

¹⁵ *HTS* 72A, p. 2458.

name in one of the most resplendent courts that China had seen.¹⁵ But his paternal relatives were not undistinguished: an uncle is given in the *Hsin Tang shu* genealogical tables as governor of K'ai-chou 開州, also in Szechuan.¹⁶ In the tables, Li is also recorded as having three brothers: one was governor of Hao-chou 濠州 in Anhui, one supernumerary secretary to the Bureau of Merits. Only one is entered without office.¹⁷

Li was said as a youth to have been precociously intelligent.¹⁸ At the age of only sixteen *sui*, probably in 754, he passed a Taoist examination. That was the year in which Tu-ku Chi 獨孤及 (725-777), later a famous scholar, also passed.¹⁹ Li was to dedicate one of his most important compositions to Tu-ku Chi and was to share experiences with other members of his aristocratic and highly cultured family. It may well be that his connection with the Tu-kus started at this point. A few years after this, Li was known to Tu Fu, and in 758, after the two capitals had been recovered from the An Lu-shan 安祿山 rebels, Tu Fu wrote a fine poem for him, on the occasion of his parting from Ch'ang-an for an official posting in the south. Tu Fu likened him to a red feathered eagle from the north, a symbol for rarity and vigour. He summarized a young career of exceptional promise: "At fifteen you were rich in literature and history; at eighteen you qualified for the post of visitor. At nineteen you were appointed a collator; at twenty your reputation dazzled." He stated that, "Whenever in company I catch sight of you, it makes my soul stir secretly." Tu Fu added that Li Chou's father was also famous, and hinted that he held the post of grand secretary and had engaged the emperor's personal attention. Some of these details are borne out by Liang Su's tomb text for Li Chou, which supplies the information that it was in the Hung-wen kuan 宏文館 that Li served as a collator.²⁰ The

¹⁵ *CTS* 190B, pp. 5035-36. Another daughter of Hsi Yü married a certain Chou Che-chih 周哲之, who figures in a lively anecdote in which, in the crisis of a severe illness, she bestows her most valuable clothes to finance the casting of Buddhist images. See Glen Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in Tang China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1995), p. 212, item 196, and *TPKC* 386, p. 3080, quoting *Kuang-i chi* 廣異記, and his article forthcoming in *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 10, "Buddhist Images in Action in Mediaeval China." This woman was Li Chou's maternal aunt, and the story suggests how one of his close female relatives was a deeply committed Buddhist.

¹⁶ *HTS* 72A, p. 2458.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Liu Ho-tung chi* 12, pp. 187-88.

¹⁹ See Hsü Sung 徐松, comp., *Teng k'o chi k'ao* 登科記考 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1987) 9, pp. 329-30.

²⁰ Sung Ch'i 宋祁, Wang An-shih 王安石 et al., *Chiu chia chi chu Tu shih* 九家集注杜詩 (ed. Kuo Chih-ta 郭知達, comm. Wang Chu 王洙) (Harvard-Yenching Inst. Sinol. Index Ser. edn.) 1, pp. 70-71. *CTS* 184, p. 4761; 157, p. 4145. For the Hung-wen kuan, see Chang

Kuo-shih pu confirms his reputation for "alacrity of mind."²¹

Li Chou probably had a reputation as an expert phonologist. The title of a rhyming dictionary in ten *chüan*, the *Ch'ieh yün* 切韻, is recorded with his name in the *Hsin Tang shu* bibliography. The T'ang was a period when there was wide interest in revising or amplifying rhyming dictionaries, and, following the famous *Ch'ieh yün* dictionary of 601, a number of compilations used or adapted this title. But, two centuries after his death, Li Chou's *Ch'ieh yün* was destined to be especially significant: it was judged to have embodied particularly important changes in and amplifications of the sequence of rhyme divisions (*pu tz'u* 部次) of the original *Ch'ieh yün*. In the early years of the Sung, the official compilatory scholar Hsü Hsüan (徐鉉) was commissioned to revise the list of rhymes in the *Shuo wen* 說文 compiled initially by his brother Hsü K'ai (徐鉉). In a postface to this revision, the *Shuo wen chieh tzu chuan yün p'u* 說文解字篆韻譜, dated 987, Hsü Hsüan stated, "After the *yün-p'u* had been completed, we searched far and wide for other editions, and made some substantial corrections. Now I have further received an edict to collate the *Shuo wen*, and have conducted detailed research with other scholars. I further secured Li Chou's *Ch'ieh yün*, which was particularly helpful. When there have been problematic points, I have taken Mr. Li to be correct." The revised scheme Hsü Hsüan devised, based as it was on Li Chou's *Ch'ieh yün*, is said to have been adopted by the compilers of the *Kuang-yün* 廣韻, the official successor to the *Ch'ieh yün* of 601, completed in 1008. As a result, no less a scholar than Wang Kuo-wei 王國維 (1877-1927) has called Li Chou's *Ch'ieh yün* "the ancestor of Sung rhyme [schemes]," in contradistinction to pre-Sung dictionaries that had rhyme schemes which followed more closely the organization of the *Tang yün* 唐韻. Though no T'ang comment on Li Chou's expertise in phonology survives, and though it is not possible to assign his dictionary to any particular stage in his career, his ability in this field perhaps helps explain the "preeminent ability to differentiate" that Liu Tsung-yüan was later to commend in him.²²

Yüeh 張說 and Hsiao Sung 蕭松, comps., *Ta Tang lin tien* 大唐六典 (edn. of 1724, ed. Hiroike Senkurō 廣池千九郎 and Uchida Tomoo 内田智雄), published as *Dai Tō rikuten* (Tokyo: Hiroike Gakuen Jigyōbu, 1973) 8, pp. 41a-11b.

²¹ *Kuo-shih pu* C, p. 60, quoted in Wang Tang 王澐, comp., *Tang yü lin* 唐韻林 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1987) 8, p. 741.

²² *HTS* 57, p. 1451; *Ch'ung wen tsung mu* 崇文總目 (TSCC edn.) 1, p. 38. Wang, *Kuan Tang chi lin* 8, pp. 375-79. I am grateful to Professor Ting Pang-hsin 丁邦新, of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, for this reference, which led to the account of Li Chou's phonology that follows. See also Hsü Hsüan, *Hsü kung wen chi* 徐公文集 (SPTK edn.)

Li Chou's next appointments mark the start of the southern provincial theme in his career that was to remain with him for most of the rest of his life. Liang Su's tomb text states that from serving in the Chin-wu 金吾 guards, he went as an aide to Meng Hao 孟皞 on commission in Hunan. He was next appointed as a staff officer to Ho-jo Ch'a 賀若弼, when the latter was a commissioner in the south. There followed two county magistracies, the first at Tung-yang 東陽 in modern Chekiang, followed by a period of mourning for a parent, the second at Hsüan-ch'eng 宣城, in southern Anhui. From the mid-770s he saw service as a staff officer on two southeastern provincial administrations, the Hsüan-She 宣歙 circuit and the Che-tung 浙東 circuit, working for the commissioner, an official named Tsui Chao 崔昭.

At the close of Tai-tsung's reign, probably in 779, evidence from Li Chou's own hand continues the record. Among his eight compositions, three, anthologised in the early-eleventh century *Wen yüan ying hua* 文苑英華, are memorials to the emperor composed on behalf of Ts'ui Chao. All contain personal information about this official that suggests that Li Chou worked closely with him, composing his memorials, and that he knew him well enough to state his case in detail.²⁵ Liang Su's tomb text supplies the information that "[Ts'ui] consulted [Li Chou] over governmental matters great and small."

Ts'ui Chao was involved with both Li Chou and the Tu-ku family, and was to be an important figure in Li's life. His own career, though it involved high office, was, like Li Chou's, not prominent enough for him to have an independent biography in the dynastic records. He is, however, mentioned several times in contemporary sources and in the *Chiu Tang shu* 舊唐書, and what is recorded of him there is fully consistent with information supplied by Li Chou's three memorials on his behalf. Ts'ui had started his career, Li Chou wrote, at the time of the An Lu-shan rebellion, by organizing loyalist

resistance to the rebels at Ch'en-chou 陳州 in modern Honan, confronting, as Li Chou put it, the troops of Yu-chou 幽州 and Chi-chou 荊州, that is the professional soldiers under An Lu-shan, with mere villagers, and he offered this as proof of his willingness to die for the T'ang dynasty. He had served later in the Che-tung circuit, being appointed to it by Tu-ku Chün 獨孤峻, an uncle to the more famous Tu-ku Chi.²⁶

In the year 769, the *Chiu Tang shu* records, Ts'ui was appointed governor of the capital, a posting that may well have followed the governorship of Lo-yang, for Li Chou records that he held this office at both capitals.²⁷ At Lo-yang, moreover, he had recruited Tu-ku Chün's younger brother Tu-ku Yü 獨孤巖 (720-74) to his staff.²⁸ He seems soon to have left the capital for two southeastern commissionerships, appointing Tu-ku Yü as a staff officer. It may well have been at this point, too, that Li Chou joined him. The first of these commissions, dated 770 by Tu-ku Chi,²⁹ was at Hsüan-chou 宣州, in southern Anhui, and this may have coincided with Li Chou's tenure as county magistrate of Hsüan-ch'eng. In the course of his posting there, and possibly in connection with the court's planning a military action in Ho-nan, Ts'ui returned to the capital for a formal court visit. But he was then, in the seventh lunar month of 776, appointed as a commissioner on the Che-tung circuit, with his base at Yüeh-chou 越州, modern Kuei-chi 會稽. These two tenures are recorded in Li Chou's memorials on his behalf, while the Sung-dynasty edition of the Kuei-chi gazetteer confirms his transfer to the new posting and supplies the date.³⁰ Li stayed at Yüeh-chou with him probably for several years.

For senior officials and their staff, in the reigns of Su-tung and Tai-tsung, provincial appointments inevitably involved an insecure relationship

²⁵ *Pi-ling chi* 毗陵集 (SPTK edn.) 10, pp. 11a-b. Tu-ku Chün was appointed to this area in 759; see *Pi-ling chi* 10, p. 6a.

²⁶ His Ch'ang-an posting is explained as having been made to enable his patron at that time, the chief minister Yüan Tsai 元載, to use him to spy on his enemy, the greatly resented and powerful eunuch Yü Ch'ao-en 魚朝恩 (722-70); *CTS* 184, p. 1761; 157, p. 4145. *Tzu chih t'ang chien* 資治通鑑 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1960; hereafter *TCM*) 224, pp. 7212-1, *k'ao-i* 考異, quotes the *Te-tsung shih lu* 德宗實錄 stating that Ts'ui Chao was further involved when, in the 3d mo. of 770 Yü Ch'ao-en committed suicide. Ts'ui Chao's adherence to Yüan Tsai makes it unsurprising that he was later a protegee of Yang Yen; see below, n. 69.

²⁷ *Pi-ling chi* 10, p. 10b. Tu-ku Chi recorded that Ts'ui Chao later helped finance his funeral.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *WYH* 609, p. 1b-2a; 602, pp. 3a-4a; Shih Su 施宿, *Chia-tai Kuei-chi chih* 嘉太會稽志 (photolith. copy of facs. of 1868 edn. in *Chung-huo fang-chih ts'ung-shu*) 2, p. 29b.

23, pp. 1b-3a, "Postface for the List of Rhymes" ("Yün-p'ü hou hsu" 韻譜指掌詞); and *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu ti-yao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Wan-yu wen-k'u edn.), vol. 1, pp. 852-53. Li Chou is also listed in the postface dated 1230 to the *Ch'ieh yüan chih chung-t'u* (SPTK edn.) edited by Ssu-ma Kuang. In western scholarship, his *Ch'ieh yüan* is set in context by E. G. Pulleyblank, *Middle Chinese: A Study in Historical Phonology* (Vancouver, B.C.: U. British Columbia P., 1981), pp. 135-39.

²⁴ *WYH* 609, p. 1b, "Memorial on Behalf of His Excellency Ts'ui Requesting to Come to Court and Submit a Memorial" ("Wei Ts'ui ta-fu ch'ing ju tsou piao" 為崔大夫請入奏表); *WYH* 609, p. 2a, memorial with the same title. *WYH* 602, p. 3a-4a, "Memorial on Behalf of His Excellency Ts'ui, Setting Forth His Situation" ("Wei Ts'ui ta-fu ch'ien ch'ing piao" 為崔大夫陳情表).

with the court. One test of loyalty was whether provincial commanders were willing to take the risk of coming to court to pay formal visits of homage. Li Chou's first memorial on behalf of Ts'ui Chao was in essence a statement committing Ts'ui firmly to the dynasty. It drew attention to the customary provision whereby provincial officials returned to the capital to attend court audiences. It also claimed that Ts'ui was chronically ill, and that his illness had become more severe with his new tenure, and that he was afraid of slanders against his name. It emphasized Ts'ui's administrative achievements at Yüeh-chou, claiming that his tax returns had not been late, and that there was peace in his area.

Two other compositions attributed to Li Chou are likely to come from this period. Both are acknowledgements of ritual gifts from the emperor, and in the early-eleventh-century *Wen yüan ying hua*, which anthologises them, both are entered under the title "Memorial of acknowledgement for an imperial order bestowing lip ointment and other gifts on the day of the winter sacrifice." One acknowledges an imperial order, delivered by a eunuch surnamed Chang 張, bestowing gifts to the writer and army officers of face ointment and red and white washing soap in a fragrant pouch. The second expresses gratitude for delivery of an order in the imperial hand of a longer list of gifts, including a new calendar, lip and face ointment, a suit of spring clothes and other items. These were customary gifts from the sovereign at the turn of the year, intended to reinforce the bond between him and his loyal officials.²⁹ Since both memorials mention army officers, they may have been written for the commander of a provincial headquarters, very probably again Ts'ui Chao.

Information for Li's stay at Yüeh-chou is not, however, exclusively political or official. The great metropolitan intellectual and statesman Ch'üan Te-yü, writing some fifteen years after Li's death, recorded that Li made what is to be seen as one of the most significant friendships of his life at this time. Ch'üan had grown up and started his official career in the

southeast.³⁰ He was, throughout Te-tsung's reign, the focus for a number of friendships or contacts with intellectuals from the southeast who had started to explore the problem of the relationship of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, the three main belief systems, in the pursuit of religious goals. Among the earliest of these friends, Liang Su and Lu Ts'an 陸參 (c. 718–802) were the most influential. Lu Ts'an was destined to particular fame, as the man for whom the "Essay on Restoring the Nature (*Fu hsing shu* 復性書)" by Li Ao 李翱, by far the most creative and profound of the surviving writings of this group, was written.³¹

When in 802 Ch'üan wrote a tomb text for Lu Ts'an, he related how Lu and his elder brother had grown up at Yüeh-chou and how he had engaged in farming there. Lu had also "practised Buddhism on a daily basis, and rejected human affairs." He was thus committed to precisely the sort of lay Buddhist devotional regime that provoked Li Chou and inspired the epigrammatic remarks in his "Letter to My Younger Sister." Only after 785, after his elder brother's death and at the insistence of unspecified friends, had Lu gone north for an official career. In his tomb text, Ch'üan also listed Lu Ts'an's important friendships. The first of these on his list of seven including himself was Li Chou, whom Ch'üan referred to as, "the late governor of Ch'ien-chou Li Kung-shou of Lung-hsi." The evidence of Li's memorials for Ts'ui Chao at Yüeh-chou in 779 and Ch'üan's tomb text for Lu make it certain that it was at Yüeh-chou that Li was friendly with Lu.

