Collecting Memories of a Fading Glory:
Li Deyu (787-850) and the Transmission of Tang Anecdotes

by

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Thesis Abstract

Anecdotes, or *yishi* 軼事 (scattered affairs) and *yiwen* 遺聞 (uncollected stories) in their original Chinese context, are in a sense recovered traces of the past. That is to say, for many Tang literati, to collect anecdotes was to catch fading memories of a recent past, and to offer explanations of, or pass judgments on, this period of history. This thesis seeks to show how Tang literati like Li Deyu李德裕 (787-850) and his contemporaries, by collecting and publicizing anecdotes, actively participated in recording and reflecting on the Kaiyuan 開元 (713-741) and Tianbao 天寶 (742-756) reigns before these periods became part of the official historical record.

Anecdote collections appeared in great numbers in China between the eighth and ninth centuries. But they received little scholarly attention until recently, partly due to their heterogeneous contents and marginalized status. Facing these challenges, the current thesis seeks to restore a set of anecdote collections of this period to the original context of their production and circulation. It reviews anecdotes collected by the influential Tang statesman and literatus Li Deyu and his contemporaries. These anecdotes, featuring Li Deyu as a collector, informant, and, at times, the subject himself, establish a solid basis for exploring this understudied genre that flourished in the Tang dynasty.

This study consists of five parts. Chapter 1, the introduction and theoretical framework of this thesis, examines the role of anecdotes in Chinese literary history, and in particular, in the context of Tang narratives. Chapter 2 re-examines biographical materials on Li Deyu in the two official histories, uncovering traces of competing narratives beneath the seemingly homogeneous surface of official accounts. This chapter further explores Li Deyu's participation in collecting and circulating anecdotes, as seen in official and unofficial materials, thus relating these unofficial materials to official narratives.

Chapter 3 examines the historical, social, and literary context of Li Deyu's *Ci Liushijiuwen* 次柳氏舊聞 (Sequenced Old Stories Heard from Mr. Liu). In 834, Li Deyu presented this collection to Emperor Wenzong 文宗 (r. 827-840), soon after Li made a political

comeback. This collection was part of a trend to revive the High Tang aura and also aided Li Deyu's self-fashioning as a learned official-scholar. Through close readings of these anecdotes, this chapter submits that anecdote collection opened up literary space for literati to "narrativize" their own experience or simply what they had heard or witnessed. This new literary form also allowed Tang literati to participate in recording and reflecting on a period of history that was still in the making.

Chapter 4 analyzes anecdotes collected by Li Deyu's contemporaries and his successors, especially, entries in Wei Xuan's 韋絢 (802-866) *Rongmu xiantan* 戎幕閒談 (Idle Talk from the Military Headquarters), and Liu Cheng's 柳珵 (fl.827) *Changshi yanzhi* 常侍言旨 (Essentials of the Attendant-in-Ordinary's Accounts). It illustrates how anecdotes compiled by and about Li Deyu became a fertile source for later anecdotes and, conversely, how subsequent anecdotes complement or compete with Li Deyu's reconstruction of the past. The concluding chapter revisits the genre of anecdote and discusses an interesting pattern—the negotiation between the center and the margin in the transmission of Tang anecdotes.

Anecdotes collected by Li Deyu and his peers exemplify the richness, breadth, and complexity of this literary genre in the ninth century. They jointly preserved memories and records that would otherwise have sunk into obscurity. They also competed with each other in the reconstruction of the past. Methodologically, this thesis supports other recent studies that break the generic limitation imposed by early modern scholars on Tang narratives. Instead, it seeks to explicate anecdote as a fluid genre straddling the lines between oral and written traditions, personal account and collective memory, and literature and historiography.

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The "Acknowledgements" of doctoral thesis is itself an intriguing genre. Here, scholars come to the foreground to tell the story of their research and resulting writings from a more personal perspective. Yet it isn't easy to relate a cohesive account of one's intellectual growth which, in any case, doesn't always have a clear and straightforward linear trajectory. Nonetheless, I will try to do so here. Thus, for me it has been more of a very gradual process of learning to ease the "anxiety of originality" and adapt to the inevitable "uncertainties" in scholarly research and life. Most importantly I am deeply indebted to all those who guided, inspired, and accompanied me throughout this journey to the completion of my doctoral thesis. Without their steadfast support, I would never have become who I am today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: ANECDOTES IN THE CONTEXT OF TANG NARRATIVES

1.1 Anecdotes of the Past and the Present

This dissertation is a study of anecdotes from the Tang dynasty (619-907), attempting to define, describe, and analyze them in the context of Tang narratives. Anedotes are normally short narratives usually involving no more than 2 or 3 characters focused around one event, often an unusual event. The ancedotes this thesis studies feature public figures, their doings in private time, and their interactions with other literati. Stories told and retold by literati of the Tang dynasty, especially those known as *chuanqi* or sometimes as *zhiguai*, are usually called "tales" in the West.[1] This is not to say that there is always a clearly-defined boundary between tales and anecdotes. By using the term *anecdote*, this thesis seeks to highlight a body of materials largely overshadowed by *chuanqi* and *zhiguai* tales in previous scholarship on Tang narratives.

It should be noted, however, that there was no single term for "anecdote" in eighth and ninth century China. Instead, these materials were often referred to as *yishi* 軼事/逸事 (scattered or lost affairs/stories) or yiwen 遗闻 (ignored or uncollected news/stories). The larger question is why one should even care about such anecdotes, and why, even if some value could be found in them, focus on this particular epoch? Before dealing with these two questions, let us turn to a

[1] As William H. Nienhauser, Jr. notes, the term "tale" was perhaps first used by Patrick Hanan to designate the dichotomy between "classical language tale" and the "vernacular story." See Nienhauser, "Introduction: Notes for a History of the Translation of Tang Tales," in Nienhauser, ed., *Tang Dynasty Tales: A Guided Reader* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2010), xiv.

recent anecdote about Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

In April 2013, China's internet was swamped with reports and discussions of a trivial news item—President Xi Jinping hopped into a taxi during Beijing's notorious rush-hour and chatted with the taxi-driver on his ride through the Downtown.

On April 18, 2013, *Ta Kung Pao* (*TKP*), a pro-Beijing newspaper in Hong Kong, first circulated this "news" by devoting an entire section of its website to this unusual story. *TKP*'s report, "The Adventure of a Beijing Taxi-Driver: I Had General Secretary Xi Jinping in the Back of My Cab" (北京"的哥"奇遇：習總書記坐上了我的車), was, for the most part, a first-person account of this purported encounter with President Xi from the perspective of Guo Lixin 郭立新, a 46-year old taxi-driver in Beijing. Guo relates how he picked up two unknown passengers and after a short conversation, recognized President Xi Jinping himself. The conversation between Xi and Guo, though brief, touched upon many pressing issues in the lives of ordinary people in Beijing, from air pollution to monthly incomes. *TKP*'s report also contained many concrete details, for instance, the taxi-ride took place between 7:08 p.m. and 7:34 p.m., covered 8.2 miles from Western Gulou street 鼓樓西大街 to the Diaoyutai State Guest Restaurant (釣魚台大酒店),[2] and cost 27 RMB. Guo Lixin supposedly also obtained from President Xi a handwritten note wishing him "Saft Travels" 一路順風, also featured on the *TKP* website along with other "visual evidence."

One may well regard this account of an "unusual encounter" as an anecdote, that is, an unverified short story about an unusual event or a public figure. Such anecdotes allow a peek

[2] The restaurant, a famous hotel complex in Beijing, was once a royal retreat, but was later renovated in 1959 into an important venue for gatherings of foreign dignitaries and state activities.

into the private life of a well-known personage and promise to provide an insider's knowledge otherwise unknown to the rest of the world. But what kind of information does this anecdote on President Xi attempt to convey? First, it casts President Xi Jiping in a very positive light. He is down-to-earth, caring about the life of ordinary people, and willing to share their pain and frustration. These qualities enhance his image as a "Man of the People," which Chinese state media have made great efforts to create ever since Xi became Communist Party General Secretary. Toward that end, shortly after President Xi assumed power in December, 2012, Xinhua published his profile along with photos of his work and home life under the headline, "Xi Jinping: Man of the People, Statesman of Vision." Several months after this purported taxi-ride, Xi Jinping was seen to drop in at a steamed-bun restaurant in Beijing. Only, this time, the mainstream media accepted this report. Regardless of whom initiated this anecdote of Xi's taxi-ride, it became part of the larger project of Xi's image building.

Compared with other materials, anecdotes as a genre have their distinct way of treating the subject matter. An anecdote relays special, personal knowledge of an important figure just by telling a story. This anecdote about Xi Jinping was characterized on the internet as a tale of "weifu sifang" 微服私訪 (traveling incognito), a phrase often used to describe an emperor's alleged secret forays. Still "traveling incognito" does not fully convey all the important narrative features of this anecdote. Traveling incognito, as the title suggests, adopts the emperor's perspective and sees the world through his eyes. To the contrary, the taxi-ride anecdote is told from the driver's point of view, rather than the president's. Readers familiar with tales and anecdotes would immediately recognize in this anecdote the "adventure formula" that usually contains three "actions": 1) A traveler chances upon a stranger; 2) The two interact and the traveler discovers the stranger's identity; 3) The stranger departs, and the traveler resumes his

journey. The exact sequence of the actions above varies from story to story but the focus of these "adventure stories" is either to reveal new information and knowledge or describe a novel experience rarely known to the rest of the world.[3] This specific anecdote attempts to show Xi Jinping's life and deeds outside of his office routine. The narrative aims to reinforce Xi's image as "Man of the People" by showing the continuity between his public and private life. The third-person perspective further serves to increase the narrative's pervasive power.

The circulation of this anecdote about Xi Jinping is as interesting as its content. Xinhua She 新華社, China's state-run news agency, confirmed this story, citing authorities in the Department of Transportation. Surprisingly Xinhua suddenly reversed itself in the afternoon and declared the report to be a "fake." Right after this announcement, *TKP* issued an apology for "making such mistakes at work and allow such a significant piece of fake news to appear." The report was quickly removed from major media sources.

Researchers tend to focus on the reliability of anecdotal materials, yet what makes anecdotes appealing to readers and listeners lies partially in their "unverifiability." When BBC wanted to uncover the "truth" behind this story, its journalists tried to find out more about the driver Guo Lixin through his taxi company which only confirmed his existence but refused to answer any further questions. It also turned out to be even more difficult, if not completely impossible, to get a confirmation from President Xi Jinping. As the journalists explained, "China has no spokesperson for the President, so there is no designated place where you could lodge such a question—and, even if there was, you would be unlikely to get a response." BBC's inability to verify this event is no accident. Instead, it epitomizes the unbridgeable gap between

[3] The exact sequence of the actions above varies from story to story. For instance, in some stories, the traveler does not realize who the stranger is until after the latter's departure. Among these actions, the process of discovery, which often consists of a series of complications, is usually the climax of the narrative.

anecdotes and their readers and listeners. Anecdotes are hard to verify because ordinary audience/readers of the anecdote can hardly have any direct contact with the featured figures. After all, it is the very inaccessibility to public figures that gives rise to anecdotes surrounding them. One might verify a story with another witness, but any personal verification of this sort, once put into words, would simply become yet another anecdote.

Based on such an understanding of anecdotes, the shifting attitude of China's state media towards this specific anecdote becomes more intriguing. Although anecdotes are in their very nature "unverifiable," authorities sometimes label them as "real" or "fake." If "real", an anecdote usually will be incorporated into a larger narrative. But if "fake," then they are rejected. Those left unnoticed will continue to circulate as anecdotes. As to this taxi-ride anecdote, it is hard to determine whether the state media was directly involved in its invention and dissemination. Probably, the state media saw this anecdote's potential propaganda value, perhaps hoping to incorporate Xi's image-building. But as more people came to question the story's reliability, state media eventually decided to discard it as fake news. Moreover, the anecdote's journey, from anecdote to "fake" news, reveals that while anecdotes can be employed for reputation and image-building, they are hard, if not impossible, to control once set into circulation even by those who invented them.

The materials studied in this thesis are, in many ways, different from this anecdote about President Xi. But anecdotes are not a modern invention. They can be found in abundance in literary, philosophical, and historical writings of pre-modern China. An early example of the use of anecdotes in historiography is Sima Qian's 司馬遷 *The Grand Scribe's Records*. In his comments on the "The Biography of Guan (Zhong) and Yan (Ying)" 管蔡列傳, the Grand Scribe observes:

> I have read Mr. Guan's 'Shepherding the People,' 'Mountains are High,' 'Chariots and Horses,' 'Light and Heavy,' 'Nine Bureaus,' and the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Yan*. Detailed are their discussions about these matters. Since I have seen their writings, I wanted to observe the way they put their words into practice and have, for this reason, compiled biographies of them. As for their writings, they are widely available now. Because of this, I did not discuss them [in this biography], but instead, spoke of **affairs that have become scattered and neglected (*yishi,* 軼事)**.
>
> 太史公曰：吾讀管氏《牧民》、《山高》、《乘馬》、《輕重》、《九府》及《晏子春秋》，詳哉其言之也。既見其著書，欲觀其行事，故次其傳。至其書，世多有之，是以不論，論其軼事。[4]

This passage reveals Sima Qian's view of the function of different types of writing: While an author's primary text sets forth first-person claims, a biography focuses on his actual behavior, or in Sima Qian's words, "how one puts his words into practice." Anecdotes, in Sima Qian's opinion, provide an unusual angle to or interesting information about a subject which is highly expressive in this regard.

Indeed, anecdotes play a significant role in Chinese historiography. They are found in almost every dynastic history, especially in the "arranged biographies" (*liezhuan*, 列傳).[5] As a strictly narrative form, the anecdote still had to wait another three hundred years or so after the

[4] I consulted the translation in Andrew Feldherr *et al*. ed., *The Oxford History of Historical Writing* Vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 472.

[5] On the role of the anecdote in early historical narrative, see David Schaberg, "Chinese History and Philosophy," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, p. 393-414 and David Schaberg, "Word of Mouth and The Sources of Western Han History," in Jack W. Chen and David Schaberg ed., *Idle Talk: Gossip and Anecdote in Traditional China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 17-37.

compilation of the *Shiji* before becoming regarded as something "collectable" in its own right. The earliest extant collections of anecdotes date back to the 3rd and 4th centuries. Not until the 8th and 9th centuries did these collections appear in great numbers. In the traditional bibliographic system, these materials were sometimes classified as "*xiaoshuo*" 小說 (literally, "small talk") under the section of philosophy (*zibu*, 子部); at other times under "*zashi*" 雜史 (miscellaneous history) within the section of history (*shibu*, 史部). In modern scholarship, these materials came to be known as a type of *wenyan xiaoshuo* 文言小說 (classical tales), *biji* 筆記 (jottings, sketches) or even *biji xiaoshuo* 筆記小說. Each of these terms is associated with a particular understanding of this literary corpus. Hence, the need to apprehend the denotation and connotation of these terms.

1.2 *Xiaoshuo, Biji* and the Tang Anecdotes

The term *xiaoshuo* (literally, "small talk") was initially introduced in the first century as a bibliographic category, but gradually took on the meaning of "fiction" through Western influences in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[6] *Xiaoshuo* first appeared as a bibliographic category in "*Yiwen zhi*" 藝文志 (Bibliographic Treatise) of the *Hanshu* 漢書 (The Book of Han). The historian Ban Gu 班固 (A.D. 32-92) categorized this work as the last of ten schools of philosophers, and characterized it as "street talk and alley gossip, created by those who engaged

[6] Ouyang Xiu in the *XTS* shows by his inclusion of certain works under *xiaoshuo* that the Song concept of *xiaoshuo* does not exclude the modern idea of *xiaoshuo* as fiction. But it is mainly in the twentity century scholars started to embrace the modern idea of *xiaoshuo* and consciously used it to reassess works in the traditional category of *xiaoshuo*.

in conversations along the roads and walkways" 街談巷語, 道聽途說者之所造也. Ban Gu traces the origin of *xiaoshuo* to the tradition of minor officials collecting intelligence about people during the Zhou dynasty. He believes these materials may prove to be informative but, if pursued too far, one may get bogged down in their study.[7] Ban Gu's definition of *xiaoshuo* laid the foundation for subsequent bibliographies in official histories and largely influenced people's understanding of *xiaoshuo* in the first millennium.

At the turn of the twentieth century, however, the introduction of the Western concept of fiction led intellectuals to reexamine and reevaluate these materials in the traditional bibliographic category of *xiaoshuo*. The infusion of the concept of "fiction" in the traditional category of *xiaoshuo* created a lasting mark on the study of pre-modern Chinese literature. As Glen Dudbridge insightfully points out, "Fiction/*xiaoshuo* became canonical in the twentieth century, and historians of Chinese literature have ever since been content to refocus their categories accordingly."[8] In the study of Tang narratives, the strongest argument is Lu Xun's theory that *xiaoshuo*/fiction changed fundamentally in the Tang dynasty with the emergence of

[7] The original statement goes as below: The *xiaoshuo* school probably evolved from the office of petty officials. The works were street talk and alley gossip, created by those who engaged in conversations along the roads and walkways. Confucius once said: "Although a petty path, there is surely something to be seen in it. But if pursued too far, one may get bogged down; hence gentlemen do not undertake it themselves." But neither do gentlemen dismiss [such talk]. Even things mentioned by those of lesser knowledge, let them be collected and not forgotten, on the chance they might contain a useful phrase or two—these were at least the opinions of rustics and eccentrics. 小說家者流，蓋出於稗官，街談巷語，道聽途說者之所造也。孔子曰：“雖小道，必有可觀者焉，致遠恐泥，是以君子弗為也。”然亦弗滅也。閭里小知者之所及，亦使綴而不忘。如或一言可採，此亦芻蕘狂夫之議也. I consulted the translations by Kenneth J. DeWoskin, and Yang Hsien-Yi and Gladys Yang. See DeWoskin, "The Sou-Shen-Chi and the Chih-Kuai Tradition: A Bibliographic and Generic Study" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1974), pp. 195-96. Yang Hsien-Yi and Gladys Yang trans., *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1959), p. 3.

[8] See Glen Dudbridge, "Question of Classification," p. 197.

chuanqi 傳奇 (literally, transmission of the marvelous) tales. In Lu Xun's history of Chinese fiction, the *chuanqi* tales derive from *zhiguai* 志怪 (records of the strange) tales of the Six Dynasties but they signal an evolution in narrative complexity, style, and diction, the use of imagination, and, most importantly, as "fiction written with intent" 有意為小說.[9] As Sarah Allen also notes, Lu Xun did not wholly equate the *chuanqi* tales with modern fiction since he pointed out that Tang *chuanqi* tales "still could not divorce themselves from collecting the strange and recording what had been left out [of historical accounts]" 尚不離於搜奇記逸. Nevertheless, Lu Xun's praise of these *chuanqi* tales is based on the ground that they are closer to the concept of modern fiction, thus leading to the now well-accepted view that the Tang *chuanqi* tales were the prototype, if not the earliest examples, of Chinese fiction.

This thesis deals with anecdotes that clearly do not belong to *chuanqi* or *zhiguai*, the two important generic terms Lu Xun coins in his *Brief History of Chinese Fiction*. Many scholars identify this body of materials with what Lu Xun calls *zhiren xiaoshuo* 志人小說 (tales of men), a special term Lu Xun invented to address anecdotes about real historical figures. Yet the real question here is whether this term is consistent with the corpus of the literature under discussion.

Lu Xun first coined the term *zhiren* in his lectures on Chinese fiction in the city of Xi'an, which was later published in 1924 as a lengthy article "The Historical Development of Chinese Fiction" (*zhongguo xiaoshuo de lishi bianqian*, 中國小說的歷史變遷). Lu Xun applied this term to *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 and works of this kind during the Six Dynasties in parallel to the *zhiguai* stories (records of anomalies), but he never precisely defined *zhiren*. But one may

[9] For a careful and precise translation of Lu Xun's argument, see William H. Nienhauser, Jr., "Creativity and Storytelling in the Ch'uan-ch'i: Shen Ya-chih's T'ang Tales," in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Review* (CLEAR), vol. 20 (Dec., 1998), p. 32.

deduce from his analysis and examples that the differences between *zhiren* and *zhiguai* lie in their subject matter: that is, tales focusing on actual historical figures are called *zhiren*, while those about ghosts and deities are *zhiguai*. Lu Xun further notes the relative importance of these two parallel types of tales:

> But the classification "Tales of men" were held to be more important than "records of anomalies" in the Six Dynasties, for such tales were closely bound up with achieving fame. If country scholars in those days sought recognition, they had to pay court to gentlemen of repute (*mingshi*, 名士). In the Jin dynasty, these scholars had to seek favor with the class of prominent men like Wang Dao and Xie An—hence, the expression, "Once (a fish) jumps past the Dragon Gate, its value increases tenfold." But to converse with this class of men properly, one had to accommodate their tastes, which meant reading books like *Shishuo* (Tales of the World) and *Yulin* (A Forest of Sayings).
>
> 可是志人底一部，在六朝時看得比志怪底一部更重要，因為這和成名很有關係；像當時鄉間學者想要成名，他們必須去找名士，這在晉朝，就得去拜訪王導，謝安一流人物，正所謂"一登龍門，則身價十倍"。但要和這流名士談話，必須要能夠合他們的脾胃，而要合他們的脾胃，則非看《世說》，《語林》這一類的書不可。

The above comparison of the *zhiguai* and *zhiren* stories is not based on the literary value, but rather the social function of these two types of tales. Both are factual records, not fiction. "Tales of men" is the more prestigious, serving as a "how-to guide" for socializing with men of higher status and repute. For the literary value of these stories, Lu Xun's *Brief History of Chinese Fiction* published earlier in 1923 is a good resource, although Lu Xun did not use the exact title "*zhiren xiaoshuo*" to address what he would later call *zhiren xiaoshuo* in this book. Here, Lu Xun relates the rise of *zhiren xiaoshuo* to the practice of evaluating character and the fashion of "pure

talk" of the Six Dynasties:

> Since this was that which was esteemed at the time, tales [suit these purposes] were gathered and put into collections. Some collected old stories, others recorded recent events. While these works contain nothing but an assortment of trifling "small talk" 叢殘小語, they all centered on the words and deeds of actual people, thereby shaking off the bonds of the records of anomalies.
> 世之所尚，因有撰集，或者掇拾舊聞，或者記述近事，雖不過叢殘小語，而俱為人間言動，遂脫志怪之牢籠也。

Again, Lu Xun contrasts *zhiren* with *zhiguai*. Here he both criticizes and praises *zhiren* stories. On the one hand, he regards these stories as a rather primitive form of narrative—as the word *congcan xiaoyu* (literally "trifling small talks") suggests. On the other hand, Lu Xun still credits them for representing a new development in Chinese fiction.

From an historical perspective, *zhiren*, or tales about people, has its own narrative tradition. Lu Xun traces its origin back to *Liezi* and *Hanfeizi* but further underscores *zhiren* as distinct from these early works. He submits that early accounts of people illuminated the author's philosophical or political ideas, while *zhiren* stories in the Six Dynasties were written simply for entertainment. This dichotomy between "works for the illustration of philosophical and political ideas" and "works for entertainment" reflects a debate on the function of literature and arts in Lu Xun's day: "arts for art's sake" or "arts for life's sake"? Lu Xun's preference for "stories for entertainment" seems to be consistent with his approval of "art for art's sake," yet his definition of *zhiren* stories—short narratives about actual people written for entertainment—only represents a portion of extant Tang anecdotes.

In sum, the term *zhiren* has both strength and limitations: it establishes *zhiren xiaoshuo* as

a distinct form of narrative meriting scholars' attention. At the same time, the *zhiren* story was considered primarily a primitive narrative form, eclipsed first by the *zhiguai* stories in the Six Dynasties, and later by the *chuanqi* tales in the Tang.

*Biji*筆記 (note-form literature) is another term often associated with the type of anecdotes studied here. Works generally regarded today as *biji* are heterogeneous in content and flexible in structure, thus precluding a clear and precise definition. Some scholars even contend that it is exactly this kaleidoscopic nature of *biji* that distinguishes it from other genres.[10] Thus unsurprisingly, many works now considered *biji* had previously been put in the *xiaoshuo* category of traditional bibliography. The question then becomes whether it is necessary to introduce yet another term in the discussion of these materials.

While a sharp descriptive definition of *biji* is not possible, scholars have still managed to delimit the scope of this literature by setting a time range and providing a useful list of examples. Y.W. Ma identifies the *biji* tradition as one extending from the Six Dynasties to the present and divides the *biji* collections into three major categories—fictional, historical, and philological.[11] Ma cites *Soushen ji* 搜神記 and *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語as examples of the fictional group, which Lu Xun classified as *zhiguai* and *zhiren* stories.[12] Other scholars trace the origin of *biji* even further back in time. Liu Yeqiu divides *biji* into "fictional stories" 小說故事, "historical

[10] See Liu Gang, "The Poetics of Miscellaneousness: The Literary Design of Liu Yiqing's *Qiantang yishi* and the Historiography of the Southern Song," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan (2010), p. 13.

[11] Y. W. Ma, "*Pi-chi*," in William H. Nienhauser ed., *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, Vol. I, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 651.

[12] This can be further confirmed by Ma's classification of Chinese fiction. Ma divides fiction into two major groups—the story and the novel. The traditional stories are further divided into five sub-categories: *biji*, *chuanqi*, *binwen* 變文, *huaben* 話本 and *gongan* 公案.

tidbits" 歷史瑣聞, and "exegesis, philology, and textual studies" 考據辨證.[13] Liu traces the first type back to the pre-Qin period and the second to the Han dynasty.

The modern scholar Tao Min encouraged researchers and readers to differentiate *biji* as a style of writing from *biji* as a narrative genre.[14] The term *biji*, when first appearing in the Six Dynasties, principally described a literary style. The literati never used *biji* to refer to their own works. Not until the Song dynasty did readers have the first example of a book with the term *biji* in its title.[15] Thus, Tao points out it is historically inaccurate to use *biji* to refer to works produced before its emergence as a generic term. *Biji xiaoshuo*, a much later invention, first appeared in the publication of *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* 筆記小說大觀 (A Great Compendium of *Biji xiaoshuo*) by the Shanhai jinbu shuju press 上海進步書局 in the 1930s.[16] A major problem with the term *biji xiaoshuo* is that scholars could not reach a consensus on its proper definition or its relationship to *biji* and *xiaoshuo*. Indeed, they have strikingly different understandings of *biji*. According to Tao Min, some scholars regard *biji xiaoshuo* as a part of *wenyan xiaoshuo* which is distinct from the more elaborated *chuanqi* tales.[17] Others advocate an all-inclusive definition of *biji xiaoshuo* including *chuanqi*, *zhiguai* and other kinds of short narratives written in classical

[13] Liu Yeqiu 劉葉秋, *Lidai biji gaishu* 歷代筆記概述 (A Brief Discussion on Biji across the Ages), (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2003), p. 12.

[14] Tao Min陶敏 and Liu Zaihua 劉再華, "Biji xiaoshuoyu Biji yanjiu" 筆記小說與筆記研究 (*Biji xiaoshuo* and the Study of *biji*)." *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產, 2003. 02: 107-44.

[15] The work is a three-chapter collection titled *Song Jingwengong biji* 宋景文公筆記, attributed to Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061).

[16] The *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* 筆記小說大觀 (A Great Compendium of *Biji xiaoshuo*) was first published by Jinbu shuju 進步書局 in the 1930s and reprinted in 1983. See *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling guji keyinshe, 1983).

[17] This opinion is represented by *Zhongguo wenxue dacidian* 中國文學大辭典 published by the Shanghai cichu press in 2000.

Chinese.[18] Still others consider *biji xiaoshuo* as a type of *biji*, one that narrates the stories of actual people with a degree of complexity.[19] In the last case, *biji* is used as an attribute of *xiaoshuo*. Hence, the term *biji xiaoshuo* means "fiction written in the form of the *biji* style."

In sum, this discussion demonstrates that terminologies such as *zhiren xiaoshuo*, *biji*, or *biji xiaoshuo* create more problems than they solve. Thus having reviewed, assessed, and found wanting traditional Chinese generic terms for this type of writings, I will refer to these works as "anecdotes." This thesis will now explore how anecdotes were conceived, and described by writers, collectors, bibliographers, and literary critics during the Tang dynasty.

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[18] Represented by *lidai biji xiaoshuo daguan* 歷代筆記小說大觀 published by *Shanghai guji chubanshe* press in 1999.

[19] This idea can be found in *Cihai* 辭海 published by *Shanghai cishu chubanshe* press in 1980 and is shared by scholars such as Miao Zhuang and Wu Liquan. See Miao Zhuang, *Biji siaoshuo shi* 筆記小說史 (History of the Biji Fiction), (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1998) and Wu Liquan 吳禮權, *Zhongguo biji Xiaoshuo shi* 中國筆記小說史 (History of Chinese Biji Fiction), (Taibei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1993).

