

The Death of Chou Li-chen: Imperially Ordered Suicide or Natural Causes?

THE CH'IENT'ANG CHIH-CHAI AND T'ANG OFFICIAL SOURCES

The publication in 1983 of rubbings of the stone-engraved epitaphs in the Chien T'ang chih-chai collection has made readily accessible to scholars of the Sui and T'ang dynasties a set of material that hitherto only a few libraries have held in original rubbing form. The set of rubbings published was formerly in the possession of Kuo Yü-t'ang 郭玉堂, and was taken from the epitaph collection formed between 1931 and 1935 by Chang Fang 張鈺 (d. 1966) and set in the walls of the Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai 千唐誌齋, built in 1935 to house them at T'ieh-men 鐵門, Chang Fang's home district, forty-five kilometers east of Loyang. Chang Fang's collection represents only a portion of the estimated total of six to seven thousand recovered T'ang epitaph stones, the other important collections being at the Lo-yang shih-k'o i-shu-kuan 洛陽石刻藝術館, the K'ai-feng shih po-wu-kuan 開封市博物館, and the Pei-lin 碑林 at Sian. The publication of the two-volume collection adds to the much earlier transcriptions of T'ang epitaphs published by Lo Chen-yü 羅振玉 (1866-1940) contained in *Mang Lo chung mu i wen* 邨洛冢墓遺文, preface dated 1914. Another major series of epitaph texts, now in process of publication as *T'ang tai mu chih ming hui pien fu k'ao* 唐代墓誌銘彙編附考, provides reproductions of rubbings in reduced size, with transcriptions, annotation, and indexes. It will add greatly to the research value of this category of material.¹

The Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai collection is not exclusively of T'ang dynasty material. Of its 1,360 epitaph stones, 1 is from the Western Chin; 3 from the Northern Wei; 2 from the Sui; 22 from the Five Dynasties; 85 from the Sung; 31 from the Ming; 1 from the Ch'ing; and 6 from the Republican

¹ *Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai ts'ang chih* 千唐誌齋藏誌, intro. Wu Chih-yüan 武志遠 and Kuo Chien-pang 郭建邦 (Peking: Wen-wu, 1983; hereafter *CTCCTC*). Also, *T'ang tai mu chih ming hui pien fu k'ao*, Mao Han-kuang 毛漢光 and Lu Chien-jung 盧建榮, comps. (Taipei: Chung-yang yen-chiu yüan li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu-so, 1984-87). The latter project provides transcriptions, annotation, and indexes for the texts concerned, and, since it will include the Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai rubbings, will ultimately form a definitive collection of published T'ang epitaph texts.

period. But the remaining 1,209, the great majority, date from the T'ang. The rubbings are published in reduced size and without the benefit of accompanying transcription, so that in some cases deciphering presents difficulties. But the readable texts may be treated with complete confidence as the epitaph biographies that were engraved on stone at the time of their subjects' burials.

There are obvious limitations to the historical value of this collection. The biographies are mainly of men or women whose lives were not remarkable and who are not mentioned in the official accounts. The information they contain is further restricted by the conventional form of the commemorative epitaph. Most of the texts consist of very brief resumes of their subjects' official careers. These accounts conform to a pattern already familiar from the many transmitted examples of epitaph texts and of the similar, but less common, reports of conduct (*hsing-chuang* 行狀) prepared for officials of the third degree and above. They are often vague on the chronology of appointments in their subjects' careers and refer at best obliquely to major political events or to social or military problems.³ Only rarely do the epitaphs show the flexibility of form and content, and the ability to include anecdotal material and personal statements, that such major writers of the early ninth century as Han Yü 韓愈 (768–824) gave to the genre.⁴

Nonetheless, it is to be argued that these epitaphs collectively contribute substantially to a distinct level of documentation for the history of the Sui and T'ang, ancillary to the official historical accounts, the institutional compendia, and the transmitted literary and anecdotal collections. Even when they allude only briefly to major historical trends, their accounts may, on analysis, contribute to an understanding of the events or processes concerned. In genealogical terms, these texts are likely to prove particularly valuable.⁴ Less directly, they will in the longer term help to establish the level of education and the command of the literary, canonical, and calligraphic traditions of hundreds of writers who never became members of the elite circles documented in transmitted sources. As historians refine their under-

standing of this second level of T'ang officialdom, these texts will contribute significantly to the resulting picture.

A few of the epitaphs were composed by scholars who are well known in the transmitted literature. Examples by Ti Jen-chieh 狄仁傑 (630–700), Ts'ui Mien 崔沔 (673–739), Liu Fang 柳芳 (c.s. 735), Hsiao Ying-shih 蕭穎士 (717–759), Ts'ui Yu-fu 崔祐甫 (721–780), and Liang Su 梁肅 (753–793) are of special interest because their authors figure in the background of the epitaph text examined in this article.⁵ Others are for the relatives, sometimes sons or grandsons, of men who figure in the official histories. Still others, in the course of their narratives, mention officials whose names recur in the transmitted sources. But five of the epitaphs in this collection are in a special category: their subjects are actually represented by biographies of paragraph length or longer in the two official histories, the *Chiu T'ang shu* 舊唐書 and the *Hsin T'ang shu* 新唐書. In most of these five cases the epitaph biographies confirm or amplify what has previously been known.⁶

There is, however, one epitaph among the five in which the engraved account conflicts with its two official historical counterparts, and in which it is clear that all three cannot be factually correct. This is the epitaph for Chou Li-chen 周利貞, engraved on stone in 720, the year of his burial. Here, the epitaph and the transmitted accounts of Chou's life in the *Chiu T'ang shu* and *Hsin T'ang shu* differ considerably. One difference is of a kind that is often evident when epitaph texts, whether transmitted or unearthed, and official accounts are compared: the epitaph account of Chou's career is fuller than those in the two official biographies. But other differences are much more dramatic: the epitaph eulogizes Chou Li-chen, his moral outlook, administrative achievements, knowledge of history, and skill in writing verse. It also provides him with a prestigious, though vague, ancestry, claiming that he

³ Denis Twitchett, "Chinese Biographical Writing," in W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank, eds., *Historians of China and Japan* (London: Oxford U.P., 1961), pp. 95–114.

⁴ For some examples of freer use of the epitaph form, to include the author's own polemic views, see the following epitaphs by Han Yü 韓愈 in Ma T'ung-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), p. 213, epitaph for Li Su 李素 (745–812); p. 220, epitaph for Lu Ch'eng 盧丞 (731–797); p. 253, epitaph for Li Hsü-chung 李虛中 (762–813); p. 319, epitaph for Li Yü 李于 (766–823). See also below, n. 171.

⁵ The editors, p. 8, offer a challenge when they state that 16 percent of the epitaph subjects in the collection claim membership in one of four great clans, the Ts'ui 崔 of Ch'ing-ho 清河, the Lu 盧 of Fan-yang 范陽, the Li 李 of Kuan-lung 關龍, and the Cheng 鄭 of Jung-yang 榮陽.

⁵ *CTCCTC*, no. 481, epitaph for Yüan Kung-yü 袁公隴 (613–685), by Ti Jen-chieh; no. 630, epitaph for Ts'ui T'ai-chih 崔泰之 (667–723), by Ts'ui Mien — the association between Ts'ui T'ai-chih and Ts'ui Mien is confirmed by Yen Chen-ch'ing 顏真卿 (709–784); see *Yen Lu kung wen chi* 顏魯公文集 (SPY edn.) 5, p. 16a; no. 833, epitaph for Yüan Kuang-ch'eng 源光乘 (670–746), by Liu Fang; no. 887, epitaph for Chia Ch'in-hui 賀欽惠 (674–714), by Hsiao Ying-shih; no. 936, epitaph for Ts'ui Chung-fu 崔衆甫 (698–762), by Ts'ui Yu-fu; no. 938, epitaph for Li T'ao 李譔 (710–759) by Liang Su.

⁶ *CTCCTC*, no. 9, Ch'ü-t'ung 屈突通 (557–628), for whom see *Chiu T'ang shu* 舊唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975; hereafter *CTS*) 59, pp. 2319–22, and *Hsin T'ang shu* 新唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975; hereafter *HTS*) 89, pp. 3749–52; no. 607, Chou Li-chen (656–719), see *CTS* 186B, p. 4852, and *HTS* 209, pp. 5912–13; no. 917, Li Yung 李邕 (675–747), see *CTS* 190B, pp. 5039–43, and *HTS* 202, pp. 5754–57; no. 971, Li Kao 李皋 (733–792), see *CTS* 131, pp. 3637–41, and *HTS* 80, pp. 3580–83; no. 1043, Ts'ui Hung-li 崔弘禮 (767–830), for whom see *CTS* 163, pp. 4265–66, and *HTS* 164, pp. 5050–51.

was descended from the Chou imperial house, and had from Han times both civil and military officials in his line. The transmitted official histories, on the other hand, treat Chou Li-ch'en with contempt, assigning him to the "Cruel Officials" division of their respective biography sections. The *Chiu T'ang shu* omits any mention of his ancestry; the *Hsin T'ang shu* states dismissively that the records concerned have been lost. Both concentrate on a single episode in Chou Li-ch'en's career, his apparently sadistic murder of the "Five Princes" (*wu wang* 五王) in the far south of China, on the orders of a court official in 706. These five were Huan Yen-fan 桓彦範 (653–706), Ching Hui 敬暉 (d. 706), Ts'ui Hsüan-wei 崔玄暉 (d. 706), Chang Chien-chih 張柬之 (ca. 626–706), and Yüan Shu-chi 袁恕己 (d. 706). (See appended table.) T'ang tradition claims that they, along with Ti Jen-chieh, brought about the restoration of the T'ang imperial line after the Wu-Chou interregnum.⁷ Soon after this achievement, however, the five men had been banished to the far south for intriguing against the notorious Wu San-ssu 武三思 (d. 707), the favorite of the Empress Wei.⁸ In describing Chou Li-ch'en's role in their deaths, the official sources dismiss him as an evil and degenerate man.

Here is a striking conflict of evidence between sources, with two images of the same individual that differ starkly in their coloring, and neither of which admits any shading in its depiction. Like many of the officials of the very early eighth century, and like almost all those officially categorized as "cruel," Chou Li-ch'en is not survived by any writings that might help us to understand his role or personality. The epitaph and the two official biographies, in sharp conflict as they are, are almost the only sources for his life.

The problem of this conflict between sources centers on their accounts of Chou Li-ch'en's death. The epitaph, its tone lofty and positive, describes Chou as meeting his death through sickness at the age of sixty-four *sui* in Yung-chou 邕州, modern Canton province, in the summer of 719. The *Chiu T'ang shu*, on the other hand, states that he committed suicide on the orders of Hsüan-tsung (*tz'u ssu* 賜死), soon after the Emperor's accession in 712. The *Hsin T'ang shu* also has him committing suicide, but at a slightly later date.

Chou Li-ch'en, both the epitaph and the transmitted sources agree, held central government and provincial offices through what were, in court po-

litical terms, some of the most turbulent years of the late medieval empire. Behind the problem raised by the three conflicting accounts of how he died is the larger issue of what view later official scholars had of these momentous events, and how this view developed as the official historical sources that were so contemptuous of Chou took shape in the course of the eighth century.

The argument made in the following pages concerns the evolution of this official attitude to Chou Li-ch'en and the political background that lay behind it. This article analyzes the sources for Chou's life, death, and subsequent reputation, treating them as an expression of the changing political climate of the mid-eighth century. The official outlook toward the regimes of the Empress Wu, the Empress Wei, and their favorites changed markedly in the course of the middle decades of the eighth century. Initially there was a distinction between the restrained outlook of the Emperor Hsüan-tsung and the more critical attitudes of some at least of the officials in the civil bureaucracy. A full understanding of the Emperor's attitude toward the dynastic politics of the period from Kao-tsung's death in 683 until his own accession in 712 will be possible only through analysis of a range of sources, among which those concerned with the imperial family, the dynastic temple, and the canonization system are likely to prove important. But it is clear that, at least early in his reign, the Emperor had reasons to play down the traumas involved. The events concerned had, after all, involved his own kin. He may also have wished, through need for political support, to demonstrate a lenient attitude to the middle-ranking former supporters of Wu San-ssu and the Empress Wei.

The scholarly element in the central bureaucracy on the other hand had suffered under the regime of Wu San-ssu and was more openly critical: the introduction to the famous letter of resignation of 708 by the great historian-critic Liu Chih-chi 劉知幾 (661–721), the efforts to prevent the canonization of Wu San-ssu's follower Wei Chü-yüan 韋巨源 (631–710) by Li Yung 李邕 (675–747), the remarks that Liu's colleague Wu Ching 吳兢 (ca. 669–749) made about Wu San-ssu in a memorial of 726, and the epitaph for Ts'ui T'ai-chih contained in the Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai collection all represent a variety of early sources that indicate the antagonism caused among scholars by the events of Chung-tsung's reign (705–710).⁹

⁷The fullest account in English is in C. P. Fitzgerald, *The Empress Wu* (London: Cresset Press, 1956), pp. 188–92. For evidence that the "Five Princes" were later grouped as T'ang loyalists with Ti Jen-chieh, see nn. 140 and 141 below.

⁸For an outline of this sequence of events, see Denis Twitchett, ed., *Sui and T'ang China 589–906, Part 1*, vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of China* (hereafter *CHC*) (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1979), pp. 320–28.

⁹See William Hung, "A T'ang Historiographer's Letter of Resignation," *HJAS* 29 (1969), p. 3 and notes; *HTS* 123, p. 4376, and *CTS* 92, pp. 2965–67, biography of Wei Chü-yüan 韋巨源, which record Li Yung's two unsuccessful attempts to alter the canonization *chao* 昭 proposed for Wei Chü-yüan. The *CTS* passage reproduces the text of Li Yung's second submission. For Wu

But as time passed, and as in the middle decades of the eighth century the T'ang dynasty went through successive military and political crises, disapproval by both emperors and scholar-officials of the Wu-Chou interregnum and its sequel became more intense. This process also gained strength because scholars socially connected with the sons of factional allies of the "Five Princes" now held positions of influence. The loss of the full official record of Hsüan-tsung's reign in the course of the An Lu-shan rebellion gave post-rebellion historians the chance to rewrite the "Cruel Officials" section of biographies in the dynastic history. In doing so, they distorted the historical truth in the interests of a compound of Confucian indignation and loyalty to the Li-T'ang line and their factional allies. The damning account of Chou Li-chen contained in the *Chiu T'ang shu* was part of this exercise.

Much later, the Northern Sung (960-1126) compilers of the *Hsin T'ang shu*, also writing at a time when issues of political principle were intensely analyzed, endorsed the moral outlook of their mid-eighth century predecessors. Both accounts, as argued below, falsified the record of Chou Li-chen's death, representing it as an order to commit suicide by the great Emperor Hsüan-tsung, and therefore a triumph of imperial authority over evil. Though epitaphs, like all genres of commemorative biography in the T'ang, customarily exaggerated the achievements of their subjects, and though Chou Li-chen's is no exception in this, it is in one respect to be preferred to the official accounts. The proposition of this article is that, far from glossing over the manner of his death, as the editors of the Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai collection maintain he did,¹⁰ the epitaph's author probably states the truth when he tells of Chou Li-chen's death through sickness in 719.

THE EPITAPH OF CHOU LI-CHEN

The account of Chou's career given in his epitaph is much fuller than the contemptuous notices of him in the official histories. It was composed by Sun Hao-jan 孫浩然, an otherwise unknown figure, who describes himself as an erstwhile student at the State Academy Directorate and *chin-shih* 進士 graduate who had regarded Chou Li-chen as his mentor. Sun Hao-jan's text was written out by Chia T'ing-chih 賈庭芝, a *ming-ching* 明經 graduate, who is equally obscure. In its size and in the details of Chou Li-chen's career that

it contains, it is a typical example of an epitaph for a senior official. Nor is there anything unusual in the fact that it was composed by an obscure figure. To the modern reader, moreover, it gains in interest as one of many examples in the Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai collection of compositions by men who apparently failed to achieve the sort of official career that was the universal aim of the educated.¹¹

Like all compositions of its kind, Chou Li-chen's epitaph text divides into two sections, the long introduction (*hsü* 序) and the inscription itself (*ming* 銘). The introduction is written in a highly self-conscious, antithetical style, and includes a number of allusions and quotations. There are two explicit citations of Confucian canonical literature, one from the *Mao shih* 毛詩 and one from the *Chou i* 周易. There are also echoes of *Chou i*, *Shang shu* 尚書, and *Tso chuan* 左傳 phrasing. The references to post-canonical literature are mainly to figures from the Han, San-kuo, and Chin periods. It is conspicuous that the echoes of post-Chin writing in the text are drawn almost exclusively from the *Wen hsüan* 文選, the anthology compiled by the Liang prince Hsiao T'ung 蕭統 (501-531). Sun Hao-jan, indeed, wrote at a time when the *Wen hsüan* had achieved its highest status in terms of imperial and court literary interest. The inscription itself comprises six numbered stanzas in a four-character verse style modeled on the *Mao shih*. It resumes the subject matter of the introduction, but in a less precise and more high-flown style.

The text contains several references that are wrongly quoted. An error in the location of Chou Li-chen's place of origin is particularly conspicuous. There are also several miswritten characters. It is tempting to identify in this aspect of the composition the reasons for the lack of success in the official careers of both Sun Hao-jan and Chia T'ing-chih. But the occasional imprecisions in the text should be detached from the theme of this article, the question of whether it is the epitaph or the official accounts that is factually correct in the treatment of Chou Li-chen's death.

The epitaph, despite these errors, is a dignified composition, pervaded by a sense of reverence for the dead official. Since it provides the most detailed account of Chou's career, it should speak for itself:

Epitaph for his late Excellency Chou of the T'ang, monitory official, upper pillar of state, Baron of Ch'ao-hsien 巢縣 in the order of the dynasty's

Ching, see *T'ang hui yao* 唐會要 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1955; hereafter *THY*) 63, p. 1198, trans. E. G. Pulleyblank, "The *T'ang hui yao* and the Sources for the History of the Period 730-763," *BSOAS* 13 (1949-1950), p. 453; *CTCCTC*, no. 630, epitaph for Ts'ui T'ai-chih.

¹⁰ *CTCCTC*, no. 607.

¹¹ I am grateful to Sung Chia-yü 宋家鉉 of the History Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences for providing a transcription of the text of the epitaph and a list of fourteen variant characters used in it. Mr. Sung made use of an original rubbing of the epitaph held by the Institute; nonetheless some individual characters were indecipherable.

foundation, and senior officer of Yung-chou, with preface. Composed by Sun Hao-jan, chin-shih of the Kuo-tzu [hsüeh].

[If one looks for an example of the man who] has investigated the hidden and trodden the secret, and merged all phenomena in the occult and supernatural, has adapted to changes and run through seasons,¹² and investigated the sixfold writings in his hand and grasp,¹³ has gone forth and been loyal to the state, entered in and been filial in his home, [on the one hand] been a servant in the pavilion for edicts,¹⁴ and adjusted the salt and the sour for the son of heaven,¹⁵ [and on the other] has discharged office at the great frontiers, and provided a pure water mirror among armed men,¹⁶ and has not let this plan lapse, here there is an instance of this.

His excellency's taboo name was Li-chen and his [courtesy name] was Cheng 正. He was a man of Lu-chiang 廬江 [county] in Ju-nan 汝南 [commandery].¹⁷ When great merit was just made apparent, the ancestral Chou [dynasty] made enfeoffments of ministers and knights; when their progeny let their fragrance flow forth, under the fiery Han they had the honored status of generals.¹⁸ Golden insignia [were held]

over many generations; sword-guards of jade were inherited in his family.¹⁹

His excellency almost attained being born with knowledge [of the truth], and was one who shed luster on his neighborhood for nearly [obtaining sagehood].²⁰ His spring light was shed without; his perception and astuteness were profound within. When Ting Chung 丁仲 was in his young years, his writings brought about a clear expectation that he should be made a duke;²¹ when [P'ang] Shih-yüan [龐]士元 was in his prime years, he was praised for talent that could assist a prince.²² Add to that [the fact that his excellency's] knowledge and [ability to] estimate were extensive and vast, and that his capacities were comprehensive and he understood the nature of [all] things. His [use of] tonal rules [in verse] was lustrous and limpid, equal in brightness to the autumn moon; his refined rhymes were harmonious, like the rising moisture of spring clouds.²³

Early on as a descendant of his family, he entered the state school,²⁴

¹² *Chou i chu shu* 周易注疏 (SPPY edn.) 7, p. 17b, has *t'an che so yin* 探蹟索隱; the idea of *pien* 變通 is also drawn from the *Chou i*, see, e.g., *ibid.* 7, pp. 17a, 18a; 8, pp. 1b and 3b.