It is a legitimate speculation not only that Li Chou may have been one of those friends who persuaded Lu Ts'an to take up an official career, but also that he may have defended his scepticism over the Buddhist view of the afterlife to the ardently Buddhist Lu. It may even be as an indirect result of the fact that Li Chou had an agnostic outlook towards the afterlife that Li Ao in his "Essay on Restoring the Nature," written as it was for Lu Ts'an, incorporated a direct question on what happened after death: "I make so bold as to ask where one goes on dying."³² This was an emphatic version of

²⁹ WYH 596, pp. 6b–7b. "Memorial of Acknowledgement for an Imperial Order Bestowing Lip Ointment and Other Gifts on the Day of the Winter Solstice" (Hsieh ch'ih-shu tz'u la-jih k'ou-chih teng piao" 謝牧賜臘日口脂等表). For the custom of imperial gifts at the time of the Winter Sacrifice (*la jih* 臘日), see *Chiu chia chi chu Tu shih* 19, p. 307, and commentary. For a parallel but later and fuller memorial, which suggests that there might be textual corruption in Li Chou's examples, see Liu Yü-hsi 劉禹錫 (772–842), *Liu Yü-hsi chi* 劉禹錫集 (Shanghai: Shang-hai Jen-min, 1975) 12, p. 110.

³⁰ For Ch'üan's childhood in the southeast, see Ma Tung-po 馬通伯, ed., *Han Ch'ang-li wen chi chiao chu* 韓昌黎文集校注 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh, 1957) 7, p. 272; WYH 707, p. 3b. "Preface to His Excellency Ch'üan's Collected Works" ("Ch'üan kung chi hsü" 權公集序) by Yang Ssu-fu 楊嗣復; CTS 148, p. 4002.

³¹ *Ch'üan Tsai-chih wen chi* 權載之文集 (SPTK edn.) 24, p. 14b. For a wholly authoritative analysis of Li Ao and his background, see T.H. Barrett, *Li Ao: Buddhist, Taoist or Neo-Confucian?* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1992). The relationship between Ch'üan Te-yü and Lu Ts'an is described at pp. 82–83.

³² *Li Wen kung chi* 李文公集 (SPTK edn.) 2, p. The question reads, "I make so bold as to

a question that may be found put rhetorically at the close of the sacrificial prayers (*chi wen* 祭文) of the medieval period. The resolutely agnostic T'ao Yüan-ming 陶淵明 (365–427) had asked it in a “drawing song (*wan ko* 挽歌)”: “The ether of the soul disperses, and goes whither?” He had also posed a similar question as Li Ao’s on the dead: “After dying, what is one aware of?”³¹ Similar questions were included in the sacrificial prayers of the late eighth century, for example by Tu-ku Chi³² and, in different words, by Ch’üan Te-yü.³³ The obvious canonical answer to this question, quoted in funerary writings of the period by Tu-ku Chi³⁴ and Liu Tsung-yüan,³⁵ was from the *Li chi*, where it was described as having the approval of Confucius himself, “That the bones and flesh return to the soil is destiny; but as for the *hun* 魂 soul, there is nowhere that it does not go.” But in his “Essay on Restoring the Nature,” Li Ao, though his answer to this question included a classic quotation from the *Analects* describing Confucius’s agnosticism towards the afterlife, gave a tendentious message in reply.³⁶ The idea of indirect influence of this kind by Li Chou on Li Ao’s famous “Essay” must, of course remain conjectural. Other evidence, considered below, suggests that Li Chou’s agnosticism may have exerted more direct influence on Li Ao’s major opponent in the Confucian debate, Han Yü, whose approach more closely echoes Li’s own outlook.

It will have been at about this time that Li wrote one of his most important compositions, a work that again proves that he was a member of the leading intellectual circles of the period. This was a preface for the collected writings of the famous official Tu-ku Chi, whose success, nearly a quarter of a century earlier, in the Taoist examination of 754, may have meant that Li Chou knew him from that date. Tu-ku was a member of the family that had been closely involved with Li Chou’s patron Ts’ui Chao; it

ask where one goes after death” (*han wen ssu ho so chih yeh* 敬問死何所之耶).

³¹ Wang Yao 王瑤, *Tao Yüan-ming chi* 陶淵明集 (Peking: Tso-chia, 1956), p. 117, “*hun ch’i san ho chih* 魂氣散何之?”; p. 63, “*ssu ch’ü ho so chih* 死去何所之?”

³² *Pi-ling chi* 20, p. 7b; the text reads, “Where do those who pass on go?” (*shih che ho chih* 逝者何之).

³³ *Ch’üan Tsai-chih wen chi* 48, p. 3a; the text reads “Where does the spirit soul proceed?” (*ch’ing hun ho wang* 精魂何往).

³⁴ *Li chi chu shu* 禮記注疏 (SPPY edn.), sect. “T’an kung 檀弓” B/10, p. 31b; *Pi-ling chi* 20, p. 6a. For this sacrificial prayer to Chia Chih, see below, n. 51.

³⁵ *Liu Ho-tung chi* 13, p. 214. This was a record for Liu’s daughter, who had turned to Buddhism, calling herself “the Buddha’s handmaid” before dying as a child of 10 *su* in 810. It is possible to understand Liu’s use of the *Li chi* passage as chiding the girl for overconfidence in the Buddhist promise of salvation after death.

³⁶ Barrett, *Li Ao*, pp. 126–28. *Analects* 11, verse 12.

has been seen that Ts’ui owed his early promotion on the Che-tung circuit to Tu-ku Chi’s uncle Tu-ku Chün and that Ts’ui in turn had kept Tu-ku Chün’s younger brother Tu-ku Yü on his staff at Lo-yang and Hsüan-chou. Li Chou probably served alongside Tu-ku Yü as Ts’ui’s subordinate, and this must have strengthened his connections with the Tu-ku family.

Tu-ku Chi, who died in 777, was a man with an interest in the Confucian tradition as well as in Taoism, while a commitment to Buddhism that he probably inherited from his widowed mother certainly intensified in his later years. It was written of him that, “though he occupied an honoured position, he still possessed the [same] beauty [of character] that had caused Confucius ‘to teach others without tiring.’”³⁷ He was important as the teacher of Liang Su, who has already been mentioned as the friend of both Lu Ts’an and Ch’üan Te-yü and as the author of Li’s Chou’s tomb text. He had known Ch’üan Te-yü from when, as a young student, Ch’üan had called on him. The fact that Ch’üan was later to marry his daughter to Tu-ku’s second son Tu-ku Yü 劉孤郁 (776–815), a long-term friend of Han Yü, shows how closely knit, over two generations, this circle of civil officials was.³⁸

Tu-ku’s own friends had included some of the most renowned prose writers of the mid-eighth century generation and also the chief minister of the first few months of Te-tsung’s reign, Ts’ui Yu-fu 崔祐甫 (721–780). Li Chou may well have renewed his friendship with Tu-ku at Shu-chou 舒州, or at Hao-chou 濠州, both in the southeast, where he had been governor, or at Ch’ang-chou 常州, the governorship of which was Tu-ku’s last posting.³⁹

Li Chou’s preface for Tu-ku Chi’s collected works is a characteristic piece of mid-eighth century literary polemic. It conveys a sense of the almost proprietorial interest in composition skills shared by the scholar com-

³⁷ *Tang wen ts’ui* 唐文章 (SPTK edn., hereafter *TWT*) 86, pp. 7a–8b, quoting *Analects* 7, verses 2 and 31. For Tu-ku’s mother, see below, n. 112.

³⁸ *Ch’üan Tsai-chih wen chi* 49, pp. 1a–b, “Prayer of Offering” for Tu-ku. Ch’üan had proposed Tu-ku’s canonization title, or “change of name (*i ming* 易名)”; see *Ch’üan Tsai-chih wen chi* 29, pp. 4a–5a. For Ch’üan Te-yü’s marriage of his daughter (d. 815) to Tu-ku Chi’s second son Tu-ku Yü, see *Ch’üan Tsai-chih wen chi* 26, pp. 3b–5a, and for Han Yü’s friendship with Tu-ku Yü, see *Han Ch’ang-li wen chi chiao chu* 6, pp. 258–60.

³⁹ For Tu-ku Chi, see mainly *WYH* 92 f, pp. 1b–8a, Ts’ui Yu-fu, “Spirit [path] Stele Inscription for the Governor of Ch’ang-chou Tu-ku Chi” (“Ch’ang-chou tz’u-shih Tu-ku Chi shen [tao] pei” 常州刺史劉孤及神道碑); and *WYH* 703, pp. 4b–6b, Liang Su, “Postface for the Collected Works of Tu-ku Chi, Governor of Ch’ang-chou” (“Ch’ang-chou tz’u-shih Tu-ku Chi hou hsü” 常州刺史劉孤及集後序).

munity to which he belonged. It dwells on the importance of the written word, *wen* 文, as a cosmic principle, and on the vital role that scholars maintained it had in human society. It speaks of decline from canonical standards, and sets out a hierarchy of seriousness in literature, starting with "ritual and music, justice and administration" and ending with "common-places (*hsiao shuo* 小說)." It condemns obsession with parallelism, "recent figures (*chin wu* 近物)," and vulgarization. It extols the late seventh century writer Ch'en Tzu-ang 陳子昂 (658-699) as having raised standards.¹² This was a view of seventh and early eighth century literary history that was to become essential to the *ku-wen* 古文 movement, which was to be most productive and articulate in the T'ang with the generation of Han Yü and Liu Tsung-yüan. Li Chou's formulation of it has ensured him a minor place in the history of literary critical theory to this day.¹³

More interesting than these polemical remarks is the account Li inserted in his preface of his father's relationship to the figures who had contributed to this movement a generation earlier. Here he was very close to what Tu-ku himself had stated in his own writings. Li recorded that his father used to tell him of his friendship with Hsiao Ying-shih 蕭穎士, (717-60),¹⁴ Chia Chih 賈至 (718-72),¹⁵ Li Hua 李華 (c. 717-c.774),¹⁶ and "Tu-ku Chih-chih 獨孤至之 whom you know." Hsiao, Li Hua and Chia were no longer alive; but, he had told his son, "had these three continued to administer the kingly words and to compile records with the historian's brush, then writings like the records and counsels, the homilies and announcements, treaties and commands [of the *Shang shu* 尚書] would have been

replicated in times to come." The implication was that Li Chou knew these figures well from his father's account, and certainly that he had personal knowledge of Tu-ku Chi himself. Just as Tu-ku did, Li Chou held that they had reinvested literature with a moral urgency that it had lost since Han times.¹⁸

Li Chou's father had singled out one particular composition, Chia Chih's decree of the seventh month of 756 for the emperor Hsüan-tsung (685-762, reigned 712-56) dividing the empire between three of his sons in the crisis of the An Lu-shan rebellion, as "glittering like the writing of the Western Han."¹⁹ Chia Chih, moreover, is relevant to Li Chou because Chia was a friend of Tu-ku Chi for twenty-six years, and their relationship, as Tu-ku recorded it, provides indirect evidence for Li Chou's own religious outlook. There was a late T'ang tradition that Chia Chih "demolished Buddhism all his life," that, in other words, he was a convinced and persistent anti-Buddhist.²⁰ His surviving works, moreover, contain no mention of Buddhism or reference to Buddhist precincts. In this, of course, he contrasted sharply with Tu-ku himself, for Tu-ku's collected works testify amply to his interest in Buddhism. When in 772 Tu-ku wrote a "Prayer of Offering" for Chia, he made a point of opening the address by stating, "The source of life and destiny was something of which Confucius seldom spoke. Recently when I was with you, you [too] reserved this question and would not speak of it."²¹ This adaptation of a key statement in the *Analekts* is

¹² For the attitudes of this generation to their cultural heritage, see Bol, *This Culture*, pp. 108-23. For Tu-ku Chi's praise for Ch'en Tzu-ang, Chia Chih, Hsiao Ying-shih and Li Hua, see *Pi-ling chi* 13, pp. 1b-6b.

¹³ Sung Shou 宋綬 and Sung Min-ch'iu 宋敏求, comps., *T'ang ta chao ling chi* 唐大詔令集 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1959) 36, pp. 154-55, "Rescript Commissioning the Three Princes" ("Ming san wang chih" 命三王制); WYH 462, pp. 3a-3b, "Rescript on Hsüan-tsung's Progress to P'u-an" ("Hsüan-tsung hsing P'u-an chih" 玄宗幸普安制); *T'IC* 218, pp. 6983-84.

¹⁴ *Ta T'ang ch'üan tsai* 大唐傳載 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1958) p. 8, quoted by Fu Hsüan-ts'ung, "Chia Chih k'ao," p. 191. The whole entry reads, "The grand councillor Chia Chih demolished Buddhism all his life. He was taking a sleep in his official premises, when he suddenly caught sight of a man with an ox head, less than a foot high, holding a small pot and burning firewood in front of his couch. He rose up in alarm and questioned him. The reply came, 'This is what is called a cauldron for boiling water, to bring to justice those who attack Buddhism.' Chia Chih said, 'So small a ghost is not worth fearing!' He proceeded to stick his feet under the couch. But the boiling water bubbled up and wet his feet, then gushed on up [his body], so that in no time he died from scalding." The anecdote itself has a traditional theme; but its "outer story" is likely to be authentic.

¹⁵ *Pi-ling chi* 20, pp. 3a-6a; adapting *Analekts* 9, verse 1. The closeness of the relationship between Tu-ku and Chia Chih is suggested by their cooperation in providing a jointly

¹² Reading the phrase *chin wu* 近物 as a contraction of the contemporary phrase *chin tai jen wu* 近代人物; see *TPKC* 288, p. 1959, quoting Lu Ch'ang-yüan 陸長源 (d. 799), *Pien-i chih* 辨疑志.

¹³ For Ch'en Tzu-ang, see Han Li-chou 韓理洲, *Ch'en Tzu-ang yen-chiu* 陳子昂研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai Ku-chi, 1988); for his dates, see pp. 1-18.

¹⁴ Peter K. Bol, *This Culture of Ours* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1992), p. 392, n. 11; p. 395, n. 12; p. 396, n. 47.

¹⁵ For Tu-ku's own perspective on recent literary history, see especially his preface for the second collection of the works of Li Hua, *Pi-ling chi* 13, pp. 1b-6b. For Hsiao Ying-shih, see Pan Lü Ch'i-ch'ang 潘呂棋昌, *Hsiao Ying-shih yen-chiu* 蕭穎士研究 (Taipei: Wen-shih-che, 1983).

¹⁶ Fu Hsüan-ts'ung, "Chia Chih k'ao 賈至考," in *T'ang-tai shih-jen ts'ung k'ao* 唐代詩人叢考 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1980), pp. 171-91.

¹⁷ For Li Hua, see especially Silvio Vita, "Li Hua 李華 and Buddhism," in Antonino Forte, ed., *Tang China and Beyond* (Kyoto: Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Scuola di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 1988), pp. 47-124.

another way of stating that Chia was unwilling to explore questions of the afterlife, including presumably those for which Buddhism provided answers. There is also evidence, from a poem that Tu-ku wrote fulsomely praising Chia Chih's verse, that their friendship was based, not on shared religious interests, but on the social activity of composing poems.⁵² In his "Prayer of Offering" for Chia, moreover, Tu-ku praised him highly for his literary attainments, but made no mention of any interest in religion. He also closed the prayer by citing silently the pre-Buddhist, *Li chi* passage on the destiny of the soul mentioned above, stating that "there is nowhere that it does not go." In this way, again, he may be inferred to have respected Chia's hostility to Buddhism. Chia Chih's anti-Buddhism, though scantily documented, is thus implicitly attested by Tu-ku in his "Prayer of Offering." It must surely have been a matter of common knowledge to all members of Tu-ku's circle, including Li Chou.