1.3 Anecdotes from the Tang dynasty

Ever since Ban Gu's established the *xiaoshuo* category in the bibliography of the *Han shu*, historians have incorporated *xiaoshuo* in official and private histories. At the same time, they marginalized these materials. While Tang historians continued this practice, their understanding of this body of materials grew in scope and depth. Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721), a Tang historian who gained his reputation through *Shitong* 史通 (Generalities on History), initially describes six schools of history in antiquity, and singles out *biannian* 編年 (chronicle) and *jizhuan* 紀傳 (composite) as the two leading models to be followed in later times. Anecdotes belong to what he designates as *pianji xiaoshuo* 偏記小說 (variant records and minor discourses or partial records) or *zashu* 雜述 (miscellaneous narratives), which he further divides into ten types as indispensible supplements to standard histories. After tracing the origin of *pianji xiaoshuo,* Liu Zhiji describes its development down to his own era:

> In recent times, this path has gradually become superfluous and confusing. Though belonging to different categories, they still ran neck to neck with the various schools of the orthodox history. A closer look [into these materials] reveals that there are ten different types: the first is called *pianji* (partial records); the second is called *xiaolu* (minor notes); the third is called *yishi* (scattered matters); the fourth is called *suoyan* (fragmentary words); the fifth is called *junshu* (local documents); the sixth is called *jiashi* (clan/family history); the seventh is called *biezhuan* (separate biographies); the eighth is called *zalu* (miscellaneous records); the ninth is called *dili shu* (books of geography) and the tenth is called *duyi pu* (registers of cities).

爰及近古，斯道漸煩。史氏流別，殊途並騖。榷而為論，其流有十焉：一曰偏記，二曰小錄，三曰逸事，四曰瑣言，五曰郡書，六曰家史，七曰別傳，八曰雜記，九曰地理書，十曰都邑簿。[20]

Of particular interest to this thesis are the two categories of *yishi* and *suoyan*, which Liu Zhiji further explains as below:

> State histories are supposed to "record events and words." What historians heard and saw is [often] incomplete, and there must be things that had been left out and lost. Thereupon, those who were fond of the unusual supplemented that which was lost, of which He Qiao's (?-292) *Jizhong jinian*, Ge Hong's (283-343) *Xijing zaji*, Gu Xie's (470-542) *Suoyu* and Xie Chuo's (*fl.* 907-923) *Shiyi* are good examples. These are what are called *yishi* (scattered matters).
>
> 國史之任，記事記言，視聽不該，必有遺逸。於是好奇之士，補其所亡，若和嶠《汲冢紀年》、葛洪《西京雜紀》、顧協《瑣語》、謝綽《拾遺》。此之謂逸事者也。
>
> [Even for] street talk and alley gossip, they are often worth a closer look; minor discourse and petty words may still be superior to one's own. Thus those who were fond of curiosity discarded none of these materials, among which Liu Yiqing's *Shishuo* [*xinyu*], Pei Rongqi's *Yulin*, Kong Sishang's *Yulu*, Yang Jiesong's *Tansou* are good examples. These are what are called *suoyan* (trivial discourses).
>
> 街談巷議，時有可觀，小說卮言，猶賢於己。故好事君子，無所棄諸，若劉義慶《世說》、裴榮期《語林》、孔思尚《語錄》、陽玠松《談藪》。此之謂瑣言者也。

Liu Zhiji recognizes the value of these materials with some reservations. Towards the end

[20]See Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721), *Shitong* 史通 (Generalities of Historiography), (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), p.81.

of the chapter, Liu uses "a box full of jade shavings" 玉屑滿匣 as a metaphor for the trivial nature of this body of materials and warns his readers to utilize them carefully. Liu criticizes irresponsible and inferior recorders for abusing these ten types of *pianji xiaoshuo* to produce useless materials. For writers and collectors of *yishi*, Liu condemns those who collect everything but fail to discern the true from the false, and those who further fabricate stories to astonish ordinary readers. As for the category of *suoyan*, Liu Zhiji regrets that words once full of wit and wisdom have now been eroded and debased.

Liu Zhiji's classification was different from his predecessors. For instance, Ge Hong's *Xijing zaji*, Gu Xie's *Suoyu* and Xie Chuo's *Shiyi*—three works Liu Zhiji considered as representatives of *yishi* stories—were placed instead under *jiushi* 舊事 (past affairs, precedents), *zazhuan* 雜傳 (miscellaneous history) and *xiaoshuo* 小說 (minor discourse), respectively, in *Sui shu*'s 隋書 (Book of the Sui, completed in 636 AD) bibliographic section. Liu Zhiji probably found these conventional bibliographical categories insufficient to describe accurately the materials in question, thus he decided to coin new terms. But even these new terms could not fully cover all the works extant in Liu's time. Those *yishi* and *suoyan* stories Liu Zhiji criticized in *Shitong* were the ones that fit awkwardly within his new categories. One can imagine that Liu Zhiji may have completely left out from his *Shitong* many more "uncontainable" stories. The two categories of *yishi* and *suoyan* gradually became major types of Tang anecdotes towards the end of the 9th century. Lu Xisheng's 陸稀聲 (?-895) comment provides a glimpse into their popularity:

> Alas! These days those who took up their brushes to write stories are countless. But most of these stories are about nothing but ghosts, deities, mutations, and

> strangeness, which is absurd and deceitful. If not so, they are mainly facetious and humorous, as a source of laughter and merriment. Other than these two types, some claimed they were narrating past affairs, but, in fact, were slandering former worthies, leaving to multitudes of materials for gossip. This is the common failing (of writers/storytellers) in our times.
>
> 噫！近日著小說者多矣，大率皆鬼神變怪荒唐誕妄之事。不然，則滑稽詼諧，以爲笑樂之資。離此二者，或强言故事，則皆詆訾前賢，使悠悠者以爲口實，此近世之通病也。[21]

This passage appears in Lu Xisheng's preface (d. 874) to Duan Gonglu's *Beihu lu* 北戶錄, dealing with scenery, customs, products and plants of *lingnan* 嶺南 (south of the mountain range, *i.e.* modern Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces). In Lu Xisheng's opinion, *Beihu lu* stood high above other collections of the time in its reliability and display of the compiler's erudition. Lu Xisheng shared Liu Zhiji's concerns about the trustworthiness of anecdotes about historical figures and criticizes those baseless anecdotes for "slandering former worthies." Despite Lu's dismissive tone, the metaphor *tongbing* 通病 (literally, a pervasive ailment) that Lu uses to condemn these anecdotes still displays their wide-range influence.

Statistics from scholars' studies further confirms the proliferation of anecdotes on historical figures during the Tang dynasty. Luo Manling counted about 130 titles known today under the broad generic category of *wenyan xiaoshuo*文言小說from the 3rd century to the early 7th century. Only a little over 20 of these 130 collections involve anecdotes about historical figures. Only 5 titles are known to exist before the An Lushan Rebellion in the Tang dynasty.

[21] This rendition is based on Sarah M. Allen's translation with modifications. See Sarah M. Allen, *Shifting Stories: History, Gossip and Lore in Narrative from Tang Dynasty China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 1. Allen notices this passage from Lu's collection and argues that Tang stories can be accordingly divided into three types—lore, tales about historical people, and humorous tales.

The post-rebellion period, nevertheless, witnessed a boom in these anecdotes. More than 100 collections of such stories still available, partially or in full, to the present time.[22]

1.4 Literature Review and the Focus of This Study

Unlike Chinese poetry with its long tradition of exegesis, careful study of Tang tales and anecdotes did not really start until the 20th century with the work of the "May Fourth scholars". For many years, two major approaches dominated the study of Tang narratives, the first, to read tales and anecdotes as allegories, conceiving them as literary vehicles for political and social criticism. The second, in contrast, focused on the "literariness" of these stories.

Bai Xingjian's 白行簡 (776-826) "Li Wa zhuan" has attracted attention ever since the Song dynasties, providing us with a good opportunity to review the general practice within the first school.[23] The earliest extant allegorical reading of the tale is found in Liu Kezhuang's 劉克莊 (1187-1269) *Houcun shihua* 後村詩話, where Liu identifies Scholar Zheng and his father as Zheng Tian 鄭畋 (825-833) and Zheng Ya 鄭亞 (d. 848+) respectively, both famous ministers in

[22] See Luo Manling, *Literati Storytelling in Late Medieval China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), p. 8.

[23] "Li Wa zhuan" is a story of Li Wa, a Chang'an courtesan, and Zheng, a young man from a noble family in Xingyang. Li Wa first swindled Zheng, who came to the capital for his examination. Seeing that Zheng was left in poverty and abandoned by his father, Li Wa repented. She nursed Zheng back to health and aided his pursuit of a political career. Although Li Wa was a woman with a base social status, she married to Scholar Zheng with due formality and eventually received the title of Duchess of Qian 汧.

the Tang dynasty.[24] Liu wrote this entry, however, to point out the absurdity of "Li Wa zhuan" and relevant anecdotes contextualizing this tale.[25] He believes a junior member of Bai Minzhong's 白敏中 (792-863) family, one of the leading figures of the Niu faction, wrote this tale to attack Li Deyu and his supporters Zheng Ya and Zheng Tian. In other words, Liu treats the tale as an allegory, though poorly constructed in his opinion.

Modern scholars like Wang Meng'ou 王夢鷗and Liu Kairong劉開榮 followed in the steps of Liu Kezhuang and continued Liu's historical mode of reading.[26] Nevertheless, Liu Kairong did not interpret this tale as a political attack on any specific historical figure, but instead a response to controversial social issues of the day, especially, intermarriage between the nobility and common people.[27] On the other hand, historian Chen Yingque rendered a social-political reading of this tale as a reflection of the tension between examination bureaucrats and Northern aristocratic elite.[28] Bian Xiaoxuan, also an important modern scholar on Tang narratives, disagreed with specifically connecting the young scholar Zheng in the tale and the

[24] Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187-1269), *Houcun shihua* 後村詩話 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), pp. 18-9.

[25] Liu notes that "books of anecdotes have alleged that when Tian and Lu Zhi, serving together as ministers, were on bad terms, [Lu] Zhi reviled Tian as the son of a prostitute." Liu denounces the illusory nature of the "Li Wa zhuan" and relevant anecdotes by pointing out that Zheng Tian's maternal kinship, that is, Lu Zhi, would disgrace himself if he had reviled the Zhengs. For a complete translation, see Glen Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa* (London: Ithaca Press, 1983), p. 187.

[26] Wang Meng'ou 王夢鷗, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi* 唐人小說校釋 (Taipei: Zhengzhong Shuju, 1983), 2: 90.

[27] Liu coined a term, *jinshi changnü wenxue* 進士娼女文學 (Graduate and Courtesan Literature), in reference to tales like the *Li Wa zhuan*, which, she argued, arose partially because of the above marriage problem.

[28] For more information on Li Yiheng, see *JTS*, 188.4927 and *XTS*,116.4242; For Li Qiyun, see *JTS*, 135.3730 and *XTS*, 167. 5111.

Zhengs of Xingyang.[29] Rather, Bian regarded this tale a topical allegory that condemns military commissioners, and, by extension, hypocritical literati represented by the young man's father in the story.[30]

Bian Xiaoxuan believes many Tang stories have hidden meanings waiting to be deciphered. An "unspoken point" or *yuyi* 寓意 (lodged meaning), what Bian mainly looked for in a Tang tale or anecdote, has a very specific reference in Bian's studies, meaning the author's motivation, or in Bian's own words: "the focus of my exploration of Tang *chuanqi* is to seek the lodged meaning of an author. In other words, what motivated him to write this tale no matter what." 我探索唐傳奇的重點, 在於探索作者之寓意, 說白了, 就是什麼動機驅使他非寫這篇傳奇不可.[31] If *yuyi* equals an author's motivation, then presumably every tale is allegorical, if we accept that there is a motivation behind every conscious action. However, the term *dongji*, or motivation, is used in a very restricted sense in Bian's studies. In the light of Bian's understanding that Tang tales were written to express political and social concerns, he believes that the motivation must be political.

To uncover the hidden allegorical meaning, Bian Xiaoxuan often hypothesizes the motivations of anecdote writers and collectors, which, in Bian's opinion, derived from one's

[29] Bian has three reasons: first, the name was later added to the tale. Second, some descriptions of Scholar Zheng in the tale are in sharp contrast of Zheng Tian in *XTS*. Moreover, the parallel between Scholar Zheng and Zheng Tian is not strong enough to connect a fictional character with a historical figure. Third, the author Bai Xingjian died before he could ever know that Zheng Tian passed the civil examination. If Bai Xingjian wanted to attack Li Deyu's supporters, he would have targeted more prominent members of the Li faction of the time. In sum, Bian Xiaoxuan believes that there is not a strong motive for the author to write such a tale.

[30] The father initially abandoned his own son for failing the civil service examination and then welcomed his son back when he gained fame and a promising political career.

[31] Bian, *Xintan*, p. 376.

political stance and associations noted in his official biographies. The strength of Bian Xiaoxuan's reading lies in his ability to gather historical records in support of his conjectures. Yet, Bian's approach also faces some challenges: to begin with, the opportunity to get information on less well-known authors and compilers is slim, let alone for those tales and anecdotes whose authors are difficult to identify. Moreover, on a theoretical level, it is not always easy to determine a clear "intent" of an author. As Terry Eagleton reminds us, "There is in fact no reason why the author should not have had several mutually contradictory intentions, or why his intention may not have been somehow self-contradictory."[32] Considering that Tang tales and anecdotes as known today have further gone through several iterations, it would be even harder to tell to what extent a writer or collector changed a story, and to determine how these changes reflect his personal experience and intent.

"Li Wa zhuan" became well-known in the West to scholars of Tang tales through Glen Dudbridge's thorough study, which presented an alternative allegorical interpretation for this work. Based on documents in standard histories, he also posited an identification of the young scholar and his father with the Zheng clan in history. However, differing with Chinese scholars, Dudbridge did not see in the allusion to the Zheng family any actual personal reference. Instead, he argued that the hero was an amalgam of the three Zheng brothers' personalities. These three brothers, when taken as a whole, represent a prestigious family "torn apart internally by one member's moral collapse, but redeemed by another's outstanding ritual piety."[33]

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[32] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 64.

[33] Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa,* p. 51.

Although I do not completely agree with Dudbridge's conflation of three personas, this approach should certainly be credited for refining the method of allegorical interpretation of Tang tales. Dudbridge contended that the political, allegorical readings of the tale since the Southern Song only revealed "political allegorists' anxious to discover in it [Tang tales] their imagination of the T'ang society."[34] Therefore, unlike Bian Xiaoxuan who treated Tang tale writers as politician-writers or literati with manifest political motivations, Dudbridge treated them as *literati-storytellers* who worked within a literary tradition (i.e. the tradition of the beautiful creature, *youwu* 尤物) and with a fresh memory of contemporary events (i.e. those from the Zheng clans).[35] Instead of limiting the tale to a perhaps excessively specific historical context, Dudbridge cited historical references as a general context, from which he conducted a structural analysis of the tale.

The search for "literariness" in Tang tales and anecdotes, the other approach adopted by many scholars, is a legacy of Lu Xun. Since Lu Xun established the *chuanqi* tales as the prototype of Chinese fiction, much scholarly attention and effort were devoted to "discover" literary qualities in Tang tales and anecdotes—aesthetic polish, self-conscious use of rhetorical figures, distance from the everyday world, and other marked status that characterize *belles letters*. In a larger context, this approach is a continuation of the traditional view of literary text as sacred, self-enclosed, and a self-justifying miracle, thus literary criticism becomes, in a sense, a display and celebration of literary genius.

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[34] Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa*, P. 37.

[35] This method is reinforced and carried further in Nienhauser's "A Third Look at Li Wa." While Dudbridge only looked for resonance and allusion in classics, Nienhauser showed that many allegories are echoed in poems and tales of the Tang dynasty. See William H. Nienhauser, "A Third Look at 'Li Wa zhuan,'" in *T'ang Studies*, 25 (2008), pp. 91-110.

In the West, anecdotes have drawn more and more scholarly attention with the rise of new historicism. The "history" new historicists pursue has been called "counter-history," which Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt define as opposed "not only to dominant narratives, but also to prevailing modes of historical thought and methods of research."[36] For new historicists, the anecdote was a conduit for carrying these counter-historical insights and ambitions into the field of literary history. The anecdote, with its heterogeneous elements and marginal status in literary history, punctures and undermines those more comprehensive historical narratives, thereby becoming a good source for new historical studies.

New historicism provides an alternative method to study anecdotes beyond the two approaches discussed above. First, it emphasizes the search for "literariness." New historicism does not "demote" art or discredit aesthetic values. Yet new historicists are not solely interested in literary skills—they are more concerned with finding much broader expressive power in language and tracking the creative power or inventive energy that shaped literary works. Second, they seek the meaning of the text, or, what do tales or anecdotes tell us about the past? Scholars who read Tang tales and anecdotes allegorically pay attention to "struggles" within a text. The ultimate goal of their allegorical readings is to connect the two struggling parties in a text with two specific interest groups in history. New historical studies are also interested in "struggles"—not the struggle of characters within a story, but the struggle between anecdotes and history. Foucault, for instance, considers anecdotes in historical archives residues of the struggle between unruly persons and the power that would subjugate or expel them.[37] Thus, for new historicists,

[36] Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 54.

[37] Gallagher and Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, p. 54.

the job is to divulge a different reality behind or beside the narrative surface through studying anecdotes that were not fully digested by, or assimilated into the larger narrative.

With the advent of new historicism, scholars in Chinese studies began to appreciate anecdotes in their own right and examine their roles in literary history and cultural memory. *Idle Talk: Gossip and Anecdote in Traditional China*, edited by Jack W. Chen and David Schaberg broke ground in shaping a new direction for the study of Chinese anecdotes.[38] According to Chen, gossip is information about members of a community that circulates within, and which therefore defines, that community. Anecdotes, on the other hand, are literary vehicles for gossip. Chen's notion of gossip and anecdote are helpful in studying anecdotes as they shift in focus from the distinction between "facts" and "fiction" to the division of "public" and "private" knowledge. In other words, scholars' efforts are now no longer devoted to deciding whether an anecdote is true or false, but rather to whom it is accessible, the public at large, or private individuals.

Chen's analytical approach heavily influenced Sarah M. Allen's study of Tang tales. In her book, *Shifting Stories: History, Gossip, and Lore in Narratives from Tang Dynasty China*, she devotes an entire chapter to gossip-based tales that recount the doings of public figures.[39] Allen argues that Tang tales on public figures serve to compete or supplement standard accounts and to pass judgment or advocate an interpretation of a person or event before the historical records and public memory of this period are "finalized into the format of a dynastic history." Allen stresses that these tales differ from standard history not only in their informality but also in the private perspective and "inside scoop" they provide. Although gossip circulated mainly

[38] Jack W. Chen and David Schaberg, *Idle Talk: Gossip and Anecdote in Traditional China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

[39] See Sarah M. Allen, *Shifting Stories: History, Gossip, and Lore in Narratives from Tang Dynasty China* (Harvard Asia Center, 2014).

within a community, writers of gossip-based tales expected an enduring influence beyond their contemporaries.

Anna Shields shares Allen's view that anecdotes preserve "personal" voices and opinions before they are submerged by, or assimilated into the master narrative. Shields regards anecdotes as a unique and valuable angle to view historical events. She contends that the perspective of anecdotes mediates between the "top-down, political view" offered by official historiography and the "first-person claims and self representations" in the collected works of a single author. Shields' paper on the representations of the *Yuanhe* Era in Tang anecdote three collections—Li Zhao's 李肇 (d. after 829) *Guoshi bu* 國史補 (Supplement to the State History), Zhao Lin's 趙琳 (803-after 868) *Yinhua lu* 因話錄 (Records of Hearsay) and Wang Dingbao's 王定保 (870-940) *Tang zhiyan* 唐摭言 (Collected Sayings of the Tang) shows the progressive narrowing of the meaning and effect of "the Yuanhe style." [40]

Scholars also now address the relationship of anecdotal materials to other genres, especially more authoritative writings such as dynastic histories. Christian de Pee conceptualizes the relationship between what he calls "historical *biji*" and standard historiography as the tension between the center and the periphery. *Biji*, with its unorthodox content and marginalized status, serves as an implicit criticism of the center. At the same time, the practice of collecting and ordering these heterogeneous materials acknowledges and reinforces the center.[41] Tian Xiaofei further underlines such power relations between anecdotal materials and other sources. By

[40] See Anna Shields, "Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History: Representations of the Yuanhe Era in Tang Anecdote Collections," in Chen and Schaberg ed., *Idle Talk*, 107-131

[41] This argument is set forth in the introduction to de Pee's book, *Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China: Text and Ritual Practice in the Eighth through Fourteenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 5-6.

closely studying a series of anecdotes drawn from dynastic history, anecdotal collections, poetic exposition, and travel writing, Tian illustrates how anecdotes may support or disrupt larger narratives.[42] In Robert Hymes' study of gossip-based tales of the Song dynasty, he speculates that Song writers "took for granted, or even actively intended, that the words they spoke entered or might enter the body of common historical knowledge: that to tell and retell stories about the people of their time and their past, was, potentially, to make history."[43] Although these studies do not address Tang tales in particular, they nonetheless shed important light on marginal narrative forms like the anecdotes this thesis discusses.

Manling Luo's *Literati Storytelling in Late Medieval China* is a book-length study of tales and anecdotes collected by literati from the mid-eighth to the mid-tenth century. Luo considers Tang tales and anecdotes products of "literati storytelling," a new mode of discourse for late medieval scholar-officials to "narrativize the[ir] desires, anxieties, and perspectives," as well as a medium of social culture formation. Examining tales and anecdotes across collections and time periods, Luo cites these four most prominent themes—sovereignty, literati sociality, sexuality, and cosmic mobility—and describes how they contribute to the construction of identity shared by late medieval literati. [44]

The thematic approach Luo Manling and other scholars employ is highly effective in analyzing short and formless narratives such as the anecdotes. Yet this approach is not enough to unpack the narrative complexity of individual anecdotes, nor properly disclose how anecdotes were produced and circulated. Facing these challenges, this thesis seeks to restore a set of

[42] See Xiaofei Tian, "Tales from Borderland: Anecdotes in Early Medieval China," in Chen and Schaberg ed., *Idle Talk*, 38-54.

[43] Robert Hymes, "Gossip as History: Hong Mai's *Yijian zhi* and the Place of Oral Anecdotes in Song Historical Knowledge," *Chūgoku shigaku* 21 (2011): pp. 28.

[44] Luo Manling, *Literati Storytelling*, 8-11.

anecdote collections of this period to their original context. Specifically, this thesis will analyze anecdotes collected by the influential Tang statesman and literatus, Li Deyu, and his contemporaries. These anecdotes, featuring Li Deyu as collector, informant, and, at times, the subject himself, establish a solid foundation for exploring the heretofore neglected and understudied Tang anecdotes about historical figures.

Chapter 1, the current chapter, is an introduction to the entire thesis. Chapter 2 re-examines biographical materials on Li Deyu in official histories, aiming to uncover traces of competing narratives beneath the seemingly homogeneous surface of official accounts. This chapter further explores Li Deyu's participation in collecting and circulating anecdotes, as seen in official and unofficial materials, thus relating these unofficial materials to official narratives that create Li Deyu's image. Chapter 3 examines the historical, social, and literary context of Li Deyu's *Ci Liushijiuwen* 次柳氏舊聞 (Jottings of Tales Heard from the Lius). In 834, Li Deyu presented this collection to Emperor Wenzong 文宗 (r. 827-840), soon after Li made a political comeback from Xichuan 西川 to the capital Chang'an. This chapter discusses how these anecdotes, while part of a trend to revive the High Tang aura, also aided Li Deyu's self-fashioning as a learned official-scholar. Chapter 4 analyzes anecdotes collected by Li Deyu's contemporaries and successors, especially, entries in Wei Xuan's *Rongmu xiantan* (Idle Talks in the Military Tent), and Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* (Essence of the Attendant-in-Ordinary's Accounts). It explains how Li Deyu's anecdotes became a fertile source for later anecdotes and, conversely, how subsequent anecdotes complement, or compete with Li Deyu's reconstruction of the past. The conclusion revisits the genre of anecdote and discusses an interesting pattern—the negotiation between the center and the margin in the transmission of Tang anecdotes.

Anecdotes collected by Li Deyu and his peers exemplify the richness, breadth, and

complexity of this literary genre in the ninth century. They jointly preserved memories and records that would otherwise have sunk into obscurity. Meanwhile, they also competed with each other in the reconstruction of the past. Methodologically, this thesis supports other recent studies that break the generic limitation imposed by early modern scholars on Tang narratives. Instead, it seeks to explicate anecdote as a fluid genre straddling the lines between oral and written traditions, personal account and collective memory, and literature and historiography.

CHAPTER 2

LI DEYU IN OFFICIAL HISTORIES AND ANECDOTAL MATERIALS

2.1 Introduction

In the preface to Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360s) *Shuofu* 說郛 (Ramparts of Apocrypha), an early Ming dynasty anthology of historical anecdotes, Yang Weizhen 楊維楨 (1296-1370), offered this comment on the *Shuofu*:

> Those scholars who open up that which they have heard and broaden that which they have seen by obtaining this book are numereous. In sum, they can broaden their knowledge of ancient things and become a Zhang Hua 張華 (232-300)[45] or Lu Duan 路段,[46] expand their knowledge of rare characters used in ancient writings and become a Ziyun (Yang Xiong 揚雄,[47] 53B.C.-A.D. 14) and a Xu Shen 許慎 (58-147),[48] and seek out unusal stories and become a Duke of Zanhuang (Li Deyu).

[45] Zhang Hua 張華 (232-300), a scholar-official of the Western Jin dynasty, is best known for his compilation of *Bowu zhi* 博物誌 (Account of Wide-Ranging Matters).

[46] Lu Duan 路段，I was unable to find any information on this person.

[47] Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53B.C.-A.D.14) was an important philosopher and leading writer of *fu* 賦 of the Han dynasty.

> 學者得是書開所聞，博所見多矣。要其博古物，可為張華、路段；其敷古文奇字，可為子雲、許慎；其索異事，可為贊皇公.[49]

Although Yang wrote this preface mainly to promote *Shuofu*, his comments reveals that Li Deyu had become an icon in the world of anecdotes, and, in particular, was recognized for knowing unusual historical events of the past and the present.

Why did Li Deyu become so closely related to anecdote collecting? Our understanding of the life of Li Deyu, or basically any historical figure, is primarily based on, and largely shaped by, sources that are still available to us today. In Li Deyu's case, those biographical sources include the two official biographies in the *Old History of the Tang* (*Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書, completed in 945, *JTS* hereafter) and the *New History of the Tang* (*Xin Tang shu* 新唐書, completed in 1060, *XTS* hereafter), and records in the *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* (*Zizhitongjian*, 資治通鑑, completed in 1080s, *ZZTJ* hereafter). In addition to these official narratives, Li Deyu's own writings (e.g. official memorials and edicts, poems and rhymed-prose, records of the Pingquan garden estate, and essays written from exile) as well as a wealth of anecdotes collected by him and written about him, also contribute to our understanding of Li Deyu's life.

Based on these materials that are available to us today, a dictionary entry on Li Deyu would probably describe his life as below:

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[48] Xu Shen 許慎 (58-147), a Chinese philologist of the Eastern Han dynasty (25-189), is best known for compiling *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explanation of Indivisible Characters and Analysis of Compound Characters). *Shuowen jiezi* was the first dictionary to analyze characters based on their graphic structures.

[49] Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀, *Shuofu* 說郛 (Ramparts of Apocrypha), in Zhang Zongxiang 張宗祥 (1882-1965) ed. *Shuo fu san zhong* 說郛三種, Vol.1 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1988), 2.

Li Deyu 李德裕 (*zi* Wenrao 文饒, 787–850) was an important statesman poet of the mid-late Tang. Li served as Grand Councilor under two emperors and was involved in what would later be known as the "Niu-Li factional rift." Li Deyu was born into the Zhaojun Li 趙郡李 clan (modern Zhao County 趙縣 of Hebei province). His father Li Jifu 李吉甫 (758-814) served as Grand Councilor during the Yuanhe 元和 reign period (806-820), thus Deyu entered officialdom through the protection privilege instead of the civil examination. In 817, Deyu was employed as Recorder (*Zhangshuji* 掌書記) by Zhang Hongjing 張弘靖 (760-824), Military Commissioner (*Jiedushi* 節度使) in Hedong 河東. But it was not until the succession of Emperor Muzong 穆宗 (r. 820–824) that Li Deyu's career took off in the capital. In 820, Li Deyu was summoned to the court and appointed as an Academician of the Hanlin Academy (*Hanlinxueshi* 翰林學士) in which position Deyu became known for the sublimity of his writing style; he drafted major edicts and official documents that required a strong classical style.[50] During the two years at the Hanlin Academy, Li Deyu met his life-long friends Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) and Li Shen 李紳 (772–846), and they were dubbed "The Three Talents" of the Hanlin Academy 翰林三俊. In 822, Li Deyu was forced out by of the court by one of the then-Grand Councilors, Li Fengji 李逢吉 (758–

[50] In the early Tang dynasty, Academicians were initially scholars and literati who were occasionally called on to "add appropriate erudition or literary flair to official documents." From the late eighth century through the ninth century, Academicians "provided the Participants in the Drafting of Proclamations (*zhizhigao* 知制誥), Recipients of Edicts (*chengzhi* 承旨) and similar secretarial assistants." After the Mid-Tang, the influence of the Hanlin Academicians grew significantly and they were "popularly called Grand Councilors in the Palace (*neixiang* 內相)." The appointment as a Hanlin Academician was often considered as a stepping-stone to a Grand Councillorship and Li Deyu's case is a good example. According to his official biographies, Li Deyu was a strong candidate for Grand Councilor and could have became one were he not forced out to Zhexi by Li Zongmin.