¹³ *Liu shu* 六書 literally refers either to the six types of character in the script (see *Han shu* 漢書 [Peking: Chung-hua, 1962; hereafter *HS*] 30, p. 1720 and *Chou li chu shu* 周禮注疏 [SPPY edn.] 14, pp. 4a-5a), or to the six calligraphic styles (see Hsü Shen 許慎, pref. *Shuo wen chieh tzu Tuan chu* 說文解字段注 [SPPY edn.] 15A, pp. 11a-b). But it may here be understood to refer either to the Six Arts (*liu i* 六藝) (see *Chou li chu shu* 10, pp. 14b-15a), or to the Six Classics (*liu ching* 六經) (see *Li chi chu shu* 禮記注疏 [SPPY edn.] 50, pp. 1a-b, and subcommentary).

¹⁴ The term *lun-ko* 論閣 should refer to the Central Secretariat; see *Chin shu* 晉書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1974; hereafter *CS*) 75, p. 1995, "Discussion of the Biographies of Wang Chan and Others."

¹⁵ The post of official taster for the emperor, mentioned in *Shang shu chu shu* 尚書注疏 (SPPY edn.) 10, pp. 4a-b, is here made to stand for a close relationship with him. For another eighth-century reference to this post, see *Feng shih wen chieh chi chiao cheng fu yin te* 封氏聞見記校證附引傳 (Pei-p'ing: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1933), ch. 3, p. 11.

¹⁶ For the idea of a man as a "water mirror" who provides an image of the moral measure of his fellows, see *Hsiang-yang chi* 襄陽記, by Ssu-ma Te-is'ao 司馬德操, quoted in P'ei Sung-chih's 裴松之 (372-451) commentary to *San kuo chih* 三國志 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1959; hereafter *SKC*) 37, p. 953.

¹⁷ For a discussion of Chou Li-chen's family, see appendix below.

¹⁸ Emending *mo* 漢 to *Han* 漢. The epithet *yen* 炎, fiery, refers to the fact that the patron element of the Han was fire; see Michael Loewe, "Water, Earth and Fire — the Symbols of the Han Dynasty," *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens* (Hamburg) 125 [1979], pp. 63-68, and Hsiao T'ung 蕭統, comp., *Wen hsüan* 文選 (SPTK edn; hereafter *WH*), preface, p. 2b; and ch. 46, pp. 18a-b, "Preface to Poems Written on the Third Day of the Third Month at Ch'ü-shui" 曲水, by Wang Jung 王融 (467-493). This remark may just be intended to suggest that the Lu-chiang line was descended from the Former Han general Chou Po 周勃 from P'ei 沛 (*HS* 40, pp. 2050-57), his son Chou Ya-fu 周亞夫 (*ibid.*, pp. 2057-62), and Chou

Ch'ang 周昌, also from P'ei (*ibid.* 42, pp. 2094-97). But *Yüan-ho hsing tsuan* 元和姓纂, Sun Hsing-yen 孫星衍, annot. (edn. pref. 1804) 5, pp. 19b-20a, makes the Chou line from P'ei a separate line of descent, from King Nan 閼, the last king of the Chou dynasty, and therefore only remotely related to Chou Li-chen's Han ancestor Chou Jen. Thus this may be intended as a reference to the San-kuo period soldier Chou Yü 周豫; see appendix below.

¹⁹ For *chin chang* 金章 as an emblem of high office, see *WH* 43, p. 27a, "Proclamation on North Mountain," by K'ung Chih-kuei 孔稚珪 (447-501). The phrase *yü erh* 玉珥 is understood as a reference to military as opposed to civil office on the basis of the gloss to *WH* 32, p. 13b, "Nine Songs," provided by the early eighth-century commentator Li Chou-han 李周翰.

²⁰ *WH* 60, p. 1a, "Report of Conduct for the Prince of Ching-ling 竟陵 [Canonized] Wen-hsüan 文宣," by Jen Fang 任昉 (460-508). This phrase is in turn borrowed from *ibid.* 36, p. 5a, "Composed on Behalf of the Duke of Sung on the Repair of the Temple for Chang Liang 張良," by Fu Liang 傅亮 (374-426). In turn, canonical sources are provided by *Analekts*; see *Lun yü yin te* 論語引得 (Pei-p'ing: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1940), p. 13 (VII/20) and p. 34 (XVI/9); and *Chou i chu shu* 8, p. 8a.

²¹ The intended reference here must be to Ting T'an 丁潭; see *Shih shuo hsin yü chiao chieh* 世說新語校箋 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1984), ch. B, p. 279, and *CS* 78, p. 2064. Ting T'an was said to have had "the expectation of becoming a duke while lacking the talent to become one," in contrast to K'ung Yü 孔愉, who "had the talent to become a duke but lacked the expectation." The given or courtesy name Chung 仲 instead of T'an cannot be substantiated and may be an error by Sun Hao-jan.

²² Shih-yüan 士元 is the courtesy name of P'ang T'ung 龐統, for whom see *SKC* 37, pp. 953-56 and 962. The common phrase "talent great enough to assist a prince" originates in *HS* 56, p. 2526, assessment for the biography of Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒; but, though high compliments were paid to P'ang T'ung early in his career, this phrase is not applied to him in extant sources.

²³ *WH* 58, p. 21b, "Text for the Stele of Ch'ü Yüan 褚淵," by Wang Chien 王儉 (452-489), "His style and demeanor were equal in brightness to the autumn moon; the beauty of his notes to the fertility of spring clouds."

²⁴ The fact that Chou Li-chen was able to secure registration in one of the colleges of the Kuo-tzu chien indicates that his father, grandfather, or great-grandfather held official rank or noble

and was raised to a grade in the *ming-ching* examination.²⁵ He loosed his serge (started his official career) as junior officer of Ch'ien-t'ang 錢唐;²⁶ but no time after he had approached his post, penalties to a servant followed one another.²⁷ Subsequently he met with the adversity of the filial son, and his grief exceeded [what was determined by] the rites. When Wang Hsiu 王攸 wept with grief, many in his neighborhood ceased their ritual offerings;²⁸ when Tzu-kung 子貢 came to the end of his mourning, his lute still played tunes of mourning and distress.²⁹

On the completion of his mourning, he was given the assistantship of Shu 蜀 county.³⁰ His administration was able and his reputation great. Presently he was appointed registrar of the Court of Justice,³¹ then promoted to be assistant of the Grand Repositories.³² Men of

title at a level stipulated by statute; see *Ta T'ang liu tien* 大唐六典 (1724 edn., Hiroike Senkurō 廣池千九郎 and Uchida Tomoo 內田智雄, eds., published as *Dai Tō rikuten* [Tokyo: Hiroike gakuen jigyoō 廣池學園事業部, 1973; hereafter *TTLT*]) 21, pp. 9b-12b. The lowest rank or noble title involved if the qualifying official had been Chou Li-chen's father would have been seventh degree or [county] marquis, earl, or baron, and the college would have been the Ssu-men hsiieh 四門學. Since Chou's father's highest post was lower-sixth degree, upper class, it may well have been he who enabled Chou to enroll in the Kuo-tzu chien. If it had been his grandfather, about whom nothing is known, who did so, the highest post he reached would have been not lower than fifth degree or county or commandery duke, and the college would have been the T'ai-hsiieh 太學. Chou's great-grandfather, according to *Yüan-ho hsing tsuan*, was not of the rank lower-third degree to have secured his great-grandson enrollment in the T'ai-hsiieh. The third college, the Kuo-tzu hsiieh, took in the sons of third-degree officials and above, the sons and grandsons of state dukes, and the great-grandsons of lower-second-degree officials. Had any of Chou Li-chen's immediate ancestors been of this seniority, their names would probably have been mentioned in the epitaph text.

²⁵ See also Lo Chi-tsu 羅繼祖, "Teng k'o chi k'ao pu 登科紀考補," rpt. in *Teng k'o chi k'ao fu pu i so yin* 登科紀考附遺索引 (Taipei: Ching-sheng wen-wu kung-ying kung-ssu 驚聲文物供應公司, 1972), p. 2070.

²⁶ To loose one's serge (*chieh ho* 解褐) is a conventional term for taking up a first posting. Ch'ien-t'ang 錢唐, more conventionally written 塘 in the T'ang, was a county under the jurisdiction of Hang-chou 杭州; see *CTS* 40, p. 1588.

²⁷ No details are given in any of the other sources for Chou Li-chen of these impositions or punishments, nor is it possible to infer anything about them.

²⁸ It is not possible to infer the date of Chou Li-chen's mourning period. *SKC* 11, p. 345, biography of Wang Hsiu 王攸, "When he was seven *sui*, he lost his mother. Because she had died when an offering to the god of the earth was held, the following year when the neighboring village held this offering, moved by the memory of his mother, he became deeply grieved. The neighboring villagers heard of this and for his sake stopped their offering."

²⁹ *K'ung tzu chia yü* 孔子家語 (SPTK edn.) 4, pp. 2b-3a. The early T'ang literary encyclopedia or prompt book *I wen lei chü* 藝文類聚 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1965) 22, pp. 403-4; 34, pp. 594-95, contains this anecdote.

³⁰ For Shu hsien 蜀縣, see *CTS* 41, p. 1665. The post of assistant was lower-eighth degree, lower class; standard-ninth degree, upper class; or standard-ninth degree, lower class — depending on the rank of the county.

³¹ For *ta-li chu-pu* 大理注簿, see *TTLT* 18, p. 7b; the rank was lower-seventh degree, upper class, and there were two. The Court of Justice reverted to this name in 705; see above, n. 17.

³² For *t'ai-fu ch'eng* 太府丞, see *TTLT* 20, p. 8b; the rank was lower-sixth degree, upper or lower class, and there were four.

letters looked up to his demeanor and principles; court and provinces rejoiced in his skill in administration.

As the sovereign increasingly conducted fine selection, his excellency was chosen ahead of others: he was appointed censor of the Right Terrace in order to develop his talents and so as to bring glory to his charge.³³ Within he reformed the imperial tent, and the heavenly pavilion developed an aura of solemnity and awe; without, he investigated the evil and proud, and corrupt officials beheld his reputation and surrendered their seals. He was further appointed supernumerary secretary of the Bureau of Honorific Titles³⁴ and again went out and held charges in a number of commanderies.³⁵ He was again appointed assistant of the Court of Justice,³⁶ and promoted to be vice-president of the Censorate.³⁷ Feng Pao 馮豹 upheld the impartial; he lay waiting at the Yellow Pavilion and was swift [in submitting] his memorials;³⁸ Fu Hsüan 傅玄 was respectful and sincere; he used a white document [of impeachment] to provide standards for the powerful.³⁹ The six offices

³³ *Yu-t'ai yü-shih* 右臺御史; no rank in the Censorate is given, but it was likely to have been serving censor (*shih yü-shih* 侍御史), at the rank of lower-sixth degree, lower class. If the *CTS* biography is correct, this appointment was made in the Shen-lung period, that is, 705-706. According to the *CTS* biography, it was in holding this appointment that Chou Li-chen incurred the hatred of Huan Yen-fan.

³⁴ For *ssu-hsün yüan wai-lang* 司勳員外郎, see *TTLT* 2, pp. 40b-41a; the rank was lower-sixth degree, upper class, and there were two.

³⁵ Neither the offices nor the places held are stipulated; but these tenures, even if they were to the lowest of the three senior posts in a prefecture mentioned in the closing lines of the epitaph (governor, deputy administrator, and marshal) in a third-class prefecture, would have provided Chou Li-chen with the same rank as his previous post, lower-sixth degree, upper class; see *TTLT* 30, p. 20a. One of the posts involved may have been at Chia-chou 嘉州 in Szechwan, since it was from this post, according to Chou Li-chen's *CTS* biography, that he was ordered to proceed across country to murder the "Five Princes."

³⁶ For *ta-li cheng* 大理正, see *TTLT* 18, pp. 6b-7a. The rank of this post was lower-fifth degree, lower class, and there were two. This post and the following ones must have dated from after 706, when Chou Li-chen committed the murders in the far south for which he became notorious. Chou apparently continued to hold capital posts until Hsüan-tsung's accession in 712. It seems probable, therefore, that Jui-tsung did not attempt to punish him, and that he was not identified as a "cruel official" until the start of Hsüan-tsung's reign.

³⁷ For *yü-shih chung-ch'eng* 御史中丞, see *TTLT* 13, p. 3a; the rank was standard-fifth degree, upper class; there were two.

³⁸ For Feng Pao 馮豹, see *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1965; hereafter *HHS*) 28B, p. 1004. This states that Feng Pao, "whenever he memorialized on some matter and no reply was given, would always lie down at the ministry hall, sometimes from twilight till dawn. Su-tsung (Chang-ti 章帝, r. 75-88 A.D.) heard of this and thought it excellent." The yellow hall (*huang-ko* 黃閣) suggests the precinct of the chief ministers; see *Han chiu i* 漢舊儀 in *Han kuan liu chung* 漢官六種 (SPY edn.) A, p. 4b. Feng Pao held the post of secretary in the Department of Affairs of State.

³⁹ For Fu Hsüan 傅玄, see *CS* 47, p. 1323. This states that "whenever he made an impeachment, holding white documents, he would adjust the hat pins and belts [of his office], jump up trembling and take his place until dawn." The "white documents" were associated with the impeachment of fellow officials, the duty of the censor who detected infringements.

were purified; the hundred officials looked up respectfully. The *Odes* say, "Oh happy is our lord; blessings and riches make him safe,"⁴⁰ the *Changes* say, "The house of one who accumulates goodness will always have later good fortune."⁴¹ He was subsequently enfeoffed as Baron of Ch'ao-hsien in the order of the dynasty's foundation, with a fief income from 300 households.⁴² This was a reward for his achievements, and a commendation for a fine official.

When the T'ang had held the empire for just over 100 years, the evil barbarians, arrogant by nature,⁴³ were still lying in wait like ants in the northern wild, and the Ou 貳 and Man 蠻 [tribes] of the soil of Min 閩 were camped like bees on the fiery borders [of the south], while murderers and slaughterers⁴⁴ on the distant frontiers refused to come as guests to the royal halls. The sovereign [was about to] select a planning official to cleanse this evil, and when all the officials together discussed [this], it was only his excellency who could meet [the demands]. Thus he was appointed overall commander of Kuang 廣 metropolitan prefecture, and concurrently entrusted with being investigating commissioner.⁴⁵ He ceded the weighty assistance [he had given] in the Cen-

⁴⁰ This is an adaptation of a line in Ode 216, *Mao shih chu shu* 毛詩注疏 (SPPY edn.) 14B, p. 5b; trans. Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937), p. 185; and of a line in Ode 4, *Mao shih chu shu* 1B, p. 7a; Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 173.

⁴¹ *Chou i chu shu* 1, p. 15b; this is an exact quotation.

⁴² This appointment and its accompanying ennoblement are presented here as the peak of Chou Li-ch'en's career. The choice of Ch'ao hsien 巢縣 as the title of Chou Li-ch'en's fief confirms that the epitaph's claim that he was descended from the Lu-chiang line was accepted by the official world of his time. Ch'ao hsien was next to Lu-chiang in the jurisdiction of Lu-chou 廬州; see *CTS* 40, p. 1576. Selection of a historically and geographically appropriate title for a fief of ennoblement was common. For example, the preeminent Chous claimed origin in An-ch'eng; see *CTS* 176, p. 4571, and *HTS* 206, p. 5845, biography of Chou Ch'ih 周勰, the only other Chou besides Chou Yun-yuan 周允元 to have attained chief ministerial rank in the T'ang. He was ennobled as Baron of An-ch'eng. See also *Wen-yuan ying hua* 文苑英華 (1567 edn., pref. T'u Tse-min; rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1966; hereafter *WYH*) 401, pp. 8b-9a, rescript by Su T'ing 蘇頌 (670-727). See also *CTS* 183, p. 4744, and *HTS* 206, p. 5843, for Chou Jen-kuei 周仁軌, a "cruel official" and contemporary of Chou Li-ch'en, enfeoffed as Duke of Ju-nan commandery as a reward when overall commander of Kuang-chou (the same post as Chou Li-ch'en's) for capturing and killing the barbarian chief Ning-ch'eng 寧承, but executed as a Wu partisan in 710.

⁴³ As often in T'ang writing, the barbarians are described in derogatory language derived from the *Han shu*. For the phrase *t'ien ch'iao* 天驕, see *HS* 94A, p. 3780, "Hsiung-nu chuan" 匈奴傳.

⁴⁴ For the phrase *ch'ien liu* 虔劉, see, e.g., *WH* 6, p. 24a, Tso Ssu 左思 (d. ca. 306), "Fu on the Wei Capital." The phrase originates in the *Tso chuan*; see *Tso chuan chu shu* 左傳注疏 (SPPY edn.) 27, p. 7b.

⁴⁵ According to Chou Li-ch'en's *CTS* biography, this appointment took place in 712; see n. 88 below. The duration of the dynasty is therefore exaggerated by more than six years. For Kuang-chou, see *CTS* 41, pp. 1711-12. Kuang-chou was a metropolitan prefecture and the headquarters for the administration of the entire southwest, including the prefectures of Kuang-chou,

sorate and brought harmony to the barbarian district of Li-p'u 荔浦.⁴⁶ He pacified them with his prestige; he succored them with his virtue. When [Lu Po-te 路博德] the wave-subduing [general] attacked Yüeh 越 he did not mobilize the armies of the general-who-descended-the-torrent.⁴⁷ At Chü-lu 鉅鹿 in the face of Ching 荊, [Liu Pang 劉邦] alone [of the Han generals] could provide the good faith [caused by] being permissive and gentle.⁴⁸ When over ten days had gone by, the great generals [from among the barbarians] came [to him] and the vapors of Chang-hai 漲海 grew calm.⁴⁹ Sealed letters [from the Emperor] added gifts.

Yüeh-yang 樂羊 was loyal to [the Marquis] of Wei 魏, but presently he was overflowing with [slandering] writings that filled his box.⁵⁰ Wang Chün 王濬 preserved Wu 吳 but went on to have the resentment of being a solitary plant.⁵¹ [His excellency] was transferred to be senior officer of Yung-chou.⁵² When demoted, he was without

Kuei-chou 桂州, Jung-chou 容州, Yung-chou 邕州, and An-nan fu 安南府, the so-called five jurisdictions of Ling-nan. The provincial inspecting commissionerships were established in 706 as *hsün-ch'ia shih* 巡察使, and in 711 changed to *an-ch'ia shih* 按察使; see *CHC* 3, p. 353. The use of the title *an-ch'ia shih* is therefore correct for the date of 712 that *CTS* suggests for this appointment.

⁴⁶ Li-p'u 荔浦 is a county name originating in the Han but also used in the T'ang; see *HS* 28B, p. 1629, and *CTS* 41, pp. 1725-26.

⁴⁷ I am grateful to Dr. Michael Loewe for help in this and the following reference. This refers to the wave-subduing general (*fu po Chiang-chün* 伏波將軍) Lu Po-te 路博德, who in 112 B.C. attacked and defeated Nan Yüeh 南越. One of his subordinate generals held the title descending-the-rapids (*hsia lai Chiang-chün* 下瀝將軍); see *Shih chi* 史記 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1959; hereafter *SC*) 111, p. 2945, and *HS* 6, pp. 186-88; 55, p. 2493; 95, pp. 3857-59.

⁴⁸ For Chü-lu, see *SC* 8, pp. 356-57, and *HS* 1A, pp. 16-17. In the wars at the end of the Ch'in dynasty, a force under the deputy leadership of Hsiang Yü 項羽 went north to relieve the town of Chü-lu, which was then under siege by the Ch'in general Wang Li 王離. The next stage in the campaign against the Ch'in involved proceeding west for the conquest of Kuan-chung 關中. In the course of arguments about whether it should be the notoriously harsh Hsiang Yü or Liu Pang 劉邦 who should go, Liu Pang was commended because "only [he] has always been a man of stature, generous and magnanimous."