There are grounds, moreover, for inferring that a similar difference towards Buddhism may have existed between Li Chou and Tu-ku Chi. These grounds again involve an *argumentum ex silentio*, namely Li Chou's failure in his preface to mention Tu-ku Chi's Buddhism. When he wrote this preface, Li made it clear that he was chronologically the last of three scholars to be involved in producing commemorative texts for Tu-ku. The first, Li stated, was Liang Su, the man who was later to write Li Chou's own tomb text and a "Prayer of Offering" for him. Liang was a devoted lay adherent of the T'ien-t'ai 天台 school who had known Tu-ku probably since 770, when he was 18 sui.⁵³ Li acknowledged that "[Tu-ku Chi] loved scholars, and [Liang] Su was the one he valued most of all. He had many discussions with him, and therefore Su is able to speak of the purpose of his writing." The closeness of the relationship is confirmed by the fact that at Ch'ang-chou Liang Su composed texts on Tu-ku's behalf, while in his "Prayer of Offering" for Tu-ku, he referred to himself as Tu-ku's disciple

(*men sheng* 門生).⁵⁴ He had had immediate charge of Tu-ku's literary remains on his death, and had arranged his three hundred odd surviving compositions into two sections and then written a "Postface (*hou hsü* 後序)" for them, which Li Chou mentioned in his preface. In this "Postface" moreover, Liang Su commended Tu-ku's Buddhism.⁵⁵

As well as Liang Su, Li continued, the chief minister Ts'ui Yu-fu, also wrote two commemorative texts for Tu-ku Chi. The more important was a "Spirit Path Stele (*shen tao pei* 神道碑)," a text that, Li stated, "recorded his career in detail, and expressed grief that he did not ascend to a position where he could discourse on the way." Tsui, added Li, was "impartial and strong and committed to uprightness, so that his account is not factional." Like Liang Su, Ts'ui also wrote a "Prayer of Offering" for Tu-ku, though Li did not mention this in his preface. In this prayer, Ts'ui spoke of a plan that he and Tu-ku should enjoy retirement together.⁵⁶ He described the activities they shared, stating that Tu-ku and he "talked of the void and investigated the sublime; dreamt of butterflies and found similes in rafts." This is an indirect way of stating that Ts'ui Yu-fu and Liang Su explored Taoist and Buddhist ideas together.⁵⁷

Li Chou, by contrast, finished off his preface for Tu-ku with an account of Han literature, through the medium of Pan Ku's 班固 comments

⁵² E.g. *WYH* 982, pp. 1a-2a, "Prayer of Offering for Supernumerary Secretary Li, Made on Behalf of Governor Tu-ku of Ch'ang-chou" ("Wei Ch'ang-chou Tu-ku shih-chün chi Li yüan wai wen" 為常州獨孤使君祭李白外文).

⁵³ As well as this "Postface," Liang wrote a "Report of Conduct" and a "Prayer of Offering" for Tu-ku; see *WYH* 972, pp. 9b-13a, "Report of Conduct for His Excellency Tu-ku, *ch'ao-san ta-fu*, Bearer of Insignia, Governor of Ch'ang-chou with Charge of Military Affairs, Granted the Purple and Gold Fish Satchel" ("Ch'ao-san ta-fu shih ch'ih chieh Ch'ang-chou chu chün shih shou Ch'ang-chou tzu-shih tzu-tzu-chün yü-tai Tu-ku hsing-chuang" 制散大夫使持節常州諸軍事守常州刺史賜紫金魚袋獨孤公行狀); and *WYH* 982, pp. 3a-4b, "Prayer of Offering for Tu-ku of Ch'ang-chou" ("Chi Tu-ku Ch'ang-chou wen" 祭獨孤常州文).

⁵⁴ Ts'ui Yu-fu wrote both a spirit path stele inscription and a "Prayer of Offering" for Tu-ku; see n. 41, above; also *TWF* 58, pp. 9a-11a, and 33B, pp. 6b-7a. For Ts'ui Yu-fu, see Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Aristocratic Families of Early Imperial China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1978), pp. 186-87. See also Robert des Rotours, *Les inscriptions funéraires de Tsouei Mien et de Tsouei Teou-fou* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1975).

⁵⁵ "Dreaming of butterflies" is a reference to classical Taoism; see *Chuang tzu* 莊子 (Harvard-Yenching Inst. Sinol. Index Ser. edn.) 2, p. 7. "Finding similes in rafts" (*yü fu* 喻筏) is to be understood as referring to Buddhism; see *Ch'uan Tang shih* 全唐詩 (Peking: Chung hua, 1960) 80, p. 867, "On an Autumn Day at T'ien-chung Monastery Going in Search of the Reverend Fu-ti" ("Ch'iu jih yü T'ien-chung ssu hsün Fu-ti shang-jen" 秋日于天中寺尋復禮上人), poem by Wu San-ssu 武三思. Here the expression is made to parallel *ch'uan teng* 傳燈, "transmitting the lamp."

written tomb text for Li Chi-ch'ing 李季卿 (703-67), an unusual arrangement; see *Pi-ling chi* 11, pp. 1a-3a. Cf. Fu Hsüan-ts'ung, "Chia Chih k'ao," p. 190, who omits this evidence for Chia's appointment as assistant of the right of the Department of Affairs of State.

⁵² For comparable examples of this attitude, see David McMullen, "Han Yü: An Alternative Portrait," *HJAS* 19.2 (1989), p. 656, n. 124. For Tu-ku's praise for Chia Chih's verse, see *Pi-ling chi* 1, p. 12b.

⁵³ *WYH* 944, pp. 8a-9b, "Epitaph for Liang Su, Scholar of the Han-lin and Omissioner of the Left" ("Yu pu-ch'ieh Han-lin hsieh-shih Liang chün mu-chih" 右補闕翰林學士梁君墓誌), by Ts'ui Yüan-han 崔元翰. For details of Liang's Buddhism, see Barrett, *Li Ao*, pp. 61-64.

on four of the main Former Han writers. Then followed a final encomium for Tu-ku, his writings, friendliness, formal manner as an official, fearlessness and compassion and the respect in which he was held by the people he governed. "As for the remainder, the other two gentlemen have said it." Here then was a suggestion, albeit again a tacit one, that Li Chou deliberately set aside the Buddhist theme in Tu-ku's writing.

There are two conclusions to be drawn from such examples of silence about Buddhism in commemorative writings. First, in the late eighth century, friendships of the kind that are so copiously documented among the T'ang scholarly elite, especially those living in the provinces, were by no means necessarily built on common religious goals, though they might certainly be strengthened by them. Writing, and especially verse composition, was just as likely to provide a common interest. Similarly, the deep antagonisms sometimes so evident among men of the same background in this period were much more likely to be generated by the harsh competition of official life at the capital than by differences of religious commitment. A generation later, Han Yü was amply to demonstrate this: despite his anti-Buddhism, he numbered both pious lay Buddhists and Buddhist monks among his friends, and was even willing to praise aspects of their Buddhism.⁵⁸ Secondly, in commemorative writings, failure to mention Buddhism could be explained either, as in the case of Tu-ku Chi writing his "Prayer of Offering" for Chia Chih because Chia, as the recipient of Tu-ku's prayer, had rejected the faith, or, as in Li Chou's case writing his "Preface" for Tu-ku's collected works because Li himself was hostile or indifferent to Buddhism. Again, Han Yü was to demonstrate this: his many commemorative biographies refrain from mentioning any interest their subjects may have had in contemplative goals, whether Buddhist or not.⁵⁹

Li Chou's preface is interesting historically, therefore, because in describing the collected works of a lay Buddhist it pointedly refrained from making any reference to Buddhism. At the same time, it announced a reformist literary programme and emphasized Han, that is pre-Buddhist, achievements in literature. Liang Su, when some eight years after this he was to write Li Chou's tomb text, may have deliberately echoed Li Chou's admiration for Han literature and his anti-Buddhism. For he too refrained

from mentioning Buddhism in his funerary tributes to Li and he also compared Li to four of the great Han intellectuals, the same number that Li mentioned in his preface for Tu-ku. A generation earlier Chia Chih, who "all his life demolished Buddhism," and whose greatest composition "glittered like the writing of the Western Han," probably had a similar position. Li Chou may thus be seen as continuing an agnostic or anti-Buddhist theme in the literary and intellectual reformism of the second half of the eighth century. Such a position would certainly have been well known in the close social circles of which he was a member. In turn, it may have acted as a catalyst to the re-evaluation in Confucian terms of religious as well as literary thought that took place in the reign of Te-tsung. It was from such a position, emphasizing the native tradition and condemning or ignoring Buddhism, that, twenty years later, Han Yü was able to draw his inspiration both for his polemical anti-Buddhism and for his attempt to revive literature and Confucian doctrine.

No information survives to indicate exactly how long after Tu-ku's death in 777 Li Chou wrote his preface. But it is interesting that the two men who were later to figure in the final stages of his career, Liang Su and Lu Chih, were probably both in Ch'ang-chou under Tu-ku's replacement as governor, Hsiao Fu 蕭復 (732-788). These two men were later to cooperate to produce one of the most famous lists of *chin-shih* graduates in Chinese history, a list that included Han Yü.⁶⁰

Li Chou probably did not stay in Yüeh-chou beyond late-779. Whether or not his first memorial to the emperor Tai-tsung from Yüeh-chou on behalf of Ts'ui Chao was acknowledged, it was overtaken by events at the capital. In the fifth month of 779, Tai-tsung died after a short illness. When the news reached Yüeh-chou, it again required a response that indicated the strength of Ts'ui's loyalty to the court. Li Chou's second

⁵⁸ Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the Tang Search for Unity* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1980), p. 60, pp. 93-100. See also below, n. 131.

⁵⁹ McMullen, "Han Yü," pp. 616-50.

⁶⁰ For Lu Chih at Ch'ang-chou under Hsiao Fu, see *Lu Hsuan kung Han-yüan chi* 14, pp. 7a-b. It is reasonable to suppose that Liang Su stayed on at Ch'ang-chou because he knew Hsiao Fu before he held capital tenures: see WYH 966, p. 16, "Tomb Text for the Wife of the Late Investigating Censor Li, née Hsiao of Lan-ling" ("Chien-ch'a yü-shih Li chün fu-jen Lan-ling Hsiao shih mu-chih ming" 監察御史李君夫人蘭陵蕭氏墓誌銘); *CTS* 123, p. 3331; and the very detailed chronology of Lu Chih's life supplied by Josephine Chiu-Duke, "To Rebuild the Empire: Lu Chih (734-803) and his Response to the Mid-T'ang Predicament" (Ph.D. diss., U. of British Columbia, 1992), pp. 43-46. Hsiao Fu, when in late 783 he became a chief minister (see *TCTC* 228, p. 7362 and *CTS* 123, p. 3331), recommended Liang Su for capital office; but Liang Su's mother was chronically ill, and he remained in the south; see Tsui Yuan-han's epitaph for Liang (n. 33, above).

memorial for Ts'ui, again anthologized in *Wen yüan ying hua*, thus represents Ts'ui's attempt to exploit the imperial death rites and the accession of the new emperor to press his case for return to Ch'ang-an.⁶¹

Li Chou therefore describes on Ts'ui's behalf how when Ts'ui first received the news of the imperial death "my lamentation and yearning knew no limits, and I urgently asked to go to the mausoleum," but that he had received an imperial reply forbidding this. The memorial went on to claim the new emperor had achieved a cosmic renewal since his succession. Ts'ui's posting was remote and "on the edge of the sea," a phrase used before him by Tu-ku Chi to describe this region.⁶² Yet the new emperor's all pervading grace had reached his jurisdiction, and "troublesome impositions had abruptly been abolished," so that his territory was at peace. Here was a reference to Te-tsung's prompt initiatives to curb court extravagance and put a stop to certain types of exotic tribute from the provinces, a series of measures that had raised hopes for a full dynastic recovery among the officials.⁶³ Ts'ui begged to be allowed to return with all haste to the capital, "so as to be able to have an audience before your dragon countenance, to come forward with my commission before the sage ruler, then withdraw and declare [your reforming] spirit to remote lands."

This affirmation of loyalty to Te-tsung was the more significant in that it was made at a time when the new emperor was planning a serious offensive against the disloyal provinces that lay between the capital and Ts'ui Chao's remote jurisdiction in Yüeh-chou. This ill-coordinated offensive and its consequences, disastrous for the imperial house, were drastically to affect the remainder of Li Chou's official career.

It may have been Te-tsung's need for reliable personnel for his offensive that led him to accept Ts'ui Chao's request and to summon him to the capital. Ts'ui was next involved in an altogether different initiative, as Te-tsung struggled to exert control not only over the recalcitrant eastern provinces but also over the non-Chinese peoples to the north. Again Ts'ui

had Li Chou with him, and again it was Li Chou who wrote on his behalf to give his reaction to the emperor's proposal. For it was now the Uighurs, traditionally, since the An Lu-shan rebellion, the allies of the T'ang house, who threatened the court. Taking advantage of Tai-tsung's death, their leader had planned an invasion. He had been stopped only by the resistance of one of his ministers, who had then murdered him and claimed the leadership. Ts'ui Chao was now, in the fourth lunar month of 780, according to a record preserved in the *Chiu Tang shu* alone, ordered to go as an envoy to confirm the mandate (*ts'z ming* 冊命) of the new khan.⁶⁴

Li Chou's final extant memorial written for Ts'ui Chao was his attempt to decline this commission to go to the Uighur heartland. In this statement, Li Chou emphasized Ts'ui's early loyalty to the dynasty, his provincial service under the emperor Su-tsung, his posts as governor of both Lo-yang and Ch'ang-an. How could anyone decline so important a commission? To do so would be illogical and derelict. But Ts'ui's reason was his serious ill-health, which had been with him since his time at Hsüan-chou, when "for three days and three nights I completely failed to recognize anyone." His illness made him quite unsuitable for a journey to the north. So convinced of his case was he that at the close of the memorial he invited the emperor to show his statement to the ministers in court.⁶⁵

It seems likely that Li's memorial achieved its aim, because another official is mentioned as visiting the Uighurs⁶⁶. Ts'ui Chao's career ran on,⁶⁷ but there is no suggestion that Li Chou had any further connection with him. Meanwhile, Li probably remained at Ch'ang-an in 780. He now benefitted from the sponsorship of Yang Yen 楊炎 (727-81), chief minister from mid-779, and possibly also of Tu-ku Chi's friend Ts'ui Yu-fu. For he was now appointed to the post of supernumerary secretary to the Board of Metal (*chin pu yüan wai lang* 金部員外郎), a desirable tenure in the metropolitan bureaucracy.

⁶¹ WYH 609, p. 2a.

⁶² *Pi ling chi* 19, pp. 9a-b. The term *hai yü* 海隅 originates in the *Shang shu*; see *Shang shu chu shu* 尚書注疏 (SPPY edn.) 5, p. 66b; 16, p. 15b. It could also be used to refer to the other extreme of the T'ang empire, the desert in the far west; see Ch'en T'ieh-min 陳鐵民 and Hou Chung-i 侯忠義, eds., *T'ien Shen chi chiao chu* 天孫集校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai Ku-chi, 1981) 2, p. 156.