835),[51] who promoted Niu Sengru 牛僧孺 (779–848)[52] to be his fellow Grand Councilor in order to consolidate their positions and power at court. Li Deyu was sent out of the capital to serve as Surveillance Commissioner (*Guanchashi* 觀察史) of Zhexi 浙西 (commandery seat in Runzhou 潤州, modern Zhenjiang 鎮江, Jiangsu 江蘇 province), where he stayed for the next eight years.

In 824, Emperor Jingzong 敬宗 (r. 824-826), ascended the throne at the age of sixteen. Although Li Deyu was kept away from the political center, he kept remonstrating with the young emperor through memorials. Emperor Jingzong was succeeded by Emperor Wenzong 文宗 (r. 827–840), during whose reign Li Deyu was in and out of the capital several times. The period also saw the rise and fall of his political rivals Li Zongmin 李宗閔 (?-846)[53] and Niu Sengru. In 833, Li Deyu made a comeback as Grand Councilor and launched a series of reforms. Yet his

[51] Li Fengji came from the Li clan of Longxi 隴西李, another great aristocrat of the time. He first became Grand Councilor in 816 through Pei Du's 裴度 (765-839) recommendation but was transferred to a provincial post for opposing the Huaixi campaign, which was supported by Li Deyu's father Li Jifu and continued by Pei Du. Li Jifu was reappointed as Grand Councilor in 822 and stroked quarrels between Pei Du and Yuan Zhen, who were also Grand Councilors at the time. After driving Pei and Yuan out, he promoted Niu Sengru to be Grand Councilor and dominated the court until 826 when Pei Du was summoned back to court and reappointed as Grand Councilor. For details, see *JTS* 167. 4365-4368; *XTS* 174.5221-5223.

[52] Niu Sengru came from Chungu 鶉觚 (modern Lingtai 靈臺 in Gansu Province). He became Grand Councilor in 823 with the support of Li Fengji but resigned from the position in 825, when the political atmosphere was unstable during the young Emperor Jingzong's reign. He was called back in 830 through Li Zongmin's recommendation but was transferred out in 833 because of the Weizhou incident. In 830, NiuSengru was reappointed as Grand Councilor under Emperor Wuzong's reign. In Emperor Wuzong's reign, as Li Deyu became dominating Grand Councilor, Niu Sengru spent years in provincial posts. Niu moved back to Luoyang and spent his last a few years in Luoyang in Emperor Xuanzong's reign. For details, see *JTS* 172.4469-4473 and *XTS* 174. 5229-5232.

[53] Li Zongmin was a descendant of the Tang royal family and was usually considered as a key figure of what was later known as the "Niu-Li factional strife." During Emperor Wenzong's reign, Li Zongmin served as Grand Counselor twice, the first time from 829 to 833 and the second time, from 834 to 835. When Bai Minzhong came in as Grand Counselor after Emperor Xuanzong's succession, Li Zongmin was summoned back to the court, but he passed away before he could return. For details, see *JTS* 176.4551-4555 and *XTS* 174. 5235-5238.

open opposition to the promotion of Li Xun 李訓 (d. 835), whom the emperor looked on with special favor, brought him down again.[54]

Li Deyu had to wait for another six years in various provincial posts before Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r. 840–846) reinstated him as Grand Councilor in 840. With the full support of Emperor Wuzong, Li Deyu pacified rebellious military commissioners, suppressed the expanding power of the eunuchs, and resisted the invasions of the Uighurs (*huihu* 回鶻) and other non-Han peoples. The Huichang 會昌 reign (841–846), which was regarded in retrospect as a brief revival of the great Tang prosperity, also observed Li's rise to the summit of his personal career, as he became Emperor Wuzong's ministerial right-hand, enfeoffed as Duke of Wei (*Weiguo gong* 衛國公) and obtained one of the most honorable titles as Defender-in-Chief (*taiwei,* 太尉).

But the political atmosphere changed dramatically when Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 846–859) succeeded Wenzong to be the next emperor. Under the new regime, Li Deyu's political rivals regained power: In 846, Bai Minzhong 白敏中 (792-861) entered as Grand Councilor and became the effective head of the remainder of the Niu faction. Li Deyu was exiled to far-off lands, serving first in Chaozhou 潮州 (modern Chaoan 潮安, Guangdong province) as Assistant Administrator 司馬 and then as Revenue Manager 司戶 in Yazhou 崖州 (modern Qiongshan 瓊山, Hainan province), where he eventually died in 850. In 852, Li Deyu's son Li Ye 李燁 (826-860) escorted Li Deyu's coffin back to Luoyang and reburied him in the family graveyard. It was not until 860, ten years after Li Deyu's death, that the court reversed the unjust verdict on Li Deyu and reinstated him posthumously.

Li Deyu was a prolific writer and left behind him one of the largest collections of writings surviving from the ninth century. His writings including memorials to the throne, orders or instructions for officials, and state letters to

[54] Li Xun, gaining the emperor's favor through his connections with Zheng Zhu 鄭注 (d. 835) and the eunuch Wang Shoucheng 王守澄, brought Li Deyu down again.

> border rulers he composed during the Huichang reign,[55] as well as poems and rhapsodies.[56] During his last years in exile, Li Deyu composed a series of essays, titled *Record of Failures and Grief* (Qiongchouzhi, 窮愁志). According to his official biography in the *JTS*, Deyu also compiled records and accounts of the past events, including *Ci liushijiu wen* 次柳氏舊聞 (Compiled Old Jottings from the Lius), *Yuchen yaolüe* 禦臣要略 (The Essential Outline of Curbing Subjects), *Fa pan zhi* 伐叛志 (Chronicles on Suppressing a Rebellion) and *Xian tilu* 獻替錄 (Persuasions and Dissuasions), yet none of these collections are extant.

Such a summary of Li Deyu's life, although seemingly comprehensive suppresses the diversity and complexity of the source materials. For example, as one may already have noticed, in summaries like this, one often finds a split between the subject's political life and his literary life. For today's scholars and readers, Li Deyu was first and foremost a political figure, and his literary activities are only secondary and supplementary in our understanding of him. Yet when compared side by side, these diverse sources of Li Deyu often reveal a great deal of inconsistency, which invites readers to rethink the nature and function of each part of this material, and how the two parts relate to each other.

Modern Chinese scholars have already treated Li Deyu's life, especially his political career in some detail. One of the most important works of this type is Fu Xuancong's annalistic biography (*nianpu* 年譜) of Li Deyu, which not only covers a wide range of sources concerning

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[55] These writings are now preserved in his twenty-*juan Huichang yipin ji* 會昌一品集 and have long been considered an exemplary style of statesmanly writing.

[56] For example, during his stay in Yuanzhou 袁州 (modern Yichun 宜春, Jiangxi province), Li Deyu wrote more than ten rhapsodies that are fused with homesickness and political aspirations. Among these exile poems, there is an entire *juan* of eighty-eight poems written in nostalgia for the Pingquan Mountain Estate 平泉山莊, Li Deyu's magnificent mansion in Luoyang.

Li Deyu, but also addresses most of the contradictions among these sources.[57] Building on these studies, the first part of this chapter will re-examine the two official biographies of Li Deyu in the *JTS* and *XTS* through a critical lense. Two questions are central to this comparison: how does Li Deyu's image differ in these two accounts and why? What do these differences tell us about the time when these two accounts were compiled? A critical examination of the materials also means uncovering traces of competing narratives under the seemingly homogeneous surface of the official narrative, and, whenever possible, slicing through layers of historical conventions and to seek the"particularity" and "individuality" of Li Deyu.

Denis Twichett famously argued that official history provides the public and functional role of a person and the personal aspect was left to the domain of the anecdotes. But as one will see later, the functional role and personal aspect are not completely separated. The second part of this chapter will look at Li Deyu's "literary life" and its textual representations in official biographies and the third part will further explore Li Deyu's participation in anecdote collecting and circulating, as seen in official and unofficial materials. The emphasis will be put on how these unofficial materials are related to official narratives of Li Deyu in establishing his image as a collector of anecdotes.

[57] Fu Xuancong, *Li Deyunianpu* 李德裕年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2013).

2.2 Li Deyu's Life in Political History

The two official biographies of Li Deyu belong to the *liezhuan* section of dynastic histories, which records the lives of prominent figures of all sorts. The biographies of ministers are generally slanted to provide models to be emulated or warnings and negative examples to be avoided. Both the *JTS* and *XTS* devoted an entire chapter to Li Deyu alone, showing that the official historians of the Five Dynasties (907-960) and the early Song dynasty (960-1279) regarded Li Deyu as a preeminent minister of his time, one who stood high above other ministers. Niu Sengru and Li Zongmin, Li Deyu's most important political rivals, were only one of the many subjects in the chapters to which they each belong.[58]

To approach a historical figure such as Li Deyu through official biographies, one has to understand, first of all, that the official biography is a genre in itself, with a basic framework and some generic conventions. The following outline shows how a typical biography in a dynastic history is structured:[59]

a. The beginning, introducing the subject'sfull name, style name, place of origin, and some details of immediate ancestors, if notable.
b. Formulaic incident(s), demonstrating the subject's character or how such a character was manifested in his childhood.

[58]Niu Sengru was one of the four ministers in *juan*172 of the *JTS* and Li Zongmin was only one of the ten subjects in *juan*176 of the *JTS.* The *XTS* puts Niu Sengru and Li Zongmin in the same chapter (i.e. *juan*174) together with Li Fengji 李逢吉, Yuan Zhen 元稹 and Yang Sifu 楊嗣復.

[59] This model is based on Denis Twitchett's observations with some modifications. See Twitchett, "The Problem of Chinese Biography," pp. 27-28.

c. Career
    i. entrance into officialdom;
    ii. trajectory in the official hierarchy (*curriculum vitae*);
    iii. retirement and death;
    iv. bestowal of posthumous honors
d. brief notes on the subjects' descendants, if they were noteworthy.
e. historian's comments and eulogy (*ming*).

Li Deyu's two biographies followed such a structure in general and, as will be shown below, such a structure largely shaped the image of Li Deyu as we have today.

Genealogy and Early life

Both accounts start with the genealogy of the Li family. The *JTS* account particularly points out that Li Deyu came from the Zhaojun Li, one of the greatest aristocratic clans of his time. When describing his early years, both accounts highlight Li's clear vision of his life ambition and his diligence in study. Precociousness, as is seen here in Li Deyu's biographies, is a very commonly used motif in biographies of outstanding figures of all times. Yet what made Li Deyu unique here was probably the fact that he was not interested in taking the civil-service examination.

Many scholars, influenced by Chen Yinque 陳寅恪 (1890-1969), take this choice as an early manifestation of Li Deyu's resistance to the new recruiting system of the civil-service examinations.[60]The foundation of such an opinion is Chen Yinque's argument that the "Niu-Li

[60]See Chen Yinque, *Tangdai zhengzhishi shulungao* 唐代政治史述論稿 (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2001), 236-320. Chen's main argument is that the factional strife between Niu and Li

factional strife" represents the conflict between aristocrats and the new elite class who rose through the civil-service exam.[61] Yet recent scholars have argued that the composition of the Tang elite class was more complicated than Chen argued.[62] However, a closer look into these two accounts also suggests a different interpretation of this passage other than social class conflict. As the *JTS* account notes:

> [Li] Deyu had lofty ideals since childhood and devoted all his strength to study. He was particularly well-versed in the *History of the Han Dynasty* and the *Zuo Commentary* on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. He was ashamed to be part of the local tribute to the capital,[63] not interested in taking the civil service examination. Just as he reached the age for capping (i.e. 20-years old), aspirations and career began to be fulfilled.
> 德裕幼有壯志、苦心力學，尤精西漢書、左氏春秋。恥與諸生從鄉賦，不喜科試。年纔及冠，志業大成。

The *XTS* account, slightly shorter than the *JTS* account, casts Li Deyu in the same light:

> [Li Deyu] in his youth gave all his effort to study. When he reached the age for capping (i.e. twenty), he had grown up to be an outstanding young man with great

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reflects interest conflict between the old aristocratic clans and the up-and-coming class of officials who entered service through the civil service examination.

[61] See Chen Yinque, *Tangdai zhengzhishi shulungao* 唐代政治史述論稿 (Beijing: SanlianShudian, 2001), 259– 61.

[62]For example, Denis C. Twitchett (1925–2006), "The Composition of the T'ang Ruling Class: New Evidence from Tunhuang," in Twitchett and Arthur F. Wright eds., *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 47–85 and "The Birth of the Chinese Meritocracy: Bureaucrats and Examinations in T'ang China" *China Society Occasional Papers*, no. 18 (1976).

[63]*Xiangfu* 鄉賦, or *Xianggong* 鄉貢 refers to the process in which Prefects nominated local men as candidates for the civil service examination in accordance with prescribed quotas.

> integrity, and showed no interest in taking the civil service examination for the officials with the other students.
> 少力於學，既冠，卓犖有大節，不喜與諸生試有司。

It is noticeable that in both accounts, Li Deyu's *disinterest* in the civil service examination was put in sharp contrast with his *interest* in larger and more important issues, which were encapsulated by words such as "lofty ideals" (*zhuangzhi*, 壯志) and "great integrity" (*dajie*, 大节). In other words, this depiction of Li Deyu's youth is used to demonstrate Li Deyu's subjectivity and individuality, not necessarily his opposition to the civil-service examination system per se.

Li Deyu later started his political career through privilege protection (*yin* 蔭): when his father Li Jifu became Grand Councilor for the second time in 813, Li Deyu was appointed Editor in the Palace Library (*Jiaoshulang* 校書郎), a fast-track entry post. But it is very interesting to note how the *JTS* account emphasizes Li Deyu's choice to *delay* his entrance into a political career. According to the *JTS* account, although Li Deyu's "personal ambition and learning came to maturity," he followed his father Li Jifu during the latter's banishment in the south, and "did not seek advancement in his own career" (*buqiu shijin* 不求仕進). Later, when his father became Grand Councilor in 813, he chose not to hold office in the major departments at the capital but took appointments on the staffs of provincial governors so as to "avoid suspicion" (*bixian*, 避嫌).[64] These details, seemingly straying from the flow of the narrative, contribute to Li Deyu's

[64] Compare the English translation by Mark Kenneth Young, "Li Te-yü and the Campaign against Chao-i (Tse-lu) 843-44" (Vancouver: University of British Columbia –M.A. thesis, 1977), p. 70.

image as a filial son, and highlight his disinterest in personal advancement in politics, a valuable character that is echoed and highly praised later in his *JTS* biography.[65]

Li Deyu's Career

The major body of Li Deyu's two official biographies concerns his political career, which spanned five rulers, from Emperor Muzong 穆宗 (r. 820-824) through Emperor Jingzong 敬宗 (824-826), Wenzong 文宗 (826-840), and Wuzong 武宗 (840-846) to Xuanzong 宣宗 (846-859). Li's service under these five emperors was recorded chronologically in both accounts, thus the following part will also be arranged so.

With the accession of Emperor Muzong, Li Deyu's career took off at the capital. Both accounts note that Emperor Muzong had long heard about Li's father Li Jifu and when the emperor met with Li Deyu in person, he was deeply impressed and appointed him a Hanlin Academician. Li Deyu's literary ability was put into full use on this position, as both accounts note that important edicts and official documents that required writing skills were all entrusted to him. In 822, Li Deyu left the Hanlin Academy to join the Censorate as Vice Censor-in-chief (*Yushizhongchen*, 御史中丞) and was considered to be a strong candidate for Grand Councilor. Yet before long Li met his first major setback in his career path—he was forced out of the capital to serve as Surveillance Commissioner (*Guanchashi* 觀察史) of Zhexi 浙西 by Li Fengji 李逢吉 (758–835). Both accounts trace this incident to a longstanding conflict between Deyu's father Li

[65] As will be discussed later, toward the end of Li Deyu's biography, the *JTS* editors quote Li Deyu's "Lun mingshu" 論冥數 (On Fate), one of his essays written during exile and explain that by quoting this essay, they intend to "warn those who were anxious to advance (or contend for positions)"警夫躁進者.

Jifu and three key figures of what would later be known as the Niu faction, namely Li Fengji, Li Zongmin and Niu Sengru.

According to the *JTS*, the two sides first came into conflict when Li Zongmin and Niu Sengru bitterly criticized the failures of the government in the special examination of "Worthy, Virtuous and Righteous Men Capable of Speaking Frankly and Criticizing without Restraint" (*Fangzheng xianliang zhiyan jijian ke* 方正賢良直言極諫科) during Emperor Xianzong's 憲宗 reign (805-820). Niu and Li's criticism reportedly caused Li Jifu, who was serving as Grand Councilor at the time, to tearfully defend himself in front of the emperor.[66] The conflict was further intensified when Li Jifu and his successor Pei Du advocated taking military action to suppress the rebellions of Hebei and Henan, while Li Fengji argued for the opposite. Li Fengji lost the emperor's support in this debate and had to resign from his position as a result. By the time Li Fengji came back to become Grand Councilor, Li Jifu had already passed away, so Li Deyu naturally became the target of Fengji's attack. The *XTS* account went further to transform these discrete conflicts above into an ever-escalating political struggle. A good example is the two accounts' different handlings of the direct confrontation between Li Fengji and Li Deyu in 822. The *JTS* account notes:

> For a long time during the Yuanhe era, [Li] Deyu was not promoted and [Li] Fengji, [Niu] Sengru and [Li] Zongmin continued to block him because of their *personal grudges.* At this time, Deyu, together with Li Shen, and Yuan Zhen were all in the Hanlin Academy. Similar in learning and reputation, they became very close to each other, and Li Fengji's clique deeply hated them."

[66] Fu Xuancong argues that this account is unreliable and was most likely to be fabricated in the late Tang by those affiliated with the Niu faction. See Fu, *Nianpu*, pp.55-56.

德裕於元和時，久之不調，而逢吉、僧孺、宗閔以私怨恆排摒之. 時德裕與李紳、元稹俱在翰林，以學識才名相類, 情頗款密，而逢吉之黨深惡之.

According to this account, the conflict between Li Deyu and Li Fengji was depicted to be rather personal—caused by grudges, mixed with Li Fengji's jealousy of Li Deyu's talents. The *XTS* account, nevertheless, did not adopt this passage but instead, detailed how Li Fengji on his return to the capital actively stoked quarrels between Pei Du and Yuan Zhen, as well as with Li Shen and Han Yu. Against such a background, his manipulation to drive Li Deyu out of the capital was nothing but another measure to consolidate his control at court. As the text goes, "[When Li Fengji became Grand Councilor himself], he passionately wanted to bring in Niu Sengru so as to expand the faction he formed, only then did he send out Li Deyu to be Surveillance Commissioner of Zhexi." 慾引僧儒益樹黨, 乃出德裕為浙西觀察史. Moreover, the *XTS* account explicitly notes that this confrontation was the beginning of what would later be known as the Niu-Li factional strife, as the text goes, "That was the point when the hatred between Niu and Li formed" 由是牛、李之憾結矣. The *JTS* account, on the other hand, did not lay as much emphasis on this particular incident, but only mentioned in passing that "because of this [incident], the mutual enmity grew deeper" 由是交怨愈深. Here the mutual enmity may simply refer to the conflict between Li Deyu and Li Jifu, not necessarily what would be later known as "the rift of the Niu and Li factions."

Li Deyu spent the next eight years in Runzhou 润州 (modern Zhenjiang 鎮江, Zhejiang 浙江 province), the seat of Zhexi prefecture, and his achievements there are noted in his biographies. According to both accounts, when Li Deyu first arrived in Zhexi, he devoted great efforts to discipline local troops and rein in military expenses. After the local society and economy were stabilized, Li Deyu turned to reforming local customs. For instance, local people

firmly believed in shamanism and exorcism, and would abandon their aged parents if they were seriously ill. Li Deyu used both his personal persuasion and the legal system to revise these practices. In addition, Deyu also removed improper temples and tore down forts and mountain dwellings so that bandits and robbers had nowhere to hide. As Jovana Muir points out, financial and moral overhaul were often closely related in Deyu's practice of provincial administration.[67] Moral overhaul in local areas is a recurring motif in official biographies, as it embodies the Confucian idea of "transformation through teaching" (*jiaohua* 教化). Yet what is interesting about this *JTS* account is that it connects Li Deyu's provincial administration to his personal experience and personality, as the text puts it, "[Li] Deyu achieved his position in the prime of his life, thus he was keen and courageous in his governing. For any ancient custom which was harmful to the local people, he would not hesitate to eliminate its negative aspects 德裕壯年得位，銳於布政，凡舊俗之害民者，悉革其弊.

In 824, Emperor Muzong died, reportedly from consuming elixirs. His eldest son Li Zhan 李湛 (809-826), later known as Emperor Jingzong 敬宗 (r. 824-826), ascended the throne at the age of sixteen. As one might expect, this young emperor soon indulged in carnal pleasures. Although Li Deyu was kept away from the political center at the time, he kept remonstrating with the young emperor through memorials. Both biographies quote, in chronological order, a total of six long memorials that Li Deyu sent up during this period, including memorials in response to the court's unreasonable or inappropriate requests, and those actively seeking solutions for local and national matters.

[67] See Jovana C. Muir, "Li Deyu: His Life, Writing, and Place in Intellectual History," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Cambridge University, 1997, 21.

In 824, Deyu refused Emperor Jingzong's demand to order Zhexi, Li Deyu's governing region, to manufacture and sent to court twenty silver cosmetic containers. Soon afterwards, the court ordered a thousand rolls of silk from Zhexi and Li Deyu, again, declined the request. Later, when Emperor Jingzong was in zealous pursuit of immortality, he issued multiple edicts to seek "unusual men" in the south. When he heard that Zhou Xiyuan 周息元, a recluse who claimed to have lived for hundreds of years, was living in Zhexi, he immediately ordered Li Deyu to provide a government carriage for his transport. Li Deyu turned down the request and sent back a long memorial to dissuade the emperor from taking elixirs andassociating with these so-called recluses.

In addition to the responding memorials discussed above, Li Deyu also submitted memorials to express his concerns over local or national matters. For instance, in one memorial, Li Deyu reported his investigation of the revival of the once banned private ordination (of Buddhist monks and nuns) in Xuzhou 徐州. In another memorial, Li Deyu reported how monks of Bozhou 亳州 had crafted a strategy to profit from the so-called "holy water." When Li Deyu heard that Emperor Jingzong made extensive impromptu imperial tours and was not holding regular morning levees, he dispatched a messenger to send to court his *Remonstrance of Six Headings Written on the Red Screens*, in which he tactfully criticized six types of inappropriate behavior of the young emperor.

The *JTS* shows how Li Deyu positioned himself in a relationship with the ruler and what kind of image he was hoping to establish with his writings. For instance, it is noticeable that Li Deyu would resort to precedents and public opinion when trying to admonish the ruler, and some of the recurring expressions include "I humbly observe that according to the precedents of our dynasty…" 伏見國朝舊事, and "Popular sentiment considers…a serious abuse" 群情所知，以

為甚弊. Another distinguishing feature of these memorials is that Li Deyu himself is present in the description of every event, and readers would feel as if they, too, were witnesses to these events personally. For example, in the memorial on private ordination, Li Deyu wrote, “Recently at Suanshan crossing, I counted over 100 who crossed in one day [to be ordained]. After investigation, [I learned that] only fourteen were formerly Buddhist novices, the rest were commoners from Suzhou and Changzhou without documents from their home districts,”and in another one on “the holy water,” he wrote, “I have learned upon investigation that…Recently, I counted thirty to fifty people from Zhedong, Zhexi, and Fujian crossing the Yangzi per day. I have already been apprehending them at Suanshan Crossing...” Terms such as *fangwen* (I inquired and heard that..., 訪聞) and the reoccurring image of Li Deyu standing at the Suanshan crossing and investigating the situation, portray him as a down-to-the-earth official.

It is hard to determine if Li Deyu was consciously fashioning his own image in his memorials, but at least in the eyes of the *JTS* editors, Li Deyu had composed and presented these memorials in part to remind the emperor of his existence, or as the original text reads “Deyu, having remained in the lower Yangzi river for a long time, was longing to return to the capital. He lodged his feelings in his writings, hoping this would regain the emperor’s recognition. ” 德裕久留江介，心戀闕廷，因事寄情，望回聖獎. But in the end, Li Deyu’s effort did not win him an opportunity to return to the capital, nor did it save the young emperor from the tragic end of being murdered by the eunuchs.

Emperor Jingzong was succeeded by Emperor Wenzong 文宗 (r. 827–840). During whose reign Li Deyu experienced ups and downs. In both the *JTS* and *XTS* accounts, the rise and fall of Li Deyu was closely associated with the fortune of his political rivals. For the convenience

of discussion, all the incidents of this period are grouped into three rounds of battles between Li Deyu and his political enemies.

Thanks to Pei Du's recommendation, Li Deyu came back to the capital from Zhexi to serve as Vice Minister in the Ministry of War (Bingbu shilang, 兵部侍郎) in 829. But within a month, he was reappointed to provincial posts again, first as Military Commissioner of Zheng and Hua (*Zheng Hua jiedushi* 鄭滑節度使) and then as Military Commissioner of Xichuan西川. Both accounts attribute these abrupt appointments to the interventions of Li Zongmin, who preemptively seized the ministerial position through the help of eunuchs, and promoted his clique member Niu Sengru to further solidify their status.[68]

Li Zongmin and Niu Sengru gained the upper hand in the first round of this political battle, and as a consequence, all those who supported Li Deyu were banished. The *JTS* account particularly mentions that Li Zongmin forced out even Grand Councilor Pei Du, to whom Li Zongmin was indebted for a recommendation to officialdom. The insertion of this piece of short background information, like many insertions of this kind, was meant to portray Deyu's rivals as unscrupulous. The *XTS* account, on the other hand, focuses on the larger picture, stressing this event as a critical point in the formation of what would later be known as the Niu faction, as the text notes, "thereupon, the power of these two people (i.e. Li Zongmin and Niu Sengru) shook all under heaven and their faction became unbeatable." 於是二人權震天下，黨人牢不可破矣。

In 830, Li Deyu left his post as Military Commissioner of Zheng and Hua 鄭滑 (northern Henan 河南) to become Military Commissioner of Xichuan 西川 (modern Chengdu, Sichuan), a

[68] However, Fu Xuancong argues that although Li Deyu's appointment in Xichuan kept him away from the political center, but it was not necessarily banishment. Given that Xichuan was overrun by forces from Nanzhao, the central government was in need of a capable official to control the situation. Thus this appointment shows Emperor Wenzong's firm trust in and reliance on Li Deyu. See Fu, *Nianpu*, pp. 172-174.

critical region just invaded by the Tibetans and other peoples. Both accounts recorded Li Deyu's impressive overhaul of the Xichuan defense. The *XTS* editors are somewhat given to hyperbole, especially in claiming that Deyu's governing transformed Xichuan so greatly that it terrified enemies on the frontiers. Readers are told that a Turfan general led his troops to surrender, and meanwhile, Nanzhao returned their Han captives. This hyperbolic description echoed the old Confucian ideal to conciliate remote peoples through the influences of civil culture and virtue without resorting to military power, and reflected the Song historians' desire, consciously or unconsciously, to idealize Li Deyu as a minister adept with both pen and sword.

Arguably, the fiercest confrontation between Niu Sengru and Li Deyu during Wenzong's regime was their disagreement on how to handle Weizhou, a strategic town on the frontier and Turfan and both accounts expatiate on the Weizhou incident: In 831, Xihengmou 悉恒謀, the chieftain of fortified Weizhou, led his troops to surrender to Deyu. Li Deyu recaptured Weizhou and swore an oath that he would protect Xihengmou and his people. However, this action met strong opposition at court, as Niu Sengru argued for handing Xihengmou and Weizhou back to Turfan in order to preserve the peace agreed to in a recent treaty with Turfan. In the end, the court ordered Li Deyu to return Weizhou to Turfan, which caused all those who had surrendered to be slaughtered by the King of Turfan. The historians of both the *XTS* and *JTS* were clearly on Li Deyu's side on the Weizhou issue. When recording the Ximoutang's surrender, both biographies devoted a long passage to introduce the geographical, historical background and strategic importance of Weizhou, reaffirming that it was a rare opportunity for the Tang court to recapture this lost territory.[69]

[69] The passage in the *JTS*, which includes some vivid descriptions and even legendary materials, was taken from Li Deyu's memorial to Emperor Wuzong in 841. This quotation appeared again in the later part of Li's biography in *JTS*, when Li Deyu reopened the Weizhou issue. The *XTS*

Although Emperor Wenzong supported Niu Sengru at the time, it was not long before he repented as the Eunuch Overseer Wang Jianyan 王踐言 returned to court to clarify the situation. The Weizhou incident unexpectedly became the turning-point in the second round of the political battle and Li Deyu reversed the defeat: he was recalled to the court, and was soon made Grand Councilor and enfeoffed as the Marquis of Zanhuang. Consequently, Niu Sengru and Li Zongmin were dismissed and sent out to take provincial posts in succession.