⁴⁹ For Chang-hai 漲海, another ancient place name revived in the T'ang, see *WH* 11, pp. 13a-b; Pao Chao 鮑照 (c. 421-c. 465), "Fu on an Overgrown City [Ruin]." See also *CTS* 41, p. 1711.

⁵⁰ *SC* 71, p. 2312; *Huai nan tzu* 淮南子 (SPTK edn.) 18, pp. 3b-4a; and 20, p. 7a.

⁵¹ *CS* 42, p. 1215, biography of Wang Chün, and esp. p. 1213, in which Wang Chün also refers to Yüeh Yang. This and the preceding are oblique references to the efforts that Chou Li-ch'en's enemies made to prosecute him in the early years of the K'ai-yüan period; see below and *THY* 62, p. 1085, *T'se fu yüan kuai* 册府元龜 (Li Ssu-ching's 1642 edn.; rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1960; hereafter *TFYK*) 875, pp. 22b-23a, and Chou Li-ch'en's biography in *HTS* 209, p. 5913. The epitaph here omits a series of provincial posts before the final tenure at Yung-chou.

⁵² For Yung-chou see *CTS* 41, pp. 1736-37. Since Yung-chou was a third-class metropolitan district, the rank was lower-fifth degree, first class. It is important to emphasize that this was not, in terms of the offices he had held, a drastic humiliation.

anger; when residing in hardship, he was not imperiled. If he had not had the enlightenment [brought about by] great refinement, how could he have been thus? After he had passed sixty-four summers, he met with sickness. On the twenty-sixth day of the intercalary seventh month of the year 719, he departed this life in an administration room at his governmental headquarters.⁵³

As for the offices that he passed through: in all, he held charges of prefect, overall commander, protector general, and deputy administrator in fifteen prefectures and senior officer and marshal in seven; in sum, he held twenty-eight administrative tenures.⁵⁴ In reforming he gave priority to virtue; he nourished the people with goodness.

When he drew near to the end, he bequeathed a clear directive; his rituals should follow frugality; his clothes should be taken in at the right time. As for reverencing the beginning and finding glory in the end, he was like [Huang-fu] Hsüan-yen [皇甫玄宴] in following the ancient [model].⁵⁵

As for his heir and son Chi 濟, the assistant in the Inner Agency of the Crown Prince,⁵⁶ his grief accumulated over heaven's lack of assistance;⁵⁷ his sadness increased over [his filial duty of] fanning [his father's] pillow.⁵⁸ He hurried like stars over the road to the [Long] River, and welcomed his [father's] soul in the district of southern Yüeh. Crossing hills and rivers, he offered his clothes in the district of eastern Chou.⁵⁹ On the eighteenth day of the tenth month of 720 he was interred in the northern graveyard. It was in accordance with ritual. [I,

Sun] Hao-jan formerly <...> the abundance of his teaching, and was early washed by his pure dust.⁶⁰ When Ku K'ai [-chih] 顧凱 [之] joined in lamentation, he exhausted the tears of the river that pours [into the sea];⁶¹ when Yen Yen [-nien] 顏延 [年] composed his dirges, did he dare to lack the feelings that fully expressed his yearning?⁶² Obedient to his fine reputation,⁶³ I venture to write an inscription which reads:

Royal heaven above
Sent down a man of wisdom;
From the divine ether of Mount Sung,
Scion of Lu-chiang county.
His fortune was consonant with yellow robes;
His learning embraced the green histories.
His abilities were those of pole of the state;
His knowledge plumbed the supernatural.

The first.

A pure flower like shaken jade;
Abundant virtue like the orchid.
At the dragon ford he made his leap,⁶⁴
A wild goose gradually making the shore.⁶⁵
[Like] Ch'iao Hsüan 喬玄 in the northern section,⁶⁶
[Like] Huan T'an 桓譚 at Lu-an 陸安,⁶⁷

⁵³ For the phrase *ch'ing ch'en* 清塵 used by a follower of his master, see Lu Chan 盧謐 (284–350), "Presented to Liu K'un 劉琨, One Poem and Letter," in *WH* 25, p. 11b.

⁵⁴ *CS* 92, p. 2404, biography of Ku K'ai-chih 顧凱之 (ca. 345–ca. 411).

⁵⁵ Yen Yen-chih 顏延之 (i. Yen-nien 延年, 384–456) has biographies in *Sung shu* 宋書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1974) 73, pp. 1891–1904, and *Nan shih* 南史 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975) 34, pp. 877–81; he is represented by two *lei* in *WH* 57, p. 15b–27a.

⁵⁶ *WH* 58, p. 35b, Wang Chien (452–498), "Text for the Stele for Ch'u Yüan," reads *ch'in-jo yüan-fu* 欽若元輔.

⁵⁷ This is likely to be a reference to Chou Li-chen's success in the *ming-ching* examination.

⁵⁸ *Chou i chu shu* 3, p. 17a. The reference may gain by its proximity in the text of the *Chou i* to the phrase "*li-chen*," Chou's given name.

⁵⁹ Kao Hsüan should read Ch'iao Hsüan 橋玄, for whom see *HHS* 51, pp. 1695–97, and *SKC* 1, pp. 2–3. He is an appropriate figure here partly because he was recognized by Chou Ching 周景, a member of the Lu-chiang line. He had a succession of low posts, and the *pei pu* 北部 referred to here may be the *Lo-yang tso-pu wei* 洛陽左都尉, his first tenure (cf. *CTCCTC*, no. 719, epitaph for Miao Shan-wu 苗善物 [646–727], where he is cited for this reason). Or it may refer to Ch'iao Hsüan's recognition of the young Ts'ao Ts'ao 曹操, and to Ts'ao Ts'ao's first post as *Lo-yang pei-pu wei* 洛陽北都尉.

⁶⁰ Huan T'an was known as Huan T'an of Lu-an, and was the author of the important treatise *Hsin lun* 新論; see *Sui shu* 隋書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1973) 34, p. 998, and his biography in *HHS* 58A, p. 961. This states that he "was made assistant at Lu-an." However "his attitude was bemused and unhappy and he died on the road." Lu-an was appropriate because it was near Lu-chiang.

⁵³ A date equivalent to August 16, 719, in the Julian calendar.

⁵⁴ The round number may have been intended to correlate with the twenty-eight stellar mansions used in astrology. For other examples, see *CTCCTC*, no. 1043, epitaph for Ts'ui Hung-li; and *Ch'üan Tsai-chih wen chi* 權載之文集 (SPCK edn.) 13, p. 3b, spirit path stele for Hun Chen 渾瑊 (736–800). As Sung Chia-yü has indicated to me, the number does not in fact fit with the total number of posts that, by addition, Chou Li-chen's epitaph states him to have held.

⁵⁵ This is an adaptation of a phrase in Huang-fu Mi's 皇甫謐 (215–282) work quoted in *CS* 51, pp. 1416–18, biography of Huang-fu Mi, entitled "Essay on Being Reverent toward One's End."

⁵⁶ *TTLT* 26, pp. 26b–27b, enters the post of T'ai-tzu nei-chih chü 太子內直局, an agency that had two assistants who held the rank of standard-eighth degree, lower class. The existence of a son in this office — if, as the epitaph implies, the son held this post when the news of his father's death reached Ch'ang-an — is a further indication that no drastic punishment had been inflicted on Chou Li-chen.

⁵⁷ The elliptical phrase *pu tien* 不天 derives from *Tso chuan*; *Tso chuan chu shu* 23, p. 2a; 35, p. 5b.

⁵⁸ To fan his father's pillow in summer and warm his coverlet in winter was the duty of the filial son; see *CS* 88, p. 2290, biography of Wang Yen 王延.

⁵⁹ That is, in the area of Lo-yang.

His administration was good and restrained,
His reputation daily grew for ability in office.

The second.

His fine model was a fragrant flower,
His harmonious spirit was gentle and restrained.
His sound flew into the heavenly fastness [city].
His name gained fragrance in the painted pavilion.
He was generous and indulgent, stern and orderly;
With long-term foresight he was diligent and conscientious.
He was a guideline for his times and brought cleanliness to the court;
He "buried his wheels" and despised the evil.⁶⁸

The third.

The petty tribes of the north and south were disobedient,⁶⁹
Making sickness in the hot south.⁷⁰
The sovereign selected men of preeminence,
And he was the bright light of his age.
He accepted his cord [? of office] in the heavenly fastness,
And revealed grievances in Ching 荆 and □.
The headmen who had turned their backs on the imperial calendar
Bowed their heads and came to the King.⁷¹

The fourth.

But royal heaven showed no condolence,⁷²
And sent down a great calamity.⁷³
A man of wisdom has perished;
Where should we let our desolation follow?

At the jade hill we halt our footsteps.
Of metal < . . . > tip;
The mound is chill, the azure mist
Blows sobbing in the green pines.

The fifth.

How fine was that gentleman;⁷⁴
He has bequeathed a model.
His family have lost a filial friend;
The state mourns a loyal and upright one.
Resentful is the light in the hills;
< . . . > autumn < . . . >
When feelings are finished, how can we mourn?
We lament that life < . . . > here finds its limit.

The sixth.

Written out by Chia T'ing-chih, *ming* [-ching] of the Kuo-tzu [hsüeh].

CHOU LI-CHEN AND THE DEATHS OF THE "FIVE PRINCES"

The mention of Chou's demotion from overall commander of Kuang-chou to senior administrator of Yung-chou is apparently the only, oblique, reference in the epitaph to the episode for which he became notorious: his murder in the remote far south of China of two or more of the "Five Princes," the five officials who had plotted successfully for the restoration of the T'ang line in 705. Though the five officials were to become major figures in T'ang loyalist tradition, the evidence for their role survives in official sources only; apart from a small number of memorial submissions, nothing of their writings survives. There are apparently no epitaph texts for them, and no more than Chou Li-chen himself do they emerge as individuals. Transmitted accounts of the sequence of events that culminated in their deaths are scattered through the *Chiu T'ang shu* and *Hsin T'ang shu* biographies of Chou Li-chen and the five officials, and are in the *Tzu chih t'ung chien* 資治通鑑 and the *Ts'ê fu yüan kuei* 冊府元龜. Imperial measures concerning both Chou Li-chen and the five men are also in the T'ang institutional compendia *Ta T'ang liu tien* 大唐六典, *T'ung tien* 通典, and *T'ang hui yao* 唐會要, and in two important collections of T'ang-era documents, the *Ts'ê fu yüan kuei* and

⁶⁸ A figure for steadfastness in prosecuting defaulters; see *HHS*, 56, p. 1817, biography of Chang Kang 張綱, who signified his refusal to sully himself and join a commission by burying his carriage near his government headquarters; see Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, eds., *The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.-A.D. 220*, vol. 1 of *CHC* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1987), p. 310.

⁶⁹ For the phrase *tsui erh* 塞爾 see *Tso chuan chu shu* 44, p. 8a, and *SKC* 4, p. 149; for *man pao* 蠻豹, referring to northern and southern barbarians, see *Mao shih chu shu* 20.2, pp. 8a-b; *Lun yü yin te*, p. 31 (XV/6).

⁷⁰ For the phrase *ts'o keng* 作梗, *WH* 3, pp. 31a-b, "Fu on the Eastern Capital," by Chang Heng 張衡 (78-139).

⁷¹ *Mao shih chu shu* 20D, p. 6a, has *mo kan pu lai wang* 莫敢不來王.

⁷² *Ibid.* 12A, pp. 3a and 4b, has *pu tiao hao t'ien* 不吊昊天.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 4a, has *chiang tz'u chü hsiung* 降此鞠凶.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 2C, p. 8b, has *hsün mei* 洵美.

T'ang ta chao ling chi 唐大詔令集. None of these accounts is fully comprehensive, they by no means always agree in detail, and the discrepancies they contain are shown to be significant in terms of the reliability of their account of events. But at this stage of the argument, a short summary should be made of the sequence of events that brought Chou Li-chen such notoriety, but which his epitaph so conspicuously fails to mention.

The plot that was to bring these five officials such enormous fame was conceived as early as 700. It was then that the oldest member of the group, Chang Chien-chih (see table), met another, less prominent, member of the conspiracy, Yang Yüan-yen 楊元琰 (640-718), to hand over authority to him as senior administrator of Ching-chou 荊州. The two men, in the privacy provided by a boat in the middle of the Yangtze, expressed their intention of restoring the T'ang. The plot was prepared in detail early in 705, when the Empress Wu was already over eighty by Chinese reckoning. In its late stages it had the connivance of the vacillating Li Che 李哲, Prince of Ying 英, whom the Empress had designated Crown Prince in 698 and who was to reign as Chung-tsung from 705 until his murder in 710. It also had other, minor participants. The role of one, Ts'ui T'ai-chih 崔泰之, a figure mentioned only once and in a different context by the *Chiu T'ang shu*, is attested by his Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai epitaph.⁷⁵

Among T'ang assassination plots that involved officials in the regular bureaucracy as well as troops and a member of the imperial line, this one was unusual in being swiftly and totally successful. Two notorious court favorites of the Empress Wu and her daughter — the half-brothers Chang I-chih 張易之 and Chang Ch'ang-tsung 昌宗 — were murdered. As a result, on the twenty-fifth day of the first month of 705, the Empress Wu abdicated, ending the twenty-year Wu-Chou interregnum. The Crown Prince succeeded to the throne as Chung-tsung and, in formal terms, the T'ang dynasty was restored.

The victorious conspirators, Huan Yen-fan and his group, however, now encountered the enmity of the Empress Wei and the Wu faction at court. The new Empress, with the help of Wu San-ssu, had ambitions to

continue female domination of the state through her daughter the An-lo 安樂 Princess. Wu San-ssu particularly is represented as suspecting that Huan was maneuvering toward a full return to political, as opposed to formal, control by the Li imperial house. Helped by Wu San-ssu, the Empress Wei lulled the group into a false sense of security, and at the same time eased from power those of them who had acquired political influence at the capital. In the course of 706 they were therefore banished to a series of provincial posts in remote locations in the far south. Wu San-ssu, however, remained fearful that they might eventually return to the north. He therefore accepted the recommendation of a treacherous former friend of the group, Ts'ui Shih 崔暉 (671-713), that they be illegally murdered.⁷⁶

Ts'ui Shih, then a grand secretary, was Chou Li-chen's brother-in-law, and it was in this connection that Chou Li-chen was chosen to conduct the killings. From being marshal of Chia-chou 嘉州 in Szechwan, he was ordered to proceed southeast to Ling-wai 嶺外, the region of modern Canton province, and murder the five men. He therefore became the agent of Ts'ui Shih's illicit instructions, and it was in this role alone that he became of interest to T'ang official historians.

THE CHIU T'ANG SHU BIOGRAPHY OF CHOU LI-CHEN

The earliest extant official notice of Chou Li-chen and the murders for which he was held responsible is in the *Chiu T'ang shu*. This brief but damning text should speak for itself:

Chou Li-chen was a serving censor in the Shen-lung period (705-706). He adhered to the powerful and important, was detested by Huan Yen-fan, Ching Hui, and the other "Five Princes," and was removed to be marshal of Chia-chou. At that time grand secretary Ts'ui Shih was friendly with Huan [Yen-fan] and Ching [Hui], and Wu San-ssu was controlling affairs within the palace. [Huan] Yen-fan was grieved by this and confided his heart to [Ts'ui] Shih. [Ts'ui] Shih, however, revealed his plan to [Wu] San-ssu, with the result that all [five] were struck down by [Wu] San-ssu and were banished to Ling-nan 嶺南. [Ts'ui] Shih exhorted [Wu] that they should all be killed, and [Wu]

⁷⁵ CTS 185B, pp. 4810-11, biography of Yang Yüan-yen; CTCCTC, no. 630. Ts'ui T'ai-chih is mentioned only once in CTS, at *ch.* 185A, p. 4791, and then merely as the son of the good official Ts'ui Chih-wen 崔知溫 (628-684) and the father of Ts'ui O-chih 崔諤之, whom CTS specifies as a participant in the conspiracy against Chang I-chih. He fares better in HTS 4, p. 105, where he is mentioned as one of the conspirators. In HTS 107, p. 4077, he is also listed as a friend of the much-praised writer Ch'en Tzu-ang. (For Ch'en, see P. A. Herbert, "Perceptions of Provincial Officialdom in Early T'ang China," *AM* 3d ser. 2.1 [1989], pp. 37-44.)

⁷⁶ For Ts'ui Shih's biographies, see CTS 74, pp. 2622-24, and HTS 99, pp. 3921-23. His treachery is described in *Tzu chih t'ung chien* 資治通鑑 (Peking: Ku-chi, 1956; hereafter TCTC) 208, p. 6590.

San-ssu asked who could be employed [to do this]. [Chou] Li-chen was brother-in-law to [Ts'ui] Shih and was therefore recommended to conduct the operation. When [Chou] Li-chen arrived [in Ling-nan] he killed them all with poison. He was then promoted to be vice-president of the Left Censorate. In the first year of Hsien-t'ien (712), he was made overall commander of Kuang-chou. At this time [Ts'ui] Shih was president of the Central Secretariat, and was out of harmony with grand chamberlain Liu Yu-ch'iu 劉幽求. He therefore trapped [Liu] Yu-ch'iu, had him removed to Ling-piao 嶺表, and hinted that [Chou] Li-chen should kill him.⁷⁷ [Liu] Yu-ch'iu, however, was protected by the overall commander of Kuei-chou 桂州, Wang Chün 王峻. By procrastinating, he managed to avoid [being murdered].⁷⁸ Very soon after, Hsüan-tsung brought legitimacy to the throne, and [Chou] Li-chen, together with Hsüeh Chi-ch'ang 薛季昶 and Sung Chih-wen 宋之間, was granted permission to commit suicide at Kuei-chou postal station.

This short account of Chou Li-chen's career reads persuasively. However, other pieces of evidence, both direct and indirect, indicate its inaccuracy over crucial details and suggest that the *Chiu T'ang shu* notice is much the least reliable, when compared with the other accounts of Chou's life — the *Hsin T'ang shu* biography and the epitaph.

The first piece of evidence is provided by an edict of 714 contained in the *T'ang hui yao*, the *Ts'efu yüan kuei*, and, in adapted form, in the *Hsin T'ang shu* biography of Chou. It indicates how the Emperor Hsüan-tsung, only two years after his accession, viewed those officials who had supported the Empress Wu and, following her abdication, the Empress Wei. It named thirteen of the bad officials of the Empress Wei's regime, listing Chou Li-chen at their head. These thirteen it described as "somewhat less guilty of offenses" than another list of twenty-three officials who had been active in the early phase of the Empress Wu's reign. This earlier list was not a new

one, for it had been contained in an edict that the Emperor Chung-tsung had issued following the T'ang restoration in 705.⁷⁹

The edict of 714 prescribed punishment for these thirteen officials in these terms: "It is fitting that all of them be sent away to return to the countryside, to end their days without seniority." The conclusions that are to be drawn from this are obvious. Far from having condemned Chou to suicide on his accession, as the *Chiu T'ang shu* notice implies, the Emperor believed at the outset of his reign that Chou was still living and in office. He was to be classed as a member of a group of officials who were guilty of harsh conduct and disloyalty. Though he headed the list, he was not singled out for special condemnation. He and his group were given significantly less punishment than those officials whom Chung-tsung had condemned in 705, for those in the latter list represented the extremes of repression and degradation that had been reached under the Empress Wu. As late as the twelfth day of the twelfth month of 725, the names on this earlier list were repeated when a censor memorialized that their descendants should not be allowed to hold office. The censor described the twenty-three officials it contained as having committed particularly heinous crimes.⁸⁰ Chou Li-chen and the blameworthy officials on the list that he had headed, on the other hand, were not included in this submission.