⁶³ For the background, see David McMullen, "The Death Rites of T'ang Tai-tsung," in Joseph P. McDermott, ed., *Court and State Ritual in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., forthcoming).

⁶⁴ *CTS* 12, p. 323. This is the only source that lists this commission. It enters Ts'ui Chao's post as investigating commissioner of Chiang-hsi 江西. For the Uighur background, see *ITC* 226, p. 7282. See also Colin Mackerras, *The Uighur Empire (744-840) According to the Tang Dynasty Histories* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1968), pp. 60-66.

⁶⁵ WYH 602, pp. 3a-1a. This involves rejecting the allocation of this composition to Tai-tsung's reign made by the WYH editors.

⁶⁶ *ITC* 226, p. 7282, mentioning Yüan Hsiu 源休.

⁶⁷ Ts'ui is last mentioned as governor of Shou-chou 壽州, in the north of modern Anhui. The court believed that he had developed too close relations with the warlord Li Hsi-lieh 李希烈 and replaced him; see *CTS* 140, p. 3829.

Li Chou's career at the capital, following the rise to the chief minister-ship of Yang Yen, now reached its climax. Yang was a charismatic patron of subordinates, a man of elegance with a spectacular flair for literary composition. His following among officials included a remarkable number of the important scholars of Te-tsung's reign, including the historian Shen Chi-chi 沈既濟 (c. 740–c. 805) and the *Ch'un-ch'iu* scholar Lu Ch'un 陸淳 (d. 805). But he was also turbulent and divisive, and had already made enemies among men of his own status and background, while Te-tsung was later to complain that "he regarded me as if I was a child."⁶⁸ He had been a protegee of the former chief minister Yüan Tsai 元載, who had sown deep divisions in the civil bureaucracy, and he and members of his faction had fallen from power with Yüan Tsai's disgrace and death in 777.⁶⁹ He was also allied to Ts'ui Chao, Li's first patron, though the evidence for this comes from the final phase of his career.⁷⁰ He now replaced Ts'ui Yu-fu as the most powerful political figure at court on the latter's death in the sixth month of 780.

One of the problems that concerned Yang Yen when in the eighth month of 779, at Ts'ui Yu-fu's behest, he had returned to high office from banishment in southern Hunan, was again that of provincial separatism. The problem was given urgency by the new emperor's ambition to restore dynastic power. It was to Li Chou, among others, that Yang now turned in the task of attempting to persuade disloyal provincial commanders to submit to the court's authority. This was always a difficult and hazardous undertaking, and it was made no easier by the court's record of inconsistency and maltreatment of those in the provinces who chose the path of loyalty. Four years later the problem was to claim its most famous victim of the period, when the senior official Yen Chen-ch'ing 顏真卿 (709–84), himself a member of the circle of Li Hua and Hsiao Ying-shih, and like Li Chou a phonologist, was murdered by Li Hsi-lieh 李希烈 (d. 786), the rebellious commander of Huai-hsi 淮西.⁷¹ What was needed in confronting disaffected and unpredictable provincial commanders was a rare combina-

tion of flexibility, diplomatic skill and moral authority.

Li's first experience of this role came in the fourth month of 780, when he was sent by the court to Ching-yüan 滎原, west of the capital in southern Kansu, to entreat a rebellious provincial warlord, Liu Wen-hsi 劉文喜. Liu had been appointed senior officer of Yüan-chou 原州 in the second lunar month of 780, and almost immediately had made his rebellious intentions clear.⁷² Li Chou, with much less personal prestige to draw on than Yen Chen-ch'ing was to possess, failed in his immediate task. Far from being persuaded to submit to the loyalist cause, Liu Wen-hsi proceeded to imprison Li. Li did, however, manage to cause serious discontent among Liu Wen-hsi's staff. For shortly afterwards, in the fifth month of 780, Liu was murdered by a subordinate, Liu Hai-pin 劉海賓 (d. 783), who promptly surrendered to the court. Li was freed from prison and returned to Ch'ang-an, his reputation for courage as an envoy for the loyalist cause intact. But among rebel commanders, or those with shifting loyalties, he was now marked down as a dangerous man, who had proved that he had the power to subvert the staff of one of their number and incite them to murder.⁷³

The next incident recorded for Li Chou's career again involved him as an envoy to the provinces. On this occasion it was another, far more deeply entrenched warlord, Liang Ch'ung-i 梁崇義, whom it was his task to entreat. Liang had been appointed military governor of Hsiang-chou 襄州 as early as 763. Hsiang-chou was strategically crucial to the court, since it commanded the main transport route to the capital from the southeast. Not for nothing had Hsiao Ying-shih, nearly twenty-five years earlier, called it "the gullet of the empire."⁷⁴ Liang's attitude to the political centre had, in the course of Tai-tsung's reign, become more and more ambivalent. When urged to visit the court, he had replied quoting the case of his predecessor and former commander, Lai T'ien 來填 (d. 763), who had done so, only later to be slandered, banished and ordered to commit suicide.⁷⁵

The task of trying to persuade Liang Ch'ung-i to commit himself to the dynasty had most recently been attempted by none other than Li's patron Yang Yen. Recalled by the most important chief minister of Te-tsung's first months, Ts'ui Yu-fu, from banishment in remote Tao-chou 道州, modern

⁶⁸ *TCTC* 233, pp. 7511–12.

⁶⁹ *TPKC* 237, p. 1823, quoting *Tu-yang pien* 杜陽編, states that Chia Chih and Yang Yen were the only officials to have remained adherents of Yüan Tsai. It has to be pointed out, however, that Tu-ku Chi referred to him very politely in tomb texts dated probably 769 and 774; see *Pi-ling chi* 11, 9a and 12, p. 5b.

⁷⁰ See below, n. 82.

⁷¹ *CTS* 128, p. 3596; *TCTC* 231, p. 7443.

⁷² *TCTC* 226, p. 7277. ⁷³ *CTS* 121, p. 3490; *TCTC* 226, pp. 7278–81. ⁷⁴ *HTS* 202, p. 5767.

⁷⁵ *CTS* 111, pp. 3364–68; *CTS* 121, p. 3490; *TCTC* 222, p. 7138, p. 7142.

Hunan, Yang had passed through Hsiang-chou on his way north probably in the summer of 779. "He resolutely encouraged Ch'ung-i to come to court. But Ch'ung-i was unable to comply, and already harboured his [intention] to defect."⁷⁶

The immediate pretext for Li's mission to Liang at Hsiang-chou and a second attempt to bring Liang back into the dynastic fold was an incident within Liang's own command. Li Hsi-lieh, the powerful commander at Huai-hsi to the east, had asked for the court's permission to conduct a punitive campaign against him. Alarmed at this development, Liang had tightened up discipline within his forces. A deserter, however, had made his way to the capital and had reported that Liang was about to rebel. Hearing of this Liang had temporized again to the court and asked for the vagrant to be punished. The emperor had had him flogged and banished. Li Chou was instructed to go to Hsiang-chou and inform Liang of this and to reassure him.

When Li Chou arrived at Hsiang-chou, he appears to have used the same inflexible approach that Yang Yen had used there and that had given him his own reputation at Ching-yüan. For he urged Liang in forceful terms to submit to the court. "His words were very incisive and uncompromising, and Liang was even more displeased." Li Chou was forced to return to the capital without success.⁷⁷

Li was, none the less, to be involved in yet a third attempt to persuade Liang Ch'ung-i to acknowledge T'ang dynastic authority, and again his patron Yang Yen was closely involved. In the third month of 781, Yang sent a group of five commissioners to cover all important provincial destinations, assigning Hsiang-chou, where Liang Ch'ung-i was based, again to Li Chou. These commissioners were said to have been sent "ostensibly to sooth and pacify" the provinces. But one of the tasks that Yang Yen gave them involved the making representations of a surprisingly factional character to provincial commanders. In the second half of 780, Yang Yen came to be held responsible for the banishment and murder of the talented financial pragmatist Liu Yen 劉晏 (713-80), who had dominated financial policy during Tai-tsung's reign. Yang attempted to deflect these charges by maintaining that his persecution of Liu Yen had not been his own wish, but had originated from the new emperor himself.⁷⁸ The five envoys, described

as Yang's "intimates (*fu-hsin* 腹心)" were to persuade provincial leaders of his case. One, whose career parallels that of Li Chou, was Sun Ch'eng 孫承成 (737-89). Like Li, he was descended from a court rescript writer of Hsüan-tsung's reign.⁷⁹ Like Li's, his future was to be drastically affected by Yang Yen's initiative. Another, P'ei Chi 裴翥, appears earlier to have been a friend of Tu-ku Chi.⁸⁰

On this occasion, however, Li Chou never managed to see Liang Ch'ung-i face to face. For Liang now used Li's reputation as someone who had earlier stirred up discontent in the staff of a provincial commander as a reason to refuse to admit him to his territory. Instead, he memorialized to the emperor, stating "There is suspicion and fear in the army; I request that he be changed for another envoy." Li was again forced to return to the capital without success. History has preserved the name of the man who replaced him: it was a certain Chang Chu 張著, who was now sent to Hsiang-chou.⁸¹

Meanwhile at Ch'ang-an Yang Yen was increasingly beleaguered. The emperor had been informed of his manoeuvrings, and had started to resent him. Yang also began to lose in harsh political infighting to Lu Ch'i 盧杞 (d. after 781), a rival who was said to have lacked any literary skill and whom Yang considered uncouth. A decisive point was reached when Yang advised the emperor against using Li Hsi-lieh, soon to be a major rebel. The emperor had the Tu-ku consort made empress and her son Chiung 承繼 prince of Han 韓 established as heir-apparent; see *CTS* 118, p. 3423; *CTS* 123, p. 3516; *TCIC* 225, p. 7260; *TCIC* 226, p. 7276 and *k'ao-i*. For the quarrel between Yang Yen and Liu Yen, see also Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Legalism in Tang Intellectual Life, 755-805," in Arthur F. Wright, ed., *The Confucian Persuasion* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1960), pp. 81-82. See also Cheng Hsüeh-meng 鄭學蒙, "Tang Tai Te liang ch'ao tang cheng ho liang shui fa" 唐代德兩朝宗室和兩稅法, in Joseph Wong and Lau Kin-ming, eds., *Studies on the Sui and Tang Dynasties* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, The University of Hong Kong, 1993), pp. 76-83.

⁷⁹ Sun Ch'eng's tomb text, now in the *Ch'ien Tang chih-chai* 前唐誌集 collection, is particularly clear on his involvement with Yang Yen; but it also states that he was earlier involved with Liu Yen; see *Ch'ien Tang chih-chai ts'ang-chih* 前唐誌集藏誌 (Peking: Wen-wu, 1989, 2d printing; hereafter *CTCC*) no. 949, and *Mu-chih* 2, p. 1836. "Tomb Text with Introduction for His Late Excellency Sun of the T'ang, with the Non-functioning Rank of *chung ta-fu*, Holding the Governorship of Kuei-chow, Concurrently Vice-president of the Censorate, Acting as Defence, Strategic, Chastizing, Investigating and Depositions Commissioner, Upper Pillar of State, Baron of Lo-an County in the Order of the Dynasty's Foundation, Granted the Purple and Gold Fish Satchel" ("T'ang ku chung ta-fu shou Kuei-chow tz'u-shih chien yü-shih chung-cheng ch'ung Kuei-chou pen kuan tu fang-yü ching-lüeh chao-t'ao kuan-ch'a ch'u-chih teng shih shang chu kuo Lo-an hsien k'ai-kuo nan tz'u tzu-chin yü tai Sun fu-chün mu-chih ming ping hsü" 唐故中大夫守桂州刺史兼御史中丞充桂州本管都防禦經略招討觀察處置等使上柱國樂安縣開國男賜紫金魚袋孫府君墓誌銘序).

⁸⁰ *Pi-ling chi* 1, p. 6b, p. 8b; 1, p. 8a, p. 9a.

⁸¹ *CTS* 121, p. 3490; *TCIC* 226, p. 7299.

⁷⁶ *CTS* 118, p. 3424.

⁷⁷ *CTS* 121, p. 3490; *TCIC* 226, pp. 7298-99.

⁷⁸ The grounds were that Te-tsung resented Liu Yen for having been party to a plot to

against the dynasty, as a means of removing the threat of Liang Ch'ung-i, on the grounds that Li was ambitious and untrustworthy. Te-tsung had, however, committed himself to doing exactly this, and was unable to change his mind.⁸² Another defeat took place when Yang's recommendation of Ts'ui Chao, Li Chou's former patron, for high office, was rejected. Te-tsung preferred to listen to the recommendations of Yang's enemy Lu Ch'i. After further political turmoil, in the tenth month of 781, Yang was stripped of high office and banished to Yai-chou 崖州 on the remote southern island of Hai-nan 海南, to be murdered shortly before his arrival there. His fall brought the banishment of a number of the notable scholar officials in the central bureaucracy, including the official historian Shen Chi-chi, the *Ch'un-ch'iu* scholar Lu Ch'un, and Sun Ch'eng and P'ei Chi, Li Chou's fellow envoys on his white-washing initiative earlier that year.⁸³ The sequel was that Yang Yen's enemy Lu Ch'i retained supreme power, until, at the end of 783, he too was disgraced.

No direct information survives to indicate what immediate effect Yang Yen's defeat, banishment and death had on Li Chou or on the other four envoys who had been instructed to tour the provinces whitewashing him at the emperor's expense. But the great early ninth century intellectual Liu Tsung-yüan, listing with tacit pride Li Chou as one of his father's friends, having praised Li's courage for "not having disgraced his commission" in confronting provincial commanders, then stated that he was slandered and banished to the provinces.⁸⁴

Whatever slander may have been involved, Yang Yen's fall signalled the end of Li's career at the capital, while the other Yang proteges who had been sent on commission at the same time now disappeared from political life or underwent periods of provincial service.⁸⁵ Li's next appointment was

⁸² *CTS* 118, p. 3124.

⁸³ *TPKC* 132, p. 3697; see also Glen Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa* (London: Ithaca Press, 1983), p. 61, and n. 9.

⁸⁴ *Liu Ho-tung chi* 12, p. 188.

⁸⁵ Two of the five envoys, P'ei Chi 裴翊 and Wang Ting 王庭 are recorded as having earlier fallen from power in 777, with Yang Yen, when Yuan Tsai was disgraced, and were likely to have been Yang Yen adherents from an early date; see *HTS* 145, p. 4714. They are not mentioned again in *CTS* or *HTS*. P'ei Chi at least must have returned to central office because he is also recorded in *TPKC* 132, p. 3697 as having been banished in 781. A third, Sun Ch'eng, deputy governor of Ching-chao 京兆 had a career parallel to Li Chou's: he is also recorded in *TPKC* 132, p. 3697 as having been banished in 781 and as making the journey south with Shen Chi-chi and Lu Ch'un. He held only provincial governorships after this and, like Li Chou, was recommended without avail to Te-tsung by Lu Chih in 784. (This

another provincial staff post and involved another political patron. This was Chang I 張翊 (d. 783), a scholarly official who had a record of encouraging *ming ching* examination candidates from the provinces and who had written a work on the *Mencius* and one entitled *The Hidden Meanings of the Five Classics* (*Wu ching wei chih* 五經微旨).⁸⁶ Chang had earlier been the patron of Lu Chih, who was soon to become the leading court scholar and intellectual of the second phase of Te-tsung's reign.⁸⁷ The fact that Li Chou and the brilliant Lu Chih thus shared the same political patron is again suggestive of Li Chou's abilities. It may also help explain why Lu Chih was soon to attempt to intervene with the emperor on Li's behalf.