Not found in the *JTS* but added in the *XTS* account are a series of reforms Li Deyu launched after coming back to the court for the second time. This added material shows that Li Deyu was actively seeking to change the atmosphere at the court, especially curbing the ever-growing power of factions. For instance, while Li Zongmin frequently entertained his subordinates and political guests at home during his tenure as Grand Councilor, Li Deyu sought to prevent officials from forming political cliques and factions, thus ordering "all who had business with the Grand Councilor should first notify the Censorate; after the morning levee, all official should instantly leave court via the Dragon Tail Way." 有事以見宰相，必先白臺以聽. 凡罷朝，繇龍尾道趨出; Li Deyu also advised the emperor to differentiate the corrupt officials from the upright ones. This suggestion, broad and general at first sight, also seems to aim at limiting the expansion of factions. In addition, Li Deyu also put an end to some protective measures that the court provided after the murder of the former Grand Councilor Wu Yuanheng 武元衡 (758-815) in 815, such as using bodyguards to escort Grand Councilors on their way to court, and constructing a sanded road connecting his residence to the capital's main thoroughfare.

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account stripped these details off but still inherited the structure and main points of argument from the *JTS.*

These details portrayed Li Deyu as a dauntless and selfless reformer who was not to be threatened or dwarfed by his opponents.

An abrupt turn of this political battle occurred in 834, when Li Deyu openly opposed the promotion of Li Xun 李訓,[70] Li Fengji's nephew and the emperor's new favorite.[71] Li Deyu's open objection displeased the emperor and undoubtedly induced the hatred of Zheng and Li. As a consequence, Zheng and Li managed to summon Deyu's rival Li Zongmin back to the capital and replaced Deyu as Vice Minister of the Imperial Secretariat and Minister of State. Li Deyu, on the other hand, was sent out to Runzhou.

Neither of the biographies left any record of Li Deyu's administration in Runzhou or his later provincial posts. Instead, the descriptions of this period in both accounts are filled with continuous political conflicts. For instance, just as Li Deyu arrived at his new post in Runzhou, he was accused of associating with Prince Zhang 漳王 through the princess's foster mother Du Zhongyang 杜仲陽. As Fu Xuancong points out, both accounts of the Du Zhongyang incident contain some anachronisms, for example, Li Deyu's meeting with Du Zhongyang happened during Li's first service in Runzhou (827-829), rather than this current period. Second, Du Zhongyang returned to Runzhou in 829, before Prince Zhang was sentenced to death due to the alleged plot to supplant Emperor Wenzong in 831. Yet by adopting this episode, editors of both

[70] Li Xun, originally name *zhongyan* 仲言, was the nephew of Li Fengji. He gained the emperor's favor because of his expertise on the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*, 易經). Later, under the guise of discussing the *yijing*, he and Emperor Wenzong prepared their machinations to wipe out the eunuchs but in the end, he was killed in the Sweet Dew Coupe in 835. For details, see his biographies in the *JTS.* 169.4395-4398 and *XTS* 179.5309-5314.

[71] In the winter of 833, Emperor Wenzong suffered a stroke and was unable to talk for over a month. The eunuch Wang Shoucheng brought back Zheng Zhu. Zheng successfully regained the emperor's favor after curing this difficult disease for him, and in turn, introduced Li Xun to the emperor.

the *JTS* and *XTS* hoped to show that after forcing Li Deyu into exile, Zheng Zhu and Li Xun continued to push home their advantages through false accusations.

The victory of Li Deyu'spolitical enemies did not last long. Li Zongmin was demoted due to his conflict of interest with Zheng Zhu and Li Xun, who were soon to be killed by eunuchs in the "Sweet-Dew Incdient" (Ganlu shibian 甘露事變).[72] Now Emperor Wenzong, according to both accounts, "came to realize" (*wu*悟) that Li Deyu had been wronged. This change of attitude was demonstrated through a series of promotions. In 837, Li Deyu succeeded Niu Sengru in Huainan. There was some misunderstanding about the exact amount of cash and cloth left in the treasury when Li Deyu first arrived in this garrison. Niu's allies attempted to make a fuss about this error and accused Li Deyu of intentionally toppling Niu Sengru. But the emperor did not inquire further. This conflict was not as serious as the previous ones and it seems to suggest Emperor Wenzong was more inclined towards Li Deyu in his later years.

Despite of all the vicissitudes which Li Deyu had experienced during Emperor Wenzong's reign, truth and correctness seem always to be on Li Deyu's side, at least in the eyes of the historians. Although the emperor would occasionally be blinded by Niu Sengru and Li Zongmin or his close attendants, he would eventually wake to the realization of Li Deyu's loyalty and foresight. As a matter of fact, it almost becomes a recurring pattern in both accounts that the emperor would "open his eyes to the truth" (wu 悟), either through the reminders of a third party, or through the lessons he learnt the hard way (i.e. the Sweet-Dew Incident).

[72] In the eleventh month of the year 835, Zheng Zhu and Li Xun, supported by Emperor Wenzong, had planned to remove formidable eunuchs but were killed by the latter, instead, as this confidential plan had leaked out before they were even able to take actions, which also caused the death of many high officials including Grand Councilor Wang Ya 王涯 (?-835), Jia Su 賈餗(?-835) and Shu Yuanyu 舒元與 (?-835). The *JTS* account does not spend much time on this incident, instead, it only mentions in the passing that "In the eleventh lunar month, Wang Fan and Li Xun started an insurrection and were executed"十一月， 王璠與李訓遭亂伏誅.

Moreover, the historians deliberately picked language to emphasize that Li Deyu never actively sought to defend himself yet would always receive voluntary help from others. For example, in the *JTS*, readers are told that when Li Deyu was chagrined to learn that he was sent out to serve as Military Commissioner of Zheng and Hua, luckily for him, "Zheng Tan was serving as a Lecturer to the emperor at the time and praised his good points from time to time. In spite of rumors from other political faction(s), the emperor's regard for Deyu never ceased." 賴鄭覃侍講禁中, 時稱其善, 雖朋黨流言, 帝乃心未已. Moreover, after Li Deyu lost the rare opportunity to take back Weizhou because of Niu Sengru's interference, things suddenly turned in his favor, as the passage goes, "it *happened* that at this time, the Eunuch Overseer Wang Jianyan *happened* to be appointed as a Eunuch Councilor at court. On one occasion, he said to the emperor that the returning of Xidamou in bonds greatly pleased the barbarians and broke from the long-held principles of treating well those who surrendered. The emperor put much of the blame for this on [Niu] Sengru" 會監軍王踐言入朝知樞密, 嘗於上前言悉怛谋縛送以快戎心, 絕歸降之義, 上頗尤僧儒.

It was not until Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r. 840–846) ascended the throne that Li Deyu was summoned back from Huainan and reinstated as Chief Minster. For this comeback in 840, the *JTS* account particularly points out a striking commonality shared by Li Deyu and his father Li Jifu in their career trajectories—Li Deyu left Huainan and returned to ministerial rank at the age of fifty-five, exactly the same age that his father Li Jifu was, when he returned to the capital to become Grand Councilor, also from Huainan. The *XTS* account, nevertheless, was less interested in this coincidence than in what exactly Li Deyu did after coming back.[73] According to

[73] As for the sources of these three episodes not seen in the *JTS* account, Fu Xuanzong found the second event was Li Deyu's *Wen Wu liangchao xiantilu* 文武兩朝獻替錄, which is only

the *XTS* account, right after accepting the appointment, Li Deyu offered his first piece of advice, suggesting that the emperor should follow the exemplary emperors of the early Tang dynasty to distinguish the politically evil from the virtuous. Note that Li Deyu had also offered the same advice to Emperor Wenzong after he returned to the capital for the second time in 833. Yet ironically, it was not long before Deyu himself was forced out by Zheng Zhu and Li Xun, both of whom would be evil officials by Li Deyu's definition. But this time, Li Deyu specified what he meant by "virtuous" and "evil" and how to tell them apart; as he put it, the virtuous remain independent but the evil tend to join a faction to seek protection. By prioritizing this episode at the beginning of Emperor Wuzong's reign, the *XTS* editors reemphasize the thread of "factional strife" that runs through its entire account and sets the tone for the rest of the account.

Emperor Wuzong's succession was not without questions. Emperor Wenzong's legitimate successor was his crown prince, Li Rong 李溶, but his brother Li Chan 李瀍, the future Emperor Wuzong, received support from the formidable Eunuch Qiu Shiliang 仇士良 (781-843) and eventually took the throne. Thus, it is not surprising to see that Emperor Wuzong wanted to get rid of Yang Sifu 楊嗣復 (783-848) and Li Jue 李珏 (785-853), Wenzong's former Grand Councilors and supporters of Li Rong, immediately after his succession. The second episode related how Li Deyu interceded for Yang and Li, despite the fact that the latter dismissed many of Li Deyu's associates during their tenure as Grand Councilor under Emperor Wenzong. The inclusion of such an episode contributes to Li Deyu's image as a just person who would requite ingratitude with kindness. The third episode relates how Li Deyu admonished the

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available in fragments today, and conjectured that the same could be true for the first episode. The third episode came from Li Deyu's memorial titled "Lun youxingzhuang" 論遊幸狀.

emperor for his indulgence in excursions and hunts, the source of which was Li Deyu's memorial to the throne on this topic.

Li Deyu's administration was famous for the wars he fought during the Huichang reign, first against the Uighurs and then with uprisings on the part of military governors. The war with the Uighurs (841-843) is narrated in three distinct but related events: At first, a group of dispossessed Uighurs, headed by Wu Jie Kaghan 烏介可汗, recaptured the Taihe princess 太和公主 and came south to the Tang borders, asking the court to loan them grains and the fortress of Tiande 天德 to regain the lost land. While frontier commanders and the majority of court officials advocated going to war with this Uighur group, Li Deyu stayed level-headed, pointing out the Uighur's merits during the An Lu-shan Rebellion and the unreliability of the steppe troops which the court planned to use to suppress the Uighurs. Li instead advocated for a peaceful settlement and convinced the emperor to offer the Uighur grains. Shortly afterwards, internal strife broke out among the Uighurs and, the remaining troops led by the Kaghan, starving and in want, invaded the borders of Shuozhou 朔州 (modern Shuozhou, Shanxi 山西) and plundered freely. Li Deyu, on one hand, made dispositions of the Daizhou 代州 (modern Daixian 代县, Shanxi 山西) troops to guard the frontiers, on the other hand, appointed Liu Mian 劉沔 (?-846) and Shi Xiong 石雄 (fl. 829-843) to make a sudden attack on the Kaghan and successfully bring back the Tang princess. The battle against the Uighurs turned out to be a huge success, which fueled Emperor Wuzong's desire to further recover lost territories. Nevertheless, this time, Li Deyu dissuaded the emperor from taking any further military action, arguing that these territories were too remote to be worthwhile for the court. Both biographies are similar in their accounts of the Uighur war, but the *XTS* account highlighted Emperor Wuzong's reliance on Li Deyu to enhance his importance.

Only a few months after the Uighur war, Li Deyu urged another campaign agaist Liu Zhen 劉稹 (d. 844), who sought to inherit his uncle Liu Congjian's 劉從諫 (?-843) post as Military Commissioner of Ze and Lu 澤潞. Li Deyu faced strong opposition on this matter but with the support of Emperor Wuzong, he eventually pacified the Liu Zhen rebellion.[74] Just as the imperial troops were attacking Ze and Lu, the border troops of Taiyuan 太原 mutinied: the soldiers drove out the Military Governor Li Shi 李石 (781-843) and elevated Commander Yang Bian 楊弁 to assume the position without the permission from the central government. Li Deyu thereupon dispatched troops to put down the Taiyuan revolt.

Both accounts record an interesting twist before the court made the final decision to launch a punitive expedition against the Taiyuan troops. Ma Yuankui 馬元逵, a eunuch envoy that the court sent to Taiyuan, accepted bribes from the rebels and exaggerated the military strength of the rebel troops, hoping to discourage the emperor from taking military actions against Taiyuan. This episode, which vividly described how Li Deyu saw through the trick and refuted Ma's claim, is a showcase for Li Deyu's eloquence and wisdom.

[74] The *JTS* presents the debate over Ze and Lu as a conversation between Deyu, Emperor Wuzong and other officials at court, in which Li Deyu first recounted relations between the court and Military Commissioners of Ze and Lu and enumerated the charges that had been made against Liu Zhen. He then assured the emperor of final success as long as they could secure the support of Weibo 魏博 and Chengde 成德, neighboring regions of Ze and Lu. Finally, foreseeing that it would be hard to ensure the cooperation of the Tang commanders, Li Deyu proposed strategies to encourage or threaten various provincial forces to keep fighting, for example, by ordering them to accept only prefecture, and not to attack sub-prefectural settlements. The *XTS* account is very similar except for three minor differences: first, the conflict between Li Deyu and other Grand Councilors was intensified to highlight Emperor Wuzong's unfailing support of Deyu; second, Deyu's dealing with the uncooperative command was added; third, the *XTS* account added, after the conquering of Ze and Lu, a discussion of how to handle the officials of Ze and Lu who had surrendered.

In 844, Li Deyu was given the position of Defender-in-Chief (*taiwei,* 太尉) and enfeoffed as Duke of Wei 衛國公. This event was handled differently in Li's two biographies. The *JTS* account summarizes Li's achievements during his years as Grand Councilor before mentioning these promotions, suggesting that these promotions were well deserved recognition for Deyu's outstanding merits and exceptional talents.The *XTS* account, however, calls attention to a twist in this promotion: Li Deyu was originally ennobled as Duke of Zhao 趙國公, the territorial base of the Zhaojun Lis but he firmly declined, insisting that such a title should be reserved for the first born of a family. Instead, he accepted the title of Duke of Wei, which he considered more appropriate for his status as a secondary son (*shuzi* 庶子, son born of a concubine). The *XTS* editors use this episode as a demonstration of Li Deyu's outstanding performance in two set of functions—those of an official and of a family member.

With these aforementioned promotions, Li Deyu rose to the summit of his personal career but the undercurrents of resentments towards him never abated. The *XTS* account juxtaposes Li Deyu's advancement in stature with two episodes. The first episode starts with a seemingly casual question raised by Emperor Wuzong, who asked Li Deyu "someone claimed that those three thousand disciples of Confucius can also be regarded as a faction, is it true?" 有人稱孔子其徒三千亦為黨, 信乎? Li Deyu explained that the difference between a community of superior men and a political faction lies in their purposes, that is, whether they ally themselves to a group "for the interest of the country" (*weiguo* 為國) or "for their own interest" (*weishen* 為身). Li Deyu also insightfully points out those who claimed that the faction of today's partisans was analogous to the community of Confucius' disciples were simply stealing concepts to cover their misbehavior.

The conversation on factions was but a prelude to a more direct criticism directed at Li Deyu. The second episode relates that an official named Wei Hongzhi 韋弘質 submitted a memorial to challenge the function and power of the Grand Councilor, arguing that the Grand Councilor should not have control over funds from the three main financial agencies. As a response to Wei's challenge, Li Deyu also sent in a memorial, in which he severely scolded Wei and firmly defended the authority of the Grand Councilors. Clearly this debate was not a theoretical debate on the power and function of Grand Councilors but another confrontation between Li Deyu and his political rivals. In fact, this is how the *XTS* contextualize this memorial from Li Deyu, as the comment goes, "Deyu's main intention [behind this memorial] was to make the court respected, subordinates reverent, and administrative decisions made by the Grand Councilors. He abhorred factionalism so much that he had to vent his anger and criticismtowards it in this memorial" 德裕大意, 慾朝廷尊, 臣下肅, 而政出宰相, 深疾朋黨, 故感憤切言之.

According to both accounts, Li Deyu sought to retire towards the end of the Huichang reign (841-846). The *JTS* notes that Li Deyu requested to resign due to health reasons but Emperor Wuzong, who relied so heavily on him, would not grant his request.[75] Yet Li Deyu's retirement was presented against a different background in the *XTS*, which phrases Li Deyu's retreat thus: "At the time, when all under the heaven had already been pacified, [Li Deyu] submitted several petitions asking to retire" 時天下已平, 數上疏乞骸骨. In other words, what the *XTS* account emphasizes is that Li Deyu did not retire for personal reasons but for the interest of the nation. The *XTS* account also notes that Li Deyu asked to leave again when astrologers

[75] According to the *JTS* account, Li Deyu was sick and asked to be relieved of his duties. He retained his existing rank as Minister of State, took a provincial post in Jiangling, but was soon recalled to resume his positions a few months later. However, according to Fu Xuancong, this appointment to Jiangling occurred after Emperor Xuanzong's succession and it was probably against Li's personal will.

reported an anomaly in the stars—the Sparkling Deluder (*Yinghuo* 荧惑, Mars) impinged on the Supreme Palace Enclosure (*Taiwei,* 太微). Such an anomaly was often interpreted as the ruler being threatened by his minister in the system of political astrology. Thus from this *XTS* record, one may infer that Li Deyu was probably also under external pressure to resign as his growing power and rising status caused anxiety at court. But in the end, Emperor Wuzong did not grant Li Deyu's request to retire.

In 846, Emperor Wuzong passed away at the age of thirty-three, and his uncle Li Cheng 李忱 (r. 846-859), who was to be known as Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗, succeeded to the throne. Li Deyu was soon dismissed from his position, and Bai Minzhong 白敏中 (d. 880) entered as Grand Councilor.[76] In 848, Li Deyu was further exiled, first to Chaozhou as Senior Administrator潮州司馬 and then as Treasury Officer of Yazhou 涯州司戶參軍, where he passed away in 850 at the age of 63. Both the *JTS* and *XTS* attribute Li Deyu's fall in Emperor Xuanzong's reign to factional strife, specifically, Bai Minzhong, Linghu Tao 令狐綯 (795-872) and Cui Xuan 崔鉉 scheming together to make accusations to drive Li Deyu out. For example, they encouraged a man from their clique to charge Li Deyu with sinister deeds and judicial misconduct during his tenure.[77] Both the *XTS* and the *JTS* accounts contain some anachronisms in this regard, for example, as Fu Xuancong convincingly argues, Linghu Tao and Cui Xuan had

[76] According to Fu Xuancong, Li Deyu was first sent out to be Governor of Jiangling 江陵 (now in Jingling county of the Hebei province), Military Commisioner of Jingnan 荊南 and then Regent in Luoyang (the Eastern Capital) 東都留守. Since this series of appointments were made within a short period of time, I suspect that Li Deyu did not travel all the way to Jingnan.

[77] Wu Runa was the former Chief of Subordinate staff in Yongning 永寧. His brother Wu Xiang was sentenced to death by Li Shen when he was serving in Yangzhou. There were doubts about the justice of this case locally and from the court but Li Deyu firmly supported Li Shen's decision on this case.

not yet returned to the court when the first of these charges were made. Yet anachronisms such as this one reflect how the historians were eager to fit material into the thread of factional strife.

As in the official biographies of most officials in dynastic histories, the trajectory of the subject's career takes up the majority of a biography. But as I have shown above, Li Deyu's career is not simply his *curriculum vitae*. Rather, the vagaries in his career were placed against, and used to reflect, a larger picture of the factional strife of his time. It is especially true in the *XTS* account, when factional strife became a great concern for its editors in the Song dynasty.

Li Deyu's Descendants and Social Connections

Towards the end of an official biography, there are usually brief notes on the subjects' descendants, especially if they were noteworthy. The *JTS* account of Li Deyu contains a very brief note about the career of Li Ye 李燁 (826-860), one of Li Deyu's sons.[78] It also mentions that Li Ye had a son named Li Yangu 李延古 (?-922?). The *XTS* account furnished more details

[78]Li Ye 李燁 (826-860), *zi* Jichang 季常, was Li Deyu's fourth or fifth son, coming from Li Deyu's concubine Xu Pan 徐盼. According to the *JTS* and *XTS* accounts, Li Ye was at one time, on the staff of Lu Jun 盧鈞, military governor of Xuanwu 宣武節度使 and Assisted Commissioner of Surveillance in Bian, Song and Bo 汴宋亳觀察判官 but was banished to be Chief of Subordinate Staff at Lishan county in Mengzhou 蒙州立山 (both accounts note Xiangshan 象山 but here I follow Fu Xuancong's correction of the place name). In 852, Li Ye escorted Li Deyu's coffin back to Luoyang and reburied him in the graveyard of their family. Li Ye was later transferred to be Chief of Subordinate Staff for Chen xian in Chenzhou 郴州郴縣尉, after the restoration of Li Deyu's titles and offices in 860 and shortly afterwards, died in Guiyang jun 貴陽 (in modern Hunan). For more details on Li Ye, see the attached biography to the epitaph and eulogy of Xu Pan, "Huazhou yaotai guan nüzhen Xushi muzhiming"滑州瑤臺觀女真徐氏墓誌銘, composed by Li Deyu and the epitaph and eulogy (along with a preface) for Li Ye "Tang gucheng xianwei Zhaojun Lijun muzhiming bing xu"唐故郴縣尉趙郡李君墓志銘并序, composed by Li Jui 李濬.

on Deyu's grandson Li Yangu, but more importantly, it provided information on Deyu's social relations. Brief biographies of three people—Cui Jia 崔嘏 (fl. 840), We Xing 魏鉶 and Ding Rouli 丁柔立 (?-851?) were attached to the end of Li Deyu's biography in the *XTS*.

Interestingly, none of these three persons was closely related to Li Deyu. As a matter of fact, except for Ding Rouli, who was once recommended to Li Deyu as a potential candidate for the Remonstration Office (*Jianzheng guan* 諫爭官), the other two people hardly had any real contact with Li Deyu. These three people were related to Li Deyu only in a sense that they all in one way or another voluntarily defended Li Deyu and as a result, were banished to remote places. The inclusion of the life stories of these three men who otherwise would have sunk into obscurity shows the *XTS* editors' recognition and promotion of their righteous actions. But more importantly, by listing these three men as Li Deyu's social connections, the historians sent out a message that Li Deyu was not involved in any kind of faction. To the contrary, all he had in his lifetime and even after his death were upright supporters and followers like these three men.

The Historian's Comments

An official biography in most cases ends with a "judgment," usually clearly marked off from the biography and written in formal language. It is in this section that the historians have the opportunity to comment on the subject's career and personality directly. These comments are helpful to the readers of official biographies, not so much in understanding the subject of the biography per se, but, in Twitchett's words, "how the historian conceived the individual biography or group biographies in terms of the grand design of his history."

The *JTS* judgment, marked by the head-phrase "The historial official says" 史臣曰, is comprised of historians' comments on Li Deyu's merits and demerits. The historians first heaped praises on Li Deyu's administrative abilities, military talents and literary excellence:

> The Official Historian said: When I was young, with hair in braids, I frequently heard virtuous people of the older generation telling the stories of the Duke of Wei (i.e. Li Deyu). At that time, the Son of Heaven, astute and wise, was a perspicacious listener and decision-maker (or perspective about listening [to his ministers] and making decisions); The Duke, in return, risked dangers and difficulties to repay the special treatment he received. His advice carried out and his plans followed; achievements accomplished and enterprises completed. Such a relation between a ruler and a minister occurs only once in a thousand years. When [we] look at his restoring deficiencies in the inner palace, sending in memorials to the outer court, and his estimating and subduing enemies, all relied on his own judgment, just like the great archer [Yang] Youji who hit the target with never a miss, [we can confidently say that] he is indeed a remarkable talent. When he talked about writings, even Yan [Zhu] 嚴助 and [Si]ma [Xiangru] 司馬相如 [would] walk behind his carriage; When he discussed matters of government, even Xiao [He] and Cao [Shen] [would] rise up on their mats.
>
> 史臣曰：臣總角時，亟聞耆德言衛公故事。是時天子神武，明於聽斷；公亦以身犯難，酬特達之遇。言行計從，功成事遂，君臣之分，千載一時。觀其禁掖彌綸，岩廊啟奏，料敵制勝，襟靈獨斷，如由基命中，罔有虛發，實奇才也。語文章，則嚴、馬扶輪；論政事，則蕭、曹避席。

A noticeable feature of the comment above is an unusual sense of intimacy between the biographer and his subject. In this account, Li Deyu was not a remote historical figure hardly known to people of the time; rather, he was a familiar name to almost every household. One can tell that Li Deyu's legend still lived on as the historian recalled the stories about Li Deyu he had

heard when he was young. Such a sense of intimacy and familiarity greatly shortens the distance between the subject, the historiographer and the readers, adding some personal color to the historical account.

The historian then examines Li Deyu's achievements in the context of his time, which was depicted as a golden age when the ruler was wise and ministers capable. He attributes the prosperity of this era to Li Deyu and to the ideal ruler-minister relation between Deyu and Emperor Wuzong. The historian then zooms in on Li Deyu and highlights his good judgment as the most remarkable talent as a statesman. Also mentioned are Li Deyu's unparalleled literary and administrative abilities, which add to Li Deyu's image of a capable and well-rounded Grand Councilor.

The only criticism that the historian had towards Li Deyu was his unsuccessful handling of his political enemies, which eventually brought him down. The historian's comments continue as follows:

> To blame him for holding a position without doing the job (or usurping office), this is going too far. What may be criticized of him is probably that he could not put aside or resolve his hatred, or to repay grudges with generosity; he could not get the issue of right and wrong out of his mind, or to position himself in the center of a circle and equalize self and others. It is just like fighting with the riffraff over trivial matters with all one's might. His banishment to [the areas by] the pestilential sea, can be said to be heart-rending. This is what the ancients meant by "To snatch gold in the market place, completely overlooking others around," or by "Li Lou [although so acute of vision], could not see his eyebrows and eyelashes." It is true that he was talented, yet it would be difficult to conclude that he had [fully comprehended] the Way.

> 罪其竊位，即太深文。所可議者，不能釋憾解仇，以德報怨，泯是非于度外，齊彼我于環中。與夫市井之徒，力戰錐刀之末，淪身瘴海，可為傷心。古所謂攫金都下，忽于市人，離婁不見于眉睫。才則才矣，語道則難。[79]

Although the historian found fault with Li Deyu, his criticism was clearly not as critical as others who blamed Li Deyu for having "stolen the position," which could either mean holding a position without doing the job, or usurping office. On one hand, the historian argued that Li Deyu well deserved his position, although he also admitted that Li Deyu's handling of political struggles could have been better. In this comment, Li Deyu's political struggle is compared to "fighting with the riffraff over trivial matters with all one's might," that is to say, Li Deyu unwisely got involved in a political battle completely unworthy of his time, energy and talent. Yet his "unwise" involvement in political struggles is attributed to moral imperfection, such as "unable to put aside or resolve his hatred," or "unable to repay grudges with generosity." In other words, the *JTS* account portrays Li Deyu more as an "imperfect hero"— a hero with flaws.

If the *JTS* comment provides a comprehensive evaluation of its subject Li Deyu, what the concluding verse, or "appraisal" 贊, of the *XTS* tries to do is to provide a larger framework for understanding statecraft. As discussed above, "factional strife" is featured as a narrative thread in the account, now in the concluding verse, the historian goes a step further to theorize and reflect on factional strife of the mid- and late Tang era. Accordingly, the historian's evaluation of Li Deyu is also conducted under this very specific framework of factional strife:

> As a well-known Grand Councilor, [Li Deyu] was unable to restrain the ones he disliked but openly squeezed them out due to hatred—[this made the enemies] band together, forming cliques and connecting with each other like the root and

[79] *JTS*.174, 3450.

> stems of a plant. [As a result,] the virtuous and the wise had to leave and flee, which eventually caused the decline of the imperial court. Isn't it that Li Deyu was "bright" but not to be regarded as truly "wise"? Otherwise (or were it not the case), he could have made shining achievements, assisted Emperor Wuzong to restore the glory of the Tang, and equaled [the greatest Grand Councilors] Yao [Chong] and Song [Jing].[80]
>
> 身為名宰相，不能損所憎，顯擠以仇，使比周勢成，根株牽連，賢智播奔，而王室亦衰，寧明有未哲歟？不然，功烈光明，佐武中興，與姚、宋等矣。

Both accounts portray Li Deyu in rather positive light and show great sympathy for his fall. In their reflections of the era, the *JTS* account attributes Li Deyu's fall to moral reasons, while the *XTS* focuses instead on Li Deyu's role as a Grand Councilor. As a Grand Councilor, it was unfortunate that Li Deyu failed to prevent the forming of political factions, thus unable to fulfill his ambition of restoring the Tang. Should Li Deyu have succeeded in this aspect, he would have become one of the most distinguished Grand Councilors of the Tang dynasty.

Li Deyu's Life in the Official Biographies

As discussed above, Li Deyu's official biography follows the general framework of *liezhuan* in standard history. The framework of biography is then filled out by descriptions of incidents in which Li Deyu is figured, by his more notable writings, and occasionally by anecdotes about him.