A second indication that the biography is unreliable concerns its statement that Chou Li-chen killed all five of the men with poison. Other accounts, widely scattered in the histories and compendia, contradict this blanket statement. One version of the episode, contained in the *Chiu T'ang shu* biography of Ts'ui Shih, contradicts the idea that Chou Li-chen actually murdered any of them. It states that "Ching Hui and Huan Yen-fan and the others, when they heard that Chou Li-chen had come [from Szechwan], mostly (to 多) killed themselves." The same text in the *Ts'efu yüan kuei* states that they "all" (*chieh* 皆) did so.⁸¹ However, the *Chiu T'ang shu* biographies of the five, grouped together to form a single *chüan*, tell in detail how three of

⁷⁷ A more detailed account of this episode is given in *TCTC* 210, p. 6677. In this version, it is clear that Chou Li-chen's only role was to send warrants to search for Liu Yu-ch'iu and, when he was not found, to report back to the capital. For Liu Yu-ch'iu (655-715), see *CTS* 97, pp. 3039-41, and *HTS* 121, pp. 4327-28; also E. G. Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan* (London: Oxford U.P., 1955), pp. 194-95. Liu Yu-ch'iu was later given the honor of having his spirit tablet introduced into the shrine of Jui-tsung in the dynastic ancestral temple; see *THY* 18, p. 371; *TFYK* 133, p. 17b; *CTS* 8, p. 179; *CTS* 26, p. 1011, and below, n. 133.

⁷⁸ For Kuei-chou 桂州, see *CTS* 41, p. 1725. For Wang Chün 王峻 (ca. 660-732), see principally his biographies at *CTS* 93, pp. 2985-89 and *HTS* 111, pp. 4153-56, which contains an account of this episode, and also Pulleyblank, *Background*, p. 198.

⁷⁹ *THY* 41, p. 744; *TFYK* 152, pp. 16b-17a; *HTS* 209, p. 5913. The *TFYK* specifies that Chou Li-chen was governor of Fu-chou 涪州 in Szechwan. There is divergence in these sources about the formulation of the date, with *TFYK* specifying the third year of Hsien-t'ien (714), second month, day *wu-tzu* 午子. This edict appears to have replaced the instruction contained in an Act of Grace for the first day of the twelfth month of 713 ordering punishment for the cruel officials of the Chou dynasty and their descendants; see *T'ang ta chao ling chi* 唐大詔令集 (Peking: Shang-wu, 1959) 4, p. 21.

⁸⁰ *CTS* 186A, p. 4841, biography of Lai Chün-ch'en 來俊臣 (d. 697); also *THY* 41, p. 744, mentioning an edict of the eleventh day of the third month of 725.

⁸¹ *CTS* 74, p. 2622, biography of Ts'ui Shih; *TFYK* 924, pp. 8a-b.

the men died at Chou's hands. Huan Yen-fan met with Chou Li-chen on the road at Kuei-chou 貴州 and was dragged, bound to a bamboo pole, then flogged to death.⁸² Chou Li-chen probably next crossed the Ch'ung-chou 瓊州 straits to Hai-nan Island and murdered Ching Hui when the latter was marshal of Yai-chou 崖州.⁸³ This death, as revealed below, had the most severe consequence for Chou Li-chen, because it was to lead between 714 and 719 to a sequence of attempts, in which Ching Hui's son had a part, to persuade Hsüan-tsung to take revenge on him. The Emperor's indifference to these attempts was probably one of the reasons that resentment against Chou Li-chen mounted after this death. It is yet another weakness of the *Chiu T'ang shu* account that it omits these later events altogether.

Yüan Shu-chi, usually listed as the last of the "Five Princes," had been confined by Chou Li-chen at Huan-chou 環州, and was possibly his first victim as he came south from Szechwan.⁸⁴ Chou Li-chen forced him to drink several gallons of "wild puerilia juice," which acted as an acute poison when its toxin was released by water. In agony, Yüan "took soil and ate it, his fingernails almost gone, he still did not die. Chou Li-chen then attacked him and killed him." The remaining two of the five, however, died naturally, without encountering Chou. Ts'ui Hsüan-wei "died of sickness on the road," and Chang Chien-chih, an old man of eighty or more, "died of anger" at Hsin-chou 新州, before receiving a final sentence of banishment to Lung-chou 瀧州.⁸⁵

The third piece of evidence concerns the two officials who the biography claims received the imperial order to commit suicide alongside Chou, at Kuei-chou postal station in or soon after 712. In the case of one of these, the official account appears to have made a gross error. Hsüeh Chi-ch'ang was in fact considered an upright scholar whose biography was entered in the "Good Officials" (*liang li* 良吏) section of the *Chiu T'ang shu*.⁸⁶ He was involved on the T'ang loyalist side in plotting with Ching Hui against Wu San-ssu and, like Ching Hui, was banished to the far south. Appointed marshal of Tan-chou 儋州 on Hai-nan Island, he quarreled with several

officials of the region as he came south; fearing that he would be killed, he prepared his own coffin and took a fatal dose of medicine. His death occurred before the start of Jui-tsung's reign in 710, for Jui-tsung on his accession issued an edict in which he conferred high posthumous office on him, and "in accordance with the same rules as that for Ching Hui and others," granted an office to one of his sons. Since Hsüeh, in any case a T'ang loyalist, had been dead at least two years when Hsüan-tsung ascended, it was an impossibility that Chou Li-chen and he received Hsüan-tsung's orders to commit suicide together.

The second official who, in the *Chiu T'ang shu* biography of Chou Li-chen, received orders to kill himself with Chou was Sung Chih-wen, famous in Chinese literary history as a writer of court verse. Sung Chih-wen had been banished under Chung-tsung for involvement on the Wu-Chou side in corruption. Under Jui-tsung, he was exiled to Ch'in-chou 欽州. The fullest accounts of his death, preserved in anecdotal sources, then go on to state that a censor memorialized that he should be ordered to commit suicide. There is no suggestion in any of the accounts of his life that the order was issued by Hsüan-tsung rather than by Jui-tsung.⁸⁷

Finally, the *Chiu T'ang shu* account appears to have confused the chronology of Hsüan-tsung's accession, the change in reign period that followed it, and the episode that involved Chou Li-chen with the distinguished official Liu Yu-ch'iu. Hsüan-tsung succeeded on the third day of the eighth month of 712. Not till four days after his accession, on the seventh day, did he change the reign period to Hsien-t'ien.⁸⁸ Thus when it states that Chou Li-chen's appointment to Kuang-chou took place in the first year of Hsien-t'ien, the *Chiu T'ang shu* biography implies that it occurred after Hsüan-tsung's accession. Certainly, as the *Tzu chih t'ung chien* account indicates, the episode involving Liu Yu-ch'iu took place after Hsüan-tsung had succeeded,⁸⁹ and Chou Li-chen's *Chiu T'ang shu* notice also places it after the change in reign period. But the account then proceeds to contradict this implied chronology when it states that "very soon after, Hsüan-tsung brought legitimacy to the throne, and Chou Li-chen . . . was ordered to commit

⁸² CTS 91, p. 2931, biography of Huan Yen-fan; TCTC 205, p. 6605.

⁸³ CTS 91, p. 2934, biography of Ching Hui; TCTC 205, p. 6605.

⁸⁴ CTS 91, p. 2943, biography of Yüan Shu-chi; *ibid.*, p. 2933, biography of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei, states that he was banished to be marshal of Tou-chou 賈州; TCTC 208, p. 6605.

⁸⁵ CTS 91, p. 2935, biography of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei; *ibid.*, p. 2942, biography of Chang Chien-chih; TCTC 208, p. 6603. An edict of 714 giving high non-functioning rank to Ts'ui Hsüan-wei's son and to Chang Chien-chih's grandson implied that both Ts'ui and Chang had died naturally; see T'FYK 131, pp. 1a-b.

⁸⁶ CTS 185A, pp. 4804-5, biography of Hsüeh Chi-ch'ang; TCTC 208, p. 6606. See also T'FYK 677, p. 23a.

⁸⁷ CTS 190B, p. 5025, biography of Sung Chih-wen; T'FYK 152, pp. 15a-b; 777, p. 15a. *T'ang shih chi shih* 唐詩紀事 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1965) 11, p. 166; *T'ang ts'ai tzu chuan* 唐才子傳 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh, 1957) 1, p. 9.

⁸⁸ For Hsüan-tsung's accession, see TCTC 210, p. 6674; cf. CTS 8, p. 169. The day is the equivalent of September 8 on the Julian calendar. For the change in reign period, see TCTC 210, p. 6675, the equivalent of September 12 on the Julian calendar.

⁸⁹ TCTC 210, p. 6677. Liu Yu-ch'iu's banishment took place probably on the twentieth day of the eighth month (October 1, 712).

suicide at Kuei-chou postal station." It is above all the reliability of this final sentence, which seems intended to suggest a full return to moral control over the political system by the new Emperor, that confronts and contradicts the epitaph's account of Chou Li-ch'en's death.

The Date of Compilation of the "Cruel Officials" Section of the Chiu T'ang shu

The testimony of the *Chiu T'ang shu* as far as Chou Li-ch'en's career is concerned is, therefore, inaccurate as well as brief. The flaws in its account raise the possibility that both it and the fuller *Hsin T'ang shu* biography of him, the editors of which appear to have copied the final sentence from the *Chiu T'ang shu* notice, may be incorrect when they contradict the epitaph's account of his death. Moreover, it may be argued that there were reasons behind the *Chiu T'ang shu*'s inaccuracy and hostility toward Chou Li-ch'en. These concern the date of its composition and the climate of dynastic crisis that prevailed when it was composed. For there are a number of indications that the biography as it now stands, and indeed the whole of the two-chüan "Cruel Officials" section in which it is included, was written probably only after the An Lu-shan rebellion of 755, and very possibly around the time of the Emperor Te-tsung's accession in 780, at another period when dynastic loyalty had become a crucial matter. So late a date of compilation, moreover, would help to explain its patent unreliability and its dismissive tone.

To demonstrate that the "Cruel Officials" section of the *Chiu T'ang shu* may have been composed so late involves first considering further information relating to the section as a whole and then analyzing the official accounts of the "Five Princes," the men that it describes as Chou Li-ch'en's murder victims. Finally, a category of evidence that is circumstantial rather than direct, namely the ways in which, in the post-rebellion period, the T'ang dynasty promoted the reputations of these five loyalists, is shown to support the hypothesis that the *Chiu T'ang shu* biography of Chou Li-ch'en was composed in the reign of Tai-tsung or Te-tsung.

Two considerations provide direct evidence that the composition of Chou Li-ch'en's *Chiu T'ang shu* biography may have taken place at a late date. The first concerns the fate of the original official records that spanned the time he died. The facts relating to his death should have been sent to the History Office soon after the event, for they came under the heading of the death of a major provincial administrator.⁹⁰ The official historians who processed incoming information, such as the imperially ordered suicide of a formerly high ranking official, would either have attached a brief biographi-

cal notice at the relevant point in their "veritable records" (*shih-lu* 實錄) for the period, or else have entered the death in their main narrative itself. But the "veritable records" for the K'ai-yüan period were, it is well known, destroyed in the course of the An Lu-shan rebellion. Subsequent efforts to retrieve the information that they contained were largely unsuccessful, for only "one or two chüan" were recovered.⁹¹ This would have meant, therefore, that any original or first-hand record of Chou's death made at the time it occurred and entered or retained for the *K'ai-yüan shih lu* would have been unlikely to have survived.

It is, however, again well known that the loss of the *shih-lu* and other records for Hsüan-tsung's reign was partly made good soon after 757 by the discovery, concealed from the An Lu-shan rebels in the mountains south of Ch'ang-an, of a version of the dynastic history compiled by the long-serving official historian Wei Shu 韋述. This version, completed by Wei's associate Liu Fang, is believed to have been incorporated almost without alteration into the mid-tenth-century *Chiu T'ang shu*. Wei Shu's account is likely to have brought the history of the T'ang dynasty at least up to the end of the K'ai-yüan period, providing both basic annals and biographies.⁹² It therefore covered the first years of Hsüan-tsung's reign, within which, all accounts agree, Chou's death occurred. It might also be expected to have contained a biography of Chou or some other record of his death. Moreover, since Wei Shu worked as a historian relatively soon after the events in which Chou Li-ch'en was involved, a biographical notice by him might have been expected to have been more accurate than the existing *Chiu T'ang shu* notice for Chou.

There is, however, an indication in the *Ch'ung-wen tsung mu* 崇文總目, a Sung bibliography of the eleventh century, that Wei Shu did away with precisely the "Cruel Officials" category of biography in which Chou's notice was later included. In its entry for the T'ang dynastic history, this bibliography states that Wei "followed [Wu] Ching's former version [of the *Kuo shih* 國史] and made further insertions and excisions. He erased the biographies

⁹⁰ CTS 149, p. 4008, biography of Yü Hsiu-lieh 于休烈 (692-772).

⁹¹ CTS 84, p. 2807, biography of P'ei Kuang-t'ing 裴光庭 (676-733), contains a canonization discussion by Wei Shu that is introduced by the statement, "The historian-official Wei Shu held that altering the canonization title would be wrong. He made a discussion of this, which says . . ." Two things suggest that Wei's essay was taken from a written history by Wei Shu. First, the use of the title history official (*shih kuan* 史官)—this is not a basic but a concurrent office, and would not have been used to refer to Wei Shu if he had submitted this statement as part of a formal canonization discussion (*shih-i* 論議). Second, the term *lun* 論, discussion, refers to a written essay rather than the sort of refutation involved in a canonization discussion, which was usually called *po* 駁. Wei Shu is, therefore, almost certain to have compiled a history that extended to the late K'ai-yüan period. It is impossible to know with certainty whether this was his *T'ang ch'ün ch'iu* 唐春秋 or the version of the *Kuo shih* referred to in the text.

⁹² THS 63, pp. 1088-89.

of cruel officials and formed basic annals, treatises, and biographies in 112 *chüan*.⁹³ If this was the case, then it would suggest that Chou's notice and the biographies of other "cruel officials" in the present *Chiu T'ang shu* were not contained in Wei Shu's version of the *Kuo shih*, but were compiled after Wei Shu had stopped working on his history. This would mean in turn that the text of Chou's biography as it is now contained in the *Chiu T'ang shu* would either have been composed by the official historian Liu Fang, who is known to have completed Wei Shu's *Kuo shih*, at least up to the year 756, or by some later historian.⁹⁴

Furthermore, a brief inspection of the "Cruel Officials" section of the present *Chiu T'ang shu*, would seem at the very least to suggest that this two-*chüan* section as a whole was completed only after the end of Su-tsung's reign. The officials concerned are drawn not from all reigns of the dynasty but from two relatively narrowly bounded periods. The first *chüan* contains biographies of eleven who served the Empress Wu. It ends with the biography of Chi Hsü 吉頊, who was a chief minister in 698 under the Empress while holding the post of vice-president of the Board of Civil Office but who underwent banishment and died with a very junior office in the Yangtze region.⁹⁵

Chi Hsü had risen by denouncing conspirators and then helping torture his victims. Despite his association with cruelty, however, the classification of his biography in the "Cruel Officials" section was, in T'ang historiographical terms, anomalous. For Chi Hsü was also among the first to suggest, by conversations that he held with the Chang brothers and with the Empress Wu herself, that a return to the Li-T'ang line was desirable. He was therefore among a select company that included the exemplary official Ti Jen-chieh and, by virtue of their successful conspiracy of 705, the "Five Princes" themselves. Chi Hsü's T'ang loyalism, however, only became known after his banishment and death in the south. But when it was publicized, it brought him imperial recognition: on the accession of Jui-tsung in 710 he was honored with the posthumous office of chief censor of the left. Recognition in this way involved overlooking the acts of cruelty to which he had

been party. In turn this explains why Chi Hsü's name, despite the low reputation he enjoyed in the official community informally,⁹⁶ does not now figure in the lists of cruel officials of the Empress Wu's reign that Chung-tsung issued in 705 and that Hsüan-tsung endorsed in 714 and 725.

After mentioning his posthumous appointment by Jui-tsung, Chi Hsü's biographies add no further information about him. However, his son Chi Hun 吉渾 (?679-727) managed an uncontroversial and fairly successful career, ending it as supernumerary secretary to the Bureau of Honorific Titles. By coincidence, his epitaph, a grander than average example, is among those in the Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai collection. This epitaph very briefly confirms his father Chi Hsü's tenure of a chief ministership and posthumous appointment by Jui-tsung as a chief censor. But it also states at a later point in its narrative that when the Emperor Hsüan-tsung ascended the throne, he "raised up [those who] had been set aside and remembered [those with] past achievements. He ventured to shed luster on the merit of Ping Chi 丙吉 and increased the fiefs of the descendants of Hsiao Ho 蕭何. And so [Chi Hun's] forebear, the vice-president [of the Board of Civil Office Chi Hsü], was given the posthumous appointment of second in charge to a chancellor, and his late excellency [Chi Hun] was given the favor of being on the staff at the capital."⁹⁷

This brief indication that Hsüan-tsung granted Chi Hsü posthumous promotion has clear implications for the date of the composition of his biography and its inclusion in the "Cruel Officials" section of the *Chiu T'ang shu*. For the Emperor who, on his accession, had gone out of his way both to honor Chi Hsü's memory and to recall his son from provincial office to Ch'ang-an, and who is also known to have been keenly interested in the dynastic history, would not have allowed the biography of a man he had posthumously honored to be included in this dishonorable section of the record. Nor, for similar reasons, is Chi Hsü's biography in its present form likely to have been attached to the "veritable records" for the reigns of the Empress Wu or Chung-tsung, since these were presented to Hsüan-tsung early in his reign.⁹⁸ The biography of Chi Hsü, at least as it now stands, must therefore have been written after Hsüan-tsung's reign.

⁹³ *Ch'ung-wen tsung mu* 崇文總目 (Kuo-hsüeh chi-pen ts'ung-shu edn.) 2, p. 46, quoted by Pulleyblank, "The Tz'iyih Tongjiann Kao-yih," p. 449.

⁹⁴ For the history composed by Liu Fang, see *CHC* 3, pp. 43-44. It is very possible that there was a biography of Chou Li-ch'en attached to the *Hsüan-tsung shih lu* 玄宗實錄 compiled by the official historian Ling-hu Huan 令狐絙 in 768; see *THY* 63, p. 1095.

⁹⁵ *CTS* 186A, pp. 4848-50, biography of Chi Hsü 吉頊. For Chi Hsü, see also R. W. L. Guisso, *Wu Tse-p'ien and the Politics of Legitimation in T'ang China* (Bellingham: Western Washington U.P., 1978), p. 194; also *CHC* 3, p. 317.

⁹⁶ *T'ang kuo shih pu* 唐國史補 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh, 1957) A, p. 22. For Chi Hsü's loyalty to the T'ang, see also *CTS* 89, p. 2895, biography of Ti Jen-chieh.

⁹⁷ *CTCCTC*, no. 683, for Chi Hun. Chi Hun is not mentioned in Chi Hsü's official biographies, but *HTS* 74B, p. 3185, lists him and agrees with his epitaph in giving his highest post as supernumerary secretary to the Bureau of Honorific Titles. For the Han dynasty minister Ping Chi, see *HS* 74, pp. 3142-51; for Hsiao Ho, see *SC* 53, pp. 2013-20, and *HS* 39, pp. 2005-13.

⁹⁸ *THY* 63, pp. 1094-95; *TFYK* 556, pp. 16b-17a.

The reason for the incorporation of his biography in the section, moreover, lies not so much with the evil that Chi Hsü himself committed as with the fact that his great-nephew Chi Wen 吉溫 (d. 755) was among the officials allied to the hated Li Lin-fu 李林甫, chief minister from 736 until his death in 752. Post-rebellion historians of the final phase of Hsüan-tsung's reign, looking for the causes of the disaster that had shattered their world, reserved the strongest condemnation for Li Lin-fu and his agents. They did this not least because Li Lin-fu had conducted harsh political purges against their factional allies or the fathers of these allies, murdering, for example, the T'ang loyalist Li Yung and others. These historians evidently believed that their portrayal of Chi Wen as sadistic and corrupt would be the more telling if they showed that an immediate relative had the same trait. Evil, like scholarly achievement, was more impressive when it ran in families.⁹⁹

The second *chüan* of the "Cruel Officials" section has seven average-length biographies, Chou Li-chen's being the second, with very much shorter notices of four more men included. The first three of these seven were involved in the violent court politics of the period of the T'ang restoration. There were then notices for two officials, Lo Hsi-shih 羅希夷, who was executed just before the An Lu-shan rebellion, and Chi Wen, who was executed in the eighth month of 755, in the same purge in which Lo Hsi-shih had perished. Finally, Mao Jo-hsü 毛若虛 served under Su-tsung and died in 761, while Ching Yü 敬羽 was condemned to death by edict in 762. This last date is the latest to be mentioned in the section. It is also the final year of Su-tsung's reign.¹⁰⁰

The "Cruel Officials" section of the biographies in an official history of the medieval period is arguably one of its most political categories. Acts of extreme violence by officials against individuals, usually social or bureaucratic subordinates, were commonplace at all periods of T'ang history. Often they were recorded only in passing, and many must have been overlooked, to be omitted from epitaphs, reports of conduct, and official biographies alike.¹⁰¹ This would almost certainly have happened to Chi Hsü's cruelties had it not been that his great-nephew had incurred the odium of post-rebellion historians and had he himself not served in a period that they wished to portray in the harshest light.