Appointed prefect of Pien-chou 汴州 and military and investigating commissioner of Pien and Hua 滑, in Honan, Chang I now requested that Li Chou be his aide. In the event, however, Chang seems to have suffered a crisis of confidence: his *Old Tang History* biography records that he "declined on the grounds of sickness and delayed on the road. He was then summoned to court, but nursed sickness in his private residence." The outcome for Li Chou is recorded in Liang Su's tomb text for him: "When the commissioner stood down, he withdrew and took to ploughing between the Ch'an 澗 and Lo 洛 rivers."

Li did not, however, go into permanent retirement in the hinterland of Lo-yang. An attempt was made in 784, after the removal of Lu Ch'i from power, to bring him back to high office. It now involved Lu Chih, who held the emperor's confidence from 783, during the humiliating evacuation from Ch'ang-an that followed the failure of Te-tsung's attempts to reimpose authority on the provinces.⁸⁸ In 784, Lu Chih was asked to bring forward the names of those whom he held capable of high responsibility. His response was to produce a list of officials from "among the ranks of the banished or demoted." The list, of thirteen names, with Li Chou as the

assumes that the Sun Hsien 孫咸, deputy governor of Ching-chao, mentioned in Lu Chih's memorial is identical to the Sun Ch'eng, deputy governor of Ching-chao, mentioned in *CTS* 118, p. 3124 and *CTS* 190B, p. 5044. See also n. 79 above. The remaining envoy, Lu Tung-mei 盧東美, was one of the "Four K'uei (*Ssu k'uei* 四賈)," for whom see Pulleyblank, "Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Legalism," pp. 84-85; *CTS* 130, p. 3625. His epitaph was later written by Han Yü; see *Han Ch'ang-li wen chi chiao chu* 6, pp. 204-05.

⁸⁶ *CTS* 125, pp. 3546-47.

⁸⁷ *Ch'üan Tsai-chih wen chi pu-k'o* 補刻, pp. 1a-1b; *Tang Lu Hsüan kung Han-yüan chi* 唐陸宣公補元集 (SPTK edn.), preface, pp. 1a-b; *CTS* 139, p. 6368; Chiu-Duke, "To Rebuild the Empire," pp. 42-44.

⁸⁸ Denis Twitchett, "Lu Chih (734-803): Imperial Adviser and Court Official," in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1962), p. 90.

ninth, largely represents Lu Chih's attempt to bring back to the political centre those scholar intellectuals who had been banished following Yang Yen's disgrace in late 781. It contained a number of well-known figures, among them again Shen Chi-chi and Lu Ch'un. Sun Ch'eng, like Li descended from a famous rescript writer of the reign of Hsüan-tsung and one of Yang's commissioners alongside Li in 781, was also included. But, despite the confidence expressed in him by Lu Chih, no sequel in the form of a Ch'ang-an appointment for Li is recorded.⁸⁰

Li's official career saw one further stage; but whether or not this owed in any way to Lu Chih is impossible to know. Abandoning his farming activities near Lo-yang, he now served in two more provincial posts, first as governor of Shan-chou 陝州, and then as governor of Ch'ien-chou. He finally retired to farm, not in the north, but at P'o-yang 鄆陽 in modern Kiangsi, in the southeast, the region that had played so large a part in his career. It was from P'o-yang that he wrote his last datable composition, a letter to a former chief minister, Ch'i Ying 齊映 (748-93). Ch'i was another former political client of Chang I, and so shared a political patron with Li Chou and Lu Chih.⁸¹ The letter may be dated to 787, because in it Li refers to hearing unexpectedly of Ch'i's banishment to be governor of Kuei-chou 夔州 in modern Szechuan, an event that took place in the first month of that year.⁸² Li Chou represents himself as an old friend of Ch'i, who had been prevented by propriety from approaching him while he had been chief minister. From the letter it is clear that Li Chou had left Ch'ien-chou and was now without an official post. He offered Ch'i Ying consolation for his removal from the chief ministership, and quoted the anonymous *Nineteen Old Poems* to say that the road between P'o-yang and Yun-an 雲安 in Szechuan was hard and long.⁸³ He spoke of being chronically ill and of leading "youngsters (*tzu-ti* 子弟)" to till the soil. Like the letter he wrote to his younger sister, this letter was to be preserved in an anecdotal collection, in this case the tenth century *Tang chih yen* 唐摭言 by Wang Ting-pao 王定保.⁸⁴

Li Chou died at P'o-yang, probably of the chronic illness he men-

tioned in his letter.⁸⁵ Despite the reverses at the end of his career, his standing at this time was high: his non-substantive titles were Baron of Lung-hsi with the non-functioning rank of *ch'ao san ta-fu*. He was survived by his wife of the Ch'ing-ho Ts'ui 清河崔 clan and by a daughter "still in infancy." His coffin was brought back north for burial at his family graveyard near Lo-yang. As it passed through Huai-nan 淮南, the devout lay Buddhist Liang Su, Li's fellow member of Tu-ku Chi's circle from ten years before, who now held office at the headquarters of the military governor, the great institutional historian Tu Yu 杜佑 (733-812), met it and composed for Li a "Prayer of Offering." He had, he said, been in correspondence with Li during their separation and Li's retirement. He had "arranged to spend the evening years of his life [with Li], with 'virtue as my neighbour,'" much as Ts'ui Yu-fu had planned to do with Tu-ku Chi.⁸⁶ "But now you are gone, and with whom shall I be close?" Liang expressed grief that Li had no surviving male heir to continue his line⁸⁷ and that his career had not brought him to high office at the political centre. His account testifies to deep friendship with Li, but fails to mention any Buddhist or Taoist common ground between them. It was almost certainly at this time too that Liang wrote his tomb text for Li, a text which, though it is anthologised only in incomplete form in the *Wen yüan ying hua*, again fails to mention any religious commitment. Both texts indicate again, just as in the case of Tu-ku Chi and Chia Chih, how in the official community differences of religious conviction were no bar to social friendship.

THE "LETTER" IN CONTEXT

It is an irony that Li's "Letter to My Younger Sister," his composition that, in the form of a brief excerpt, was destined to be most widely read,

⁸⁰ *Liu Ho-tung chi* 12, p. 188. A *terminus ante quem* for Li's death is provided by Liang Su's appointment to Ch'ang-an, which was in 789; see the *nien-p'u* by Kanda Kiichirō 神田清一郎, *Ryō Shoku nempu* 聖朝年譜, *Tōhō Gakkai sōritsu nijūgoshūnen kinen Tōhōgaku ronshū* 東方學會創立二十五周年記念東方論集, p. 272.

⁸¹ *Analekts* 1, verse 25.

⁸² Quoting the precedent of Teng Yu (d. AD 326) 鄧攸; see *Chin shu* 晉書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1971) 90, p. 2310. Teng Yu had earlier abandoned his own son in favour of a nephew. For another example of a reference to Teng Yu in a tomb text of this period, see *Mu-chih*, p. 1813. "Tomb Text with Introduction for the Late Lady P'ei of Ho-tung, Wife of the Late Senior Administrator of Ho-chou" ["*Ku Ho-chou chang-shih Chao fu-chün ch'i Ho-tung P'ei fu-chen mu-chih ning ping hsü*"] 故冀州長史趙府君妻河東裴夫人墓誌銘并敘.

⁸³ *Tang Lu Hsüan kung Han-yüan chi* 11, pp. 8b-9b.

⁸⁴ *CTS* 125, p. 3517; p. 3519.

⁸⁵ *CTS* 136, p. 3751; *ITC* 232, p. 7180.

⁸⁶ Sui Shu-sen 隋樹森, ed., *Ku shih shih-chiu shou chi shih* 古詩十九首集釋 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1955) 2, p. 1. The couplet referred to reads, "The road is hard and long; how may we know that we shall meet face to face again?"

⁸⁷ *Tang chih yen* 唐摭言 (Shanghai: Ku-tien Wen-hsüeh, 1937) 4, pp. 18-19.

contains no contextual details that might help to date it to his career. Short though it is, however, the excerpt from the "Letter" may be related in broader terms to lay attitudes to Buddhism and the afterlife in the late eighth century. Its appeal to cultural context was familiar: Buddhism was suited to India; the teaching of the Duke of Chou and Confucius to China. Less usual was its insistence on the sufficiency of the Confucian moral programme: the right thing to do was to lead a good life, and to be agnostic about the afterlife. If heaven and hell should prove real, then access to them will be determined solely by the individual's performance in life. Prayers for advantage, by implication, whether by the individual in life or by his relatives after his or her death, are demeaning and ineffective. Implicitly, therefore, Li Chou condemned the intercessory prayers for the soul of the deceased that, in the course of the medieval period came increasingly to be made as an observance every seventh day until the forty-ninth day after death. A matter of decades after this, Han Yü and Li Ao were to concur in explicitly condemning the observance that in his "Letter" Li Chou implicitly rejected.¹⁷

Li Chao recorded in the *Kuo-shih pu* of Li Chou's "Letter" that "those who heard it considered that Li Chou knew how to put things." This remark, though conventional, and the very fact that the "Letter" was excerpted, suggests that anti-Buddhism enjoyed some support at the end of the eighth century. Other evidence bears out a picture of latent, or at best episodic, resentment against Buddhism. For members of the literate elite, this resentment was expressed in the context of three main problems caused by Buddhism: first, the difficulties caused by excessive expenditure on Buddhism by the emperor himself and by members of the imperial family; secondly, for those in office, the problems caused empire wide at the administrative level by Buddhism; and finally, for a few members of the elite, problems of a domestic character brought about by excessive devotion to Buddhism within the family.

All three of these contexts triggered anti-Buddhist reaction in the reigns of Tai-tsung 代宗 (727-79; r. 763-79) and Te-tsung 德宗 (742-

805; r. 779-805), and an account these reactions provides a general context for Li Chou's "Letter." Tai-tsung had been an extravagant supporter of the church, and had expended enormous sums in building projects. In 767, for example, when timber for a lavish monastery in memory of his mother ran short, he demolished administrative buildings and even used the confiscated residences of high ranking civil and military officials to supply it. The neglect of more pressing state problems, the extravagance of the project and the brutal treatment of the conscripts drafted for construction led a young *chin-shih* graduate, Kao Ying 高郢 (740-811), an almost exact contemporary of Li Chou, to submit two memorials of protest. In these, Kao Ying attacked the notion that a building project of this kind would be effective in securing blessing, and repeated the principle, using the vocabulary of the *Chou i* 周易, that "the enlightened kings of ancient times amassed good deeds and so brought about good fortune; they did not spend money in order to seek good fortune." Kao Ying's condemnation of Tai-tsung's attempt to gain merit through extravagant building is comparable to Li Chou's implicit contention that it was demeaning to pray to Buddha for entry into heaven. But Kao Ying did not reject or express scepticism about Buddhist theology; rather he argued merely that as non-substantiality was central to Buddhism so the construction of lavish physical premises was simply ineffective in religious terms.¹⁸

Under Tai-tsung, Buddhism permeated the court environment, and the emperor's female kin were conspicuous as patrons of the faith. Tai-tsung's consort, from the Tu-ku family, posthumously canonized as the Chen-i 貞懿 empress, was a lay Buddhist. Epigraphical evidence shows that she was a patron of the abbess and vinaya mistress Ju-yüan 如願 (700-775). A descendant of the Shen kung 申公 branch of the Lung-hsi Li clan, this remarkable figure was thus distantly related to Li Chou. She had become a novice at the age of eleven *sui*, was ordained at 20 *sui* and later lectured to the "Six Palaces," that is to the palace women. She claimed the Ch'ang-lo 長樂 princess, a daughter of Su-tsung and therefore a half sister of Tai-tsung, as one of a very large number of disciples.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Huang-fu Ch'ih-cheng wen chi* 皇甫持正文集 (SPTK edn.) 6, p. 4a; *Li Wen kung chi* 4, pp. 2b-3a; Ma, *Han Ch'ang-li wen-chi chiao chu* 5, pp. 192-93. For a valuable overview of the evolution from the mid-fifth century of the seven memorial rituals held every seven days after death, see Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: U. of Hawaii P., 1994), pp. 20-30, and references in n. 12, p. 23.

¹⁸ *TWT* 26B, pp. 5b-8b; *HTS* 165, pp. 5070-72. Kao Ying's *CTSh* biography, *CTSh* 17, pp. 3975-77, does not refer to this episode and *TWK* does not contain these memorials.

¹⁹ *Mu-chih*, pp. 1786-87, "Tomb Inscription with Introduction for the Venerable Nun Ju-yüan, Vinaya Mistress, with Authority to Ordain, Former Abbess of the To-pao Pagoda of the Chen-hua Monastery under the Great Tang" ["Ta Tang Chen-hua ssu To-pao ta ku ssu

Tai-tsung was assisted by a succession of deeply committed lay-Buddhist chief ministers, in Tu Hung-chien 杜鴻漸 (d. 769), Yüan Tsai, and Wang Chin 王綽 (700–81). They even encouraged the emperor to abandon the Confucian view of history and persuaded him that the principle of karmic retribution had determined the course of history since the An Lu-shan rebellion. Tu Hung-chien, in particular, was described as “having no long term strategy in his mind, in purpose and spirit timid and weak. He was moreover an ardent admirer of Buddhism and had no liking for military matters.”¹⁰⁰ When he returned to Ch’ang-an from a brief commissionership in Szechuan, he requested to hold a ‘thousand monk feast’ at the Tzu-sheng 資聖 monastery, asking that the eunuch Yü Ch’ao-en 魚朝恩 (722–70) and the high ranking general service official Li Pao-yü 李抱玉 offer the incense. “It was because his commissionership in Shu had been free of illness and in order to seek for blessings.”¹⁰¹ On his death-bed, Tu asked to take the tonsure and “bequeathed an order to his sons to bury him under a stupa, with no mound or marker, hoping to be of a kind with Buddhist clergy. Opinion sneered at him for this.”¹⁰² Tu’s devotion to Buddhism, like that of the small number of eighth century officials who let their deep commitment to the faith affect their performance in office, is recorded as an excess that threatened effective administration.¹⁰³

chu lin-tan ta-te ni fu-tian li-shih mu-chih ming ping hsiu” 大唐貞化寺多寶塔故寺主臨壇大德尼如願律師誌銘并序. See also the brief entry in Li Yü-chien 李玉珍, *Tang-tai ti pi-ch’iu-ni* 唐代的比丘尼 (Taipei: Tai-wan hsüeh-sheng, 1989), pp. 27–28, no. 13. I am grateful to Professor T. H. Barrett for this reference. For the Ch’ang-lo princess, see *HTS* 83, p. 3660.

¹⁰⁰ *CTS* 118, pp. 3117–18; *CTS* 108, p. 3284; *TCTC* 224, pp. 7196–97; *Ts’u-fu yüan kuei* 唐府元龜 (Li Su-ching’s 1612 edn., rpt. Peking: CHUNG-HUA, 1975, hereafter *TFYK*) 927, p. 66b; Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism under the Tang* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1987), p. 79.