Michael Hoeckelmann, in a recent study, convincingly argues that it was not until the Song dynasty that the Niu and Li factions, headed by Niu Sengru and Li Deyu respectively,

[80]See *XTS*.180, 5344.

emerged as two distinct political factions in historical writings. [81] As this paper has shown above, Li Deyu's conflict with his political rivals (e.g. Li Fengji, Niu Sengru, Li Zongmin and Bai Minzhong) was central to his official biographies but were handled differently in the two dynastic histories on the Tang: while the *JTS* description of this conflict remains more or less at the personal level, the *XTS* elevates it to the level of "factional strife" and features it as the narrative thread that connects all the building blocks in this biography.

Another interesting difference that stands out through the comparison of the two official biographies of Li Deyu is the sense of individuality. Although both accounts are part of larger political histories that the *JTS* and *XTS* each present, and neither was meant to be read as a full portrait of Li Deyu as a person, the *JTS* account makes Li Deyu a more approachable historical figure, and his feelings almost tangible. This effect was created partly through quotation of Li Deyu's writings, which kept his tone and attitude, and creation of vignettes, which show Li Deyu's bodily presence and his inner activities. But these details were eventually omitted in the *XTS* account, showing that they were no longer regarded as necessary material in Song historians' reconstruction and reflection of the Tang history.

[81] Michael Hoeckelmann, "The Construction of the 'Factional Strife Between Niu and Li' (*Niu Li dangzheng* 牛李黨爭) in (Pre-) Song Writing," unpublished paper presented at the Conference on Middle Period China, 800-1400, Harvard University, 5-7 June 2014.

2.3 Between the Public and Private Domains: Li Deyu's Literary Life

In his two biographies, between the long description of Li Deyu's career and brief notes on Li Deyu's descendents (and associations), there are some materials that are hard to categorize, and for the time being, let them be called "supplementary information" or "additional information" on the subject's life. How does this information fit into the overall structure of Li Deyu's biography and what kind of message does it covey to readers? The *JTS* account devotes a long passage to Li Deyu's writing, which notes: [82]

> (1) [Li] Deyu, on his own initiative, shouldered the responsibility of restoring the glory of the Tang dynasty, standing high above the crowd (or Deyu took pride in his capacity as a potential minister and stood above the crowd). [Li Deyu] was fond of writing books and composing essays, so as to promote the good andcondemn the evil. Even after reaching the utmost position of Grand Councilor, he never stopped reading. (2) There was a Liu Sanfu 劉三復, excelled in composing memoirs, whom [Li Deyu] treated with special favor. From the time when Deyu was garrisoned at Zhexi 浙西 till his time in Huai 淮 and Dian 甸, [Sanfu] was always assisting at his side as his retainer. After military and government matters were finished, [Deyu] would spend all day chanting and reciting [poetry] with Sanfu. (3) In his private residence in Chang'an, he had a Courtyard for Drafting (*Qicao yuan*, 起草院) built separately. In this courtyard, there was a Pavilion for Pondering (*Jingsi ting* 精思亭), wherein he drafted edicts and orders, and made plans and decisions during military campaigns. On these

[82]The Chinese text can be found in *JTS* 174.4528. I consulted Mark Kenneth Young's rendition in my translation of this passage. See also Mark Kenneth Young, "Li Te-yü and the Campaign against Chao-i (Tse-lu) 843-44," pp.111-112.

occasions, he would stay alone in the pavilion and resolutely draft government documents with his brush, those attending at his side were not able to either participate or interfere. (4) At the Eastern Capital (i.e. Luoyang), south of Yique, [Li Deyu] purchased the Pingquan Villa, with clear flowing water and green miniature bamboos, secluded woods and exotic rocks. Previously when [Deyu] had not yet served in official positions, he studied in this villa. He then served in military regions, and later became a master of pen and sword, going out to fight as a general and coming back to serve as a minister—thirty years had passed before he could come back for a return visit. But those poems he composed on various occasions, or sent to different peoplewere all inscribed on the stones in this villa. To this date, there are still two stones preserved, on which his "Record of Flowers and Trees" and "The Collected Songs and Poems" were inscribed. (5) He has a collection of writings in 20 *juan*. As to records and accounts of the past events, there are *Ci Liushijiu wen* 次柳氏舊聞 (Compiled Old Jottings from the Lius), *Yuchenyaolüe* 禦臣要略 (The Essentials of Curbing Subjects), *Fa pan zhi* 伐叛志 (Chronicles of Suppressing a Rebellion) and *Xian tilu* 獻替錄 (Records of Persuasions and Dissuasions) still in circulation.

德裕以氣業自負[83]，特達不群。好著書爲文，獎善嫉惡，雖位極台輔，而讀書不輟。有劉三復者，長於章奏，尤奇待之。自德裕始鎮浙西，迄於淮甸，皆參佐賓筵。軍政之餘，與之吟詠終日。在長安私第，別構起草院。院有精思亭，每朝廷用兵，詔令制置，而獨處亭中，凝然握管，左右侍者無能預焉。東都於伊闕南置平泉別墅，清流翠篠，樹石幽奇。初未仕時，講學其中。及從官藩服，出將入相，三十年不復重遊，而題寄歌詩，皆銘之於石。今有花木記、歌詩篇錄二十存焉。有文集二十卷。記述舊事，則有《次柳氏舊聞》、《禦臣要略》、《伐叛志》、《獻替錄》行於世。[84]

[83]The term *qiye* 器業 has two basic meanings, one is great achievement or meritorious deed, and in this cases, to undertake the enterprise of restoring the glory of the Tang dynasty; the second one focuses on one's capacity, capability and potential, especially as minister of the state.

[84] See *JTS*, 174.4528.

Before delving into details on Li Deyu's writing, it would be interesting to draw a comparison between Li Deyu's writings and those of another group—the literati whose lives appear in the "Garden of Letters," one of the special classified biographies (*liezhuan*, 列傳) in dynastic histories. The section of the "Garden of Letters" in *XTS* consists of biographies of one hundred and one literati, including some of the best-known Tang literati such as Chen Ziang 陳子昂 (661-702), Wang Wei 王維 (701-761), Li Bai 李白 (701-762), Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), and Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813-858). However, people of equal, if not higher stature in Chinese literary history are sometimes not to be found in this section. Li Deyu is a good example in this regard, and the reason for his "absence" in the "Garden of Letters," as Hans Frankel has convincingly argued, is because this session is "reserved for those who were famous *only* as literati, and this, in the view of the Confucian historiographer, is a shortcoming."[85]

Thus one may well ask why both biographies would devote long passages to Li Deyu's literary abilities? Where do literary abilities fit into a statesman's official biography such as that of Li Deyu, and how, in an official biography, would historians show the literary abilities of a statesman, if they are noteworthy?

To answer the questions above, I will start from several basic questions as to when, where, what and why Li Deyu wrote. What Li Deyu wrote, according to *JTS* passage quoted above, were edicts and orders that he drafted for the court, and poems he composed and chanted with his retainers and friends. These works were most likely to be what made up the majority of his 20-*juan* collection. Additionally, he was also responsible for compiling several anthologies, which as the *JTS* account notes, were mainly "records and accounts of the past events." The *XTS*

[85] See Hans H. Frankel, "T'ang Literati: A Composite Biography" in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett ed., *Confucian Personalities* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1962), 66.

account also made it very clear as to why Li Deyu composed what he wrote. On one hand, his writings served the didactic function of "promoting the good and condemning the evil" 奖善嫉恶. On the other hand, however, his writings also serve more personal purposes, for instance, to socialize with friends, or to express his feelings and thoughts. The dual function of writing in Li Deyu's life shows that writing was depicted as a space where Li Deyu's "public" and "private" lives meet and intersect with each other.

This cross-boundary nature of writing becomes even more obvious if one looks into when and where Li Deyu wrote according to the *JTS* account. From the very beginning, readers are told that reading and writing were Li Deyu's life-long devotions, which he kept on doing even after he became Grand Councilor. That is to say, writing extends over different stages of Li Deyu's life and connected the different roles he played. It is not surprising that in standard histories, the official biography of a statesman such as Li Deyu would put more emphasis on the *practical* aspects of writing, that is, how one's literary ability was used in his public and workaday life. As an official, Li Deyu was, first and foremost, known for writing elegant edicts and memorials and he appreciated literati with similar abilities. A good example in this regard is Liu Sanfu, who won Li Deyu's recognition for his excellence in writing official documents. Only in his spare time, or *JTS* puts it, "after military and government matters were finished" 軍政之餘 would he compose more personal and literary works. Speed of literary composition is an important *topos* in classified biographies for literati in the "Garden of Letters." When the *JTS* account describes how Li Deyu wrote, it does not put as much emphasis on the speed of his writing as the power of concentration demonstrated in this process of writing, as the passage notes, "Li Deyu would stay alone in the pavilion and resolutely draft government documents with his brush, those attending at his side were not able to either participate or interfere."

Where Li Deyu wrote is another interesting point in this account. One's residence is usually considered as a private space, but in Li Deyu's Chang'an residence, he had a pavilion built, in which he "pondered over state affairs and concentrated on drafting government documents." The extension of Li Deyu's public life into his private space undoubtedly helped to establish his image as a diligent official. Li Deyu's Pingquan Villa in Luoyang, on the other hand, was reserved for his "private" life and literary writings. Before starting his official career, Li Deyu immersed himself in studying in this secluded villa. But he could hardly have enjoyed a peaceful life again in this villa later in life, as the *JTS* account describes in a somewhat nostalgic tone, "he then served in military regions, and later became a master of pen and sword, going out to fight as a general and coming back to serve as a minister—thirty years had passed before he could come back for a return visit." Li Deyu's "absence" from his Luoyang villa creates a "tension" between his public and private lives. But the fact that Li Deyu kept sending back his poems and had them inscribed on the stones in the Pingquan Villa shows that the villa remained, physically and spiritually, in reality and in the literary world, an escape or a shelter from the public life.

The *XTS* account also devoted long passages to Li Deyu's writing but the personal elements and private aspect of his life was completely eclipsed by his public role as an official. The text goes as follows:

> Deyu was aloof and pround. He was an eloquent speaker, with elegant and graceful bearing and excelled at writing essays. After rising to high positions, he still would not put aside his books. When discussing political matters, he would cite examples from the past in a flow of eloquence. He always regarded administering all under heaven as his duty and the Wuzong emperor, not only appreciated him, but was able to repose his trust in Deyu, following his words and

> acting upon his advice. The imperial court nearly restored the glory of the Tang dynasty at the time…In [Deyu's] residence in the Anyi Ward 安邑里, there is a yard called "Courtyard for Drafting" and a pavilion named "Pavilion for Pondering." Whenever he needed to make important plans, he would stay there, and even those attending at his side were not able to either participate or interfere. He did not like to drink, and there was no entertainment of sounds and sights (i.e. music and women, sensual pleasure) in his room. It was said that most of the works he wrote in his lifetime were still extant.[86]
>
> 德裕性孤峭，明辯有風采，善為文章。雖至大位，猶不去書。其謀議援古為質，裒裒可喜。常以經綸天下自為，武宗知而能任之，言從計行，是時王室幾中興……所居安邑里第，有院號起草，亭曰精思，每計大事，則處其中，雖左右侍御不得豫。不喜飲酒，後房無聲色娛。生平所論著多行于世云。[87]

Compared with the *JTS* account, the practical side of Li Deyu's writing completely dominates this *XTS* passage, as it makes no mention of Li personal writing at all. Correspondingly, the *XTS* account left almost no trace of Li Deyu's private life; readers are only told that "he did not like to drink, and there was no entertainment of sounds and sights (i.e. music and women, sensual pleasure) in his inner rooms." What the *XTS* historians attempted to establish here is an image of an extremely self-disciplined official, who maintains high moral standards in his personal life.

What follows the historians' comments on Li Deyu's writings in the *JTS* account is an excerpt from Li Deyu's "Lun Mingshu" (論冥數, or "On Fate"), one of his essays written during

[86]It is not clear exactly what function does the particle *yun* serve in this sentence or what kind of tone it adds to the sentence. By rendering the sentence into "It was said that…," I would like to stress that some of Li Deyu's works were probably no longer extant by the time the *XTS* were compiled but the *XTS* editors knew from earlier documents, including the *JTS*, that most of Li Deyu's works were still in circulation after his death.

[87]*XTS*, 180. 5342-43.

his last years in exile. In this essay, Li Deyu put forth a new interpretation of Confucius' silence over "fate". Li posited that this statement did not necessarily deny fate or the existence of spirits. Rather, Confucius chose to shelve the idea of fate in order to encourage people to render a great service to their country and leave their marks in history. He illustrated this idea with examples from both history and his personal experience.

This essay was quoted here, according to the *JTS* compilers, to show that Li Deyu was so devoted to composition that "even when he was "drifting from one place to another, he still kept writing" 雖蒼黃顛沛之中，猶留心著述. Of course, nothing is probably more direct and convincing in showcasing one's literary ability than one's own writing. But more importantly, this excerpt serves as an excellent summary and reflection, in Li Deyu's own words, on the rise and fall of his entire life, thus making it an ideal choice to conclude Li Deyu's life story.

Notably, this excerpt ends Li Deyu's life story on a distressingly low note. Probably just like the frustrated Li Deyu in his last years, the historians also found it difficult to account for Li Deyu's failure so they had to turn to mysterious and unpredictable "fate" for answers. Such a choice, on one hand, shows the historians'deep sympathy for Li Deyu, but at the same time, it reveals a pessimistic view of the role and function of scholar-officials in political history.

The *JTS* account did not use Li Deyu's own writing but instead, provided four discrete episodes that flashed back to Li Deyu's days during Emperor Wuzong's reign. At first glance, these four episodes seem to be a hodgepodge of leftover bits and pieces of Li Deyu's life story but a closer look shows that they are included to demonstrate the effect of Li Deyu's writings. The first episode relates that Li Deyu, through returning the right of "composing and issuing edicts and orders" to Grand Councilors, curbed the power of Eunuch Overseers (*Jianjun,* 監軍), and brought success to the war against the Uighurs as well as to punitive expeditions against

military governors. The second episode recaps some of Li Deyu's military achievements during the Yuanhe reign period and highlights Li Deyu's two features as an outstanding official: first, Li Deyu was always calm and collected even at the most critical moments; second, Li Deyu was a great writer and speaker. His words, be it oral or written, were so elegant and powerful that they not only won recognition from the emperor, but also exerted overwhelming influence over his subordinates. The third episode quotes a timely memorial, in which Li Deyu repressed Emperor Wuzong's desire to engage in more military ventures after winning the Uighur war. While in the last episode, Li Deyu sent another memorial to dissuade the emperor from doting on Daoist Recipe Master Zhao Guizhen 趙歸真 (782-846), although he did not succeed eventually.

Looking back at the comments on Li Deyu's writing, it is interesting to note how the historians turn Li Deyu's texts into an important component of Li Deyu's administration. After discussing the unique style of Li Deyu's writing—"citing examples from the past in a flow of eloquence," the historians add that "he always regarded administering all under heaven as his duty and Emperor Wuzong, not only appreciated him, but was able to repose his trust in Deyu, following his words and acting upon his advice. The imperial court nearly restored the glory of the Tang dynasty at the time." Taken together, these four snapshots serve as footnotes to the turn of fortune from prosperity to decline during Emperor Wuzong's reign: When Emperor Wuzong completely trusted Li Deyu, Li's writings exerted great influence; but when the emperor turned a deaf ear towards Li Deyu, Li's once powerful writing could no longer save the dynasty from decline. Compared with the *JTS* account, which attributes Li Deyu's personal failure and the dynasty's fall to destiny, in the *XTS* account, Li Deyu remained an active agent from the beginning to the end.

2.4 Li Deyu and Anecdote Collecting

Now back to the question raised at the beginning of the chapter—why did Li Deyu's name become so closely related to anecdotes? Although Li Deyu's official biographies did not mention Li Deyu's interest in "unusual historical events of the past and the present" or anecdotes per se, they do mention Li's profound learning in history, and the application of this knowledge in his writings. As a matter of fact, the collection of *Ci Liushijiuwen* was considered as a record of past events (*jiushi,* 舊事) in the *JTS*. His family background and his political trajectory that took him to various parts of the empire also enabled him to get access to rare source of materials. For example, Wei Xuan, a native of Jingzhao京兆 (modern Xi'an city, Shanxi) and descendant of the prominent Wei family, joined Li Deyu's staff as an inspector in the fifth year of the Taihe 太和 period (831), when Li Deyu was serving as Military Commissioner of Xichuan 西川.[88] Wei Xuan compiled what he heard from Li Deyu in a single collection titled *Rongmu xiantan* 戎幕閑談 [Idle Talks in the Military Headquarter] and his preface to the collection reads as below:[89]

[88] Both Zhou Xunchu and Bian Xiaoxuan note that Li Deyu was on good terms with Wei Xuan's father-in-law, Yuan Zhen. Yuan Zhen and Li Deyu were colleagues at the Hanlin 翰林 academy during the first year of the Changqing長慶 reign period (821). Thus, they suspect that it was because of this connection that Li Deyu hired Wei Xun. See Zhou Xunchu, "Wei Xun Kao," p. 36; BianXiaoxuan, "Xintan," p. 36. It is also interesting to note that Wei Xuan was not the only person who had connections with Li Deyu in the Wei family. Wei Guan 韋瓘 (789-?), one of Xuan's cousins, was also on good terms with Li Deyu. Biographical data on Wei Guan can be found to the end of his father Wei Zhengqin's 韋正卿 biography, see *XTS*, 162.4996.

[89] Wei Xuan's other extant work—*Liu Gong jiahua lu* 劉公嘉話錄 [A Record of Master Liu's Fine Discourses], is a collection of similar kind. For details, see Tori Richardson, "'Liu Pin-k'o chia-hua lu' ['A Record of Advisor to the Heir Apparent Liu [Yü-hsi's] Fine Discourses']: A

> The Duke of Zanhuang 贊皇 (i.e. Li Deyu) had an encyclopedic knowledge of all kinds of things and was fond of strangeness 博物好奇. He was especially good at telling unusual stories of the past and the present. While [he was] stationed in Shu 蜀, his guests and assistants would constantly tell stories, as if they could never tire. Once he said to me, "Should you name and arrange these accounts, they will also be sufficient to broaden horizons." I, Xuan, consequently picked up a brush to record them and titled [the collection] *Rongmu xiantan.* Wei Xuan, the inspector, quoted on the twenty-third day of the eleventh month in the fifth year of the Taihe reign period (831).
>
> 贊皇公博物好奇，尤善語[90]古今異事。當鎮蜀時，賓佐[91]宣吐曇曇，不知倦焉。乃謂[92]絢曰：能題[93]而紀之，亦足以資於聞見。絢遂操觚錄之，號爲戎幕閒談，大和五年十一月二十三日，巡官韋絢引。[94]

Wei Xuan's portrait of Li Deyu as an erudite official who was "fond of strangeness" and "especially good at telling unusual stories of the past and the present" is probably an early source

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study and translation," Unpublished Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1995, pp. 6-7.

[90] The *Tang wen shiyi* has 話 for 語.

[91] The *Tang wen shiyi has* 資佐 for *bingzuo* 賓佐, thus the phrase becomes "he would aid and assist story-telling."

[92] The *Tang wen shiyi* has *yu* 語 for *wei* 謂.

[93] The *Tang wen shiyi* has 隨 for *Ti* 題, thus the phrase becomes "Should you be able to follow [what we said] and record them..."

[94] The Chinese text was based on Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (fl.1360-1368), comp., *Shuofu* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shudian, 1986), 7: 14a. The *Shuofu* text is also slightly different from the *Tang wen shiyi* 唐文拾遺 edition. See Lu Xinyuan 陸心源 (1834-1894), *Tang wen shiyi* 唐文拾遺 in *Quan Tang wen* (11v.; Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 11: 28.14b. All the textual differences are noted below.

of Yang Weizhen's comments quoted at the beginning of the chapter. Such an image of Li Deyu was reinforced by other records left by his staff members. For example, in 827, Duan Chengshi 段成式 (*zi* Kegu, 柯古), who later became famous for his collection of miscellaneous records—*Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang)—joined Li Deyu's staff, when Li was Surveillance Commissioner of Zhexi浙西. In *Youyang*zazu, Duan identified Li Deyu and other members as his informants of stories and there were several stories that feature Li Deyu's encyclopedic knowledge of things. [95] Duan's *Youyang zazu* also recorded two stories that he heard from Zhang Zhoufeng 張周封,[96] to whom the "Yiwenzhi" 藝文志 (Bibliographic Treatise) of the *XTS* attributed a one-*juan* work titled *Huanyang fengsu lu* 華陽風俗錄 (A Record of Customs in Huayang). According to the note on the entry of *Huayang fengsu lu*, Zhang Zhoufeng, whose style name is Ziwang 子望, was a retainer of Li Deyu when Li served as the Military Commissioner of Xichuan 西川.[97]

These are but some of the textual representations of Li Deyu's participation in anecdote collecting. Now one may push the question at the beginning of the chapter one step further and ask how Li Deyu would regard today the reputation he gained five hundred years after his death?

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[95] Many of these stories were seen in of *Youyangzazu, xuji*, 9. See Duan Chengshi, *Youyang zazu* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981).

[96] See *Youyang zazu*, 15.143-15.148. The first story is also seen in Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) et al., ed., *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 [Extensive Gleanings of the Reign of Great Tranquility] (Rv. ed.; Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1961), 362.581.

[97] Carrie Reed notes that Duan Chenghshi's father, Duan Wenchang 段文昌 (772-835), held the same office as that of Li Deyu from 833 to 836, directly following Li Deyu's stint from 831 to 833. Thus, Zhang Zhoufeng must have been working for one or both of the military commissioners during those years, which enabled him to inform Duan Chengshi these stories. See Carrie E. Reed, *A Tang Miscellany: An Introduction to* Youyang zazu. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), p. 483.

Or to put it another way, is his iconic status in collecting and circulating anecdotes merely a process of canonization, or did he also consciously fashion such an image of himself? These are the questions that will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 LI DEYU'S *CI LIUSHI JIUWEN* 次柳氏舊聞

3.1 Textual History of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*

Bibliographic Records

Li Deyu, one of those Mid-Tang writers who selected and edited their own oeuvre, did so twice in his lifetime—in the fifth year of the Huichang reign (845) at the summit of his political career and the first year of Dazhong reign (847) after he fell from power. From current editions of Li Deyu's self-edited works, it appears he did not include *Ci Liushi jiuwen* in the final body of his corpus. There are several possible reasons for Tang writers to exclude genres such as anecdotes from their completed literary production. Anecdotes were considered merely records of what one heard, thus, technically, not one's own personal creation. Moreover, anecdotes were often thought to be trivial, or inappropriate in presenting one's literary image. In Li Deyu's case, the triviality is more likely to be his reason for excluding *Ci Liushi jiuwen*.

Although *Ci Liushi jiuwen* did not make its way into Li Deyu's personal collection, its textual history can still be gleaned from notices about, quotations of, and different editions of this work. What follows is a critical review of the materials concerning *Ci Liushi jiuwen* still extant today along with an account of insights and issues these surviving texts bring to modern readers.

The earliest evidence of *Ci Liushi jiuwen* is a note preserved in "Annals of Emperor Wenzong" 文宗本紀 in *JTS*:

> "On the *jiwei* day (Oct. 30, 834), Minister Li Deyu presented *Yuchen yaolüe* and *Liushi jiuwen*, 3 *juan* [in total]."
> 己未，宰臣李德裕進《御臣要略》及《柳氏舊聞》三卷.

This brief description, when compared with other bibliographical records from the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127) down to the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), raises questions about the exact title and length of this collection.

How did scholars and compilers in the past refer to *Ci Liushi jiuwen*? At least two different titles are found in sources from the Song dynasty. The first title, "Ci Liushi jiuwen"次柳氏舊聞, as seen in the "Bibliographies" (*Yiwen zhi* 藝文志) of the *XTS*, informs readers of the source and nature of the stories in this collection.[98] Variations of this title include *Liushi jiuwen* 柳氏舊聞 found in *JTS*, as quoted above, and *Liu Fang jiuwen*柳芳舊聞 (Old Stories Heard from Liu Fang) in the *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜.[99] In some other sources, the term *jiuwen* 舊聞 (hearsay) is replaced by *jiushi* 舊史 (old history), suggesting that some editors regarded this collection as more of a historical record than anecdotal materials. One example is *Tang huiyao*

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[98] See Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-72) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061) ed., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (The New History of the Tang), 58.1468. The text reads, "Li Deyu, *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, one-*juan*" 李德裕《次柳氏舊聞》一卷. The *XTS* was compiled between 1044 and 1060 and presented to the throne in 1060.

[99] *Cefu yuangui* is an important *leishu* 類書 completed in the Song dynasty. It is divided into 31 main sections and 1104 subsections, covering from early times to the end of the Five Dynasties (960). The collection under discussion appears in the session of "Collecting and Compiling" (*caizuan* 採撰) under "National History" (*Guoshi* 國史), See Wang Qinruo 王欽若 et al., comps., *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 (Outstanding models from the storehouse of literature), 12 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2006), 7: 556.6380. The text reads, "Li *Deyu* became Vice Director of the Secretariat, Joint Manager of Affairs with the Secretariat-Chancellery and on the Jimo Day of the ninth month of the eighth year of the Dahe reign (Oct. 17, 834), presented a three-juan *Liu Fang jiuwen.*"李德裕，為中書侍郎、平章事。大和八年九月己未，進《柳芳舊聞》三卷.

唐會要 (Collected Essentials of the Tang), where the collection is called *Ci Liushi jiushi* 次柳氏舊史 (Chronicle of Old History from the Lius)[100]

A second title for *Ci Liushi jiuwen* is "Minghuang shiqi shi" 明皇十七事 (Seventeen Tales of the Enlightened Emperor), denoting the protagonist and total number of stories in this collection. This second title often appears in anthologies and *leishu* 類書 (literally *classified books*, or encyclopedia) that partly or completely preserve stories from *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, for example *Leishuo* 類說 (Categorized talk) and *Ganzhu ji* 紺珠集 (Maroon pearl collection), two Southern Song dynasty compilations, and Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360s) *Shuofu* 說郛, a Ming-dynasty anthology.

The question of *Ci Liushi jiuwen*'s length is more easily resolved than its correct title. Catalogues from the Song down to the Qing dynasty consistently show that *Ci Liushi jiu wen* was transmitted in the form of one *juan* (some authorities even went farther in specifying a total of seventeen stories).[101] Despite these seemingly consistent records, it is unlikely Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* remained unaltered and intact to the present day. In fact, there has been a protracted debate among scholars and compilers over the content and structure of this collection

[100] *Huiyao* usually traces the history of institutions of a given dynasty using excerpts from contemporary documents and were intended as a guide to bureaucratic practice. The collection under discussion is found under the "Compiling and Editing" (*xiuzhuan* 修撰) session of the *Tang huiyao* compiled by Wang Pu 王溥 (922-82). See Niu Jingqing 牛繼清 ed., *Tang Huiyao Jiaojian* 唐會要校箋 [Collated and Annotated Edition of *Important Documents of the Tang*] 2 vol. (Xi'an: Sanqin Chubanshe), 2:36.569. The text reads "In the ninth month of the year, Minister Li Deyu presented *Yuchen yaolüe* and *Ci Liushi shi*" 其年九月，宰臣李德裕進《御臣要略》、《次柳氏舊史》.

[101] The only exception is *Cefu yuangui*, which notes that the collection consists of 3 *juan*. Modern scholars speculate that the *Cefu yuangui* editors created this discrepancy because of their misinterpretation of the *JTS* record, which notes Li Deyu's two collections were presented in a total of 3 *juan*.

as they were trying to reconstruct it. When different editions of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* texts are compared, it becomes evident that authorities disagree as to which stories belonged to the original collection and how they were actually compiled.

The *Gushi wenfang* edition

Among all the available editions of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, a mid-Ming dynasty version known as the *Yangshan gushi wenfang xiaoshuo* 陽山顧氏文房小說eventually stood out from the rest and gradually became the foundation for many later editions.[102] The *Yangshan gushi wenfang xiaoshuo* is an anthology compiled by Gu Yuanqing 顧元慶 (1487-1565), a well-known compiler and writer of classical stories in Suzhou 蘇州.[103] Gu Yuanqing wrote editorial notes for over seventy percent of the stories in his anthology, often in the format of "collated with a certain edition held by the Gu family of Changzhou." According to these editorial comments, the texts Gu Yuanqing published in this anthology were either collated with or reprinted from rare Song and Yuan editions preserved in the family's own private library. While an editor's note is not found at the end of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, Gu Yuanqing's edition of *Ci Liushi jiuwen* is still highly valued as a base text in reconstructing this collection.

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[102] In addition to the *Yangshan gushi wenfang xiaoshuo*, Gu Yuanqing also compiled two other important anthologies—*Gushi mingchao sishi jia xiaoshuo* 顧氏明朝四十家小說 and *Guang sishi jia xiaoshuo* 廣四十家小說. His own collections of classical stories include *Yunlin yishi* 雲林遺事 and *Yanpu outan*. *Gushi wenfang xiaoshuo* 顧氏文房小說 was first printed by the Gu family during the Zhengde 正德 and Jiajing 嘉靖 eras, which was photocopied and published by *Hanfen lou* 涵芬樓, a Shanghai publishing house in 1925.