⁹⁹ CTS 186B, pp. 4854-58, biography of Chi Wen; see also Pulleyblank, *Background*, pp. 91, 92, 97, 101, and CHC 3, pp. 451-52.

¹⁰⁰ CTS 186B, pp. 4848-61.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, below, n. 172, for the case of Tu Chien 杜兼; any reference to his murders were omitted from his epitaph by Han Yü. Ts'ui Shih, Chou Li-chen's brother-in-law, was responsible for massive casualties in an opportunistic road-building project; see T'FYK 697, p. 12b, and his biography at CTS 74, p. 2627.

Factors other than cruelty or rapaciousness alone, therefore, dictated that certain individuals be upheld as negative examples and recorded in the history. The historians used biographies of cruel officials not simply to condemn those concerned, but also by implication to extend their censure to the regimes in which they were recruited to office and given the scope to act as they did. The regimes of the Empress Wu and then of the Empress Wei clearly provided such a period. So also did the ministerships of Li Lin-fu and Yang Kuo-chung 楊國忠 (d. 756) in the second half of Hsüan-tsung's reign. The inclusion of biographies of two sadistic officials who served under Su-tsung and the fact that no more such biographies were entered argues a date after Su-tsung's death for the compilation of the section as a whole. The preface to the section supports such a view, for it states:

Forty years after the restoration [of the T'ang imperial line by Chung-tsung] there recurred degenerate administration under Chi Wen and Lo Hsi-shih. Then again a few years later there was the harsh [misuse of] law (*wei fa* 危法) by Ching Yü and Mao Jo-hsü. The dynastic court had passed through four generations, and imprisonment and litigation arose again; cliques were all pervasive, oppressing, and cutting off the good.

The four generations refer to the reigns of Chung-tsung, Jui-tsung, Hsüan-tsung, and Su-tsung. Periodization of the activities of cruel officials into these two bands was probably a general perspective in post-rebellion T'ang China. A similar analysis is found in the "Monograph on Punishments" in the *Chiu Tang shu*.¹⁰² Unlike the introduction to the cruel officials biographies, however, this latter account carries its narrative beyond Su-tsung's reign. Here again there is an indication that the compiler of the "Cruel Officials" section of the biographies and of its preface reviewed events from the perspective of someone writing in the reign of the Emperor Tai-tsung or possibly of Te-tsung. Almost certainly, therefore, this section of the biographies was not compiled by Liu Fang, for the version of the *Kuo shih* to which his name was attached was submitted in about 759-760 to the Emperor Su-tsung. If Chou Li-chen's biography was composed at this late stage, between fifty and sixty years after he died, this would help explain its inaccuracy.

The Evidence of the Honors Systems

A third line of inquiry that points to a date in the reign of Tai-tsung or Te-tsung for the compilation of Chou Li-chen's *Chiu Tang shu* notice in-

¹⁰² CTS 30, p. 2151.

volves circumstantial evidence. It concerns the history of the reputations of the five men whom the *Chiu T'ang shu* states that Chou killed, as these are measured by the dynasty's honors systems. The ascent in the prestige of the five over a period of some seven decades (see table), until they acquired the status of paramount T'ang loyalists and cult figures, demanded the creation of a moral counterweight, a figure or figures who represented evil to the same degree that they were being promoted as loyal, virtuous, and valiant. The official account of the dynasty, moreover, required that at the outset of the greatest reign of the dynasty, T'ang imperial authority be comprehensively reasserted. Nothing could express this more effectively than an imperial order for an evil official of the previous, illegal, regime to end his life. Ts'ui Shih, the man who, by plotting the murders of the "Five Princes" with Wu San-ssu, bore the major moral responsibility for their deaths, callous though he appears to have been, could not be used as an example because Hsüan-tsung as Crown Prince had had close contact with him and because he was required to commit suicide on Hsüan-tsung's orders for the far more specific and dangerous crime of involvement with the T'ai-p'ing 太平 Princess.¹⁰³ But Chou Li-chen, told by Ts'ui to murder the five officials, was almost as guilty as Ts'ui and was moreover an obscure provincial general service official. It was in the interests of history that he be harshly condemned.

The gradual elevation in the standing of the five men is measured by procedures that might at first sight seem unimportant, "dignified" rather than "efficient" provisions of the state, but that on analysis provide valuable information on T'ang political life. The status systems involved were, first, conferment of noble rank and fiefs, and then a series of posthumous measures: conferment of posthumous rank in the noble hierarchy; the granting of privileged status or office to direct descendants; introduction of a portrait into one or more of the palaces, usually the Ling-yün ko 凌雲閣, the dynasty's gallery of famous officials and soldiers; and canonization. Only one of the posthumous honor systems the dynasty employed, that of satellite burial of officials near the mausoleum of the Emperor whom they had served in life — a system largely abandoned for emperors after T'ai-tsung — was not invoked in their case.

The treatment of the five loyalists in life and then after death follows an almost symmetrical pattern of descent from high favor, extreme humiliation, death, and then ascent to unprecedented posthumous honors. The principal

sources that document this process are the biographies of the five officials in a single *chüan* of the *Chiu T'ang shu*. But other sources, chiefly the *T'ang hui yao* and the *Ts'ie fu yüan kuei*, fill out the picture.

There is no case for arguing, as in the instance of Chou Li-chen's biography in the "Cruel Officials" section of the history, that the *Chiu T'ang shu* biographies were compiled after the An Lu-shan rebellion. It is shown below that firm reference to the five officials as being represented in the dynastic history occurs only in 780, and again in 808. But it would have been most unlikely that following the particularly high honors Hsüan-tsung had given them in 718 they would have eluded Wei Shu, the official historian responsible for the *Kuo shih* of the first half of Hsüan-tsung's reign. Moreover, the biographies in some form probably predate even Hsüan-tsung's reign. For biographical accounts of high-ranking officials were, under the regulations, attached to the "veritable records" of the reigns of the emperors under whom they had died. In this case the "veritable record" involved would have been that for Chung-tsung. This was presented to the Emperor Hsüan-tsung in revised form in 716. It survived the An Lu-shan rebellion and was certainly used by Ssu-ma Kuang 司馬光 (1019-1086) in compiling the *Tzu chih t'ung chien* account of the reign.

Nonetheless, the *Chiu T'ang shu* biographies of the five men contain inconsistencies that suggest later editorial efforts to impose uniformity on them. There is also a series of inconsistencies between them and other sources that mention the five officials. To identify these, it is necessary to explore in greater detail the way in which the five men Chou Li-chen is accused of murdering were first honored, then humiliated and killed, only to receive even greater posthumous recognition.

After killing Chang I-chih and his half-brother and forcing the abdication of the Empress Wu, the five men were promptly honored by Chung-tsung with the award of commandery dukedoms: Huan Yen-fan of Ch'iao-chün 譙郡,¹⁰⁴ Ching Hui of P'ing-yang 平陽,¹⁰⁵ Ts'ui Hsüan-wei of Po-ling 博陵,¹⁰⁶ Chang Chien-chih of Han-yang 漢陽,¹⁰⁷ and Yüan Shu-chi of Nan-yang 南陽.¹⁰⁸ All five men were given the "iron token" (*t'ieh-ch'üan* 鐵券). They were, however, certainly not the only officials to have been rewarded: Yang Yüan-yen was made a commandery duke of Hung-nung 弘農 and given the "iron token," while his Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai epitaph states that

¹⁰⁴ CTS 91, p. 2929, biography of Huan Yen-fan; CTS 7, p. 136; TCTC 207, p. 6582.

¹⁰⁵ CTS 91, p. 2932, biography of Ching Hui, and 7, p. 136.

¹⁰⁶ CTS 91, p. 2935, biography of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei, and 7, p. 136.

¹⁰⁷ CTS 91, p. 2942, biography of Chang Chien-chih, and 7, p. 136.

¹⁰⁸ CTS 91, p. 2942, biography of Yüan Shu-chi, and 7, p. 136.

¹⁰³ CTS 74, p. 2623, and HTS 78, p. 3521, biographies of Ts'ui Shih.

Ts'ui T'ai-chih was also commended by Chung-tsung and made a baron. The victorious conspirators also held high office, and two of them, Huan Yen-fan and Ching Hui, now held a measure of real political power.¹⁰⁹ Riding on their success, they may have believed that they would be able to compromise with the Wei faction at court, and specifically with Wu San-ssu. The biography of Liu Yu-ch'iu thus represents them as ignoring his prediction that if they did not get rid of Wu San-ssu, "they would end by having no place to be buried in," while Hsüeh Chi-ch'ang's biography describes Hsüeh as warning them to act against Wu San-ssu.¹¹⁰

Their success indeed proved short lived. A matter of weeks later there began a sequence of episodes in which the five men came under suspicion from the Empress Wei and Wu San-ssu for plotting to remove members of the Wu clan from the court.¹¹¹ Wu San-ssu is not, however, represented as taking immediate retribution against them for this. Rather, he maneuvered to secure their removal from real power by persuading the Empress Wei to treat them with material generosity and give them exalted formal status. In this process, Huan Yen-fan was raised to the rank of Prince of Fu-yang 扶陽. He also had the honor of an imperially conferred change of surname, from Huan to the imperial consort surname of Wei. In addition, he accepted gifts of brocades, silver and gold, and saddled horses from the imperial family.¹¹² Ching Hui was appointed vice-president of the Central Secretariat (*shih chung* 侍中), and had his fief raised to that of Prince of the state of Ch'i 齊; he was thus the only one of the five to be the prince of a state rather than a commandery.¹¹³ Ts'ui Hsüan-wei was made president of the Central Secretariat and raised to princely rank;¹¹⁴ Chang Chien-chih, much the oldest of the five, was made president of the Central Secretariat, raised to princely rank, and made director of the dynastic history;¹¹⁵ and Yüan Shu-chi, after a provincial tenure caused by the submission of too keen a memorial of admonition, was also made president of the Central Secretariat and raised to the rank of prince.¹¹⁶

An edict by Chung-tsung, dated the tenth day of the fifth month of 705,

in which the five men were extravagantly commended and given these appointments, is preserved in the early Sung compilation *T'ang ta chao ling chi* and condensed in the basic annals of the *Chiu T'ang shu*.¹¹⁷ Oddly, *T'ang ta chao ling chi* also contains two more separate edicts, dated the fifteenth day of the fifth month and the sixth day of the sixth month respectively, elevating Chang Chien-chih and Ts'ui Hsüan-wei to the rank of princes.¹¹⁸ These measures of ennoblement, however, represent the high point of the status of the five while they were alive. There is also some indication that their elevation to the rank of prince at this stage was subsequently discounted, at least under the Emperor Hsüan-tsung, possibly because it was inspired by Wu San-ssu and represented a cynical attempt to deprive them of real influence.

Princely ennoblement of the five officials was followed by the success of Wu San-ssu's attempts to maneuver them out of court life. Again, however, there is some conflict of evidence about whether the five men received their orders of banishment at the same time and as a concerted move. The basic annals of the *Chiu T'ang shu* state that Chang Chien-chih had retired voluntarily in the seventh month of 705, to be non-functioning governor of Hsiang-chou 襄州 with full pay. His biography confirms that this happened and adds that his son, a secretary in the Bureau of Compilers, went with him, and that Chung-tsung feasted him at his departure. An entry in the *Ts'ue fu yüan kuei* states that as governor of Hsiang-chou he tried to decline his princely rank, but that Chung-tsung, in a high-flown edict, refused to let him do this.¹¹⁹ Yang Yüan-yen, his co-conspirator from 700, also tried to escape from political life, applying unsuccessfully for permission to become a monk.¹²⁰

The *Chiu T'ang shu* basic annals then have three of the five — Ching Hui, Huan Yen-fan, and Yüan Shu-chi — banished to prefectures east of the capital on the tenth day of the first intercalary month of 706, with the following governorships: Ching Hui of Hua-chou 滑州, Huan Yen-fan of Ming-chou 洺州, and Yüan Shu-chi of Yü-chou 潞州.¹²¹ Ts'ui Hsüan-wei, however, was given the post of an acting major provincial administrator based at I-chou 益州 in Szechwan.¹²²

¹⁰⁹ *TFYK* 805, p. 21b.

¹¹⁰ *CTS* 97, p. 3039, biography of Liu Yu-ch'iu; 185A, p. 4808, biography of Hsüeh Chi-ch'ang; 91, p. 2933, biography of Ching Hui.

¹¹¹ *CTS* 74, p. 2622, biography of Ts'ui Shih.

¹¹² *CTS* 91, p. 2930, biography of Huan Yen-fan; *TCTC* 208, p. 6591.

¹¹³ *CTS* 91, p. 2932, biography of Ching Hui.

¹¹⁴ *CTS* 91, p. 2933, biography of Ching Hui, and p. 2935, biography of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei.

¹¹⁵ *CTS* 91, p. 2942, biography of Chang Chien-chih.

¹¹⁶ *CTS* 91, p. 2942, biography of Yüan Shu-chi.

¹¹⁷ *T'ang ta chao ling chi* 61, p. 331; *CTS* 7, p. 139.

¹¹⁸ *T'ang ta chao ling chi* 61, p. 332.

¹¹⁹ *CTS* 7, p. 140, and 91, p. 2942, biography of Chang Chien-chih; *TFYK* 133, pp. 13a–14b; *TCTC* 208, p. 6594; *TFYK* 48, p. 14a.

¹²⁰ *CTS* 185B, p. 4811. ¹²¹ *CTS* 7, p. 141; *TCTC* 208, p. 6597.

¹²² *CTS* 91, p. 2935, biography of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei; *TFYK* 172, p. 10a, giving a date of 705, fourth month.

Yang Yüan-yen managed to escape punishment, but the minor participant Ts'ui T'ai-chih, his epitaph states, suffered a transfer, for "in no time the evil minister Wu San-ssu clandestinely controlled the levers of state, and (suppressed?) the good men of the state. He banished [Ts'ui T'ai-chih] to be governor of Ming-chou 洛州." Here, presumably, he replaced Huan Yen-fan.

In the course of these events, on the twenty-sixth day of the eleventh month of 705, the Empress Wu died.¹²³ After her death, two of the five men, Ching Hui and Yüan Shu-chi, were honored by the provisions of her will.¹²⁴ That the Empress should have thus rewarded two men who had, by killing the man who had provided her chief political support, secured her abdication points to a feature of the final stage in the transition back to T'ang rule. This was very probably achieved with her full retrospective assent, at least in her last days, and did not, at the very highest political level, involve the coercing of a very old lady. It suggests that at this time it was their courage and success in killing Chang I-chih rather than his restoring the Li-T'ang line that was seen as the five officials' great achievement.

After this, Wu San-ssu's continued anxiety to have these officials removed from political influence resulted in further transfers to governorships. Ching Hui was moved to Lang-chou 朗州, Ts'ui Hsüan-wei to Chun-chou 均州, Huan Yen-fan first to Hao-chou 濠州, then to Po-chou 亳州, and Yüan Shu-chi to Ying-chou 郢州. Only Chang Chien-chih, now aged about eighty, stayed on as non-functioning governor of Hsiang-chou.¹²⁵ Again Ts'ui T'ai-chih, the second-level participant in the conspiracy against the Chang brothers, whose role is documented exclusively by his Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai epitaph, was given a parallel demotion. His epitaph states that as a result of Wu San-ssu's mounting hatred and suspicion he was made governor of Te-chou 德州.

On the sixth day of the sixth month of 706, however, all five main conspirators were drastically demoted and sent to be marshals, in a super-numerary capacity, in the least favored areas of the extreme south: Huan Yen-fan at Lung-chou 隴州, Ching Hui at Yai-chou 崖州 on Hai-nan Island, Yüan Shu-chi at Tou-chou 賈州, Ts'ui Hsüan-wei at Pai-chou 白州, and the aged Chang Chien-chih, now included in the list, at Hsin-chou 新州. Banishment meant the loss of their noble ranks and fief incomes. Huan Yen-

fan lost the imperially conferred surname of Wei and reverted to his own name.¹²⁶

This was not, however, the end of their humiliation. Wu San-ssu now proceeded to charge the five with having slanderously publicized a corrupt relationship between himself and the Empress Wei and having posted an anonymous notice to this effect on the T'ien-chin 天津 Bridge outside Lo-yang. Though Wu San-ssu is represented, with others, as wanting their executions, Chung-tsung, mindful of the honors he had paid them, resisted the death penalty. Instead, the five were given sentences of permanent banishment: Huan Yen-fan to Hsiang-chou 濠州, Ching Hui to Ch'ung-chou 瓊州, again on Hai-nan Island, Chang Chien-chih to Lung-chou 隴州, Yüan Shu-chi to Huan-chou 環州, and Ts'ui Hsüan-wei to Ku-chou 古州.¹²⁷ Ts'ui T'ai-chih also underwent further transfer at about this time, being made governor of Tzu-chou 梓州, then of K'ai-chou 開州, and finally marshal of Tzu-chou 資州. Only the accession of Hsüan-tsung was to bring him relief, enabling him to resume his career with capital posts.

Wu San-ssu, however, was still fearful that the five officials would achieve a return to political power at the capital. Having failed in a further attempt to exterminate them and their families, he used Ts'ui Shih to arrange their illegal execution in the far south. It is an important feature of the story at this point that this operation to have them killed is represented as a private one that did not have the connivance of the Emperor Chung-tsung, whom the five officials had restored to the throne. Though Chou Li-chen, involved at this stage as Ts'ui Shih's close relative, certainly did not murder them all, all five perished in the obscurity and isolation of the remote south without honors, fiefs, or office. Though their sons over the age of sixteen *sui* were to accompany them to their final places of exile, it is not known whether their bodies were brought back north for burial, as Chou Li-chen's was to be, or whether epitaph texts were ever composed for them.

Their ascent to great posthumous fame and status started four years later, immediately after Chung-tsung's death in 710. Two of the biographies

¹²⁶ CTS 91, p. 2931, biography of Huan Yen-fan; 91, p. 2933, biography of Ching Hui; TCTC 208, p. 6603.

¹²⁷ CTS 91, p. 2931, biography of Huan Yen-fan; TCTC 208, p. 6604; CTS 91, p. 2934, biography of Ching Hui. The TCTC "K'ao-i" 考異 notes variants for Ching Hui's final place of exile and determines in favor of Ch'ung-chou, on Hai-nan Island. The basis for this is the lost *T'ang chung chi* 唐統紀 by Ch'en Yüeh 陳燾, which is likely therefore to have had an account of the whole episode. Ts'ui Hsüan-wei's biography, CTS 91, p. 2935, does not mention his final appointment to Ku-chou.

¹²³ TCTC 208, p. 6596.

¹²⁴ CTS 91, p. 2932, biography of Ching Hui, and p. 2943, biography of Yüan Shu-chi.