¹⁰¹ The incident of Ts’ui’s return from Shu and conduct of a “thousand monk feast” is not entered in his *CTS* biography, and is summarized only in his *HTS* biography (*HTS* 126, p. 1424). The full account is in *Sung pen Ts’u-fu yüan kuei* 宋本唐府元龜 (rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1989) 927, p. 6b, and *TFYK* 927, pp. 66b–7a, where the text is deficient.

¹⁰² There is, however, a significant difference in the entries for Tu Hung-chien between the *Sung pen Ts’u-fu yüan kuei* and the 1612 edition of *TFYK*: the Sung edition has no report of public opinion at the close of its entry. It follows with an entry for Meng Chien 孟簡, and closes this with the remark “He was greatly belittled by men of insight, and people of the time regretted this.” The 1612 edition, on the other hand, tacks these same remarks onto the end of its entry for Tu Hung-chien, enters Meng Chien as Lan Chien 蘭簡 and has no report of contemporary opinion following its Lan Chien entry. Tu Hung-chien’s *CTS* biography ends with the statement, “Opinion sneered at him for this” (*wu-i shen chih* 物議嗤之), which is translated here.

¹⁰³ Accounts of excessive devotion to Buddhism by Tang serving officials are conveniently collected in a section entitled “Fawning to Buddha (Ning Fo 佞佛)”; see *TFYK* 927, pp. 5b–7b, and *Sung pen Ts’u-fu yüan kuei* 927, pp. 5b–5b. See also n. 102 above. The significant

It was natural, therefore, that Te-tsung’s accession in 779 should have been the occasion of reaction and of initiatives intended to curb the influence of the faith. The best known is that of Li Shu-ming 李叔明 early in the reign. His attack was primarily on the general economic drain caused by the Buddhist and Taoist churches, and he called for large-scale laicization within his jurisdiction of Chien-nan Tung-ch’uan 劍南東川. When his memorial was discussed at court, two central government officials, P’eng Yen 彭隱 and P’ei Po-yen 裴伯言, criticized the Buddhist church for moral corruption and submitted more recommendations, this time to apply empire-wide, for its restriction. Their proposals are significant because, where Kao Ying in 767 had attacked a single, imperially sponsored, building project, they suggested to the new emperor that the problems Buddhism caused extended throughout Chinese society.¹⁰⁴ But they raised no religious objections or arguments against Buddhist or Taoist beliefs at the level that might have been persuasive for individual members of the educated elite.

Less well known, but more relevant to Li Chou, are two anti-Buddhist incidents involving the new emperor and the imperial family. At the outset of his reign, Te-tsung himself is said to have reacted against the religious policies of his father, to have cut down the establishment of monks within the palace and to have put an end to their services there.¹⁰⁵ But these economy measures are not to be taken as evidence that he was anti-Buddhist in the longer term. The reverse is likely: many of his immediate family, including his female kin, were believers, and he was surely influenced by them. The first indication of this came late in 782, when Hsiang 詳, prince of Su 肅, his fifth son, died at the age of four *sui*. Te-tsung, who was especially fond of him, wanted to have a stupa built over his grave. An aide to the ritual commissioner, Li Yen 李元, memorialized objecting that this was an Indian practice, contrary to Chinese ritual prescriptions. He advocated a proper ritual burial, with a tomb in accordance with traditional regula-

examples in the generation before Li Chou’s were P’ei K’uan 裴寬 (681–755) for whom see *CTS* 100, pp. 3129–31; and Yen Ting-chih 嚴庭之 (673–742), for whom see *CTS* 93, pp. 3103–6.

¹⁰⁴ See *HTS* 147, p. 1758, and Weinstein, *Buddhism*, pp. 89–91. The name of P’ei Po-yen, rather than P’ei Po, is attested in *TFYK* 162, p. 16b, measure of the second month of 780, where he is referred to as holding the same title, supernumerary secretary to the Board of Justice, as in *HTS*. For evidence that the new, anti-Buddhist climate at the start of Te-tsung’s reign was felt in the provinces, see Glen Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in Tang China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1995), p. 85.

¹⁰⁵ See McMullen, “Death Rites of Tang Tai-tsung.”

tions.¹⁰⁰ A second, comparable argument with Te-tsung took place in 781, when the T'ang-an 唐安 princess, Te-tsung's grandchild, whose marriage had been postponed because of the court's flight in 784, died on the road. Again Te-tsung wanted to erect a stupa over her grave, and again there was opposition, though it was less obviously inspired by anti-Buddhism.¹⁰¹ The dead members of the imperial family involved were both young, not senior figures who might have established their own religious preferences. Te-tsung, in effect, intervened to impose his own wishes on how they were buried.

These initiatives attacking Te-tsung's Buddhism have in common with Li Chou's "Letter to My Younger Sister" that they involved their authors distancing themselves from the whole belief system that Buddhist-style tombs were intended to express. They suggest that a radical anti-Buddhism, rejecting Buddhist views of the afterlife, found support in the early 780s. Li Yen's characterization of stupa building as an Indian custom, not to be practised in China, in particular, echoes Li Chou's implicit contention that Buddhism was a religion for India rather than China.

Li's "Letter," however, addressed as it was to his younger sister, contrasted with these memorials in that it was clearly domestic in its focus. In this respect, it is to be related to Buddhism as it was practised in the homes of the elite, and to the T'ang tradition of writing comprehensive "Family Injunctions." The elite of the eighth century took great pride in their family codes.¹⁰² These were intended to maintain the internal discipline of the individual families concerned, and so to enable them to preserve or increase their status and survive the harsh competition of official life. Most of these codes no longer survive; but it is reasonable to assume that those that were more discursive rather than merely prescriptive followed the classic extant example, the earlier *Yen shih chia hsün* 顏氏家訓 by Yen Chih-t'ui 顏之推 (531–after 591), which pronounced on questions of religious belief and practice. Among the group of scholars with whom Li Chou was directly or indirectly linked, Ts'ui Yu-fu came from a line with a tradition of honouring

its family code.¹⁰³ Ch'üan Te-yü referred in his "Prayer of Offering" to Tu-ku Chi's "family rules."¹⁰⁴

Like the *Yen shih chia hsün*, these family codes would also have had rules or precepts that particularly applied to women. And the women of these elite families were often notably devout Buddhists. The lay Buddhism that eighth century women practised in their homes, the third context in which it might cause problems, is often clearly documented in their tomb texts. Some took their commitment to extreme lengths: there is the case of a woman called Li Yen 李琰 who died aged 34 *sui* at Lin-an 臨安 in 756, to be reburied with her elder brother in 769. Her tomb text describes her relentless Buddhist devotions: "She ate no meat and dispensed with self-adornment. She chanted sutras over several years and practised the way at all six periods of the Buddhist day. The *Diamond Sutra* and the *Wisdom Sutra* were early etched in her heart. The *Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law* was for ever in her hand." It adds, "Though she did not let her hair drop to become a nun, she was surely a 'boddhisatva in the home'."

For many members of the eighth century elite, too, whether men or women, lay Buddhism practised in the home in this way exerted a particularly strong appeal in the "late years" of their lives.¹⁰⁵ The Tu-ku family and the Liang family, both closely linked to Li Chou, provide examples. Tu-ku Chi's own mother (695–758), of the aristocratic Chang-sun 長孫 clan, turned to Buddhism after her husband's death in 743.¹⁰⁶ Tu-ku Chi was joined at Ch'ang-chou, his final posting, by a widowed sister, a devout Buddhist, who died there in 776, a year before Tu-ku himself. Liang Su wrote of her that "in her later years, she took pleasure in meditation and

¹⁰⁰ *Ta Tang ch'uan tsai*, p. 17; Ebrey, *Aristocratic Families*, pp. 87–115.

¹⁰¹ *Ch'üan Tsai-chih wen chi* 49, pp. 1a–b, "Prayer of Offering to Tu-ku of Ch'ang-chou."

¹⁰² For Li Yen's tomb text, see *Mu-chih*, pp. 1772–73, and *CTCCTC* no. 918, "Tomb Text for the Maid Li of the Tang with Introduction" ("Tang Li ch'u tsu mu-chih ming ping hsu" 唐李琰子墓誌銘序). The reading is blurred in the published rubbing; I am adopting the reading *tsao* 早, an adverb of time parallel to *ch'ang* 常 in the next phrase, suggested by inspecting the rubbing, rather than *ts'ao* 草 as in the transcription in *Mu-chih*. The reading *yü* 於 in the transcription should be emended to *chu* 諸. For examples of men and women becoming committed to Buddhism in later years, see *Pi-ling chi* 8, pp. 10a–b, of Li Shao-kang 李少康; *Pi-ling chi* 12, pp. 10a–b, of Lady Yüan 元, wife of Ho-jo jui 賀若瑒. For Tu-ku Chi's own late interest in Buddhism, see *Pi-ling chi* 3, p. 5a, "Sent to Secretary Han on Visiting the Meditation Master K'ai-wo 開悟 and Asking about the Stages in the Dharma of the Mind."

¹⁰³ *Pi-ling chi* 10, pp. 1b–5a. For an account of the Tu-ku family, identifying Tu-ku Chi's immediate ancestry, siblings and children, see Ts'ien Chung-mien, "T'ang chi chih i" 唐集賢氏, in *Tang jen hang ti lu*, pp. 381–82.

¹⁰⁴ *CTS* 130, p. 4014; *THK* 590, pp. 9a–b; *THK* 328, p. 8a.

¹⁰⁵ *CTS* 138, p. 3787–88; *TCTC* 230, p. 7422.

¹⁰⁶ Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi 宇都宮清吉, "Tōdai no kijin ni tsuite no ichi kōsatsu" 唐代の貴人についての考察, *SR* 19.3 (1934), pp. 80–84, describes some examples of T'ang *chia-hsün* writing. I am grateful to Professor Chen Jo-shui for suggesting to me that a distinction should be maintained between *chia hsün* and *chia fa* 家法 or *chia ling* 家令.

maintained that the *Wisdom Sutra* was the device for [enlightenment]."¹¹³ Like Tu-ku, Liang Su had an elderly, devoutly Buddhist female relative living at Ch'ang-chou. He recorded of her that "in her later years, she practised the laws of Buddha and occupied herself with meditating and chanting. She looked on her body and the world, on glory and decay, as no different from an illusion.... She ordered her fourth son to become a monk."¹¹⁴ When serving officials like Tu-ku Chi and Liang Su, to whose circle Li Chou belonged, left their official premises and returned to their quarters, they left a world dominated by administrative concerns to enter one given a powerfully Buddhist ambience by its domestic regime.¹¹⁵

Another, no less apposite example was narrated by Tu-ku Mien 獨孤慚, a cousin or perhaps brother of Tu-ku Chi, with whom he had shared a childhood,¹¹⁶ in a long tomb text written in 778 for Lady Li (711-768), wife of Hsin Yün-ching 辛雲京 (713-768). Lady Li was, like Li Chou, a Lung-hsi Li from Ch'eng-chi. Her career as Tu-ku Mien described it is put forward as an ideal for mid-eighth century womanhood. Her husband was one of the most powerful and professional of the generals of the post-rebellion period, a man much feared for his harshness towards his own troops

¹¹³ WYTH 966, pp. 5b-6b; CTCTC no. 933; and *Mu-chih*, pp. 793-94. "Tomb Text for Lady Tu-ku of Ho-nan, Wife of the Late Li Staff Officer in the Bureau of Works at Ch'ü-chou" ("Ch'ü-chou ssu-shih ts'an-chün Li chün fu-jen Ho-nan Tu-ku shih mu-chih" 衢州司土參軍李君夫人河東獨孤氏墓誌), by Liang Su, dated 777. Another epitaph for Li (Tao) 李 [諱] and his wife, by Liang Su, dated 778 on the occasion of their reinterment, repeats in condensed form the same account; see CTCTC no. 937 and *Mu-chih*, p. 1808. Tu-ku Chi's tomb text for Li Tao, his brother in law, dated 774 is at *Pi-ling chi* 12, pp. 7b-8b, and the retrieved version is published in CTCTC no. 929 and *Mu-chih*, p. 1783. Their unmarried daughter, who had died in 768 was reburied on the same day; see *Mu-chih*, p. 1784.

¹¹⁴ WYTH 966, pp. 7b-8a. "Tomb Text for Lady Liang, Wife of the Late Li, Assistant of An-te County in Te-chou" ("Te-chou An-te hsien ch'eng Li chün fu-jen Liang shih mu-chih" 德州安得縣丞李君夫人梁氏墓誌).

¹¹⁵ For the concept of returning from an official to a private realm, see for example Han Yü, in *Han Ch'ang-li shih hsi-nien chi-shih* 韓昌黎詩集年集序 (Shanghai: Shang-hai Ku-chi, 1984) 5, p. 485.

¹¹⁶ *Mu-chih*, pp. 1809-10. "Tomb text with Introduction for Lady Li, Posthumously Promoted Lady of the State of Su, Lady of Lung-hsi Commandery, Wife of His Excellency Hsin, Military Governor of Ho-tung and Acting Vice-president of the Left of the Department of Affairs of State Charged with Regulating the Affairs with the Presidents of the Central Secretariat and the Chancellery, Prince of Chin-ch'eng Commandery" ("Ho-tung chieh-tu-shih chien-chiao shang-shu p'u-yeh t'ung chung-shu men-hsia p'ing-chang-shih Chin-ch'eng chün wang Hsin kung ch'ü Lung-hsi fu-jen tseng Su-kuo fu-jen Li shih mu-chih-ming ping hsü" 河東節度使檢校尚書僕射同中書門下平章事金城郡王辛公爽龍西郡夫人贈肅國夫人李氏墓誌銘并序). For Hsin Yün-ching, see *CTS* 110, pp. 33-44-45, and *HTS* 177, pp. 1753-55. For Tu-ku Mien, see *Pi-ling chi* 14, pp. 5b-6a.

and much respected for his ruthlessness on campaign. When in her middle life her husband became a chief minister, Lady Li's moderating advice to him was so greatly appreciated that the emperor gave her the title of Lady of Lung-hsi commandery. But she later turned to Buddhism and aspired to become a nun. "Her husband would have persuaded her to stop, but her purpose was not to be wrested from her. Accordingly the issue was reported to the emperor and there was a proclamation that she should become a nun of the Ch'ung-ching 崇敬 monastery, with the Buddhist name of Yüan-chi 圓寂." Tu-ku Mien's text went on to praise her for "starting by marrying, establishing her reputation in middle life, and ending as a Buddhist."

The point of this account is not only that Lady Li provides yet another example of a woman turning to Buddhism in later life. It is also clear that her husband, a military man and none too sensitive about matters of life and death, was opposed to her doing so, and that he actively tried to stop her. Only an appeal to, followed by action from, the emperor, the supreme lay patron of Buddhism, enabled her to over-ride her husband and realize her aim. Thus two of the contexts in which, in the eighth century, anti-Buddhist attitudes were developed, the home and the emperor, were involved in her case. In the case of Lady Li, too, there is a particular resonance with the issue which Li Chou treated in his "Letter." For Li Chou, as a man and a serving official, was also attempting to caution a female relative from excessive dedication to Buddhist practice.