[103] Gu's anthology, completed no later than 1533, collects forty works between the Han and the Song dynasties, with emphasis on Tang and Song works. Not only does this anthology contain collections of short stories, but it also includes longer tales that circulated independently.

Gu Yuanqing's edition consists of a preface and seventeen stories, chronologically arranged and varied in length. Taken together, these ancedotes of Emperor Xuanzong, from his time as a crown prince to his retirement, cast the emperor in a highly positive light as a loving father, caring brother, and wise ruler. To facilitate later comparison with other editions, this paper summarizes these seventeen stories in their original order:

1. As a crown prince, Emperor Xuanzong was forced to abort his wife's pregnancy under the pressure of his political rival Princess Taiping. A god in golden armor overturned the pot three times that Xuanzong used for making abortion medicine, which the Grand Tutor Zhang Yue read as a heavenly sign to protect the fetus and thus saved the life of the future Emperor Suzong.

2. Emperor Xuanzong did not answer Minister Yao Chong's question, but later disclosed to his attendant, Gao Lishi, that this refusal to respond was an intentional demonstration of his belief that a minister should be given full control over his own domain, without any interference, even by the emperor himself.

3. Wei Zhigu planned to use Yao Chong's sons' intended bribery to undermine Yao. But, Yao reassured Emperor Xuanzong of his fealty and trustworthiness, while Wei himself was then demoted.

4. The emperor confided to Gao Lishi that he promoted Yuan Qiaoyao to Grand Councilor because of Yuan's striking physical resemblance to his once-loyal minister Xiao Zhizhong, later executed for his alliance with Princess Taiping.

5. Story number 5 again relates how the emperor dealt with internal political struggles between his ministers, Xiao Song and Han Xiu. The thoughtful words in the emperor's decree and the tribute oranges the emperor handpicked and wrapped for Xiao Song, demonstrated his intense care for the ministers.

6. Zhang Guolao, a Daoist master, who refused to have an audience with Empress Wu Zetian, instead later came to Emperor Xuanzong's court and displayed many extraordinary abilities.

7. Emperor Xuanzong summoned the Indian Monk Master Wuwei (637-735) (i.e., Śubhakarasimha) to pray for rain when the capital region suffered a severe drought.

8. Emperor Xuanzong excelled in calligraphy and habitually handwrote candidates' names for the Grand Councilor position. When asked to guess whom he would promote, the heir predicted that the emperor would elevate them all, showing the closeness of father and son, as well as their shared political insights.

9. Emperor Xuanzong selected for his son a palace lady who dreamed of a god in golden armor coming through her left underarm into her belly and then gave birth to the future Emperor Daizong.

10. When the future Emperor Daizong was born, Emperor Xuanzong paid a visit to see his grandson. The nannies substituted a plump baby for the feeble royal grandson but Emperor Xuanzong immediately recognized his true grandson and predicted he would become emperor one day.

11. Emperor Xuanzong was once upset to see the crown prince cleaning an oily knife with a fresh cake but was soon pleased to find out that the crown prince did not plan to waste the cake but ate it all.

12. The emperor visited the Palace of Ascendant Felicity before departing for Shu, where he heard the lyrics to the "Tune of Waters," written by his former Grand Councilor Li Qiao to long for past glories. The emperor was deeply touched and praised Li Qiao as "truly talented."

13. Just as the emperor and his entourage were leaving the palace, Grand Councilor Yang Guozhong proposed to set the country's depository on fire so it would not come under the control of the rebels. Emperor Xuanzong, nevertheless, denied this proposal, trusting that the money from the depository would so satisfy the rebels that they wouldn't further oppress common people.

14. On his way to Shu, the emperor repeatedly rejected hot wine a follower offered him. When people thought that he was concerned about being poisoned, the emperor explained that he had abstained from alcohol for over forty years since under the influence of alcohol he had mistakenly killed a man.

15. When the emperor and his entourage were about to cross the Jialing river, the dragon that resided in the pond of his Ascendant Felicity Palace flew all the way from the capital to bid farewell to the emperor.

16. The emperor's elder brother, Prince Ning, once choked during a meal with the emperor, and the food shot out of his mouth onto the emperor's mustache. The

emperor's attendant Huang Fanchuo defused this embarrassing situation with a witty pun that greatly pleased the emperor.

17. Huang Fanchuo allied himself to the rebels. When the imperial forces later recaptured the central region, Huang Fanchuo was denounced for interpreting An Lushan's dream as an auspicious sign for military success. Huang then made a totally opposite interpretation of the same dream and the emperor pardoned him.

Although Gu Yuanqing claimed he had access to rare Song editions, still, a survey might determine whether and to what extent Gu Yuanqing's editorial work shaped the collection as it now stands. Any scholar who attempts to reconstruct this collection would immediately have to deal with multiple forms of text. Tang stories survive into later dynasties through different textual forms: Glen Dudbridge, in his pioneering work on Tang tales, points out that Tang stories were transmitted through two traditions—the synoptic tradition represented by the *Leishuo*類說 (Categorized Talk) and the full-length tradition that the *Taiping guangji* represents.[104] Sarah Allen expands Dudbridge's framework and argues that Tang stories exist in three different forms: 1) long versions, which are "the fullest versions of a story available;" 2) abridgements, which repeat the general story line but leave out details; 3) fragments, that is, short segments recounting some details of a story, but not long enough to encompass an entire plot.[105] While contemporary readers are much more familiar with long versions of Tang stories, Allen points out that

[104] Glen Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa* (Ithaca: Oxford University Press, 1983), 5-14.

[105] Sarah M. Allen, "Tang Stories: Tales and Texts," p. 22.

abridgements and fragments are far more common in extant Song sources. In the case of *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, we found full versions, abridgements, and fragments of the stories.

The Synoptic Tradition

Shorter versions of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* texts can be traced back to *Leishuo*, an anthology of stories compiled by Zeng Zao 曾慥 (preface dated 1136).[106] Zhu Shengfei's 朱勝非 (1082-1144) *Ganzhu ji* 紺珠集 (Maroon Pearl Collection) is another Southern Song anthology of this kind, but much shorter in length, consisting of only 13 *juan.*[107] Both anthologies selectively preserve only a portion of a given collection according to standards set by their compilers. In terms of the organizing principles, these two anthologies are also similar: both keep stories from any given collection together. To reconstruct a collection with materials from these two anthologies thus has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, these synoptic texts, even when taken together, cannot represent the entire collection but only a portion of it. On the other hand, the shorter versions sometimes provide valuable textual variants or stories, especially when compared with corresponding full-length texts.

Zeng Zao's *Leishuo* refers to Li Deyu's collection as *Minghuang shiqi shi* and attributes a total of thirteen stories to it. Among these thirteen stories, eight are textually related to those in

[106] *Leishuo* covers stories from pre-Han to early Song but only a small portion of a mid-southern Song printing is available. What became the foundation of most modern editions of *Leishuo* is the Tianqi edition 天啟本, a seventeenth century printing produced nearly five hundred years after its first edition.

[107] The term *ganzhu* comes from a tenth-century anecdote about the Grand Councilor Zhang Yue 張說, who was said to be able to recall things when holding a magic maroon pearl in hand. As its content and title suggest, this anthology aims to refresh memories of the details of a story or the origin of a phrase.

the Gu Yuanqing edition but they are significantly shorter than those in the Gu Yuanqing edition, outlining only the general plot or simply one aspect of the corresponding story.[108] For example, the "Palace of Ascendant Felicity" story (No.12 in Gu's edition) becomes two independent entries in *Leishuo*, each with a title: the first, now titled "Li Qiao, A True Genius," relates that Emperor Xuanzong heard a young man singing Li Qiao's lyrics. The emperor praised as follows: "Li Qiao was a true genius." Compared with the longer version, this entry is a summary of the original story. The second entry, now titled "Jade-ring *piap*," is a one-sentence introduction of *Jade Ring*, a musical instrument that appears in the original story. The entry reads, "[This musical instrument] was once handled by Emperor Ruizong. When His Highness was about to grace the West with his imperial presence, he ordered He Huaizhi to play it." This entry reads like a note that one would jot down to feed his or her interest in a particular type of knowledge, in this case, information about this particular musical instrument. *Ganzhu ji* 紺珠集 (Maroon Pearl Collection), on the other hand, includes a total of fourteen stories under the title "*minghuang shiqi shi*." These fourteen stories overlap to a large degree with those from *Leishuo*. Like Leishuo, *Ganzhu ji* also contains eight stories that are textually related to those in the Gu Yuanqing edition. These eight entries are similar in wording with the corresponding *Leishuo* texts. As to the remaining six entries not found in Gu Yuanqing's edition, four are almost identical with the Leishuo.[109]

[108] These eight stories are No. 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14 and 15 in the Gu Yuanqing edition.

[109] But whenever the two editions differ in length, the *Ganzhu ji* text is usually the longer one, providing slightly more details than the *Leishuo* text. This comparison interestingly contradicts Sarah Allen's general observation of the compilation, which, according to her, is primarily interested in collecting phrases from a story and hence is shorter than other versions.

How do we account for the entries in the earlier *Leishuo* and *Ganzhu ji* editions that do not correspond to those in the later Gu Yuanqing's edition? The *Gan Zhuji* edition provides an important solution to this problem. A short note next to the title of *Ci Liushi jiuwen* reads: "Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* is also included" 柳珵常侍言旨附. Although this note does not specify which entries belong to Liu's work, the first six stories, not textually related to any story in the later Gu Yuanqing's edition, were most likely drawn from Liu's collection.

As to why the *Ganzhu ji* editor chose to print Liu Cheng's stories together with those by Li Deyu, the reason can only be speculated. Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* (to be discussed in Chapter 4) is also a collection of anecdotes about Emperor Xuanzong's reign. Liu also claims that its stories were told and collected by members of the historian Liu Fang's family, as Li Deyu states in his preface to his *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Scholars conjecture that anthologists reprinted these two collections together because they believed these stories derived from the same source. But it may also be true that in order to reconstruct *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, compilers turned to collections concerning Emperor Xuanzong. Thus, stories from these collections became mixed together. The *Leishuo* edition shares with *Ganzhu ji* four stories from Liu's *Changshi yanzhi* but does not list Liu's work as its source. This omission suggests that by the Song dynasty anthologies had difficulty deciding which story belonged to the original collection of *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Moreover, while the *Ganzhu ji* edition groups stories from Liu's work together and places them ahead of stories from Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, the corresponding stories in *Leishuo* are inserted between stories from the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. This reordering also confirms that the *Leishuo* editor was either unclear about the different origins of these two groups of stories, or determined it unnecessary to further differentiate them. In any case, the boundary between Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi*

jiuwen and relevant collections such as Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* has been blurred by the time of the Southern Song dynasty.

The Full-Length Tradition

The longer version of *Ci Liushi jiuwen* stories can be found in the *Taiping guangji,* a primary source of Tang *xiaoshuo* composed during the Taiping xingguo reign period 太平興國 (970s) of Emperor Taizong of the Song dynasty (r. 976-997).[110] The *TPGJ* Stories were taken from a wide range of sources and topically rearranged. In most cases, a *TPGJ* story comes with a title and a source attribution. In total, *TPGJ* attributes five stories, spreading over four categories, to *Liu shi shi* 柳氏史 (History by the Lius), presumably, an alternative title of the collection, *Ci Liushi jiuwen.*[111]

Besides these five stories, there are also other *TPGJ* stories textually related to those in the Gu Yuanqing edition, but they are attributed to sources other than *Ci Liushi jiuwen.*[112] For

[110] The earliest extant edition of the *TPGJ*—the Ming edition compiled by Tan Kai 談愷 (first printed in 1567), was published nearly six hundred years after its original Song edition. Unless otherwise noted, the *TPGJ* texts examined in this thesis all come from Zhang Guofeng's 張國風 *Taiping guangji huijiao* 太平廣記會校.

[111] To be more specific, The *TPGJ* texts correspond with stories No. 1, No. 5, No. 7, a combination of No. 9 and No. 10, and No. 11 in the later Gu Yuanqing edition.

[112] There are several other stories textually related to *Ci Liushi jiuwen* but attributed to other sources: "Yao Hong," 姚泓 in Chapter 29 "immortals" invokes the narrative structure of story No. 2 in Gu Yuanqing's edition; "Yuan Qianyao" in Chapter 202, "Rui xing" 儒行 (Deeds of Confucian Scholars) is almost identical to Story No. 4 in Gu Yuanqing's edition but was attributed to Li Zhao's 李肇 *Guoshi bu* 國史補; "Xingqing chi long" 興慶池龍 (Dragon of the Xingqing Pond) is textually related to Story No. 15 but was attributed to Zhang Du's *Xuanshi zhi*; the second part of "Huang Fanchuo" in Chapter 250 "Huixie"詼諧 is similar to the 16th

example, a story titled "Zhang Guo" 張果 in Chapter 30 of the *TPGJ* describes various miraculous deeds of the legendary Daoist Master Zhang Guo including three episodes from Story No. 7 in Gu Yuanqing's edition. *TPGJ* attributes this story to three sources, suggesting that the editor either found this story in multiple sources, or stitched together the current story with materials garnered from different sources. These three sources—Zheng Chuhui's 鄭處晦 (?-867) *Minghuang zalu* 明皇雜錄 (Miscellaneous records on the Bright Emperor), Zhang Du's 張讀 (834-886) *Xuanshi zhi* 宣室志[113] and Shen Fen's 沈玢 *Xu Shenxian zhuan* 續神仙傳 (Sequel to the *Memoir of Immortals*),[114] all appeared after the publication of Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Why did the *TPGJ* editors skip *Ci Liushi jiuwen* and instead list three later collections as the sources for the "Zhang Guo" story? Possibly, these three episodes were not found in the original collection of *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, or the version available to the *TPGJ* editors. Equally plausible, these three episodes concerning Zhang Lao were so widely circulated that they became stock stories writers often used to produce more elaborate stories. Once new stories were widely accepted, they could overshadow the original text. The great popularity that Zheng Chuhui's *Minghuang zalu* enjoyed lends support to this hypothesis. According to the *XTS* biography of Zheng Chuhui, "Early on, there was Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. But [Zheng] Chuhui thought it was too brief and unclear, thus he compiled another collection—*Minghuang zalu*. This work

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story in Gu Yuanqing's edition but *TPGJ* attributes this story to Zhao Ling's 趙璘 (802?-872?) *Yinhua lu* 因話錄 and *Songchuang zalu* 松窗雜錄 by Li Jun's 李濬, the Tang prime minister Li Shen's 李紳 (772-846) son.

[113] *Xuanshi* zhi, a 10-*juan* collection of anecdotes, was compiled by Zhang Du, the grandchild of Li Deyu's political rival, Niu Sengru. Based on materials dealing with Zhang Du's life and career, scholars infer that *Xuanshi zhi* was most likely published during the early years of the Xiantong 咸通 reign (860s) of Emperor Yizong (r. 859-873).

[114] Shen Fen, the compiler of *Xu Shenxian zhuan*, was active at the end of the Tang dynasty, but scholars believe this work was published during the 910's, after the fall of the Tang dynasty.

soon became very popular and circulated widely at the time." 先是, 李德裕《次柳氏舊聞》, 處誨謂未詳, 更撰《明皇雜錄》, 爲時盛傳. By the time the *TPGJ* was compiled, the *Minghuang zalu* edition of the Zhang Guo story likely became so well-established that its precedent, the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* text, faded from people's memory. Down to the Song dynasty, the *TPGJ* editors decided it was either impossible, or unnecessary to trace the "Zhang Guo" story all the way back to the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*.

Shuofu **and Other Ming & Qing Collectanea**

Another important source of Tang stories is *Congshu*, or *collectanea*. *Congshu* are collections of independent works published together to prevent their loss and gain wider circulation. *Congshu* flourished during the Ming 明 (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties清 (1644-1911). Many *collectanea* contain, or claim to contain Tang texts and collections. Scholars have long criticized Ming and Qing collectanea for mistakenly attributing texts to certain authors, arbitrarily altering and abbreviating original texts, and even forging Tang collections. Consequently, texts from these sources should be used with caution.[115]

In terms of selecting materials, *collecteanea* published during the Ming dynasty generally adhere to two traditions: some adopted the model established by Zuo Gui's 左圭 *Baichuan xuehai* in collecting writings of the "hundred masters" or historiographical writings. Others are

[115] Chinese Scholars generally agree that *Yuchu zhi* 虞初志 and *Gu jin shuohai* 古今說海, two Ming collectanea published before the appearance of the Tan Kai 談愷 edition of *Taiping guangji*, are relatively more reliable sources of Tang texts and preserve some valuable variants for reconstructing and collating texts. This is not to say, however, that these two compilations are flawless.

based on Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (ca. 1316-ca. 1402, *zi* Jiucheng 九成) *Shuofu* and only excerpt from collections, as opposed to incorporating the entire work.

Shuofu was credited to Tao Zongyi, a fourteenth-century historian and poet. Tao lived most of his life in Songjiang 松江 near modern Shanghai.[116] Tao modeled his *Shuofu* on Zeng Zao's *Leishuo*, excerpting materials from the Han to the Song dynasties. *Shuofu* also resembles *Leishuo* in its selective reproduction of texts and organizing principles in keeping excerpts of any given collection together. The *Shuofu* texts thus belong to the synoptic tradition as discussed above, but the *Shuofu* texts of *Ci Liushi jiuwen* are no shorter than the corresponding texts in *Taiping guangji* or the *Gushi wenfang* edition. That is why this thesis treats *Shuofu* and its successors in a separate section.

The original copy of *Shuofu*, divided into 100 *juan*, reportedly culled materials from over a thousand works. Yet, according to *Sibu zongmu tiyao* 四部總目提要, only about 70 *juan* of

[116] Peter Chang and Chao-ying Fang provide an excellent summary of Tao Zongyi's life and his important works: Tao Zongyi was born into a scholarly family. During chaotic times of the late Yuan, he first moved to Songjiang, and then to Sijing 泗涇, where he resided in a house later known as the *Nancun caotang* 南村草堂. When Sijing came under the control of Zhang Shicheng's 張士誠 (1321-1367) troops, Zhang summoned Tao to serve as an adviser. But Tao wisely refused. Thus, he was saved from prison when Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398), founder of the Ming dynasty, ascended the throne. Later, Tao was summoned to appear at court in Zhu Yuanzhang's capital at Nanjing. He was exempted from government service and continued as a teacher for the remainder of his life. Tao Zongyi culled invaluable materials from extensive sources in his own and his friends' library. In addition to *Shoufu*, his most important works include *Chuogen lu* 輟耕錄 (or *Nancun chuogen lu* 南村輟耕錄), a collection of his miscellaneous notes and essays on art, literature, science as well as his recording of current events and modes of life, *Shushi huiyao* 書史會要, a work on calligraphers; and *Guke congchao* 古刻叢鈔, a collection of ancient stone inscriptions. See Goodrich and Fang, ed., *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644* (New York, 1976), p. 1269-70. *Shuofu* and its relationship with the seventeenth century revision of *Shuofu* by Tao Ting 陶珽 are examined by Chang Bide 昌彼得 in *Shuofu kao*. See also Peter Chang and Chao-ying Fang in Goodrich and Fang, ed., *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644* (New York, 1976), p. 1271.

this compilation were still in existence by the end of the fifteenth century. Thereafter, various restored editions appeared but the two most influential were the 120-*juan* "recompiled edition" (also known as *Wanwei shantung* 宛委山堂 edition) attributed to Tao Ting 陶珽 (cj 1591, cs 1610), and the 100-*juan Hanfen lou* 涵芬樓 edition prepared and published in 1927 by Zhang Zongxiang 張宗祥 (1882-1965) of the Shanghai Commercial Press. Zhang Zongxiang collated six Ming manuscripts of the *Shuofu* to produce his own edition. The *Hanfenlou* edition only includes 725 works, twenty-five percent less than the original version and was produced much later than other restored *Shuofu* editions. Modern scholars nonetheless regard this version as the most reliable version available today. The 120-juan edition, first printed by the *Wanwei shantang* publishing house in late Ming, lists more than 1,300 items, surpassing the original *Shuofu* in scope.[117] Yet, many scholars criticize the *Wanwei shantang* edition for its uncritical selection of materials, arbitrary alteration of original texts, and incorrect attribution of sources and authorship.[118]

[117] The textual history of the *Wanwei shantang* edition itself is rather complicated, with extant printed editions all varying in the number of items it included.

[118] One good example is that Lu Xun's 魯迅 (1881-1936) criticism of the *Wanwei shantang* edition as "fake" *Shuofu* 偽說郛. Lu Xun first saw the *Wanwei shantang* edition in early 1910s. He relied on this edition to reconstruct several works. But his attitude towards the *Wanwei shantang* edition changed sharply in the 1920s after he obtained several Ming manuscripts of *Shuofu* and discovered many textual problems of the *Wanwei shantang* edition after careful comparisons. *Shuofu* became an indispensible source for Lu Xun when he compiled *Collection of Tales from the Tang and Song dynasties* 唐宋傳奇集, a pioneer work in the field of classical Chinese stories published in 1927, but the edition on which Lu Xun relied then was the Ming manuscripts, not the *Wanwei shantang* edition. Records also show that Lu Xun purchased Zhang Songxiang's *Hanfen lou* edition of *Shuofu* towards the end of 1927, but afterwards Lu Xun switched his focus to other fields so there is no record showing Lu Xun's use of the *Hanfen lou* edition in collating and reconstructing texts of Tang stories.

In the *Hanfen lou* edition, the collection under the earlier discussion, is titled "Ci Liushi jiuwen." A note next to the title shows the collection was published in the form of "one *juan*" and is "… also known as *Minghuang shiqi shi.*" Nevertheless, the *Hanfen lou* edition of *Shuofu* only selects *three* stories from *Ci Liushi jiuwen* together with a preface to the work.[119] Compared with the Gu Yuanqing edition, the preface in the *Hanfen lou* edition of *Shuofu* is an abridged version though its three stories are comparable in length to those in the Gu Yuanqing edition.

After the loss of *Ci Liushi jiuwen,* different compilers sought to restore this work from available sources, resulting in multiple versions of the same work. These restored editions, sometimes titled "Ci Liushi jiuwen," and at other times named "Minghuang shiqi shi," differ in wording and total number of stories. Editor of the *Wanwei shantang* edition apparently encountered at least two restored editions of the same work by Li Deyu but treated them as two independent collections, reflecting his uncritical selection of materials. These two collections in the *Wanwei shantang* edition overlap largely but are not identical: along with textual variants, these two collections also differ in the total number and selection of particular stories. The *Wanwei shantang* edition of *Ci Liushi jiuwen* consists of a preface and sixteen stories with the last describing an auspicious sign that appeared after Emperor Xuanzong prayed for his people. The *Minghuang shiqi shi*, on the other hand, replaces this last supernatural story with two stories

[119] These three stories are "Zhang Yue jiyu" 張說際遇 (A Critical Juncture in Zhang Yue's Life, No. 1 in Gu's edition), "Pendi" 噴帝 (Sniffing or Spewing Food at The Emperor, No. 16 in Gu's edition) and "Huang Fanchuo jieji" 黃幡綽捷給 (Quick-wittedness of Huang Fanchuo, No. 17 in Gu's edition).

concerning the Emperor Xuanzong's court entertainer, Huang Fanchuo, making the total number of stories seventeen.[120]

Authorities considered it unnecessary, even misleading for the *Wanwei shantang* edition to collect both *Minghuang shiqi shi* and *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Yet, this edition enhances our understanding of the collection in question. First, with a total of seventeen stories, this version presents *Minghuang shiqi shi* in its complete form. Second, this edition also preserves two stories not found in other versions of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen.* The first of these two stories appears in the middle of the collection and reads as below:

> During the Tianbao reign, whenever An Lushan came to court, His Highness treated him differently from others, greeting him with an especially high degree of courtesy. His Highness would have people set up golden-cockerel screens along the west side of the palace hall and then seat Lushan behind these screens. The future Suzong emperor once admonished His Highness, "Since ancient times, there is no such protocol for seating a subject in the palace hall. Now that Your Majesty doted on him, [he will] definitely grow proud and arrogant. " His Highness, asking the Crown Prince to move closer, explained, "This barbarian has a highly unusual appearance. [By granting him all these special courtesies,] I just want to assuage [his thirst for power] and sate [his appetite for power]."
>
> 天寶中，安祿山每來朝，上特異待之，為致殊禮，殿西遍張金雞障，來輒賜坐。肅宗諫曰：“自古正殿無人臣坐禮。陛下寵之既厚，必將驕也。”上呼太子前曰：“此胡有奇相，吾以此饜弭之爾。”

This story and its variations appeared in several other sources from the Tang and Song dynasties, suggesting this account was widely circulated at the time. Yet, among all the extant

[120] The two Huan Fanchuo stories in the *Wanwei shanting* edition are nearly identical with those in the *Hanfen lou* edition. But where the two editions differ, the *Wanwei shantang* edition is superior syntactically.

materials, this current version attributed to *Minghuang shiqi shi* is the most detailed. Furthermore, a variation of this story also appears in the *Du yi zhi* 獨異志 compiled by Li Kang 李亢, Li Deyu's contemporary who collected and rewrote stories from early times down to his own era. Based on these two observations, modern scholar Zhou Xunchu conjectures that this story possibly belonged to Li Deyu's original collection.[121]

In fact, this story's theme and narrative structure also resembles several other stories in Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Emperor Xuanzong's improper favor of An Lushan creates in the story an initial tension, compounded by a series of words such as *te* 特 (specially), *shu* 殊(special), *bian* 遍 (spread everywhere), all denoting the emperor's excessive and inappropriate behavior. The tension of this story is further intensified when the Crown Prince openly admonishes the emperor for his behavior. It was not until the emperor revealed his plan to the Crown Prince that the tension was resolved. In some accounts, Emperor Xuanzong's coddling of An Lushan was considered the cause of the later disastrous An Lushan rebellion. This story, however, interprets the emperor's seemingly inexplicable favor as a well-conceived strategy to satisfy An Lushan's high self-esteem. In terms of narrative strategies, this story is not unlike the second anecdote in the Gu Yuanqing edition where Emperor Xuanzong's rude action in not answering his old minister turns out to be a display of the emperor's complete trust in them.

Neither does the last story of the *Wanwei shantang* edition of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* appear in any earlier editions of the work. The story unfolds as follows:

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[121] Zhou Xunchu lists several other materials that touch on this story, including Zheng Yu's 鄭嵎 note to his self-annotated long verse "The Poetry of the Jinyang Gate" 津陽門詩, the "Memoire of An Lushan" in both the *XTS* and *JTS* and *Zizhi tongjian juan*. For details of Zhou's argument, see Zhou, *wenji*, p. 214.

> During the Tianbao reign, His Highness once prayed for his people in the Inner Place of Dharma Preaching. The emperor himself wrote his own prayer on a piece of yellow silk. Just as the emperor ascended to the altar, the prayer text, on its own, rose up and soared into the sky. Then a voice came from the sky: "Long live to the August Emperor." From dignitaries to ordinary officials, all asked [the emperor] to include this event in the national history; therefore, an edict was issued to follow this request.
>
> 天寶中，上於內道場為兆庶祈福，親製素黃文。及登壇之際，其文乃自然凌空而上，騰於天也。聞空中有言"聖壽延長"，王公以下請編入史冊，制從之。

Zhou Xunchu discovered records of this event in official histories and documents from the early Song, providing greater detail about what happened, including the manifesto from the officials as well as the emperor's responding edict. Zhou surmises the *Shuofu* story was in fact derived from these early Song records but was improperly attributed to the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* simply to make up the total number of stories in this lost collection. To support his theory that the *Shuofu* story was a later add-on, Zhou further noted the event of this story describes took place earlier than those appearing in other stories of the collection and hence, should not be located at the end of the chronologically compiled *Ci Liushi jiuwen*.