¹²⁵ TCTC 208, p. 6601.

of the five suggest that on his accession the Emperor Jui-tsung restored them all posthumously to the rank of prince.¹²⁹ But there are other indications that this was not the case and that statements implying this are later editorial insertions, made perhaps with the motive of emphasizing that the restored Li imperial line was prompt in recognizing their contribution to the dynasty. Chang Chien-chih's biography reproduces the text of an edict dated 710 commending him very highly and making him posthumously Duke, rather than Prince, of Han-yang commandery.¹²⁹ Less directly, the biography of Ching Hui states that at this time Ching was posthumously made overall commander of Ch'in-chou 秦州 and canonized Su-min 肅愍.¹³⁰ If this was the case, then, surprisingly, Ching was the only one of the five to receive canonization at this stage. This again suggests that they did not receive uniform treatment in terms of posthumous honors and that statements suggesting blandly that they were all recreated princes at this time may be later insertions. It is likely, however, that Jui-tsung granted office to one of the sons of each of them.¹³¹

In a measure that involved two only of the five, in 714 Hsüan-tsung conferred the non-functioning post of *ch'ao-san ta-fu* on Ts'ui Hsüan-wei's son Ts'ui Chü 崔璩 and on Chang Chien-chih's grandson Chang Pi 張泌.¹³² This honor was followed four years later by a measure that is of great importance in documenting the increase in the reputations of all five. On the twenty-second day of the sixth month of 718, the Emperor Hsüan-tsung issued an edict in which he conferred on them what amounted to the highest posthumous honor that was in the gift of T'ang sovereigns. This involved the installation of their spirit tablets in the shrine within the dynastic ancestral temple of the Emperor whom they had served in life, so that they would receive concurrent offerings in sacrifices to T'ang imperial ancestors. This great honor was rarely given; on average only about five of the most important officials of each T'ang reign received it. It was also a highly political award, reflecting the importance of loyalty to the dynasty in times of crisis. The edict, referring to the five as dukes, commended them in high-flown terms as having assisted in the restoration of the T'ang line.¹³³

It was of course an irony that the five officials should be honored in this

¹²⁹ CTS 91, p. 2931, biography of Huan Yen-fan, and p. 2934, biography of Ching Hui.

¹³⁰ CTS 91, p. 2942, biography of Chang Chien-chih.

¹³¹ CTS 91, p. 2934, biography of Ching Hui.

¹³² CTS 185A, p. 4805, biography of Hsüeh Chi-ch'ang. ¹³³ T'FYK 131, pp. 1a-b.

¹³⁴ THY 18, p. 371; T'FYK 133, pp. 18a-b; CTS 8, p. 179, 26, p. 1011, and 91, p. 2932, biography of Huan Yen-fan.

way. For although Chung-tsung was the emperor who had ascended the throne as a result of their successful plot against Chang I-chih, and though the accounts are careful to emphasize that he was not privy to Ts'ui Shih's plot to have them murdered, it was undeniable that he had twice assented to their humiliation and exile.

In referring to them as dukes, Hsüan-tsung's edict of 718 agrees with the edict of 710 contained in Chang Chien-chih's biography, in which the Emperor Jui-tsung bestowed on him the posthumous rank of duke. But it conflicts with the implication that Jui-tsung restored all five to the rank of prince and adds credence to the hypothesis that Jui-tsung's measure never took place and is to be understood as a later editorial insertion. The fact that the version of this measure contained in the *T'ang hui yao* mentions some of the five as dukes and others as princes may be discounted as evidence, since this listing of the five refers to them by their canonization titles. In what Chang Chien-chih's great-grandson claimed at the time to be an oversight, they did not all five receive these titles until as late as 808. It may be that the references to them as princes contained in the *Ta T'ang liu tien* account of the tablets of meritorious officials installed in the imperial ancestral temple and in the *Chiu T'ang shu*'s basic annals and "Monograph on Ritual" are also later adjustments.¹³⁴

At what point in the middle decades of the eighth century the five men began to be known conventionally as the "Five Princes" is difficult to determine precisely, but the foregoing analysis of their treatment in the reigns of Chung-tsung, Jui-tsung, and Hsüan-tsung suggests that they did not immediately achieve this high collective status. Listing small numbers of men in named groups is a very familiar T'ang habit. Thus even as the five officials prepared their conspiracy another group of "Five Princes," very much closer to Hsüan-tsung, already existed. These were the sons of Jui-tsung other than Hsüan-tsung himself, the Princes of Ning 寧, Shen 申, Ch'i 岐, Hsüeh 薛, and Sui 隋. They lived together first in Lo-yang in the "Residence of the Five Princes" and then, after 701, in another similarly named quarters in the Hsing-ch'ing 興慶 ward of Ch'ang-an. There are grounds for doubting whether an informal title such as this could have been immediately transferred from one group to another.¹³⁵

Following the introduction of their spirit tablets into the ancestral temple, over sixty years elapsed when no further recorded honors were given the five men (see table). It can, however, be inferred that this was a period

¹³⁴ T'LLT 4, pp. 36a-b. ¹³⁵ CTS 95, p. 3011.

when members of the scholar community were deriving keener perspectives on the reign of the Empress Wu and the transition back to the Li-T'ang line. There was a trend toward stronger and more thoroughgoing condemnation of the personnel involved on the Wu-Chou side of the political conflict, and toward increased recognition of those officials who had contributed to the Empress Wu's decision to restore Chung-tsung to the heir apparenacy in 698, or who otherwise helped in the restoration of full political control by the Li-T'ang house.

One official who may be seen as an important participant in this trend was Li Yung, whose epitaph survives in the Ch'ien T'ang chih-chai collection and who is also represented by official biographies. Li Yung was closely involved in the T'ang restoration and the events leading to the accession of Hsüan-tsung. As a junior official, he was politically allied to Chang Chien-chih and two of the other "Five Princes."¹³⁶ He was banished alongside Chang Chien-chih, Ts'ui T'ai-chih, and others when Wu San-ssu gained control of the court. He also played a small but vital and highly dramatic role in the elimination of one of Hsüan-tsung's contenders for the succession.¹³⁷

Despite the loss of most of Li Yung's writings, his loyalty to the T'ang cause is known to have been expressed in his compositions. At some stage he composed a biography of Ti Jen-chieh in three *chüan*, which represented him as persuading the Empress to accede to the installation of Li Che, the future Chung-tsung, as Crown Prince. This work still circulated independently in the late eighth or early ninth century.¹³⁸ It may have been the result of Li Yung's promotion of Ti Jen-chieh that on the twelfth day of the first month of 747 the spirit tablets of Ti and two other T'ang loyalist officials joined those of the five dead conspirators in Chung-tsung's ancestral shrine. Their installation is to be seen as another politically determined ritual measure, for Ti Jen-chieh had died some years before Chung-tsung succeeded.¹³⁹ Li Yung

¹³⁶ Li Yung, biographies in *CTS* 190B, pp. 5039-43, and *HTS* 202, pp. 5754-57; *CTCCTC*, no. 917. Also, *CTS* 91, p. 2930, biography of Huan Yen-fan, and p. 2935, biography of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei; *TCTC* 208, p. 6589.

¹³⁷ *TCTC* 210, pp. 6654-55.

¹³⁸ *CTS* 89, p. 2895, biography of Ti Jen-chieh. This work is listed in *HTS* 58, p. 1484, but not in the *CTS* bibliography. This omission suggests, though it certainly does not prove, that the work may have been written after the compilation of the *Ch'ün shu ssu pu lu* 群書四部錄 in 722. (None of the four compilatory works by Ts'ui Hsüan-wei listed in his *CTS* biography, ch. 91, p. 2935, line 13, is listed in the *CTS* bibliography.) In his biographies, *CTS* 89, p. 2894, and *HTS* 115, p. 4214, Ti Jen-chieh is also represented as the political patron of Huan Yen-fan, Ching Hui, and Chang Chien-chih. For a later reference to Li Yung's biography of Ti Jen-chieh, see *WYH* 780, pp. 116-122, Lü Wen 呂溫 (772-811). See also *TCTC* 206, pp. 6527-30; 207, pp. 6531-32, "K'ao-i."

¹³⁹ *THY* 18, p. 271; *CTS* 26, p. 1011. Ti Jen-chieh's spirit tablet is not included in the *TTLT* listing; see *TTLT* 4, p. 36b. Nor is it mentioned in his biography, *CTS* 89, p. 2895.

also wrote a poem entitled "The Six Dukes." It is not extant but was mentioned by Tu Fu 杜甫 (712-770), one of Li's admirers, in the closing lines of a verse tribute to him. It was understood in the Sung period to have referred to Ti Jen-chieh and the "Five Princes."¹⁴⁰ It suggests again that the five were conventionally referred to as dukes rather than princes, and is the first indication that they had become associated in tradition with Ti Jen-chieh as T'ang loyalists and cult figures.¹⁴¹

In the middle and later stages of his dramatic and varied career, Li Yung won the admiration of a number of influential scholar-officials who belonged to the circle of Sun Ti 孫逖, the chief examiner of the years 734-735.¹⁴² Li was also a friend of the calligrapher Chang T'ing-kuei 張廷珪 (c. 663-734). In the early K'ai-yüan period, Chang T'ing-kuei supported Li Yung when Li held the office of governor of Ch'en-chou 陳州. Chang T'ing-kuei, it is shown below, also tried repeatedly to impeach Chou Li-ch'en for his role in murdering Ching Hui, the second of the "Five Princes."¹⁴³

It is possible to see in the ascent of Li Yung's reputation and in what can be inferred about both his own role in and his compositions relating to the T'ang restoration an indirect, but very pronounced, indication of the increase in the prestige of the early eighth-century T'ang loyalists.¹⁴⁴ This increase in esteem, moreover, took place among scholars and men of letters, and was not the result of an imperially initiated act of recognition. Since Li Yung was the friend of Chang T'ing-kuei, who had tried to impeach Chou Li-ch'en, the ascent in his standing is likely to have been accompanied by an increase in hostility toward Chou.

Two other officials whose careers and influence may have contributed indirectly to an increase in hostility toward Chou Li-ch'en were direct

¹⁴⁰ *Chiu chia chi chu Tu shih* 九家集注杜詩 (Pei-p'ing: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1940), pp. 210a-b (ch. 14). Li Yung has only three poems extant; see *Ch'üan T'ang shih* 全唐詩 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1960) 115, p. 1168.

¹⁴¹ For ninth-century indications that Ti Jen-chieh and the "Five Princes" were grouped together, see *WYH* 780, pp. 116-122, Lü Wen; *ibid.* 877, p. 42, Feng Su 馮宿 (767-836); *Ch'üan T'ang wen* 全唐文 (Taipei: Hua-wen, 1965) 799, pp. 222-b, P'i Jih-hsiu 皮日休 (ca. 834-ca. 883).

¹⁴² *Yen Lu kung wen chi* 5, p. 2a, "Preface to the Collected Works of Sun Ti"; see also p. 17b, "Note for Inscription at the Former House of Ts'ui Mien," for another mention of Li Yung by Yen Chen-ch'ing. Hsiao Ying-shih composed a memorial submission for Li Yung, probably between 742 and Li's death in 747; see *WYH* 612, p. 8b, and P'an Lü Ch'i-ch'ang 潘呂棋昌, *Hsiao Ying-shih yen chiu* 蕭穎士研究 (Taipei: Wen-shih-che, 1983), pp. 154-55.

¹⁴³ *CTS* 101, p. 3154, and *HTS* 118, p. 4264, biographies of Chang T'ing-kuei.
¹⁴⁴ *CTCCTC*, no. 1003, for Li Yung's son Li Ch'iao 李翹 (731-776), testifies to Li Yung's great reputation. For other references, see *Huang-fu Ch'ih-cheng wen chi* 皇甫持正文集 (SPTK edn.) 1, pp. 6a-b; *Liu Yü-hsi chi* 劉禹錫集 (Shanghai: Jen-min, 1975) 39, pp. 395-96; *T'ang wen ts'ui* 唐文粹 (SPTK edn.) 62, p. 72, Liang Su.

descendants of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei, the third of the "Five Princes." Ts'ui Chü, his son, rose to be a grand secretary and then vice-president of the Board of Rites, both highly respected and influential offices. Ts'ui Huan 崔渙 (c. 769) was even more eminent. He joined Hsüan-tsung's party in 756 as the Emperor fled to Szechwan from the An Lu-shan rebels, and was further recommended to Hsüan-tsung by Fang Kuan 房琯 (697-763). As a chief minister alongside Fang Kuan, he played an important role in the transition of formal imperial power from Hsüan-tsung to Su-tsung. Ts'ui Huan's son Ts'ui Tsung 崔縱 (730-791) also managed a successful official career, dying in Te-tsung's reign. Although Ts'ui Hsüan-wei was probably not one of Chou Li-chen's victims, it is most unlikely that his descendants, politically influential as they were, had a charitable view of the man who had murdered two of their ancestor's fellow loyalists.¹⁴⁵

There is precise evidence from the close of Tai-tsung's reign or very early in the reign of Te-tsung of the trend to promote the status of the "Five Princes." Moreover, here the interests of the Emperor and his officials appear to have coincided. The first few months of Te-tsung's reign were a period when the Emperor showed great determination in his effort to restore full military, political, and ritual authority to the Li-T'ang house. Indeed, his commitment was remembered by scholar-officials long after subsequent events had made it an unrealistic dream. It is tempting to associate the measures taken at this time to honor past T'ang loyalists in the civil bureaucracy with both the Emperor and the scholar-minister Ts'ui Yu-fu, who held power as chief minister briefly until his untimely death in 780. Through his father, Ts'ui Mien, Ts'ui Yu-fu had longstanding connections in the scholarly bureaucracy with men involved in the T'ang restoration. Ts'ui Mien had been a patron of Li Yung himself early in Li Yung's career. On becoming chief minister, Ts'ui Yu-fu appointed numerous scholars and also directed the dynastic history.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ See CTS 91, p. 2935, biography of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei; 108, p. 3280, biography of Ts'ui Huan; and pp. 3281-82, biography of Ts'ui Tsung. See also Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Aristocratic Clans of Early Imperial China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1978), p. 112. Chang Chien-chih had a son in office (see CTS 91, p. 2942, and T'FYK 930, p. 10a), but, probably as president of the Central Secretariat, he incurred the resentment of public opinion for his arrogance. The name of a grandson also survives; see n. 132 above. A great-grandson is mentioned in *Feng shih wen chien chi* 3, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ See Robert des Rotours, *Les Inscriptions funéraires de Ts'ouei Mien et de Ts'ouei Yeou-fou* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1975). Also Ebrey, *Aristocratic Clans*, esp. pp. 96-101, 186-87; CTS 119, pp. 3437-41, and HTS 142, pp. 4666-68, biographies of Ts'ui Yu-fu; *Ch'uan Tsai-chih wen chi* 23, p. 8a, epitaph for Chou Wei 周渭 (740-805); WYH 946, p. 6a, Liang Su, epitaph for Fang Lin 房儼 (727-784); CTS 135, pp. 3714-15, biography of Lu Chi 盧杞 (d. 785); cf. also *Han Ch'ang-li wen chi chiao chu* 7, p. 151.

Also in this period an initiative was taken toward revising and rewriting the official account of both the reign of the Empress Wu and the transition back to T'ang rule, with which the "Five Princes" were so crucially involved. An official historian, Shen Chi-chi 沈既濟, submitted a memorial suggesting that the official history of the reign be redrafted in such a way as to deprive the Empress Wu of her full imperial status and to treat Chung-tsung as the reigning sovereign during the Chou interregnum. Shen's memorial was not in the event followed up. But it is entered, with a very brief biographical notice, before the *Chiu T'ang shu* biography of his son, also an official historian, and is contained in the *T'ang hui yao*, which dates it to the seventh month of 780.¹⁴⁷

In 780 three key measures directly affecting the status of the "Five Princes" were taken. Again, it is important, in arguing that Chou Li-chen's *Ch'iu T'ang shu* biography was written at this time, to emphasize that the History Office was involved in all three of these measures. They are recorded in edicts and memorials preserved in the *T'ang hui yao*.

First in 779, sixth month, first day, an imperial edict granted office to one descendant of every meritorious official since the start of the dynasty. On the twenty-sixth day of the seventh month, the Board of Civil Office requested that the History Office be required "to carry out thorough investigations and establish their names and deeds." On the fifth day of the ninth month of 780, the History Office submitted its list, in which it classified into three groups those officials who between the start of the dynasty and the end of Hsüan-tsung's reign had shown outstanding service. Huan Yen-fan, Chang Chien-chih, and their three fellow loyalists, all titled as princes, were accorded membership in the first group, which otherwise included only five of the most famous of the generals and ministers of T'ai-tsung's reign. A separate section of the submission classified those outstanding generals and ministers who had died since the rebellion of An Lu-shan, again grouping them in three grades. The History Office memorialized that it had examined and verified the facts according to the official biographies.¹⁴⁸

A similar measure in the twelfth month caused illustrious chief ministers and generals on one hand and meritorious officials on the other to be classified each into two ranks. In the meritorious officials section, the five officials whom Chou Li-chen was held to have killed were listed in the first rank, with a total of thirty-four officials. Again, the two lists were divided

¹⁴⁷ THY 63, pp. 1095-97; T'FYK 559, pp. 9b-11b; CTS 149, pp. 4034-36, biography of Shen Chi-chi.

¹⁴⁸ THY 45, pp. 805-6; cf. T'FYK 131, p. 11a.

into those who had served before and after the An Lu-shan rebellion of 755.¹⁴⁹

The third measure is recorded at the end of the five men's *Chiu T'ang shu* biographies. Each biography ends with a statement that in "early Chien-chung," that is, in 780, each was honored by posthumous appointment to one of the highest offices that the T'ang state provided. Huan Yen-fan was made master of commoners (*ssu-t'u* 司徒); Ching Hui, grand marshal (*t'ai-wei* 太尉); Ts'ui Hsüan-wei, grand instructor to the Crown Prince; Chang Chien-chih, master of commoners; and Yüan Shu-chi, grand tutor to the Crown Prince. In the cases of Huan Yen-fan, Ching Hui, and Chang Yen-chih, these were described as "further posthumous appointments" (*ch'ung tseng* 重贈 or *yu tseng* 又贈); in the cases of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei and Yüan Shu-chih, they were simply "posthumous appointments" (*tseng*).¹⁵⁰ Presumably, official historians added these posthumous appointments to the biographies of the five in 780 or not long thereafter. It is almost certain that they did so before 808. It was in this year that, on the application of a great-grandson of Chang Chien-chih and in consultation with the History Office, all five men received canonization titles. The designations selected were among the most exalted that the system provided. Ching Hui, who had been canonized Sumin soon after his death, had this designation changed to the more prestigious Chen-lieh 貞烈.¹⁵¹ Despite the fact that canonizations commanded more prestige even than high posthumous office and were routinely entered in official biographies, these two-character titles are not entered at the end of the *Chiu T'ang shu* biographies of the five officials. This suggests that their biographies were not updated after 780, when the historians entered their posthumous appointments.

The extraordinary attention given to the history of the Empress Wu's reign and to these five men at the start of Te-tsung's reign by the History Office itself and the addition of their posthumous appointments justify the speculation that in about 780 their biographies in the dynastic history received further editorial attention. Probably this would have taken the form of new emphasis on their identity as a group of "Five Princes" and renewed stress on their valor and uprightness. This possibility is to be set alongside the evidence that the "Cruel Officials" section of the biographies

may also have been compiled in this period. As the Emperor prepared to make a great effort to reclaim for the dynasty full political and military control of China, he enlisted the help of his scholars in reclassifying and elevating those who had served his forebears well in the same cause in past crises. At the same time, these scholars took advantage of the fact that Wei Shu had withdrawn the "Cruel Officials" section of the *Kuo shih* to compose a new section for cruel officials and so to underscore the evil of those who had betrayed the interests of the T'ang dynasty.

From the standpoint of the dynasty, the victim in this new attempt to emphasize the difference between the good and the evil, or the light and the dark, was Chou Li-ch'en, such a minor and poorly recorded participant in the dramatic events of 705-706 that he provided a suitable vehicle for the indignation of historians. The composers of his biography may have had some recollection of the deep resentment he had incurred when Ching Jang 敬讓, the son of one of his victims, together with Li Yung's friend Chang T'ing-kuei, had tried unsuccessfully to impeach him. But whether through ignorance or carelessness, they failed to record the events in his life that intervened between the accession of Hsüan-tsung and his death in 719. Instead, their account terminated his life in a way that, in their view, reflected appropriate dignity on the first years of Hsüan-tsung's reign.

Both Chou Li-ch'en's biography and those of the five officials (or "Five Princes") as they are now contained in the *Chiu T'ang shu* are likely to have stood largely unaltered from the reign of Te-tsung until the time when, in 945, Liu Hsü 劉昫 (887-946) completed the work. In the case of Chou Li-ch'en, this is argued on the grounds that the absence of any biographical notice of a "cruel official" who served after the reign of Su-tsung suggests that the official historians left this two-*chüan* section of the *Kuo shih* unaltered following its completion and the writing of its preface. The reasons in the cases of the "Five Princes" again concern the posthumous honors systems that the dynasty operated. Not only were the prestigious canonizations that all five received in 808 not entered in their biographies, but lesser honors were also omitted. By 798 their portraits were displayed in the Wu-ying tien 武英殿;¹⁵² in 807 their descendants were given office.¹⁵³ On the eleventh day of the seventh month of 848, the History Office memorialized that portraits of the five should be displayed in the Ling-yen ko, the dynasty's gallery for pictures of famous men. The Censorate was commanded to search for descendants of the thirty-seven men involved in this measure, so as to

¹⁴⁹ *THY* 45, p. 807.