The domestic climate in the circle to which Li Chou belonged was thus one not only of profound devotion to Buddhism but also of respect for women. There was, as the preceding examples indicate, a tradition of composing tomb texts for wives and mothers. There was also one of preserving letters to or about women. Yen Chen-ch'ing's collected works contain one to his wife, discussing a reinterment, travel arrangements and the transport of his "books and sacrificial vessels."¹¹⁷ Li Hua late in his life wrote a "Letter to the Maternal Grandchildren of the Ts'ui Family": "Only if women are going to read books and understand writing, and know the circumstances of ancient and modern, can they be above reproach."¹¹⁸ On

¹¹⁷ *Yen Lu kung wen chi* 顏魯公文集 (SPPY edn.), 1, p. 3b; Fukutani Shūdō 深谷周道, *Gen Shinsei* 顏氏詩 (Nagoya: Fubaisha, 1974), pp. 381-82.

¹¹⁸ *TWT* 90, pp. 8b-9b, "Letter to Two Grandchildren of the Ts'ui Family" ("Yü wai-sun Ts'ui shih ech hai shu" 與外孫崔氏二孩書).

the evidence of the title of the "Letter," Li Chou was likely to have been as concerned for his women relatives as any scholar of the period. But, again, he differed from his friends in his implicit opposition to the quest for blessings in the Buddhist afterlife and in his agnostic attitude to the Buddhist faith itself.

A further tradition to which Li Chou's "Letter to My Younger Sister" may be related was that of death-bed instructions, made usually to immediate descendants. Here Li Chou's debt was to an ancient and very specific tradition of making statements about death and the survival of the soul. Both men and women in the T'ang made death-bed statements, often to prescribe for their own death rites. Frequently they stipulated frugality and promptness over burial, and sometimes they also, as Li Chou did in his "Letter," stated their authors' religious position. In the late sixth century, Yen Chih-t'ui 顏之推 had set out detailed prescriptions for his own burial.¹¹⁹ Other, T'ang examples were also well known, not least by virtue of their inclusion in the official dynastic records. Many were specifically Buddhist: Hsiao Yü 蕭瑀 (574-647), a senior official whose devotion to Buddhism once greatly irritated the emperor T'ai-tsung, wrote instructions for a prompt, frugal burial, without prognostication.¹²⁰ Nearer to Li Chou's own circle, Ts'ui K'ai 崔暉, the grandfather of Ts'ui Yu-fu, who was portrayed in his tomb text as learned in Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, told his sons in his final illness to edit the books that he had written, and left instructions in a sealed box: "Our family sets value on the plain and frugal. After my death, dress me (simply) in the clothes of the season..."¹²¹ Hsi Yü, Li Chou's maternal grandfather, gave orders for a swift dressing and burial after his death, requiring his sons "not to allow further delay and cause trouble publicly and privately."¹²² Another example was Li Chi-ch'ing 李季卿 (709-67), for whose tomb text Tu-ku Chi and Chia Chih had collaborated. Tu-ku Chi praised Li's exemplary attitudes and frugality: "He

had no regrets arising from condemnation by others or from the reprimand of supernatural beings. He lacked even ten pieces of cash to supplement the offerings to be made to him. ...When he died, he looked around at his family and household elders and told them to dress his body on a plain carriage."¹²³ Other examples confirm that to include an account of death-bed instructions in tomb texts was not uncommon.¹²⁴

A small number of these death-bed instructions or final utterances, moreover, contained statements that were strikingly similar to those of Li Chou's "Letter." In effect, they set out an open or agnostic position towards the afterlife, by making alternative propositions, one proposing a survival of consciousness and a second positing the opposite. It is important to a full understanding of Li Chou's adaptation of this double formula that it had a long tradition in Chinese history and that this ante-dated by centuries the arrival of Buddhism in China.

Thus already in the *Tso chuan*, the formula, "If my forbears have knowledge, ..." or "If the dead have knowledge, ..." occurs.¹²⁵ Again by the time of T'ao Yüan-ming this formula had entered the literary tradition.¹²⁶ But the most relevant early example was attributed in T'ang times to the *Chou ch'un-ch'iu* 周春秋 and is contained in the *Mo tzu* 墨子. This sets out the double proposition that is ancestral to Li Chou's own formulation. King Hsüan 宣 of Chou 周 (reigned traditionally 827-782 BC) was about to murder his minister Tu Po 杜伯, when Tu Po said to him, "You, my lord, are about to kill me as an innocent man. If the dead have no consciousness then the matter stops there. If I die and have consciousness, before three

¹¹⁹ *Pi ling chi* 11, pp. 1b-2a.

¹²⁰ For example, Ts'ui Hsüan-liang 崔玄亮 (767-833), a religious eclectic praised for his knowledge of all three teachings, insisted that he buried in his traditional family graveyard rather than near one of the two capitals, and required a frugal burial. *Po Chü-i chi* 白居易集 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1979) 70, p. 1171. Another example is narrated by Ts'ui Yu-fu, in a tomb-text for his K'ou Hsi 寇恂 (707-777); see *CICCC* no. 926 and *Mu-chih*, pp. 1805-06, "Tomb Text with Introduction for His Excellency K'ou, *ch'ao-i lang* and Secretary of the Board of Works in the Department of Affairs of State under the T'ang" ("Yu T'ang ch'ao-i lang shou shang shu Kung pu lang-chung K'ou kung mu-chih ming ping hsi") 有唐朝議郎守尚書工部郎中寇公墓誌銘并序. For a good review of T'ang tomb texts and their religious content, see Nakasuna Akinori 中砂明徳, "Tōdai no bōso to bōshi" 唐代的瘞葬と墓誌, in Tonami Mamoru 谷田正徳, ed., *Chūgoku chūsei no bumbutsu* 中國中世の文物 (Kyoto: Jimbun Kagaku Kenkyūsho, 1983), pp. 371-414.

¹²¹ *Tso chuan chu-shu* 39, p. 1b and 35, p. 2a; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics Vol. V, The Ch'un-ch'ueh, with the Tso Chuen, Part II*, p. 513, p. 519; Duke Hsiang 襄, 29th year, p. 758, p. 760; Duke Ting 定, 5th year.

¹²² *Tao Yüan-ming chi*, pp. 138-39.

¹¹⁹ See Teng Ssu-yü, trans. and annot., *Family Instructions for the Yen Clan: Yen-shih chia-hsün by Yen Chih-t'ui* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 209-11.

¹²⁰ *CTS* 63, p. 2101.

¹²¹ *Mu-chih*, p. 1802, "Tomb Inscription for His Late Excellency Ts'ui of the T'ang, *ch'ao-san ta-fu*, Acting Senior Officer of Ju-chou, Upper Pillar of State, Baron of An-p'ing in the Order of the Dynasty's Foundation, Posthumously Appointed Deputy President of the Court of the Imperial Guards" ("Yu T'ang ch'ao-san ta-fu, shou Ju-chou chang-shih, shang-chu-kuo, An-p'ing hsien k'ai-kuo nan, tseng wei-wei shao ch'ing Ts'ui kung mu-chih" 有唐朝議大夫守汝州刺史崔國安平縣開國男贈衛尉少卿崔公墓誌).

¹²² *CTS* 190B, p. 5026.

years are up, I shall certainly have you know it." In the event, the narrative states, Tu Po returned to shoot King Hsüan on a hunt.¹²⁷ This early story of revenge from beyond the grave was to exert a lasting appeal. An amplified version of it, though without the double formulation about consciousness after death, was anthologized by Yen Chih-t'ui in the *Huan yüan chi* 還冤記, an anthology of stories about avenging ghosts, the underlying purpose of which may have been Buddhist.¹²⁸ It was, however, also criticized by the famous sceptical philosopher Wang Ch'ung 王充 (AD 27–c. 100), who used it to argue that there could be no survival after death, and that the apparition who murdered King Hsüan was not the ghost of Tu Po. Tu Po also figured in the debate over the survival of the soul that took place at the court of Liang Wu-ti 梁武帝 (464–549, reigned 502–49) in the early sixth century.¹²⁹ Thus the anecdote, exploited over time, both to support and to oppose the idea of the survival of the soul, may have been a touchstone for the agnostic position.

The double proposition formula with which the doomed Tu Po had threatened King Hsüan was widely used in the late pre-Ch'in and Han periods. Nothing else, given the bias against women of Han sources, can explain its use by a woman at the end of the Former Han. Wang Cheng-chün 王政君, the widow of the emperor Yüan-ti 元帝 (74–33 BC, reigned 49–33 BC) and grand empress dowager, addressing the remains of Yüan-ti's shrine, demolished by Wang Mang 王莽 in AD 12, stated, "If it should be that ghosts and spirits have no knowledge, why should temples be maintained for them? If it is the case that they have consciousness, then I am [now] the consort of another man, so how could it be fitting for me to defile the emperor's shrine by setting forth food offerings?"¹³⁰ Another example, from the Later Han, has a certain Jen Mo 任末 striking a fatalistic note and appealing to Confucian morality in a way that anticipates Li Chou's "Letter": "You must take my corpse to my teacher's gate. If the

dead are conscious, my soul will not be ashamed [before him]. If they are not conscious, then I will simply become earth."¹³¹

In medieval times, this double formulation was still in use. It figures in several of the stories on the theme of avenging ghosts collected for the *Huan yüan chi* by Yen Chih-t'ui. In these, just as in the case of Tu Po as the *Mo tzu* contained it, wrongly sentenced or murdered men or women are made to use it on the point of death, in order to threaten their murderers. In two such stories, the language is very similar to that of Li Chou's "Letter." A female musician of the Yung-chia 永嘉 period (AD 307–12), callously sentenced to die for a crime that she did not commit, states, "If there are no ghosts, then that is that. If ghosts exist then I shall certainly file a plaint."¹³² A second example concerns a Han dynasty figure, Tou Ying 鄧嬰, a member of the empress Tou's family in the second century BC. Wrongly sentenced to death, he is made to say, "If in death I have no consciousness, then that is that. But if I have consciousness, then I shall certainly not remain alone in death." Tou Ying, like Tu Po, provided the philosopher Wang Ch'ung with another example of a spurious belief in ghosts. But the striking point in Yen Chih-t'ui's version of his story is that the original *Shih chi* 史記 and *Han shu* 漢書 accounts on which Yen's version is loosely based, do not contain this threat; it was added for the benefit of Yen's readers precisely for its dramatic value.¹³³ These and similar stories in the *Huan yüan chi*, like that of Tu Po, make revenge their central theme, and their use of the double proposition is duly followed by accounts of how, after death, their subjects duly achieved revenge from beyond the grave.

The formula remained in use in the eighth and ninth centuries. But those who now adapted it confronted a religious landscape wholly unimagined by the pre-Ch'in and Han Chinese who had first used it. The pervasive presence of Buddhism and of ever more elaborate beliefs about life after death in effect challenged traditional Confucian orientated agnosticism and revitalized its ancient roots. The formula continued to be used in traditional contexts to suggest the possibility of supernatural

¹²⁷ *Mo tzu chiao chu* 墨子校注 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1993) 8, p. 337; see K. E. Brashier, "Han Thanatology and the Division of Souls," *Early China* (forthcoming).

¹²⁸ Yen Chih-t'ui, *Huan yüan chi* 還冤記, quoted in *TPKC* 119, pp. 830–31. See Alvin P. Cohen, *Tales of Vengeful Ghosts*, Variétés sinologiques, New Series (Paris: Institut Ricci-Centre d'Etudes Chinoises, 1982), pp. 63–65.

¹²⁹ See Huang Hui 黃暉, *Lun-heng chiao shih* 論衡校釋 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1938), esp. 22, pp. 943–44; 23, pp. 963–64. For citation of Tu Po in the Liang debate, see *Hung ming chi* 皇明集 (SPTK edn.) 9, pp. 4a–b; 14, p. 18a. See also *Kuang hung ming chi* 廣皇明集 (SPTK edn.) 4, pp. 18b–19a.

¹³⁰ *Han shu* 98, p. 4034; *TCTC* 37, p. 1199, entry for AD 12.

¹³¹ *Hou Han shu* 79B, p. 2572. Brashier, "Han Thanatology," at n. 96.

¹³² Cohen, *Vengeful Ghosts*, pp. 15–16; *Huan yüan chi*, quoted in *TPKC* 119, p. 835.

¹³³ Cohen, *Vengeful Ghosts*, pp. 22–24, and n. 3 to Tale 13 on p. 126; *Huan yüan chi*, (Pao-yen Yang pi chi edn.), pp. 2b–3a. For the original *Shih chi* version, see *Shih chi* 史記 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1959) 107, pp. 2839–54; for the *Han shu* version see *Han shu* 漢書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1962) 52, pp. 2375–93. For Wang Ch'ung's citation of Tou Ying, see mainly *Lun-heng chiao shih* 22, pp. 933, 944.

revenge. But some at least of those who adapted it exploited it in order to give authority to their own dispassionately held agnostic convictions.

A traditional use of the formula was made by Kao Ying, Li Chou's almost exact contemporary and the *chin-shih* who in 767 had warned Tai-tsung against one of his most extravagant Buddhist building projects. In 790 he composed a text for engraving to commemorate the rebuilding of temples to Chiang Yüan 姜嫄 and Kung Liu 公劉, ancient progenitors of the Chou 周 royal house, at Pin 鄆.¹³¹ He praised Chang Hsien-fu 張獻甫 (736–96), the military governor,¹³² for relocating the shrines in a quiet and dignified place by the southern city wall. He hinted at the idea that an insulted spirit might take revenge on those who showed it insufficient respect. He condemned those who approached spirits crudely just to seek for protection, and laid the responsibility for showing due respect on senior officials: "Now the petty man knows all about serving spirits with percussion and dancing, but fails to realize how familiarity and rudeness insult them. He knows about seeking help by serving spirits, but does not know how insulting them will buy him calamity.... If spirits have no consciousness, then that is that; if we say that they have consciousness, then the way in which familiar clamour and rudeness [may cause them to] bring about the disaster of pestilence and early death must surely [be traceable to] inadequate compassion from senior officials." Kao Ying's position resembles Li Chou's in condemning a crudely self-seeking attitude to the spirit world, but differs in conveying the ominous message that if indeed spirits were conscious then they were able to exert a terrible revenge for being insulted.

Others in the eighth and early ninth centuries, however, used the formula more reflectively to analyze their beliefs about what would happen to their own souls after death. One was Hsin Mi 辛秘 (757–820), nearly twenty years younger than Li Chou. He is likely to have objected principally to the pervasive T'ang belief that siting of a grave by divination could influence the fortunes of a man's descendants. His spirit path stele was composed by Niu Seng-ju 牛僧孺 (779–847), a leading sceptical intellectual of the period. Niu recorded that when Hsin's wife died, he made the following statement, "Man's residence is impermanent, and his tombs and graves are likewise. The grave yards of my family, by [mine] the fourth generation, have thrice been divined. If when I am dead there is an I, then

surely I will not keep to the tomb. If when I am dead there is no I, then there should be no question of choosing a spot [for my tomb by a fourth divination]. If some other day I die here, proceed with the burial and do not move me [later]." He then determined the spot for his wife's burial. Later, he both composed his own tomb text and confirmed his earlier instructions, committing directives for his burial in a final letter left on a table. "They were both frugal and comprehensive, and in no way contravened ritual. Famous people of the time made much of his ability to die well." Hsin's statement of agnosticism is particularly relevant to Li Chou because it adapts the traditional double proposition about the survival of the soul, not to convey the threat of revenge, but rather to express his own scepticism about the efficacy of divination for grave siting.¹³³

An even closer statement to Li Chou's, however, antedates it probably by some six decades. This is a long testament intended for his sons by the chief minister Yao Ch'ung 姚崇 (651–721), which is entered in his *Chiu T'ang shu* biography. Yao had witnessed some of the profligate construction work done in the name of Buddhism and Taoism in the reigns of the empress Wu (c. 627–705, reigned 690–705), Chung-tsung (656–710, reigned 684, 705–10) and Jui-tsung (662–716, reigned 684–90, 710–12), and had promoted anti-Buddhist measures early in Hsüan-tsung's reign.¹³⁷ In his address to his sons, he condemned the huge sums spent on Buddhist buildings and funerals and argued from examples that they achieved nothing. He cannot be counted an anti-Buddhist, since he appealed, just as Kao Ying was to do in 767, to the idea that true Buddhism involved austerity, and that extravagant buildings and offerings therefore violated a Buddhist ideal. He also asked that, "if you cannot wholly follow the true way and if you must accord with vulgar emotions," then the seven seven day rituals should be performed for his soul. But pronouncing on the

¹³¹ WYH 915, pp. 11a–b, "Spirit Path Stele for the Military Governor of Chao-i, His Excellency Hsin" ("Chao-i chün chieh-tu-shih Hsin kung shen-tao pei" 昭義軍節度使辛公神道碑), by Niu Seng-ju 牛僧孺. For Hsin, see also *CTS* 157, p. 1150. I am indebted to the doctoral research of Jovana Muir for characterization of Niu Seng-ju as a sceptical thinker.