The *Wanwei shantang* edition of *Shuofu* was not the only work that treats *Minghuang shiqishi* and *Ci Liushi jiuwen* as two independent works. *Wuchao xiaoshuo* 五朝小說 (Stories from Five Dynasties), a compilation from the late Ming, continued such a practice although the editor doubted if a distinction was even necessary.[122] Further, Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* is also

[122] *Wuchao xiaoshuo* 五朝小說 was compiled during the late Ming and was centered on collecting *xiaoshuo*, or more generally known to modern readers as memories, miscellaneous notes, tales, anecdotes from the Three Kingdoms 三國 (220-280) to the Ming dynasty. Stories in this collection are divided into four periods—the Wei and Jin dynasties, the Tang, the Song and

found in several other Ming and Qing collectanea, including Chen Jiru's 陳繼儒 (1558-1639) *Baoyan tang miji* 寶顏堂秘笈 (Rare Texts from the Hall of Precious Visage), Li Shi's 李栻 (fl. 1610s) *Lidai xiaoshi* 歷代小史, *Baicheng* 稗乘and Cao Rong's 曹溶 (1613-1685) *Xuehai leibian* 學海類編. One can make several interesting observations through a comparison of the *Ci Liushijiu wen* in these four collectanea. Although these collectanea all include Li Deyu's preface, which explicitly observes the original collection consisted of seventeen stories, only *Baicheng* fits this total number. None of these collectanea include the last two stories concerning the entertainer Huang Fanchuo as he appears in Gu Yuanqing's edition. Instead, these compilers made different choices in adopting the "Jinji zhang" story, the "Suhuang wen" story or both, the two stories seen in the *Wanwei shantang* edition of *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Although compared with Gu Yuanqing's edition of *Ci Liushi jiuwen,* these collectanea may add or delete a few items, but these stories' relative sequence to each other remains the same. Arguably, by the end of the Ming dynasty, compilers reached a consensus about the general structure and content of the collection but took different stances dealing with specific stories. Evidently, Gu Yuanqing's edition, the primary base text for modern editions of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen,* had not established itself as the dominating model for reconstructing the collection at the time. A look into the state-sponsored

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the Ming, each with a title in the format of stories from hundred schools of a certain dynasty. The origin of the *Wuchao xiaoshuo* is still under scholarly debate. Some scholars, such as editors of the *Zhongguo congshu zonglu,* Chang Bide 昌彼得 and Chen Xianxing 陳先行, believe that *Wuchao xiaoshuo* derived from an incomplete version of the *Wanwei shangtang* edition of the *Shuofu*. That explains why compilers of the collectanea index *Zhongguo Congshu zonglu* 中國叢書綜錄 used the *Wanwei shantang* edition as their base text for reconstructing the lost *Wuchao xiaoshuo*. Other scholars believe *Wuchao xiaoshuo* came from earlier sources. For example, Chen Yizhong found, at the Peking University library, two independently circulated collections of Tang stories and Song stories from the *Wuchao xiaoshuo*. Since these two independent collections collect more stories than their counterparts in current version of the *Wuchao xiaoshuo*, Chen speculates that they were two of the base texts for the original *Wuchao xiaoshuo*.

collectanium *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 supports this view. The *Siku quanshu* edition of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* consists of a preface and seventeen stories. This edition left out the last two stories in the Gu Yuanqing edition and, instead, chose to include the "Jinji zhang" story and the "Su Huangwen" story.

Modern Editions of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*

Modern critical editions of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* largely draw upon Gu Yuanqing's edition of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. This trend of attributing authoritative status to Gu Yuanqing's edition can be traced back to Ye Dehui's 葉德輝 (1864-1927) edition of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. In the third year of the Xuantong 宣統 reign (1912), Ye Dehui published a small collectanium of six works on Emperor Xuanzong's reign and titled it *Tang Kaiyuan xiaoshuo liuzhong* 唐開元小說六種 (Six Works of Tang Tales on the Kaiyuan Reign Period). In the preface to the collectanium, Ye Dehui explained his reason for reprinting these Tang collections: Ye Dehui highly valued *Gushi wenfang xiaoshuo*, Gu Yuanqing's collectanium, for preserving high-quality texts of Tang tales but regreted that Gu's collectuanium was not widely circulated in his time, hence Ye was motivated to selectively reprint part of Gu's collectanium. Ye Dehui's text was mainly based on Gu Yuanqing's edition but was also collated with the *Wuchao xiaoshuo* edition. Ye carefully compared and noted textual variants between these different editions, which became the textual criticism of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* the attached to the end of his collection.

There are two important modern editions of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*—the *Kaiyuan tianbao yishi shizhong* 開元天寶遺事十種, a small collectanium of anecdotes published by the Shanghai guji 上海古籍 press, and the other, Tao Ming's *Quan Tang Wudai biji* 全唐五代筆記, an

anthology of anecdotes from the Tang and the Five Dynasties. Both works used Gu Yuanqing's edition as base text and collated with Ye Dehui's *Kaiyuan xiaoshuo liuzhong*, among others. For stories not appearing in Gu Yuanqing's edition, both works establish an addendum and attached it after the commonly-accepted seventeen stories. *Kaiyuan tianbao yishi shizhong* includes in its addendum "Jinji zhang" and "Suhuang wen," as well as five stories from *Leishuo*. The compiler of *Kaiyuan tianbao yishi* characterizes these seven stories as "(stories to) supplement omission" (*buyi*, 補遺). Tao Ming, on the other hand, only reserved the term *buyi* for the first two stories. He coined a new term, "stories to be further examined" 備考, to describe the remaining five stories. This nominal difference reveals that in Tao Ming's opinion, the first two stories—"Jinji zhang" and "Suhuang wen"—are more likely to belong to the original collection. Unless otherwise noted, this thesis uses Tao's *Quan Tang Wudai biji* 全唐五代筆記 edition as the base text.

3.2 The *Ci Liushi jiu wen* in the Historical, Social and Literary Context

In the year of 834, about a year and a half after Li Deyu was reinstated as one of Emperor Wenzong's Grand Councilors, Li presented two works to the emperor, the first, titled *Ci Liushijiuwen*, is a collection of stories concerning the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (685-762; r. 712-756), when the Tang dynasty reached its apex of political, economic, and cultural power.

Thanks to Li Deyu's preface to this collection, the circumstances surrounding the compilation of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* are much clearer than most anecdotal collections from this period. This preface describes in detail why and how this collection came into existence:[123]

> It was the autumn of the eighth year of the Dahe reign (834). On the *yiyou* day of the eighth month (Sept. 29), His Highness (Emperor Wenzong) held court at the Purple Morn Hall (*Zichen dian,* 紫宸殿)[124]. Ministers under the Grand Councilor

[123] The preface can be found in the *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (*juan* 707), *gushi wenfang xiaoshuo* 顧氏文房小說, *Shuofu* 說郛 (*juan* 44) and Ding Ruming 丁如明, ed., *Kaiyuan tianbao yishi shizhong* 開元天寶遺事十種 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji Chubanshe, 1985), 1. The *shuofu* edition contains a shorter version of this preface.

[124] The Zichen Hall 紫宸殿 was an audience hall behind Xuanzheng Hall 宣政殿, the principal audience hall used for daily court assembly in the Daming Palace 大明宮 in the Tang capital, Chang'an. The Zichen Hall, on the other hand, was used for less formal court meeting, and the atmposhere was thus much more relaxed. Such a setting made the emperor's inquiry about Gao Lishi seemed more appropriate, especially, given that the more serious discussions had been finished. For details, see Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 36

> [Wang] Ya 王涯 (?-835)[125] all reported to the throne according to their respective duties. His Highness turned to the Grand Councilor and asked, "Please tell me about the traces of the former enunch [Gao] Lishi's deeds?" Minister [Wang] Ya duly replied, "During the Shangyuan reign (760-761), official historian Liu Fang was convicted of a crime and banished to *Qianzhong* 黔中,[126] as was Lishi to Wuzhou 巫州 at the same time.[127] Consequently, Liu Fang and Gao Lishi became acquainted and got along well. Since Liu Fang was once in charge of writing the national history, Lishi told him what had gone on in the palace in former time, which otherwise would have been unknown to Liu Fang. Liu also asked [Lishi] to clear up questions [he had about Xuanzong's reign]. Liu silently memorized what Lishi told him and, upon returning home, transcribed and arranged those stories in chorological order. He then named this collection, *Asking Gao Lishi*."
>
> 大和八年秋，八月乙酉，上於紫宸殿聽政，宰臣涯已下奉職奏事。上顧謂宰臣曰：故內臣力士終始事跡，試為我言之。臣涯即奏云：上元中，史臣柳芳得罪，竄黔中，時力士亦徙巫州，因相與周旋。力士以芳嘗司史，為芳言先時禁中事，皆芳所不能知，而芳亦有質疑者。芳默識之。及還，編次其事，號曰《問高力士》。

Gao Lishi (684-762), about whom Emperor Wenzong inquired, was a famous chief eunuch during Emperor Xuanzong's reign. Gao Lishi was also a life-long confidant of Emperor Xuanzong. Gao's banishment to Qianzhong in 760 was part of Emperor Suzong's purge to

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[125] Wa Ya 王涯 (?-835) served as Grand Councilor under Emperors Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805-820) and Wenzong 文宗 (r. 827-840). During Wenzong's reign, Wa Ya was involved in a major political struggle between imperial officials and ennuchs and was thus killed by enunuchs along with three other Grand Councilors, Li Xun 李訓, Jia Su 賈餗 and Shu Yanyu 舒元與 in the "Sweet Dew Incident" in 835.

[126] The Qianzhong 黔中 circuit, whose seat is Qianzhou 黔州, covers the Southwest of modern Hubei, Southeast of Sichuan, the North of Guizhou and the West of Hunan. See Qixiang 譚其驤, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集 [Beijing: Zhongguo ditu chubanshe, 1996], 5: 59.

[127] Wuzhou is now known as Qianyang Xian 黔陽, Hunan province.

remove systematically his father Xuanzong's closest associates, fearing their attempt to reinstate the Retired Emperor.[128] Liu Fang柳芳 (fl. 690-770) was a prominent official historian during the reigns from Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (712-756) to Emperor Daizong 代宗 (762-779). In 735, Liu Fang passed the *Jinshi* examination, and then served in the Historiographical Office for more than forty years. He was known for preparing *Tang li* 唐歷 (The Chronicle of The Tang)[129] and *Guoshi* 國史 (National History)[130]. The precise reasons for Liu Fang's exile to Qianzhong (760-762) are not clear. But historians speculate that Liu's banishment was possibly related to his previous service in the rebel's regime during the An Lushan rebellion: like many other officials who did not flee Chang'an during the An Lushan rebellion, in 756 Liu Fang was forced to accept an official position under the rebels. As a result, when the Tang armies later recaptured Chang'an and Luoyang, he was found guilty of collaborating with the rebels. Although Liu Fang was soon

[128] Gao Lishi played a crucial role in securing the throne for Emperor Xuanzong in the 710s and continued to exert great influence on the emperor and beyond during Xuanzong's reign. Before the rebels broke into Chang'an in 755, Gao Lishi followed Emperor Xuanzong all the way into Shu (western Sichuan) and then accompanied him back to Chang'an after the court moved back in 757. His banishment in 760 was directly caused by the machination of Li Fuguo's 李辅国, emperor Suzong's favorite eunuch at the time. Gao Lishi was granted amnesty in 762 after Suzong's death. But in the end, he did not make his way back to Chang'an. According to his official biographies, Gao heard about the death of his old master Emperor Xuanzong, and died from shock and distress. This piece of information appared in Guo Shi's *Informal Biography of Gao Lishi*, which was supposedly composed shortly after Gao's death. For details, see *JTS* 184, 4759 and *XTS.* 207, 5860.

[129] T*ang Li*, comprising forty chapters, was Liu Fang's privately compiled chronological history of the Tang from Emperer Gaozu Li Yuan's uprising at Taiyuan to the year of 778. According to Twitchett, the work was written during Daizong's reign, and probably completed in the early 780s under Dezong. See Twichett, *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang*, p. 59.

[130] Liu Fang's *Guoshi*, compiled in 130 *juan*, was based on Wei Shu's 韋述 draft, with some sections added later by Yu Xiulie 于休烈 and Linghu Huan 令狐峘. According to Twichett, this work covers a period from Gaozu's reign (618-626) all the way to Suzong's Qianyuan period (758-759). Although a state-sponsored project, it is unknown when it was completed and presented to the throne.

pardoned and reinstated as an official historian, this trial undoubtedly blemished his record. He may have also been suspected of sympathies toward the Retired Emperor Xuanzong, probably the direct cause of his banishment in 760.[131] In any case, in 760 the historian Liu Fang crossed path with the aged eunuch Gao Lishi—the two either met on their way to their places of banishment, or later during their exile (Wuzhou, Gao Lishi's place of banishment, was also in the Qianzhong region). According to Wang Ya's account, it was Gao Lishi who took the initiative to tell Liu Fang about these palace stoires, showing that the old eunuch made a conscious effort to provide an insider's view of Xuanzong's reign to an historian who would pass it along to future generations.

Emperor Wenzong, it seems, became very interested in this collection *Asking Gao Lishi* after his conversation with Minister Wang Ya. He soon dispatched his ministers to meet with official historians, hoping to locate this collection. Upon receiving the emperor's mandate, Minister Wang Ya summoned Liu Fang's grandson, Liu Jing, an officer of the Bureau of General Accounts (*Duzhi yuanwai lang* 度支員外郎) and asked for the collection's whereabouts. Li Deyu's preface continues to record Liu Jing's account of how his grandfather collected all these stories:

> My grandfather [Liu] Fang once had an opportunity to ask [Gao] Lishi about the details [of Xuanzong's reign]. [The records were left] unfinished when my grandfather turned to compile *Tangli* 唐歷 (Chronicle of the Tang). Therefore, [of the stories he heard from Gao Lishi], he selected those that are most similar to one another in content and category and passed them on to later generations as a part of his *Tangli*. The rest of these stories, either because they were too private to

[131] For more details of Liu Fang's life, see *JTS* 149.4030; *XTS*, 132. 4536.

> publicize, or too strange and marvelous, were not appropriate stories for inclusion in the collection. So those stories were not passed on [to future generations].
> 某祖芳，前從力士問覶縷，未竟，復著唐歷，採摭義類尤相近者以傳之，其餘或祕不敢宣，或奇怪，非編錄所宜及者，不以傳。[132]

Liu Jing's account of this collection's origin confirms that Liu Fang met Gao Lishi in person and questioned him about the Xuanzong's reign during their exile in the South. Liu Fang did attempt to assemble Gao Lishi's account into a collection, presumably known as *Asking Gao Lishi*. However Liu Fang did not complete this project and had to attend to more important tasks instead. More importantly, the provenance of these stories is far less straightforward than what Minister Wang Ya claimed—the stories had to go through a process of careful selection process before they could be preserved. Readers are told that only some of these stories made their way into Liu Fang's privately compiled Tang history *Tangli*.[133] Yet it remains uncertain what became of those stories that were too provocative or personal to publish. Nevertheless, the preface observes that the ministers made further attempts to locate this collection but in the end were "unable to find it anywhere" 亡失不獲.

The search for this collection, the narrative thread that drove the preface forward, came to a sudden halt. It was not until this juncture that Li Deyu first appears in the text, as a compiler of

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[132] The *Kaiyuan tianbao yishi shizhong* 開元天寶遺事十種 edition punctuated the text as 前從力士問覶縷，未竟，復著唐歷, which I think fit less well with the context. 覶縷 is more likely to be used as a verb, meaning to describe/narrate in details, than a noun, as suggested by the *yishi shizhong* edition.

[133] *Tangli* 唐歷 was Liu Fang's privately compiled history of Tang written during Daizong emperor's 代宗 (r.762-779) reign and probably completed in the early 780s under Dezong Emperor 德宗 (r. 780-785). See Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the T'ang*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 58-60.

the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* he was to present to the emperor. Li Deyu describes his aim for putting together such a collection and his actual source of these stories:

> Your former subject Deyu's deceased father was a colleague of [Liu] Mian 柳冕 (fl. 730-804), Liu Fang's son, and the Vice Director of the Bureau of Personnel. They both served as Secretarial Court Gentleman (*Shangshulang*, 尚書郎) during the Zhenyuan 貞元 reign period (785-805). Later, when they were banished, they left together for the east. They conversed along the way, thereupon [Liu Mian] touched on what Gao Lishi had said and noted, "Those were all things he (i.e. Gao Lishi) had personally witnessed—not mere hearsay. These stories are reliable, verifiable, and can be used as reliable records." Your former subject (i.e. Li Jifu, Li Deyu's father) always liked to tell me these stories. From what I can recall, there are seventeen we know of. As the years passed, the written version of these stories disappeared. Your subject, Deyu, though not as conversant with state affairs as Huang Qiong 黃瓊 (86-164), is still familiar with past events.[134] Lacking the Grand Scribe Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (145 B.C.-ca. 87 B.C.) erudition, all I could possibly do was to arrange some old stories. Still, I am deeply concerned about whether these stories will be [fully and accurately] transmitted to the future generations, or they would still be insufficient to answer our lord's question [about the court life of Emperor Xuanzong]. I carefully recorded these stories as you will see to the left of this preface, hoping to fill in the blanks left by scribes.
>
> 臣德裕亡父先臣、與芳子吏部郎中冕，貞元初俱為尚書郎。後謫官，亦俱東出。道相與語，遂及高力士之說，且曰："彼皆目睹，非出傳聞，信而有

[134] Huang Qiong 黃瓊 (*zi* Shiying, 86-164), was a native of Jiangxia 江夏. Qiong was the son of Huang Xiang 黃香 (55-110), a well-known filial son. The *Hou Han shu* biography records that Qiong used to follow his father to the office of the minister, and was familiar with the old practices; later when Qiong took positions, he demonstrated his conversance with administrative affairs. 瓊昔隨父在台閣, 習見故事; 及后居職, 達練官曹. See "Zuo Zhou Huang liezhuan" 左周黃列傳 in Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445), *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965), 61.2033. For Huang Xiang's biographical information, see Fan Ye, *Hou Han shu*, 70.2613.

> 徵，可為實錄。”先臣每為臣言之。臣伏念所憶授，凡十有七事。歲祀久，遺稿不傳。臣德裕，非黃瓊之達練，習見故事；愧史遷之該博，唯次舊聞。懼失其傳，不足以對大君之問，謹錄如左，以備史官之闕云。[135]

The process of transmission presented in Li Deyu's account is even more complicated than Liu Jing's version: After these stories were written down, they were again orally transmitted, first among colleagues, and, then, across generations. The preface itself is equally complicated and problematic, if taken as a single-authored text. For one, although the narrator describes in detail the sources of these stories, it is hard to determine the extent to which these third-hand stories accurately reproduce Liu Fang's *original* "written draft" which no longer exists. That is, one simply doesn't know if the stories Liu Mian told Li Deyu's father were from the "left-out" stories, those preserved in *Tangli*, or, perhaps, a combination of these two sources. Secondly, if not just an error in transcription, it is noteworthy the narrative voice in the preface shifts several times. For example, the first half of the preface is told in Minister Wang Ya's voice with the initial phrase, "Your Subject Ya," while the second half of the preface is related in Li Deyu's voice. It is possible the current preface is merely a patchwork drawn from different sources. Still, without any additional textual evidence, this reading is only speculative.

To record or not record these stories, and which ones to record, remained a continous question for all parties involved throughout the transmission process. While Gao Lishi actively offered his stories to Liu Fang, Liu himself only later selectively incorporated them into history. Liu Mian promoted the authenticity and historical value of these stories, Liu Jing, to the contrary, had reservations about them, noting that some of these stories were inappropriate. Last, but not least, Li Deyu claimed these stories would "supplemtent" or to fill in the blank of standard

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[135] See *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi shizhong* 開元天寶遺事十種 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1985), p. 1.

history. This tension in deciding whether or not to record these stories becomes even more apparent when compared with another episode in the *Jiu Tang shu*. As seen later, the anxiety and tension one can sense in Li Deyu's preface is completely absent in the *JTS* account:

> During the Shangyuan (760-761) reign, he (i.e. Liu Fang) was convicted of an offence and banished to Qianzhong. It happened that the eunuch Gao Lishi was also exiled to Wuzhou, so the two met on the road. [Liu] Fang asked [Gao] Lishi about affairs inside the palace of which he was in doubt. [Gao] Lishi spoke about political matters of Kaiyuan and Tianbao (712-756) and [Liu] Fang made verbatim notes. Moreover, as the *National History* had already been completed and sent for presentation to the emperor, it could not be altered. So he [Liu Fang] composed separately a *Tangli* in forty chapters, recording under each date what [Gao] Lishi had told him.[136]
>
> 上元中坐事徙黔中，遇內官高力士亦貶巫州，遇諸途。芳以所疑禁中事咨於力士。力士說開元、天寶中時政事，芳隨口志之。又以國史已成，經於奏御，不可復改，乃別撰唐歷四十卷，以力士所傳，載於年曆之下。[137]

The *JTS* account differs from Li Deyu's preface in several important respects: First, in the *JTS* it was Liu Fang who actively sought Gao Lishi to dispel his doubts about Emperor Xuanzong's reign. Since this episode was taken from Liu Fang's biography in the *JTS*, it is understandable that Liu Fang was featured as the more active part in communication with Gao Lishi. Second, the *JTS* account seems to suggest that the *Tangli* was compiled especially to preserve the stories that Liu Fang heard from Gao Lishi. There is no mention of *Asking Gao*, the unfinished product between Gao Lishi's oral stories and the stories incorporated into the *Tangli*.

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[136] The Translation is taken from E. G. Pulleyblank, "The 'Tzyjyh Tongjiann Kaoyih' and the Sources for the History of the Period 730-763," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* 13 (1950), p.459-60.

[137] *JTS*, 149, 4030.

The most noteworthy discrepancy, however, is that this *JTS* episode stresses that what Gao Lishi discussed with Liu Fang was purely "political matters" 政事. Hence, whether or not to delete inappropriate stories is no longer pertinent to this narrative.

According to the preface, Li Deyu presented this collection to Emperor Wenzong in order to answer the emperor's question about Gao Lishi and to "supplement official history." It is not unusual to claim that a collection of anecdotes is meant to "supplement history." But in Li Deyu's case, it is not simply a stock phrase but may well be the truth, especially after the dynasty endured the large-scale destruction of the An Lushan rebellion.

In his preface to the bibliographic section of the *XTS*, Ou Yangxiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) celebrates the wealth of the imperial collection during Emperor Xuanzong's reign and mourns the loss of these priceless books in the turmoil. The passage below gives us a glimpse of the range and depth of the enormous damage that the An Lushan rebellion inflicted on the imperial library, as well as the great effort that the Tang court had to put into its rebuilding after the war:

> Book collecting reached its acme during the Kaiyuan period. Books recorded by the national bibliography amounted to 53,915 scrolls (*juan* 卷), of which 28,469 *juan* were composed by scholars of the Tang dynasty alone. Alas, it may well be said to be the heyday [of books].....After the An Lushan rebellion, no a single bamboo slip[138] was left [in the imperial library]. When Yuan Zai 原載 became Grand Councilor, he implored the throne to purchase books, which would cost up to a thousand coins (*qian* 錢) for just a single *juan*. He further ordered Miao Fa, Reminder [of the Chancellery] to search high and low for more books in the Jianghuai area. In Wenzong's time, when Zheng Tan was serving as Imperial

[138] Zhujian, or bamboo slips were used for writing on in ancient times. In this context, "not a single bamboo slip was left" is a hyperpolic way to describe the condition that few books survived the war.

> Tutor, he reported that the imperial collection of the classics was incomplete. Thereupon [the emperor] ordered the Imperial Archives (*mige*, 秘閣) to search for books and only then could they restore the collections in all four branches of literature (*siku*, 四庫) and store them in twelve stacks."
>
> 而藏書之盛，莫盛於開元，其著錄者，五萬三千九百一十五卷，而唐之學者自爲之書者，又二萬八千四百六十九卷。嗚呼，可謂盛矣……安祿山之亂，尺簡不藏。元載爲相，奏以千錢購書一卷，又命拾遺苗發等使江淮括訪。至文宗時，鄭覃侍講，進言經籍未備，因詔祕閣搜採，於是四庫之書復完，分藏于十二庫。

Not only were books lost during the war, so, too, were archives of historical records when the historiographical office was burnt to the ground during the An Lushan rebellion. In fact, the Grand Councilor Yuan Zai, cited in the preface above, directed restocking the imperial library after the rebellion, and compiling the Veritable Records (*shilu*, 實錄) Emperor Xuanzong's entire reign. Linghu Huan 令狐峘, the historian commissioned to directly compile the Veritable Record faced huge challenges: the earlier Veritable Records and Court Diaries had all been destroyed in the war.[139] According to Ouyang Xiu's preface, it was not until Emperor Wenzong's time was the imperial library fully restored to its previous condition. Wenzong's effort to restock and increase the imperial library holdings in the mid-830s as well as his personal interest in Emprer Xuanzong's reign may well have encouraged Li Deyu's compilation of *Ci Lishi jiuwen* and many other collections of the kind.[140]

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[139] See Denis Twichett p. 140 and p.186.

[140] David L. McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 237. For Emperor Wenzong's interest in Xuanzong, see see Paul Kroll, "Nostalgia and History in Mid-Ninth-Century Verse: Cheng Yü's Poem on 'The Chin-yang Gate,'" *T'oung Pao* 89 (2003), 288-9.

Li Deyu's compilation of *Ci Liushi jiuwen* can be examined within a broader context of "remembering and recreating" the Kaiyuan-Tianbao (713-756) aura from the late eighth century to the end of the Tang dynasty.[141] There are over a hundred poems, still extant, written about Emperor Xuanzong's reign, forming an important subgenre of Tang poetry. Collections of unofficial histories on the same topic are numerous, too, amounting to twenty works. These collections, often claiming to come from oral sources, open a window for us to see how Emperor Xuanzong's reign was represented in narratives from this period. In her study of four monothematic post-An Lushan rebellion collections devoted to the Kaiyuan and Tianbao eras, Luo Manling considers Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* a key part of the "cultural memory construction" that occurred in the mid- and late-Tang periods. [142] The loss of official accounts of the Kaiyuan-Tianbao era further provided an opportunity for the post-rebellion generation to fix and reshape the collective memory of this period. As Li Deyu's case demonstrates, Li was able to ride an early tidal wave in this trend with his access to rare materials. The need to assert one's authority over this forgotten history probably explains why Li Deyu took such great pains in his preface to identify sources and trace the transmission of stories in his collection.

A closer look at the allusions Li Deyu used in this preface reveals an ancillary purpose for compiling such a collection. In a modest tone, Li Deyu states he was not as conversant with administrative affairs as Huang Qiong 黃瓊 (86-164), but due to his father's influence was familiar with past events at the court. Not as learned as the Grand Scribe Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (145 B.C.-ca. 87 B.C.), he strived to collect these old stories from Liu Fang, which would

[141] For studies on the remembrance and re-creation of the high-Tang aura, see Kroll, "Nostalgia and History,'" 306-10.

[142] See Luo Manling, "Remembering Kaiyuan and Tianbao: The Construction of Mosaic Memory in Medieval Historical Miscellanies," in *T'oung Pao* 97 (2011), 263-30.

otherwise have been lost. By restoring and presenting Liu Fang's collection to the emperor, Li Deyu may have hoped to depict himself as an erudite scholar-official. This "erudition," however, was made possible not only through book-learning, but also through "observing" and "imitating" his own father's career in political service. This collection of anecdotes suggests that growing up in the household of high officials, Li Deyu had a natural access to old stories and practices, and, by the same token, could master the nuts and bolts of public administration. In other words, Li Deyu's access to the lost stories and nearly forgotten history became his political capital at court in his times.

After a brief discussion of the social and cultural milieu of *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, this chapter will turn to the literary context of this work. Notably, Li Deyu's preface presents his collection as a record of *orally transmitted narratives*, and specifically notes Gao Lishi first told the historian Liu Fang these stories. It was not unusual for collections of Tang tales to claim their origins from eyewitness and hearsay accounts, yet the fact that Gao Lishi has a remarkably high visibility in tales of Emperor Xuanzong's reign, sometimes as an alleged source, other times himself as a character in these stories, merits our attention.[143]

Admittedly, it is hard to determine whether Gao Lishi was an actual, or imagined story-teller, as is the case with most attributions in collections of Tang tales. But one can still ask why collectors attributed these stories specifically to Gao Lishi. Claiming Gao Lishi as the source of the stories highlights a special perspective to these historical events. The perspective that Gao Lishi provides (as an informant of stoires) is grounded on Gao's social status (as a historical

[143] These include Zheng Chuhui's 鄭處晦 *Minghuang zalu* 明皇雜錄 (Miscellaneous Records on the Eminent Emperor), Wang Renyu's 王仁裕 *Kaiyuan tianbao yishi* 開元天寶遺事 (Neglected Stories of the Kaiyuan and Tianbao Reigns), *Yue Shi's* 樂史 *Yang Taizhen waizhuan* 楊太真外傳 (The Unofficial Story of Yang Taizhen)**.**

figure). As the emperor's intimate adviser, Gao Lishi possessed highly confidential inside information and knowledge unknown to the outside world. But at the same time, eunuchs were not considered official representatives of the emperor. Hence, their accounts of the past were not authoritative but private and personal memories. Yet the level of this "privateness" also has limits, as will be seen later, since none of these stories really discloses the "underbelly" of palace life and politics as some modern readers of anecdotes would expect. Moreover, Gao Lishi served from Emperor Xuanzong during his early days as a crown prince all the way to his later years as a Retired Emperor and also accompanied him in his flight to Shu, hence greatly expanding the temporal and spatial scope of these stories.

We can go one step further to ask what Gao Lishi's alleged participation in the transmission of these Tang stories reveal about their production, circulation and reception? How does Gao Lishi's presence in the story, either as an informant or character, affect one's reading and interpretation of the stories?[144] In addressing these questions, this paper first reviewes Gao Lishi's biographical sources and then examines short tales in the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* and a longer tale titled *Gao Lishi waizhuan* 高力士外傳 (The Informal Biography of Gao Lishi), which also claims Gao Lishi as its source.

Biographical writings about Gao Lishi now available include commemorative writings as well as official and private biographies of Gao Lishi. These biographical writings, serving different purposes, reveal a shared interest about Gao Lishi's life and also changing public attitudes towards this public figure along history.