¹⁵⁰ *CTS* 91, p. 2932, biography of Huan Yen-fan, p. 2934, biography of Ching Hui, p. 2935, biography of Ts'ui Hsüan-wei, p. 2942, biography of Chang Chien-chih, and p. 2943, biography of Yüan Shu-chi. Cf. *TFYK* 131, p. 11a.

¹⁵¹ *THY* 80, p. 1488; *TFYK* 131, p. 17a.

¹⁵² *THY* 45, pp. 808-9; *TFYK* 133, pp. 24a-25a. ¹⁵³ *THY* 45, p. 810.

secure their likenesses.¹⁵⁴ That these measures are omitted from the end of the biographies of all of the five suggests again that no systematic attempt had been made to update these accounts. Only one further entry after 780 was made: at the end of the biographies of four of the five, a note gives the office that a great-great-grandson of each was promoted to in the year 838. Probably this information was extracted from an edict of that year honoring them. A record of such a measure, which followed a discussion at court between Wen-tsung and a great-nephew of Ti Jen-chieh, is entered in the *Ts'ê fu yüan kuei*. This also notes that no descendant of Huan Yen-fan could be located to receive the honor. There is, however, no evidence as to when the information was added into the *Chiu T'ang shu*.¹⁵⁵

THE HSIN T'ANG SHU BIOGRAPHY

The *Chiu T'ang shu*'s damning account of Chou Li-chen's career and death might have stood unchallenged until modern times but for changes made in the second full-length official history of the T'ang, the *Hsin T'ang shu*, completed in 1060. It is well known that the *Hsin T'ang shu* often supplements the *Chiu T'ang shu*, usually, where biographies are concerned, by adding anecdotal material drawn from the many collections of official lore that were current in the early Northern Sung. Though the new material that the *Hsin T'ang shu* editors introduced was often of uneven reliability, their biography of Chou Li-chen includes an account drawn almost entirely from institutional rather than anecdotal sources that is not only closer to the epitaph account, but also appears to be authentic. Even more important, this additional material suggests why Chou Li-chen incurred the deep hatred that he did. It tells of the exasperation of a group of officials, including Li Yung's friend Chang T'ing-kuei, at their unsuccessful attempts to obtain revenge on Chou Li-chen for the death of Ching Hui, the second of the "Five Princes." Since the new detail about Chou Li-chen that it supplies concerns mainly events that took place over the six or seven years following Hsüan-tsung's accession and after the point at which the *Chiu T'ang shu* states him to have committed imperially ordered suicide, the text from that point should tell its own story:

At the start of K'ai-yüan there was an edict: "[Chou] Li-chen and the governor of Hua-chou 滑州 P'ei T'an 裴談; the governor of Jao-chou 饒州 P'ei Hsi-chen 裴栖貞; the judicial enquirers Chang Ssu-ching

張思敬 and Wang 'Ch'eng-pen 王承本; the magistrate of Hua-yüan 華原 K'ang Wei 康暉; the serving censor Feng Hsün-hsing 封詢行; the staff adjutants Chang Sheng-chih 張勝之, Liu Hui 劉暉, Yang Yün 楊允, Wei Sui-chung 韋遂忠, and Sun Yen 孫琰; and the marshal of Lien-chou 廉州 Chung Ssu-lien 鍾思廉 are all cruel officials. It is appropriate that they should be without seniority for the rest of their lives."

[Chou Li-chen] was subsequently further appointed marshal of Chen-chou 珍州. The following year he was made governor of I-chou 夷州.¹⁵⁶ Then the attendant at the Yellow Gate Chang T'ing-kuei¹⁵⁷ proffered a memorial that said, "Your majesty has heroic judgment and sagely perception, and all within the four seas acknowledge this in their hearts. What is meant by heroic judgment means exterminating the evil and rebellious and bringing correctness to the court. What is meant by sagely perception means discriminating between the loyal and evil and making rewards and punishments trustworthy. [Chou] Li-chen belongs to the former clique of the Tsung 宗 and Wu [clans]. He killed [Huan] Yen-fan and Ching [Hui]. But since your majesty has ascended the throne and spread forth new administration, you have taken his court rank from him and moved him out to remote wildernesses, and so have fulfilled the wishes of the world. Yet men of righteousness still consider that he will hold hopes that his penalty will be reduced. If you now give him the vermilion cord [of high office] and in addition entrust him with maintaining the frontiers, this means that the principle of demoting the evil is not always being operated."

The memorial was sent in, but the matter subsequently rested. [Chou Li-chen] was further appointed overall commander of Ch'ien-chou 黔州 and was promoted to the [non-functioning rank of] *ch'ao-san ta-fu*. Chang T'ing-kuei again submitted a memorial replying to the edict [of appointment?] that said, "[Chou] Li-chen is evil and contemptible, a petty man who adhered to [Wu] San-ssu and imperiled the court, murdering meritorious officials. Men's spirits have been angered and aggrieved about this and have been in agony to this day. At the eastern capital a search has been made of his home, and gold and silver and silk brocades have been found [in quantities that] contravene edicts

¹⁵⁶ The epitaph omits these provincial appointments to Chen-chou, I-chou, and Ch'ien-chou, though it perhaps makes an effort to include them obliquely in numbering the total of provincial appointments that Chou Li-chen received. *TFYK* 152, p. 16b, also indicates that in 714 Chou was governor of Fu-chou 涪州 in Szechwan.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *CTS* 101, pp. 3153-54, biography of Chang T'ing-kuei.

¹⁵⁴ *THY* 45, p. 812. ¹⁵⁵ *TFYK* 131, p. 25a.

and statutes. Moreover, if he occupies court posts for long, and by quick answers [presses] his familiarity and flattery and is regarded as loyal by his prince, this will be like inciting [him] to exact revenge [for his banishment]. If he is allowed to enter court, he will bring chaos to the state; if he pacifies customs [in the provinces], he will do damage to the people. If he is now promoted to administer strategic frontiers, and is from the sixth grade transferred to the third grade, why did you punish him in the past and why do you now proceed to reward him?" Hsüan-tung then desisted.

It happened that [Chang] T'ing-kuei ceased [to be a court official] and then was raised to be senior officer of Ch'en-chou 辰州. At the court assembly at the capital, he submitted a memorial with the senior officer of Wei-chou 魏州 Ching Jang. Jang was the son of [Ching] Hui (whom Chou Li-chen had killed in 706), and was memorializing in disregard of his [junior] position. He stated, "Chou Li-chen, in order to earn favor with an evil official, killed your former official my father, Hui. May your majesty punish him correctly in order to acknowledge the world."

The serving censor of the Left Censorate Ti Chang 翟璋 impeached Jang for not awaiting clearance in coming forward, and requested to apply the law. But Hsüan-tung said, "To make a plaint about an injustice done to one's father cannot but be commendable; yet the procedures of the court cannot but be treated with solemnity." He then deprived [Ching] Jang of three months' stipend and further demoted [Chou] Li-chen to be senior officer of Yung-chou. Very soon after, he ordered [Chou] to commit suicide at Wu-chou.

It is this version of the death of Chou Li-chen, compiled nearly three and a half centuries after his death, that presents the most plausible context for Chou's imperially ordered suicide and that therefore offers the most convincing alternative testimony to the epitaph's account. For the modern reader, the choice between the two versions is not easy, and conclusive proof as to which was right is probably impossible. Several factors, however, in addition to those already argued above, point to the unreliability of the *Hsin Tang shu* version of his death and the probable accuracy of the epitaph.

The *Hsin Tang shu* reveals that Hsüan-tung confirmed twice after 714 that Chou Li-chen might expect to live on: first by overriding his edict of 714 and allowing Chou to take up a series of offices again; second by his masterly judgment punishing both Ching Jang and Chou Li-chen, with different but very carefully stipulated degrees of severity. He had also

received, and had declined to follow up, three memorials from Li Yung's friend the calligrapher Chang T'ing-kuei asking for harsher punishment for Chou. To kill him after all this, and thirteen years after the crimes that he was held to have committed, might seem not only unusual cruelty, but inconsistency as well. In his judgment punishing both Ching Jang and Chou Li-chen, moreover, it is possible to glimpse the authentic reaction of a powerful sovereign, who declined to take very seriously vendettas among his junior officials, and who favored an even-handed style of judgment when dealing with them.

More significant, there are persuasive grounds for querying the integrity of the *Hsin Tang shu*'s all-important final sentence, which states that "very soon after, [the Emperor] ordered him to commit suicide at Wu-chou." The evidence for this is contained in two of the institutional compendia. First, the episode that the *Hsin Tang shu* tells as the final incident in Chou's life is entered in a section of the *Tang hui yao* entitled "Recognizing Court Rank" (*chih pan* 知班).¹⁵⁸ This tells the story of Hsüan-tung's masterly judgment punishing both Chang T'ing-kuei and Ching Jang, and dates it at the first month of 719, that is, very close to his death that summer. Second, the same anecdote, with minor variations, is entered in the *Ts'ê fu yüan kuei*, where it is dated simply to the "middle K'ai-yüan." In this version, Hsüan-tung pronounced on their quarrel in much the same terms as in the *Tang hui yao* version, though here he deprived Ching Jang of one month's stipend only, rather than three as in the *Hsin Tang shu* and *Tang hui yao* accounts, and banished Chou Li-chen to be governor, rather than senior officer, of Yung-chou.¹⁵⁹

Neither version of this final episode in Chou Li-chen's career, however, proceeds to state, as the *Hsin Tang shu* biography of Chou does, that "very soon after, [Chou Li-chen] was ordered to commit suicide at Wu-chou." The omission of this sentence from both accounts can only mean that, when the Emperor's order demoting Chou Li-chen to be senior officer of Yung-chou was copied into the *Tang hui yao* and the *Ts'ê fu yüan kuei*, an order given "very soon after" that he commit suicide was not a part of the accounts on which they drew. The fact that in the *Ts'ê fu yüan kuei* the anecdote is entered in the "Plaints against Injustice" (*sung yüan* 訟冤) section, where an outcome ordering Chou Li-chen to commit suicide would have reinforced the theme of the section, makes it particularly unlikely that such an outcome was originally part of the account.

¹⁵⁸ THY 62, p. 1085.¹⁵⁹ T'FYK 875, pp. 22b-23a.

In conclusion, the final sentence of the *Hsin T'ang shu* account reads like an adaptation of the final sentence of the unreliable *Chiu T'ang shu*, but with an element of graphic confusion introduced by the similarity of the graphs 梧 and 桂. Imperially commissioned suicide would have appealed to neo-Confucian historians for reasons not dissimilar to those for which it appealed to their mid-eighth-century forebears, but even more strongly, in view of the more intense political-philosophical and moral climate of the eleventh century. The *Chiu T'ang shu* account, on which these historians were in general heavily dependent, stated that Chou had committed suicide on the Emperor's orders. They themselves felt that nothing less than the death penalty for Chou was appropriate. They therefore corrected the obvious errors that Chou's *Chiu T'ang shu* notice contained about those officials condemned to die with Chou, added the episode about the feud against him by Chang T'ing-kuei and Ching Jang, and with little compunction, perhaps even with a sense of relief, copied the final sentence of his *Chiu T'ang shu* notice as the definitive account of how he died.

It might be objected that the account of Chou's suicide and the events leading up to it that supplied the information for the final stage of Chou Li-ch'en's life in the *Hsin T'ang shu* notice might have existed in integral form outside the *T'ang hui yao* and the *T's'ue fu yüan kuei* and have been available to the *Chiu T'ang shu* compilers, and that they, intent on brevity, took only the final sentence, telling of Chou's suicide, and dispensed with the story of Ching Jang's attempt at revenge. If such an account had been available to them, however, they would not have committed the gross errors that they did in stating that soon after the Emperor's accession Chou was ordered to commit suicide at Kuei-chou postal station alongside two officials, Hsüeh Chi-ch'ang and Sung Chih-wen, who had died some years before.

THE EVIDENCE OF T'ANG BURIAL PRACTICE

Other arguments that support the epitaph's account of Chou Li-ch'en's death are more speculative. They involve considering not the reliability of the two different official versions, but information of a more general kind relating to T'ang funerary practice and the treatment of dead disgraced officials.

There are indications that, just as the graves of meritorious officials were maintained on imperial order,¹⁶⁰ so reburying in the north the body of

an official who had been disgraced and died in the far south required special permission, which was likely to be forthcoming only after a change in regime or a long lapse of time.¹⁶¹ But there are no suggestions whatever in the epitaph's account that Chou Li-ch'en's burial was delayed or was in any way irregular. The very procedures through which his body went at this stage suggest arguments against any such idea. Bringing a body back from the far south for reburial near Lo-yang was necessarily a public operation. It is hard to imagine also that burial in a family graveyard outside Lo-yang could be other than public. The burial of an eighth-century official normally involved an elaborate funeral procession and much other activity by numbers of people.¹⁶² The height and area of an official's tomb were specified, in accordance with his rank, by ordinance, as were the size and quantity of the grave goods buried with him.¹⁶³ In 712 there had been a suggestion that grave goods should be deployed at the site of the tomb and not carried in procession,¹⁶⁴ but this measure is unlikely to have been effective. Commemorative texts produced after an official's death, including family biographies (*chia-chuan* 家傳), dirges (*lei* 誄), and memorial stele (*pei* 碑), were subject to official scrutiny by the Bureau of Merit Assessments.¹⁶⁵ The reasons behind these measures were partly the state's wish to curb extravagance and to monitor an activity that had an important social dimension, but these provisions were also intended to ensure that commemorative biographies conformed to a minimum level of political accuracy.

It is unknown whether Chou Li-ch'en's burial outside Lo-yang late in 720 conformed to all these customs and regulations, but there are no grounds for inferring that it did not. There is no evidence for any delay in encoffining his body and transporting it back from the far south. On the contrary, the epitaph's implication that his son moved with filial promptness is borne out by the dates: Chou Li-ch'en was finally laid to rest near Lo-yang just under

¹⁶¹ *T'ang ta chao ling chi* 39, p. 181, and *Ch'üan T'ang wen* 73, p. 11a. An edict issued by Wen-tsung in the sixth month of 839 granted permission to Li Yüan-ch'en 李元真, a Taoist priestess and great-great-great-granddaughter of T'ai-tsung's eighth son, Li Chen 李貞, the Prince of Yüeh 越, to reinter the remains of four generations of her line at the grave of Li Chen, the whereabouts of which had to be ascertained. Li Chen's son Li Chen 珍, Duke of Lin-huai 臨淮, had been banished to the far south, and "for several generations they had lived in obscurity." The edict states that the case was specially deserving of compassion because it involved a "close clan." This in turn might suggest that reburial in the north of the remains of disgraced officials who were not members of the imperial clan needed special dispensation. See also *HTS* 80, p. 3577.

¹⁶² *Feng shih wen ch'ien chi* 6, p. 36. ¹⁶³ *THY* 38, p. 691. ¹⁶⁴ *THY* 38, p. 692.

¹⁶⁵ *T'ung tien* 通典 (Kuo-hsüeh chi-pen ts'ung-shu edn.) 3, p. 136A, entry for *k'ao-kung yüan-wai-lang* 考功員外郎.

¹⁶⁰ *THY* 45, p. 812, order of 848.

fifteen months after his death in 719. There is, therefore, a contrast between Chou Li-ch'en's burial and the cases of others involved in or mentioned in connection with his case. Chi Hsü, the "cruel official" of the Empress Wu's reign who died in the south, has no recorded epitaph, despite the fact that a fine epitaph stone exists for his son. The "Five Princes," two of whom died naturally in the far south, have no recorded epitaphs; nor is there any reference to their bodies being transported to the north. Li Yung was murdered in the southeast in 747, but his body had to wait for twenty years and for the initiative of a senior official to be brought back and reinterred near Lo-yang.¹⁶⁶ It is, therefore, not unreasonable to assume that Chou Li-ch'en's was a normal burial, not perhaps a well-attended one in view of his demotion to Yung-chou only months before his death, but not one of a man who had been humiliatingly condemned by the Emperor to end his own life.

Against the reliability of the epitaph's account, on the other hand, must be argued the status of epitaphs and of commemorative literature more generally. For despite the precautions taken by the state and occasional lofty statements about their true purpose,¹⁶⁷ epitaph texts and commemorative biographies generally throughout the dynasty had a poor reputation for being too laudatory and exaggerating the achievements of their subjects. It would be difficult to favor the evidence of the epitaph against that of the official historians, if the objection could be sustained that the reliability of the whole genre was vitiated by low standards as far as truth and restraint were concerned. The cynicism that surrounded epitaph texts was intensified because the composer of an epitaph customarily received payment for his services. Li Yung was mentioned as commanding a high price,¹⁶⁸ and doubtless Chang T'ing-kuei, who collaborated with him in providing calligraphy for his texts, also benefited. There were, therefore, social and financial, and certainly also in some cases political, pressures on epitaph writers to represent their subjects in the best possible light. The man who turned down financial reward and resisted a request to "plot the immortality" of a deceased senior official or colleague was rare indeed.¹⁶⁹ From the point of view of the official historians who had to receive and process commemorative biographical texts, the problem was severe. Dissatisfaction expressed itself

in a series of complaints that spans the second half of the eighth century and the first two decades of the ninth.¹⁷⁰

The extent to which epitaph texts conventionally glossed over their subjects' crimes and shortcomings in this way is illustrated by an example that dates from a century after Chou Li-ch'en's death. Despite its distance in time from the composition of Chou's epitaph and the fact that it is a transmitted rather than an unearthed example, this text is particularly suggestive for two reasons. First, it deals with a man who committed murders and therefore provides a parallel to the case of Chou Li-ch'en. Second, it was composed by the great Confucian moralist and revivalist Han Yü, whose collected works largely survive. Han Yü certainly emerges as an individual in ways that Chou Li-ch'en and the "Five Princes" do not. But he was also treated with exaggerated reverence, and considered to have exemplified the highest standards in political and private life.

Han Yü was a greatly sought after and prolific composer of epitaph texts. Indeed, as he himself recorded, it was said that "to be buried and not to have a text by Han Yü is not to be buried at all." Han Yü also adapted the epitaph form in new ways, departing freely from its conventions.¹⁷¹ Among the subjects for whom he composed an epitaph was Tu Chien 杜兼 (750-809), a colleague from his days as a staff officer under Chang Chien-feng 張建封 (735-800) at Hsü-chou 徐州. Tu Chien was guilty of putting to death two innocent men, not as Chou Li-ch'en had done on the orders of a superior but simply because they had thwarted his own plans. Like Chou Li-ch'en, he continued his official career after he had committed this crime. Han's text for this violent man was perhaps less eulogistic than some of his other epitaph compositions, and it was certainly a lot shorter than that of Sun Hao-jan for Chou Li-ch'en. Nonetheless, it praised Tu Chien for his friendship and largess, and there is in it no breath of criticism or suggestion that Tu Chien might have been a murderer.¹⁷² But an account of Tu Chien's murders survived, probably because his victims, though certainly not of the status of the "Five Princes," turned out to be men of standing; one was a *chin-*

¹⁶⁶ *CTCCTC*, no. 917, epitaph for Li Yung.

¹⁶⁷ *CTCCTC*, no. 719, epitaph for Miao Shan-wu.

¹⁶⁸ *Liu Yü-hsi chi* 39, p. 395; *CTS* 190B, p. 5043, biography of Li Yung. See also Hans H. Frankel, "T'ang Literati: A Composite Biography," in Arthur Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1962), pp. 77, 82.

¹⁶⁹ *Kuo shih pu*, B, p. 41.

¹⁷⁰ David L. McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1988), pp. 191-94.