¹³² Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, *Tō chūki no jōdo kyō toku ni Hōshō zenshi no kenkyū* 唐中興の淨土教特に法照律師の研究 (Kyoto: Tōhō Bunka Gakuin Kyōto Kenkyūsho, 1933), p. 26; Weinstein, *Buddhism*, p. 51. See also *TCTC* 210, p. 668q, *K'ao-i*, quoting a work entitled *Sheng p'ing yüan* 昇平源, attributed to Wu Ching 吳兢, in which Yao sets out ten points of urgent concern in government, to which Hsüan-tsung agrees. One of these was lavish imperial building of Buddhist and Taoist monasteries. See also *Ch'uan T'ang wen* 全唐文 (rpt. Taipei: Hua-wen, 1963) 206, pp. 14a–b.

¹³¹ *CTW* 449, pp. 22b–23b.

¹³² For Chang Hsien-fu, see his biography at *CTS* 122, pp. 3498–99.

possibility of an afterlife, he too used paired antithetical propositions that surely both draw on pre-Buddhist tradition and foreshadow Li Chou's: "If the dead are without knowledge, no different from dung, why bother to have an extravagant burial? If they do have knowledge, the soul will not remain located in the coffin, so what purpose would there be in disobeying your father's orders and destroying resources [intended for] food and clothing?"

These eighth and early ninth century statements by Yao Ch'ung, Hsin Mi and Kao Ying therefore share with Li Chou's "Letter" the double proposition, surely very familiar to medieval Chinese, about death. This formula had been given edge by its use in the context of threats of revenge from beyond the grave and had acquired authority from its use in the remote pre-Buddhist past. Kao Ying asked that the spirits of the ancient progenitors of the Chou house be treated not crudely but with appropriate reverence, because if they were conscious they would exert revenge for insults shown them. The statements by Yao Ch'ung and Hsin Mi belonged to a T'ang tradition of highly crafted expressions of doubt about the survival of the soul made by individuals as their death approached. Whether Li Chou's "Letter" was written during his final illness and contained death-bed instructions cannot now be determined. His formulation certainly owes to the general tradition of expressing doubt about the afterlife exploited by Hsin Mi and Yao Ch'ung. But it differs in its dignified insistence that to follow the Confucian moral programme in life was sufficient preparation for any afterlife that might exist and in its implication that Chinese should reject the whole concept of Buddhist intercession on behalf of the soul of the deceased.¹³⁸ The spirit world, whether in the threatening guise of hell or the seductive guise of heaven, was unverifiable; the right response, Li argued, was simply to lead a good life.

That Li Chou had identified a sceptical note in his attitude to Buddhism with authority and precision is made clear when his position is compared to that of the most famous T'ang anti-Buddhist of all, Han Yü. Han, like Li Chou and even Ssu-ma Kuang,¹³⁹ was not totally negative towards Buddhism. He saw some goodness in the psychology of detachment that a Buddhist training produced. But he is likely to have maintained a traditional Confucian agnosticism over the question of whether the dead

have consciousness. He thus followed the convention whereby a question that is agnostic in spirit might be inserted at the close of funerary compositions. One of his most impassioned funerary texts, his celebrated "Prayer of Offering for Nephew Twelve," closed with the familiar alternatives, here expressed as questions, "Are you [my nephew now dead] conscious of this, or are you not conscious of it?"¹⁴⁰ But his anti-Buddhism has an insistent note that is quite absent from Li Chou's carefully balanced statements. He thus explicitly and emphatically condemned praying to Buddha for advantageous re-birth as "without benefit," and "using fallacy to assuage grief, [in the hope of] comforting a new ghost. Alas! Of what avail is this?"¹⁴¹

More significantly, over thirty years after Li Chou's death and towards the end of his own life, Han Yü wrote a letter that contains more than an echo of Li's. Banished to the remote south by an infuriated emperor for his anti-Buddhist memorial of 819, Han had been put on the defensive by his friendship with the monk Ta-tien 大顗. In a letter to his friend the devout lay Buddhist Meng Chien 孟簡 (d. 824), a composition that Ssu-ma Kuang himself knew and appreciated,¹⁴² he emphasized the moral independence of the individual, using the same vocabulary as Li Chou. The true gentleman, he stated, follows the models of the sages so that he may be without shame. In amassing good or bad deeds, he accepts the good and bad results of his own actions "according to category," that is in limited and verifiable ways. There was no question of his "following the teachings of barbarians in order to seek blessings and advantages." Han then put forward two antithetical propositions again reminiscent of Li Chou's: "If the Buddha was a true gentleman, he would not spuriously allocate calamities to those who follow the way. If he was a petty man, then he has already died, his spirit is not effective, and the gods of heaven and earth, in their resplendent array, are not to be taken in vain."

The similarities to Li Chou's brief statement to his younger sister are striking: Han Yü employs precisely the same categories, the true gentleman and the petty man, though he transfers them to the Buddha as a notional judge of the dead rather than making them refer to the deceased about to be judged. He also makes substantially the same charge against Buddhism as that understood to be implicit in Li Chou's letter: intercessory prayer is demeaning and ineffective; moral performance, judged by traditional

¹³⁸ *CTS* 96, pp. 3026-29.

¹³⁹ *Wen-kuo Wen cheng Ssu-ma kung wen chi* 溫國文正司馬公文集 (SPTK edn.) 66, p. 1a.

¹⁴⁰ *Han Ch'ang-li wen chi chiao chu* 5, p. 198.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 5, p. 193.

¹⁴² *Wen-kuo Wen cheng Ssu-ma kung wen chi* 69, pp. 1b-2b.

Confucian categories is all that matters. It is only in not mentioning heaven and hell that Han Yü differs from Li Chou, and this may be through disdain or impatience on his part with a notion he termed "fallacious."

Whether Han Yü read Li Chou's "Letter," or comparable statements by him that might have survived into the ninth century, cannot, of course, now be determined. It is perhaps unlikely that he intended a deliberate textual echo, for letters of this kind were informal compositions, and are not likely to have formed part of any T'ang "memorization corpus." But Han must surely have known of Li Chou, through their common acquaintances Lu Ts'an and Liang Su, and probably through Tu-ku Yü, Ch'üan Te-yü and Liu Tsung-yüan as well. The statements by Li Chou and Han Yü both belong to a tradition that resisted Buddhism by invoking traditional Confucian categories and by condemning Buddhist practices. The attitude involved, essentially defensive, contrasts with the outlook of eclectic thinkers like Ch'üan Te-yü or Liang Su, who were willing to equate traditional Confucian interior concepts with Buddhist goals, or with Li Ao's far-reaching, though sometimes tendentious, re-exploration of Confucian interior concepts. In the longer term, it was this defensive attitude, or reluctance to become involved in Buddhism, that was to characterize orthodox neo-Confucianism in China.

Li Chou, in conclusion, had a career that was distorted by the provincial separatism of the post-rebellion decades; but in the course of three decades of service he passed the test of loyalty to the dynasty, and "did not disgrace his commission." He was also a significant figure on the margins of the religious and literary developments that dominate the literary historical record for the late eighth and early ninth centuries. He was a recognized phonologist and his preface for Tu-ku Chi's collected works proves that he was involved in the reform of literary practice that was advocated, over his life-time and later, by leading scholars of the period. His "Letter to My Younger Sister," explored in the context of his career and social connections, suggests that he may represent a line of continuity in anti-Buddhism or agnosticism from Chia Chih through to Han Yü, who took up and elaborated ideas that he had formulated only epigrammatically. And if Li kept anti-Buddhist, or even agnostic, ideas alive in the minds of those who, like his friend at Yüeh-chou Lu Ts'an, were analyzing religious values in Te-tsung's reign, he would also have been a catalyst for the sort of position that Li Ao explored. All this and the facts of Li's frustrated official career

might be thought achievement enough to merit the respect, three centuries later, of Sung scholars, for many of them shared his loyalist political values and literary and religious concerns.

In fact, however, admiration of Li Chou's "Letter to My Younger Sister" by neo-Confucians was guaranteed by another factor, one that ironically made it appear less important to his own, late eighth century world. This was precisely its domestic focus, the fact that its recipient was a woman. The "Letter" was a private statement, and for T'ang readers it can have attracted none of the frisson of excitement that a dangerous submission to the emperor, like that of Li Yen in 782 objecting to Te-tsung's plan to give his infant son a Buddhist burial or the most famous anti-Buddhist memorial of all, Han Yü's "Memorial Discussing the Bone of the Buddha" in 819,¹¹¹ would have done. Li Chao in the early ninth century had included part of it in his *Kuo-shih pu*, a miscellany that has a notably wide range of material, for motives akin to those that underlie gossip. But the Sung saw the completion of a major shift in the concerns of Confucian scholars and teachers. This took place between Li Chou's own lifetime and the time when Ssu-ma Kuang, addressing a far wider readership than Li Chou writing his "Letter" could have conceived of, wrote his *Shu-i*. By the eleventh century Confucians, confronted with a society that was both richer and more literate, were concerned to prescribe universally for the family, to a degree of detail that was new. A letter that in the eighth century was intended to be private and domestic, addressed to a woman member of one aristocratic family, written to give it advantage in the competition with other elite families, was now attractive because it contained a message that the teachers of the day wished to be universally followed, by "common men and women," by the whole population of China. A century later, when Chu Hsi composed the *Chia li*, the shift was even more pronounced.¹¹² Though the facts about Li Chou's life and career had by then largely been forgotten or misremembered, the title and content of his "Letter to My Younger Sister" admirably suited the preoccupations of the neo-Confucians.

¹¹¹ Hartman, *Han Yü*, pp. 84-93.

¹¹² Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1991), esp. pp. 102-201.

APPENDIX A: Li Chao's Citation of Li Chou's Letter in *Kuo-shih pu*

Li Tan of Ch'ien-chou's "Letter to My Younger Sister" reads, "If Sakyamuni had been born in China, he would have founded a teaching like that of [the Duke of] Chou and Confucius. If [the Duke] of Chou and Confucius had been born in the west, they would have founded a teaching like that of Sakyamuni. If heaven does not exist, then that is that. If it does, then the true gentleman will be reborn there. If hell does not exist, then that is that. If it does, then the petty man will enter there." Those who heard of this held that [Li Chou] knew how to put things.

APPENDIX B: Ssu-ma Kuang's Citation of Li Chou's Letter in *Ssu-ma shih shu-i*

If heaven does not exist, then that is that. If it does, then the true gentleman will ascend there. If hell does not exist, then that is that; if it does, then the petty man will enter there. [Commentary] Contemporaries, when a parent dies, pray to the Buddha. This is assuming one's parent was not a person of virtue but an inferior person who had accumulated bad deeds and sins. Could there be a less kind way to treat one's parents? And if in fact one's parents had accumulated bad deeds and sins, how could they escape the consequences by your bribing the Buddha?

APPENDIX C: Yü Wen-pao's citation of Ssu-ma Kuang in *Ch'ui chien lu*

Li Chou says, "If heaven does not exist, then that is that. If it does, then the true gentleman will be reborn there. If hell does not exist, then that is that. If it does, then the petty man will enter there. [Commentary] Now if one prays to Buddha on account of the death of one's father and mother, this is to take one's parents for petty persons."

APPENDIX D: Excerpt from Han Yü's "Letter to President Meng"¹¹⁵

The conduct and careers of all true gentlemen of themselves have their own models and measures. The deeds of saint and sage are there in the written records, to be emulated and taken as models. Thus looking up one is not ashamed before heaven, looking down one is not ashamed before men, and within one is not ashamed before one's own mind. The bad consequences of amassing evil deeds and the blessings from amassing good deeds each come according to their category. What question can there be of quitting the way of the sages, rejecting the models of the former kings and following the teachings of barbarians in order to seek blessings and advantages? Does not the *Book of Odes* say, "Easy and self-possessed was our prince; seeking for happiness by no crooked ways"?¹¹⁶ And the *Chronicle of Tso* says, "He is not terrified by threats,"

and "He is not corrupted for the sake of gain."¹¹⁷ Supposing Buddha were able to bring calamities to people, then this should not be what a true gentleman who observes the [Confucian] way should fear. How much more is this the case since there is no question whatsoever of this being possible? Moreover, who in fact was the Buddha? Was his career of a category with that of the true gentleman? Or of a petty man? If he was a true gentleman, then he would certainly not wrongly allocate calamities to those who observe the way. If he was a petty man, then he has already died, his spirit is not active, and the gods of heaven and earth, in their resplendent array, are not to be taken in vain. Would they be willing to let his ghost act according to its own arbitrary wishes and work threats and blessings among them? To behave without basis and to honour and believe in him is deluded indeed.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CTCTC	<i>Ch'ien-t'ang chih-chai ts'ang chih</i> 千唐誌齋藏誌
CTS	<i>Chiu Tang shu</i> 舊唐書
HTS	<i>Hsin Tang shu</i> 新唐書
Mu-chih	Chou Shao-liang 周紹良, <i>Tang-tai mu-chih hui-pien</i> 唐代墓誌彙編
TCTC	<i>Tzu chih t'ung chien</i> 資治通鑑
TPKC	<i>Tai-p'ing kuang chi</i> 太平廣記
TWT	<i>T'ang wen ts'ui</i> 唐文萃
TYFK	<i>Ts'e-fu yüan kuei</i> 開府元綱
WYYH	<i>Wen yüan ying hua</i> 文苑英華

¹¹⁵ *Han Ch'ang-li wen chi chiao chu* 3, p. 125.

¹¹⁶ *Mao shih chu shu* 毛詩注疏 (SPY edn.) 16, p. 6b, Legge, *The Chinese Classics Vol. IV Part II, The Shu King* (London: Oxford U.P., preface dated 1871), p. 446.

¹¹⁷ *Tso chuan chu shu* 左傳注疏 (SPY edn.) 19, p. 5a, and 60, p. 2b; Legge, *The Ch'un T's'uo with the Tso Chuan, Part II*, p. 678, p. 682, Duke Chao 昭, 20th year; pp. 844-45, p. 847, Duke Ai 哀, 16th year.