¹⁷¹ *Han Ch'ang-li wen chi chiao chu* 6, p. 260, epitaph for Chang Chi-yü 張季友 (762-815). See above, n. 3, for examples of Han Yü's adapting the epitaph form to more personal ends. In *ibid.* 6, pp. 223-25, epitaph for K'ung K'an 孔戡 (754-810) and 7, pp. 305-8, epitaph for K'ung K'uei 孔戣 (751-824), the *ming* 銘 are, by early eighth-century convention, very short.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 225-26. For the background, see Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1985), pp. 40-44.

shih and both came from recognized families. The scandal of their murder reached the Emperor Te-tsung, who, infuriated by another incident involving Tu Chien, ordered that he be killed. Tu Chien's crime was also discussed by his contemporaries, including Han Yü's great friend Liu Tsung-yüan 柳宗元 (773–819),¹⁷³ and was later made central to Tu Chien's *Chiu T'ang shu* notice and was the subject of entries in the *Ts'ê fu yüan kuei*.¹⁷⁴

Here, then, is a case that shares features with that of Chou Li-chên. If a man with Han Yü's great reputation for uprightness and perception had concealed the real character of his subject, then surely the lowly Sun Hao-jan would hardly have hesitated to disguise the way in which Chou Li-chên, a man who had been his teacher, had lived and died. But although the parallels between the epitaphs for Chou Li-chên and Tu Chien are striking, there is one significant difference. Tu Chien's career never involved him, as Chou Li-chên's did, in the politics of dynastic crisis, and his career was not especially significant in T'ang history. Nor in the medium term did his murder of two well connected scholars result in public vendettas against him or in his ostracism by the official community. He was protected against Te-tsung's irritation at his crimes partly by his aristocratic pedigree and partly, his *Chiu T'ang shu* biography implies, because a relative, the senior official and great institutional historian Tu Yu 杜佑 (735–812), gave him support. Liu Tsung-yüan's essay discussing his murders thus argues that he had done good in office as well as evil and that moral judgment on him was a complex matter.

There was, therefore, no motive for official historians to alter the official account of Tu Chien's career in the interests of the dynasty or of factional enemies. The *Chiu T'ang shu* notice for him and Han Yü's epitaph, therefore, in other respects conform to each other. Both are brief, but not inaccurate, records of his career, and there is no parallel in them to the way in which the epitaph's account of Chou Li-chên's death contradicts his official biographies. It is, then, this stark contradiction in evidence over Chou Li-chên's death that remains the nub of the problem in his case. And for the reasons argued above, the powerful motive of dynastic loyalty, the need to find a scapegoat for the death of the "Five Princes," the late date of the compilation of the "Cruel Officials" section of the *Chiu T'ang shu*, and the need to honor

factional allegiances, it seems almost certain that the compilers of the notice for Chou Li-chên misrepresented the way in which he died.

THE OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHIES OF CHOU LI-CHEN IN PERSPECTIVE

For if T'ang epitaphs and commemorative biographies had acquired a reputation for unreliability, the dynastic history itself was also far from being above reproach. Many of the comments on the dynastic history that survive from the T'ang are formulated in particularly high-sounding language. Historians described themselves as wielders of enormous authority. They believed that they had a solemn task to sort out the record at the moral level, to "reward the good and punish the evil." At the same time, in the Confucian historiographical ideal, no departure from strict truth was justifiable. The account should be factual precisely because, in Confucian theory, the facts, properly selected, would demonstrate concisely, definitively, and for all time the truth of the Confucian political and ethical code. And the implications for the treatment of individuals or of bureaucratic factions were awe-inspiring in their finality. As Sun Ch'iao 孫樵 (fl. ca. 867), a follower of Han Yü, put it, "A chief minister may cause a man to rise or sink for ten years or so; but a historian will cause a man to stand forth or perish for hundreds or thousands of years. This is how the historian and the chief minister divide their authority over the living and the dead."¹⁷⁵

The official historians of the eighth and ninth centuries were aware of the great volume of laudatory commemorative texts that circulated in the T'ang, just as they knew of the existence of the many thousands of epitaph biographies that were buried in the crowded graveyards near Lo-yang. They also knew that this material was notionally of relevance to their own operation in compiling the dynastic record. But, aiming for an account that was to be both condensed and highly discriminating, they discounted almost all this evidence, in the name of concision and of what they believed was a greater moral objectivity.

In practice, of course, their lofty ideals were never realized. Official historians themselves represented the interests of a small and self-perpetuating minority in the serving bureaucracy. Official history was vitiated by manipulation involving a range of interests at every stage of the long and

¹⁷³ *Liu Ho-tung chi* 柳河東集 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1958) 14, pp. 226–27; the commentary states that Liu's composition is incomplete.

¹⁷⁴ *CTS* 146, p. 3969, and *HTS* 172, p. 3204, biographies of Tu Chien. See also *TFTK* 933, pp. 16a–b, and 945, p. 17b.

¹⁷⁵ *Sun Ch'iao chi* 孫樵集 (SPTK edn.) 5, p. 3b.

untidily process that resulted in the *Kuo shih*. It is to the credit of the T'ang historiographical tradition that T'ang historian-critics themselves, from Chou Li-chen's contemporary Liu Chih-chi to Han Yü and his disciples, identified most of these interests. Liu Chih-chi touched in general terms on the issue of the unreliability of commemorative biographies when he spoke of distortion at the level of the individual biography motivated by a desire on the part of individual ministers in power to glorify their own ancestors. He also wrote of the danger of relying too much on individual reports of conduct. He had a keen eye for the ways in which imperial dynastic interest had led to exaggeration.¹⁷⁶ Han Yü emphasized the high moral responsibility of the historian to record the moral truth. He censured the historians of his time for allowing political interests to distort their narratives so drastically as to make them useless.¹⁷⁷

Despite this well-established tradition of criticizing the dynastic history, however, it is hard to believe that for T'ang official historians Chou Li-chen and the manner of his death could have represented more than a minor issue. In their view, a sense of indignation that the "Five Princes" should have perished so ignominiously was in itself an almost laudable thing. The absence in the dynastic history fifty or sixty years after Chou's death of a section devoted to cruel officials gave them a chance, metaphorically, to sound the dynastic drum. It offered them an opportunity to settle, in the name of morality, old factional scores, for they inherited the view that Wu San-ssu and his followers had been evil men. They followed Li Yung in extolling the achievements of Ti Jen-chieh and the "Five Princes," and they recollected imperfectly that Li Yung's friend Chang T'ing-kuei and others had hated Chou Li-chen and tried unsuccessfully to take revenge on him. They may even have been influenced by the fact that descendants of one of the "Five Princes," Ts'ui Hsüan-wei, held exalted office in the middle decades of the eighth century. The moral and social principles demonstrated by an order from Hsüan-tsung that Chou Li-chen should kill himself were more valuable to them than the factual accuracy they rejected, the edification of their readers more desirable than the reliability of their account. The act of distortion for which they were responsible over the final episode in Chou Li-chen's life was justifiable; it was no more than a petty infringement of their code.

¹⁷⁶ Pulleyblank, "Chinese Historical Criticism: Liu Chih-chi and Ssu-ma Kuang," in Beasley and Pulleyblank, eds., *Historians of China and Japan*, pp. 136-51.

¹⁷⁷ Jack Dull, "Han Yü: A Problem in T'ang Dynasty Historiography," in Yao Ts'ung-wu et al., eds., *International Association of Historians of China, Second Conference Proceedings* (Taipei, 1964), pp. 80-86.

To modern historians, however, the conflict of evidence, between the "ineradable authority" that the Emperor and the official historians hoped the dynastic history would provide and the engraved statement of the epitaph, is informative in ways that could never have occurred to T'ang historians. It warns against the danger of accepting as reliable the harsh moral categories that many medieval scholars, writing not only for the official history but in many other contexts as well, adopted. It suggests that official accounts of court and dynastic crises may be less accurate over details than has been supposed. It indicates that historians, and the official community generally, had long, though sometimes imperfect, memories for factional disputes. The small size, continuity, and social cohesiveness of this community contributed to its ability to sustain its political and social perspectives through generations. Official history in the decades immediately before and after the An Lu-shan rebellion was in the hands of a self-perpetuating group, revolving to some extent around figures like the influential chief examiner Sun Ti. This group had political and social origins in the early eighth century, precisely the period of the T'ang restoration. The presence in their community of descendants of those who had been involved in factional struggles a generation before caused continuing distortion of the objectivity of the historical record long after the events.

Analysis of the case of Chou Li-chen has also suggested the importance of the distinction between the imperial interest and the interest of official scholars in politics. It throws light on the complex stages involved in compiling the "Cruel Officials" section of the *Chiu T'ang shu's* account of the political events of Hsüan-tsung's reign. It shows that the dynasty's elaborate posthumous status systems, in which the History Office itself, functioning as a reference department, was involved, and in which both emperors and officials had an interest, can provide the modern investigator with an important category of evidence with which to document changing political attitudes. It proves that buried epitaph texts may contain significant clues toward the reconstruction of complex episodes of T'ang political life.

In summary, the arguments for the factual accuracy of Sun Hao-jan's account of the manner of Chou Li-chen's death and against that of the two official biographies rest on a complex of factors operating over a period of 350 years. The arguments that he did not die on the Emperor's orders are persuasive, just as the motives for the official sources' representing him otherwise are clear. His case illustrates that, if the commemorative biographical literature that was produced on the margins of the official system was often too laudatory to provide reliable accounts of its subjects, official

Chronological Table Showing Posthumous Honors Conferred on the "Five Princes"

RULER AND YEAR	HUAN YEN-FAN	CHING HUI	Ts'ui HSÜAN-WEI	CHANG CHIEN-CHIH	YÜAN SHU-CHI
Jui-tsung: 710	(653-706) Fief restored	(d. 706) Fief restored Canonized as Su-min	(d. 706) Sons: Chü, Huan; g'son: Tsung	(c. 626-706) Fief restored	(d. 706) Fief restored
	Son, g'son to inherit fief Desc. to hold office				
Hsüan-tsung: 714		Desc. to hold office Commdr.-gen. of Ch'ing-chou	Desc. to hold office	Desc. to hold office Pres. of Secretariat	Desc. to hold office
			Son made <i>ch'ao-san ta-fu</i>	Son made <i>ch'ao-san ta-fu</i>	
718	Tablet in ancest. temple	Tablet in ancest. temple	Tablet in ancest. temple	Tablet in ancest. temple	Tablet in ancest. temple
Te-tsung: 780	Meritorious official Master of commoners as further app't	Meritorious official Gd. marshal as further app't	Meritorious official Gd. tutor	Meritorious official Master of commoners as further app't	Meritorious official Gd. tutor to crown P.
789	Portrait in Wu-ying tien	Portrait in Wu-ying tien	Portrait in Wu-ying tien	Portrait in Wu-ying tien	Portrait in Wu-ying tien
Hsien-tsung: 807		G'son promoted	G'son promoted		G'son promoted
808	Canonized as Chung-lich	Canonized as Chung-lich	Canonized as Wen-chung	Canonized as Wen-chen Office to gt.-g'son	Canonized as Chung-lich
Wen-tsung: 838	Desc. not found	Gt.-g'son promoted	Gt.-g'son promoted	Gt.-gt.-g'son promoted	Gt.-g'son promoted
Hsüan-tsung: 848	Portrait sought for Ling-yen ko	Portrait sought for Ling-yen ko	Portrait sought for Ling-yen ko	Portrait sought for Ling-yen ko	Portrait sought for Ling-yen ko

NOTE: P = prince; Desc. = descendant; Gd. = grand; G'son = grandson; app't = appointment

history, for all the lofty ideals put forward in its name, was also capable of falsification.

APPENDIX

Chou Li-chen's Place of Origin and Line of Descent

The place of origin given in the epitaph for Chou Li-chen involves a geographical contradiction and very possibly a confusion between Chou family lines. The claim of origin from An-ch'eng 安成 or 城 for those surnamed Chou was an old one. It involved tracing descent from the second son of King P'ing 平 of the Chou, Lieh 烈, who was enfeoffed as Marquis of Ju-fen 汝墳, an area changed under the Ch'in to Ju-nan chün 汝南郡. Twenty generations later, a Former Han descendant of this line, Chou Jen 周仁, was enfeoffed as Marquis of Ju-fen or Ju-nan, but moved to An-ch'eng. See *HTS* 74B, p. 3181; cf. *Yüan-ho hsing tsuan* 5, p. 19b. Tu Mu 杜牧 (803-852) in *Fan-ch'uan wen chi* 樊川文集 (Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1978) 7, p. 119, epitaph for Chou Ch'ih (793-851), makes essentially this claim, though he gives the figure of only eighteen generations from Lieh to Jen. A number of the Chou lines in the T'ang dynasty, including Chou Li-chen's (*Yüan-ho hsing tsuan* 5, p. 20), claimed descent from this Former Han ancestor Chou Jen.

An-ch'eng in Ju-nan, where Chou Jen had been enfeoffed, was also the place of origin claimed for numbers of eminent officials surnamed Chou in the period from the Han to the T'ang. It was probably the most prestigious place from which any official surnamed Chou could claim origin. In the pre-T'ang period, Chou Fei 周斐 of the Wei dynasty had compiled a work entitled *Ju-nan hsien hsien chuan* 汝南先賢傳, which is likely to have centered on this line (see *Sui shu* 33, p. 974; *CTS* 46, p. 2000; *HTS* 58, p. 1479). The following are examples of Chou biographies in pre-T'ang official histories for whom An-ch'eng in Ju-nan was entered as the place of origin: *CS* 61, p. 1657, Chou Chün 周浚 (also entered under this heading in *Yüan-ho hsing tsuan* 5, p. 19b); *Nan Ch'i shu* 南齊書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1972) 41, p. 730; Chou Yung 周顒 (also entered in *Yüan-ho hsing tsuan* 5, p. 19b); *Liang shu* 梁書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1973), Chou She 周捨 (*Yüan-ho hsing tsuan* 5, p. 19b); *Sui shu* 65, p. 1526, Chou Fa-tseng 周法僧 (*Yüan-ho hsing tsuan* 5, p. 20b, as being from another line descended from Chou Jen, claiming Yung-an 永安, in modern Canton province, as its place of origin since Western Chin; see Sun Hsing-yen's commentary). In the lifetime of Chou Li-chen, the name was fresh in the minds of scholars because Chou Yün-yüan 周允元 (d. 695), a chief minister under the Empress Wu, was said to be from An-ch'eng in Yü-chou 豫州 (see *CTS* 90, p. 2924, and *HTS* 114, p. 4205, and 74B, p. 3182). Yü-chou was a general administrative headquarters that oversaw Ju-nan commandery (see *CTS* 38, p. 1434; cf. *Yüan-ho hsing tsuan* 5, p. 20b, which enters Chou Yün-yüan as descended from Chou Jen, but with Lin-ju 臨汝 rather than Ju-nan or An-ch'eng as his place of origin).

The epitaph's claim that Chou Li-chen came from Lu-chiang (usually written 廬江) in Ju-nan is geographically impossible, in that Lu-chiang was in Anhui, south of modern Ho-fei 合肥 (*Sui shu* 31, p. 875, and *CTS* 41, p. 1576), and was therefore

some distance from Ju-nan and An-ch'eng. But Lu-chiang was the place of origin of what was by T'ang times claimed as a separate line of the Chou clan. This line featured a succession of officials starting with Chou Jung 周榮 of the Later Han, his son Chou Hsing 周興, grandson Chou Ching 周景, great-grandsons Chou Ch'ung 周崇 and Chou Chung 周忠, and great-great-grandson Chou Hui 周暉 (*HHS* 45, pp. 1536-38, and *CS* 58, p. 1578, which specifically mentions the move to Lu-chiang). In the San-kuo period, this line continued with Chou Yü 周喻, a celebrated general of the kingdom of Wu 吳 who in the T'ang commanded a high reputation, for whom a temple and tomb stood and to whom visiting scholars paid tribute (*WYTH* 716, pp. 5a-b; Hu Tseng 胡曾, *Ts'ai tiao chi* 才調集, in *T'ang jen hsüan* *T'ang shih* 唐人選唐詩 [Peking: Chung-hua, 1958] 9, p. 640). In the Five Dynasties period, an official surnamed Chou claimed descent from Chou Yü, on the grounds that he came from a Chou family that had lived for generations in the proximity of Chou Yü's tomb; see Hsü Hsüan 徐鉉 (916-991), *Hsü kung wen chi* 徐公文集 (SPTK edn.) 11, p. 12; *Shih kuo ch'un ch'iu* 十國春秋 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1983) 7, p. 110, biography of Chou Pen 周本. Chou Yü had sons named Chou Hsün 循 and Chou Yin 胤 (*SKC* 54, pp. 1259-67). In the Chin, this line is recorded as continuing with five more generations (*CS* 58, pp. 1578-87).

After the Chin, no member of this Lu-chiang line was accorded an official biography, and none had achieved eminence under the Sui or early T'ang. However, the *Yüan-ho hsing tsuan* supplies some details of the line at a late stage in its pre-T'ang history, mentioning also that it claimed descent from Chou Jen. Before mentioning Chou Li-chen himself, it provides two names that go some way to bridging the gap in the Lu-chiang line between the Chin ancestors and Chou Li-chen. The names are Chou Shih-heng 周士衡, who served on the staff of the Prince of Kuei-yang 桂陽 under the Ch'en dynasty (for this prince, who died in 583, see *Ch'en shu* 陳書 [Peking: Chung-hua, 1972] 29, p. 364). An epitaph by Ch'üan Te-yü 權德輿 (759-818) tracing the immediate ancestry of a certain Chou Wei 周渭 (740-805), mentions a Sui ancestor Chou Heng-shih 衡仕, who might be the same person as Chou Shih-heng, Chou Li-chen's great-grandfather. If so, then Chou Wei's grandfather Chou Shou-tse 周守則 was likely to have been one of Chou Li-chen's nearest relatives in the T'ang official service (see *Ch'üan Tsai-chih wen chi* 23, pp. 7b-9a). Chou Shih-heng's grandson was Chou Chi 績, entered as an assistant of the Court of Punishments in the T'ang. The rank was lower-sixth degree, upper class, and there were six (*TTLT* 18, p. 7a). The title here is wholly consistent with a tenure between 684 and 705, during which period the Court of Justice (Ta-li ssu 大理寺) was renamed the Court of Punishments (Ssu-hsing ssu 司刑寺). Chou Li-chen was Chou Chi's son, and with him is entered Chou Li-she 周利涉, presumably Chou Li-chen's brother, whose post is given as secretary of the Bureau of Judicial Control.

Chou Li-chen, if this information relating to the Lu-chiang line is accepted, came from a family that had achieved very high status in the Later Han period and in the century that followed. This family may have retained its economic base and traditions sufficiently to continue to have access to office in the southern dynasties. In the Ch'en dynasty and early in the T'ang, Chou Li-chen's immediate ancestors had held socially prestigious but politically insignificant posts. Though the Lu-chiang line was by the T'ang period distinct from and probably less respected than the

prestigious An-ch'eng line, the claim of the epitaph that Chou Li-ch'en's ancestors had held civil and military office over many generations is an appropriate one. In terms of such claims, the epitaph is fairly modest, in that it did not suggest that Chou Li-ch'en's forebears had "shed luster on the histories," a conventional way of stating that they had been the subject of official biographies. Nor did it refer to the high reputation that the San-kuo general Chou Yü enjoyed, though a Chou of a generation before Chou Li-ch'en's did so; see *Mang Lo chung mu ssu pien* 3, p. 16b, "Epitaph for the Late Lady Chou" (583-665).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHC	<i>The Cambridge History of China</i>
CS	<i>Chin shu</i> 晉書
CTCCTC	<i>Ch'ien T'ang chih chai ts'ang chih</i> 千唐誌齋藏誌
CTS	<i>Chiu T'ang shu</i> 舊唐書
HHS	<i>Hou Han shu</i> 後漢書
HS	<i>Han shu</i> 漢書
HTS	<i>Hsin T'ang shu</i> 新唐書
SC	<i>Shih chi</i> 史記
SKC	<i>San kuo chih</i> 三國志
TCTC	<i>Tzu chih t'ung chien</i> 資治通鑑
TFYK	<i>Ts' e fu yüan kuei</i> 冊府元龜
THY	<i>T'ang hui yao</i> 唐會要
TTLT	<i>Ta T'ang liu tien</i> 大唐六典
WH	<i>Wen hsüan</i> 文選
WYYH	<i>Wen yüan ying hua</i> 文苑英華