[144] The framework of this part is largely influenced by and built on that of Rania Huntington, in Huntington, "The View from the Tower of Crossing Sails: Ji Yun's Female Informants," *Nan Nü* 12 (2010), 30-64.

Gao Lishi passed away in 762, the first year of Emperor Daizong's Baoying 寶應 reign. He was later buried in Tailing 泰陵, the tomb of his old master Emperor Xuanzong. In 1999, the entombed epitaph (*muzhi ming* 墓志銘, a tomb inscription carved on a stele that buried in the grave) for Gao Lishi was discovered during a government-sponsored excavation of the Tailing tomb.[145] Gao's *shendao bei* 神道碑 inscription, carved on the stele erected on the avenue leading to Gao's tomb, was uncovered much earlier, indeed, as early as the Qing dynasty when scholar Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728-1804) recorded the fragmentary text in his bibliographical catalogue. The remainder resurfaced during an excavation in 1982. [146] Presumably, shortly after Gao Lishi's death, the imperial court ordered Pan Yan 潘炎, an official in the Bureau of Equipment in the Ministry of War (*Jiabu yuanwailang*駕部員外郎) and concurrent Participant in the Drafting of Proclamations (*Zhi zhigao*知制誥), to compose these tomb inscription texts for Gao Lishi.[147]

The entombed epitaph follows the convention to summarize the subject's life course and career path with an emphasis on Gao Lishi's merits and achievements, including promotions and

[145] The complete title of Gao Lishi's *Muzhiming* inscription is called *Datang gu kaifu yitong sansi jian neishijian shangzhuguo Qiguo gong zeng Yangzhou Dadudu Gaogong muzhiming bing xu* 大唐故開府儀同三司兼內侍監上柱國齊國公贈揚州大都督高公墓志銘並序, for text of the inscription, see *Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiu suo* 陝西省考古研究所, "Tang Gao Lishi mu fajue jianbao" 唐高力士墓發掘簡報, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物, 2002 (6), 22-32.

[146] For more information on the *shendao bei* inscription, see Tao Zhongyun 陶仲云 and Bai Xinying 白心瑩, "Shanxi Pucheng xian faxian Gao Lishi canbei" 陝西蒲城縣發現高力士殘碑, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物, 1983 (2), 36-38.

[147] According to Tao and Bai, the stele on the avenue leading to Gao Lishi's tomb was erected in 777, about 15 years after the burial of Gao Lishi, but the text was probably written earlier, together with the epitaph.

titles. This particular epitaph, however, starts with a discourse on the "difficulties of serving a ruler":

> The difficulties of serving the lord, please allow me to describe it for you: for those who paid the utmost reverence [to the lord], sometimes they were considered as flatterers; for those who offered faithful words (i.e. good advice), there were times when they were not tolerated. To be straightforward will surely be criticized as "pressing the highness" (or mincing no words); to be strict will make you intimidating, thus unable to remain in the inner circle (or mediate between different parties). Among all those that were said to be the difficulties of being a subject since ancient times, this is the most difficult respect (or That's why the old saying has it: "it is not easy to serve as a subject").
> 事君之難，請言其狀：盡禮者，或以為諂；納忠者，時有不容。直必見非，謂之劘上；嚴又被憚，不得居中。古所謂為臣不易者，以此至。

According to the epitaph writer Pan Yan, subjects always faced a dilemma: how to fulfill their duties without offending their ruler. In this regard, Gao Lishi can be said to be "a real pro," as the epitaph continues:

> There is an occasion when one could push open the golden gate and ascend to the jade hall. For five decades, he was able to come and go freely and bathe in the glory of the Son of Heaven. He attended upon [the emperor] all the time but never once did he go counter [to the will of the emperor]; whenever he presented a plan or offered an advice, it would be accepted. What he said, be it a large or small issue, he always had the emperor's ear; what he did, through special effort, all suits the idea of the emperor; He acted respectfully but not to the point of bustling laboriously; he was close to the emperor but not to the point of being indecent; he made admonishments but never did it defiantly; he served for a long time but never cheated on anything. He made a reputation in the palace and his good name

was known to the outside world. It was not until the Kaiyuan era that people finally saw such a successful subject as Mr. Gao.

有排金門、上玉堂，出入五纪，近【__】[148]天子之光，周旋無違，獻納必可；言大小而皆入，事曲折而合符；恭而不劳，[149]親而不黷，諫而不忤，久而不猒[150]；美暢於中，聲闻於外—開元之後，見之於高公矣。

Admittedly, this epitaph is highly eulogistic with its extremely high praise for Gao Lishi: it portrays him as a confidant and indispensible assistant to the emperor in ruling of the entire country. Yet, its focus on the ruler-subject relationship between Gao Lishi and his master Emperor Xuanzong was to become a recurring theme in later narratives about Gao Lishi.

In addition to commemorative writings, Gao Lishi also has official biographies in the "Grouped Biographies of Eunuchs" of the *Jiu Tang shu* and the *Xin Tang shu*, and frequently appeared in *Zizhi tongjian*'s account of Emperor Xuanzong's reign. Neither of Gao's two official biographies was interested in the lives of the eunuchs per se. Instead, they address the eunuchs' erosion of imperial power in the mid- and late Tang and blame the eunuchs for bringing down the Tang dynasty. For instance, both accounts start with an overview of the rise and fall of Tang eunuchs in both the *JTS* and *XTS* before getting into biographies of each individual eunuch.

[148] This character is indiscernible from the original inscription.

[149] Here it makes reference to Confucius's *Analects*, which reads, The Master said, "Respectfulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity; boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudeness."子曰：恭而無禮則勞，慎而無禮則葸，勇而無禮則亂，直而無禮則絞。

[150] This phrase could literally mean that the ruler and his subject, although stayed together for a long time, were never tired of each other. However, it may also refer to a sentence in the "Wangshu"王術 chapter of the *Huainan zi* 淮南子, which reads, "the ruler and his subject, the longer they stayed with each other, (the less likely) they are to deceive (or hide anything from) each other" 君臣彌久而不相猒. Gao You 高誘 in his commentary notes that *yan* means *qi* 欺, to deceive, to cheat.

According to the overview, in the early years of the Tang dynasty, the role of eunuchs in court politics were limited, as their positions and responsibilities in the Department of the Inner Palace (*Neishi sheng*, 內侍省) were clearly defined, and rules were set to prevent them from amassing power, especially after Taizong's decree to prohibit eunuch from taking the position of rank three or above. Yet these earlier rules were gradually changed by later emperors—they increased the number of eunuchs, raised their status, and granted them political and military powers, which, according to the historians, eventually led to the decline of imperial power. These bad precedents, according to both accounts, were set by no other than Emperor Xuanzong. Not only did Emperor Xuanzong use eunuchs such as Gao Lishi as his confidential couriers and intelligence sources, but he also allowed them to participate in political decisions. In addition, Emperor Xuanzong also loosened up the limit on the highest rank of office a eunuch could hold, and Gao Lishi was the first eunuch to be awarded a post of the third rank. In other words, the close ruler-subject relationship between Emperor Xuanzong and Gao Lishi now becomes "personal favor" that damages the political system in these two accounts. This new framework and the agenda behind the master narrative of the *JTS* and *XTS* may well explain why Gao Lishi received relatively negative comments later, even though Gao Lishi's prudence and loyalty to his emperor exempted him from the harsher criticisms that other eunuchs received.[151]

The epitaph of Gao Lishi was supposedly composed shortly after his death in 762, while his *JTS* biographies did not appear until 945. Between this long period of almost two hundred years, there appeared a wealth of Tang tales about Gao Lishi. The final paragraph of Pan Yan's epitah for Gao Lishi merits special attention, as it partially explains the proliferation stories about Gao Lishi after his death:

[151] See *XTS*. 207. 5860.

> Mr. Gao served to "the left and right" (i.e. as a close adviser) of a brilliant ruler for almost fifty years. [He helped to] lay out/impose law and order on the land within the four seas (i.e. the entire country)[152] and received secret edicts sent through nine layers in the palace.[153] Those conversations he had with the emperor when they sat knee to knee, those writings he composed but then discarded—there is no way [for us] to know anymore.[154] Yet his generous nature, and professional skills and talent in issuing imperial edicts and winning over/pacifying [conquered people], his giving to the need—all of these are still on the lips of the elders. In Gao, one can still find the manners inherited from the old times.
>
> 公左右【__】[155]明主，垂五十年。布四海之宏綱，承九重之密旨，造膝之議，削藁之書，不可浮而知也。其寬厚之量、藝業之尤、宣撫之才、施舍之跡，存於長者之論，良有古人之風。

This passage reveals the difficulty of providing a comprehensive account of life for someone like Gao. The difficulty lies in the scarcity of source materials. That Gao Lishi became a household name and a frequent topic of the elders suggests Gao Lishi's legend emerged soon after his death. Yet, to fully understand Gao Lishi's role as portrayed here as the emperor's intimate adviser, it would be ideal if one had access to Gao Lishi's own writings and his private

[152] The term *sihai* here refers to the entire country, as China was traditionally imagined as land bounded by water on all sides.

[153] *Jiuchong* 九重 is often used to describe a palace that is tucked away and separated from the outside world by a series of gates or other forms of divisions.

[154] *Xiaogao* 削藁 means to discard or destroy one's own writings. The reason for discarding or destroying one's writings vary, but it is often taken as a sign of one's humility, for the people who did so often think little of their own writings and were not interested in gaining fame.

[155] This character is indiscernible from the original inscription.

conversations with the emperor. It seems that Pan Yan even tried to locate this type of first-hand materials, but his effort was of no avail.

Yet the quest to obtain such "inside information" never ceased and continued to promote the circulation and collection of anecdotes allegedly from an insider such as Gao Lishi. This unending quest may explain why stories claiming Gao Lishi as their sources or featuring Gao Lishi as a character appeared in abundance after the An Lushan rebellion. An early example of claiming Gao Lishi as the source of a story is "The Informal Biography of Gao Lishi" 高力士外傳 that appeared in the Dali 大曆 era (766-779).

The bibliographical session of the *XTS* records this biography as "Gaoshi waizhuan" 高氏外傳, and notes its author as Guo Shi 郭湜 (700-788), a native of Taiyuan 太原 who served as Rectifier of the Court of Judicial Review (*Dali sizhi*, 大理司直) in the Dali era. Until the excavation of Guo Shi's tomb in 2000,[156] little was known about this biographer, as he had no official biographies in the standard histories, and only one essay was found under his name in the *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (The Complete Collection of Essays from the Tang).[157] According to his entombed epitaph, Guo Shi, whose styled name was Xizai 溉载, was born in Luoyang. Among his immediate ancestors, his grandfather Guo Daiju 郭待舉 achieved a high official position under Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649-83), serving as Vice Director of the Chancellery (*Huangmen shilang*, 黃門侍郎) and Jointly Manager of Affairs with the Secretariat-Chancellery

[156] For the text and a brief study of Guo Shi's entombed epitaph, see Mao Yangguang 毛陽光, "Luoyang xin chutu Guo Shi muzhi ji xiangguan wenti kaoshi" 洛陽新出土郭湜墓誌及相關問題考釋, *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua* 2009 (3), 49-53.

[157] Guo's only extant writing was a eulogy titled "Tang Shaolin si Tongguang chanshi taming" 唐少林寺同光禪師塔銘.

(*Tong zhongshu menxia pingzhang shi*, 同中書門下平章事). In the twelfth year of the Kaiyuan reign (724), Guo Shi passed the *jinshi* exam, and first worked in the capital and later Hedong prefecture 河东. Towards the end of the Tianbao reign (742-756), he served as administrator of Hucheng in Guozhou (modern Lingbao, Henan province 河南靈寶) 虢州湖城令 but was soon demoted to modern Jiangxi. He took various posts including the Rectifier of the Court of Judicial Review as mentioned above. In his later years, Guo was relieved from menial duties—he was promoted to be Administrator 長史 of Tongzhou 同州 (in today's Dali, Shanxi Province陕西大荔) and composed up to ten *juan* of works. Guo passed away in Tongzhou at the age of eighty-eight.

In the postscript of his "informal biography," Guo Shi discloses his purpose for writing this unofficial account: to voice grievances on behalf of Gao Lishi and criticism against Li Fuguo, Emperor Suzong's favorite eunuch, who monopolized power at the court and banished his opponents. Guo Shi claimed that those who were affected in Li Fugo's purge amount to 2,000 people. Many of these demoted officials including former Grand Councilors Pei Mian 裴冕, Zhang Gao 张缟 and Diwu Qi 第五琦 and Gao Lishi, were sent to the circuit of Qianzhong 黔中, where they crossed paths. Guo Shi asserted he was also among this demoted group in Qianzhong and as a result, became well acquainted with Gao Lishi:

> "I (i.e. Guo Shi) was a fellow sufferer [of Mr. Gao], and wanted to repay [his] kindness by recording his life and deeds. Moreover, since Mr. Gao and I were

both demoted and trapped [in Qianzhong], [I had this opportunity to listen to him]. Whenever I learned anything from him, how dare I not record it attentively?"[158]
涅同病者，報以誌之，況與高公俱嬰譴累。每接言論，敢不書紳.

Without any further evidence, it is nearly impossible to fully verify whether or not Guo Shi actually met Gao Lishi in person, especially given that Guo Shi's entombed inscription did not mention any such encounter. Further, while Guo Shi's entombed epitaph lists the many positions he held throughout his political career, none were in the Qianzhong region. The value of this postscript, however, lies not in its authenticity but in its reflection of a tendency to claim Gao Lishi as a source of anecdotes from this period.

In comparing this postscript with Li Deyu's preface to *Ci Lishi jiuwen*, one finds some "shared patterns." For instance, both Liu Fang and Guo Shi reportedly met Gao Lishi during their exile in the Qianzhong region; they both had a chance to talk with Gao Lishi and consequently, acquired from Gao inside information otherwise unknown to them; both Liu and Guo claim to be a faithful recorder and transmitter of Gao Lishi's words.

"The Informal Biography of Gao Lishi" is an indivdually circulated tale consisting of a string of brief episodes, all in the form of an overview of the political situation at court followed by a private conversation between Gao Lishi and his master, Emperor Xuanzong. These episodes all took place at critical moments during Emperor Xuanzong's reign, such as the An Lushan

[158] The term *shushen* 書紳 appears in the "Wei Ling gong" 衛靈公 chapter of the *Analects*, in which Zizhang 子張 wrote Confucius' counsels on how to conduct oneself on the end of his sash. Such an action was interpreted by later commentators as a sign that one is going to take these words seriously or to live by these words. See Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (1909-1992), annot. and trans., *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯註 (Translation and Annotation of the Analects) (Peking: Zhonghua Shuju, 1980), p. 171. In this context, the term lays emphasis on the attitude of the biographer, who presents himself as a faithful recorder who trancribed the words of Gao Lishi with care and respect.

rebellion, Xuanzong's flight to Shu, the mutiny at the Mawei station, Emperor Suzong's succession/usurpation at Lingwu, Cui Yuan's rise as Grand Councilor, and Emperor Xuanzong's final return to the capital. The private conversation in each episode provides some insight into the past through revealing the thoughts and struggles of Gao Lishi and Emperor Xuanzong at each crucial point in history. For example, in the tenth year of the Tianbao reign (751), Emperor Xuanzong further slackened in his commitment to govern and considered entrusting court business largely to Grand Councilors (such as Li Linfu) and military defense to his frontier generals. The episode allows the emperor to disclose his thoughts and also informs readers that such a decision met opposition from Gao Lishi, who tried to dissuade the emperor from making such appointments but without success. Unlike the informal biography, the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* is a collection of shorter tales, which are not necessarily set in the "critical historical moment"; instead, they are more like snapshots of Emperor Xuanzong's life, each revealing a different aspect of the emperor's life and his era.

Througout Gao Lishi's informal biography, he was, foremost, a witness and actual participant in the emperor's decision-making process, even though the emperor did not always accept his advice. Gao also served as an intermediary between the inner palace and the court. He briefed the emperor on the current situation about the empire he learned beyong the palace gate. In one case, Gao told the emperor, "[I've] stayed in the inner palace and was unaware of public opinion/current criticism of the court. Recently, I observed messengers from various circuits gathering at the palace gate discussing rioting in Yunnan." 比在內宅，不知時議。近於閣門外見諸道奏事人說雲南頻有喪律. But more importantly, Gao Lishi was also a transmitter, who orally passed this story along to people outside the court including the biographer Guo Shi. Such a rending of Gao Lishi is further confirmed by the very first episode of the informal biography.

This biography notably does not start from basic information and geneolgoy of the subject, as biographies often do; instead, it relates how Gao Lishi discovered a wooden comb, a fine-toothed comb, and a grass-root brush, all in a small container found in a palace attached to Emperor Taizong's mausoleum.[159] The role that Gao Lishi played in this episode is noteworthy: Not only did Gao discover these relics from Emperor Taizong's era, but he also interpreted and articulated their meaning for the new emperor. Gao Lishi's discovery and interpretation of the relics is highly symbolic in representing his access to and authority over a part of the history that would otherwise unknown. This part of the history Gao Lishi preserved and passed along to later generation is filled with tangible objects and vivid details of everyday life as embodied by the wooden comb, the fine-toothed comb, and the grass-root brush.

In the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, Gao Lishi assumes different roles in different stories: sometimes he was said to be the informant of a story; other times, he himself was a charcter in the story. Yet, unlike the informal biography, Gao Lishi doesn't appear in all seventeen stories. This "absence" of Gao Lishi suggests that claiming all stories dervied from Gao Lishi provides only a loose organizing principle for later collections such as the *Ci Liushi jiuwen.*

Other Informants of the Stories

In his preface to *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, Li Deyu describes how the stories in his collection were passed down to him through many earlier hands. But the stories themselves also left clues as to their possible sources.

[159] The exact time of this episode cannot be pinpointed, but could be inferred to be the beginning of the Kaiyuan reign, when Emperor Xuanzong just ascended the throne, from later stories.

Two of these stories indicate that some stories might derive from the family history of Li Deyu's well-known clan—the Zhaojun Li 趙郡李. Li Deyu descended from the great Zhaojun Li clan that enjoyed social and political prestige throughout the Tang dynasty. In the ninth century alone, this clan produced eight Grand Councilors and many more high officials.[160] The clan's origin can be traced back to Qin 秦 (221-207 B.C.) and Han 漢 (206 B.C. - A.D. 220) times. Its genealogy is outlined in LiYanshou's 李延壽 (fl. 618-76) *Beishi* 北史 (History of the Northern Dynasties) and elaborated in the "Genealogy of Grand Councilors" in the *XTS.*[161] The Zhaojun Li clan originally had three or four branches in the prefecture of Zhao (modern Zhaoxian, Hebei Province). Members shared the Zhaojun choronym but in time several sub-choronyms appeared, among which the most prominent one was Zanhuang 贊皇. Li Deyu was born in the capital Chang'an and probably never set foot in the Zanhuang County, but all his life, he bore the sub-choronym of Zanhuang Zhaojun Li.

The Zanhuang County is in the foothills of the Taihang Mountains, which stood on the western edge of the Hebei plan. The Zanhuang branch, although emerging relatively late, was the most powerful and cohesive branch of the Zhaojun Li clan. Li Qiao, whose lyrics won the full appreciation of Emperor Xuanzong according to Story No. 12 in the *Ci Liush jiuwen*, descended from the Zanhuang branch of the Zhaojun Li clan. Indeed, Li Qiao, one of the earliest prominent members of the Zanhuang branch in the 8th century, served as Grand Councilor several times

[160] The eight Zhaojun Lis who served as Grand Councilors were Li Xun 李巽, Li Jifu 李吉甫, Li Fan 李藩, Li Jiang 李絳, Li Deyu 李德裕, Li Guyan 李固言, Li Jue 李珏 and Li Shen 李紳.

[161] Li Yanshou descended from the Longxi Li clan 隴西李, another great clan from who the Tang imperial house claimed to descend. Li's *Beishou* was compiled between 630s and 650s. The project of *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New History of the Tang) was led by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-72) and Song Qi (998-1061) and was compiled between 1043 and 1060.

under Empress Wu (690-705) and Emperor Zhongzong (705-710), and was further bestowed the title of Baron of Zanhuang 贊皇縣男, Duke of Zanhuang 贊皇縣公 and, eventually Duke of Zhao 趙國公. In the preface to his collection, Li Deyu claimed he learned this story from Li Jifu, who, in turn acquired this story from Liu Fang and Liu Mian. Yet it is also possible that this story about Li Qiao was widely circulated within Li Deyu's clan.

Another piece also concerning a Zhaojun Li member is Story No. 6 in the collection. It relates the Indian Monk Wuwei's pray for the rain during a severe drought in Luoyang. The story's postscript lists a series of witnesses and records of this miraculous rain-making event, attesting to its plausibility. Among all written accounts of this event, Li Deyu cited an epitaph which a certain Li Hua composed for Monk Wuwei.[162] Li Hua (c. 710- c. 767) also descended from the Zhaojun Li clan although his immediate ancestors were of no great eminence. In 735, Li Hua passed *jinshi* examination together with Xiao Yingshi 蕭穎士 (706-758) and the historian Liu Fang 柳芳. Li Hua acquired a strong reputation as a Censor before the outbreak of the An Lushan Rebellion. Unfortunately, the rebels captured Li Hua while he was trying to rescue his mother in rebel-dominated regions. He was forced to collaborate like many of his contemporaries. Li Hua was later pardoned and summoned back to court, but he declined all new appointments, probably believing that his collaboration with the rebels permanently disqualified him for an office. Li Hua retired to the south where upper-class families competed to hire him to write family histories and epitaphs. In his later years, he cultivated an active interest in Buddhism and composed commemorative texts for foreign Tantric priests, including Master Wuwei, subject of the twentieth story in *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Thus, there are some grounds to conjecture that it wasn't

[162] For a study of Li Hua's life and milieu, see David McMullen, "History and Literary Theory in the Mid-eighth Century," in *Perspectives on the T'ang,* Arthur Eright and Denis Twitchett, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 307-342.

mere chance that Li Deyu came across Master Wuwei's rain-making story. If the writings of his clansman, Li Hua, did not introduce Deyu to the marvelous rain-making event in the first place, Li Hua's account at least piqued Deyu's curiosity and interest in this event.

3.3 Close Readings of Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen.*

The Gu Yuanqing edition of *Ci Liushi jiuwen* consists of a preface and seventeen stories set in different phases of Emperor Xuanzong's life from his time as a crown prince to his last years as a "Retired Emperor" (*shanghuang* 上皇). How is emperor Xuanzong portrayed in this collection? The following anecdote (Anecdote #12) exemplifies the idealized image of Xuanzong this collection attempts to establish. Before taking a close look at the anecdote itself, a few words on its historical background.

It is generally accepted that the Tang dynasty reached its apex in economy, culture, and military power during Xuanzong's reign. But this peaceful and glorious era was soon disrupted by the An Lushan rebellion. In July 756, An Lushan's rebel forces seized the Tong Barrier (*tongguan* 潼關), a strategic pass protecting access to the capital Chang'an. According to the *Zizhi tongjian* account, on July 10, the Tong Barrier commander Geshu Han 哥舒翰 (?-757) sent a messenger to report this critical situation to the court. Emperor Xuanzong immediately dispatched troops to aid Geshu Han, but the rebels quickly crushed them. The next day, Emperor Xuanzong summoned his Grand Councilors for a council. One of his Grand Councilors, Yang Guozhong, proposed moving the court to Shu where Yang launched his political career and continued to maintain close local ties. From that day on, it became increasingly difficult for the emperor to control his court and the country. According to the *ZZTJ* account, officials wept at the levee, and gentlefolk and peasants fled in panic. On July 13, the emperor ascended the Loft of Zealous Administration (*Qinzheng lou* 勤政樓) and proclaimed to the populace of Chang'an that he would personally lead the battle against the rebels. Instead, he fled the capital before dawn,

taking with him only some members of the imperial family, close attendants, and a handful of high ministers. It is against this background the following anecdote unfolds:

> The Palace of Ascendant Felicity (Xingqing gong 興慶宮) was the place where His Highness dwelt before ascending to the throne. At the start of the Shengli 聖歷era (698-699), it was the Residence of The Five Princes.[163] His Highness was very close to his brothers. After he ascended the throne, [Xuanzong] had a tower erected at the southwestern wall of the Palace [of Ascendant Felicity] and wrote an inscription, which read: "The Tower Where Stems and Buds Shine on Each Other" (*Hua e xiang hui lou*花萼相輝樓).[164] When he left court, he would promptly roam [in the Palace] with his brothers, sometimes enjoying themselves with a feast. At that time, there had been no war in the empire for almost fifty years—thus, it was a great moment of tranquility and prosperity. Later on, an urgent message was brought to the court that the Northern Barbarians had invaded the capital. The emperor decided to leave the palace. Before his flight, His Highness graced the palace with his [imperial] presence for the last time. There the emperor climbed up the tower and had people set up wine at its top. Looking in all directions, His Highness' heart was filled with sorrow; he therefore asked his attendants to bring the Jade Ring (*yuhuan*, 玉環), a lute that his father, Emperor Ruizong, once played. In the past, when His Highness set up drinks and music in his palace, he would always place this lute on a separate couch and cover it with a yellow handkerchief, so that it wouldn't be mixed with the other instruments. [He] never played this lute after his father died. That day, however, when His Highness arrived, he asked the musician He Huaizhi to tune the lute and

[163] The palace was formerly a mansion located in the *Xingqing* Ward 興慶坊, where Li Longji and his brothers lived after they were released from virtual imprisonment under Empress Wu's reign. After Li Longji assumed the throne, he renovated and expanded the mansion into a detached palace for himself, with his brothers living nearby. For details, see *JTS* 95, p. 3011.

[164] The name "Stems and Buds Shine on Each Other" (*Hua e xiang hui* 花萼相輝) symbolizes Xuanzong's close relationship with his brothers.

Master Jia Shi, a Buddhist monk from the Chanding temple, to play it. Among the emperor's attendants there were three beautiful female attendants who sang. His Highness asked one of them to sing "Tune of Waters." When she finished, His Highness still seemed reluctant to leave. He had people see if there were any other singers near the tower well versed in singing and, especially, "Tune of Waters." A young man, understanding His Highness' feelings, announced he could sing this song. So the young man was asked to ascend the tower and sing for the emperor "Tune of Waters," whose lyrics go as follows:

Mountains and rivers fill my eyes, tears soak my robes,
Wealth, esteem, glory, and honor—how long can they endure?
Don't you see right now, there above the Fen River,
Only autumn geese flying by year after year.

On hearing this song, His Highness wept. He turned to his attendants and asked, "Who wrote these lyrics?" "It was the Grand Councilor Li Qiao," someone replied. His Highness commented, "Li Qiao is a truly talented man." With these words, His Highness left this palace before the song ended.

興慶宮，上潛龍之地，聖歷初五王宅也。上性友愛，及即位，立樓於宮之西南垣，署曰："花萼相輝。"朝退，亟與諸王遊，或置酒為樂。時天下無事，號太平者垂五十年。及羯胡犯闕，乘傳遽以告，上欲遷，幸之，登樓置酒，四顧淒愴，乃命進玉環。玉環者，睿宗所禦琵琶也。異時，上張樂宮殿中，每嘗置之別榻，以黃帕覆之，不以雜他樂器，而未嘗持用。至，俾樂工賀懷智取調之，又命禪定寺僧假師取彈之。時美人善歌從者三人，使其中一人歌《水調》。畢奏，上將去，復留眷眷。因使視樓下有工歌而善《水調》者乎。一少年心悟上意，自言頗工歌，亦善《水調》。使之登樓且歌，歌曰："山川滿目淚沾衣，富貴榮華能幾時。不見只今汾水上，唯有年年秋雁飛。"上聞之潸然出涕，顧侍者曰："誰為此詞？"或對曰："宰相李嶠。"上曰："李嶠真才子也。"不待曲終而去。

The slow pace of this narrative stands in sharp contrast to its counterpart in *ZZTJ*. What is consonant with this gradual narrative progress is the emperor's exceptional equanimity: he managed to maintain, even under the worst circumstances, the formal role and grace of a ruler. On the brink of war, one can still see him gracefully ascending the tower, pouring wine, immersing himself in music and poetry.

Two descriptive passages, one at the beginning and one in the middle, further slow down the flow of this narrative. As this story relates, the Palace of Ascendant Felicity was earlier a mansion in the *Xingqing* Ward 興慶坊 of the Capital Chang'an, where Xuanzong and his brothers lived after their release from virtual imprisonment in 701. Hence, the mansion was initially known as "Residence of the Five Princes" (Wuwang zhai 五王宅). After Xuanzong ascended the throne, he renovated and expanded this mansion into a detached palace for himself, built residencies nearby for his brothers, and erected at the southwestern wall of the palace two towers—the Tower of Stems and Buds Shine on Each Other, and the Tower of Assiduous Administration. The name "Stems and Buds Shine on Each Other" first appears in the *Book of Odes*, symbolizing the close and supportive relationship between the emperor and his brothers.

What ties the palace to its splendid pre-rebellion era in this story is the emperor's "entertainment," and, in particular, his fondness for music. At the height of Emperor Xuanzong's powers, he would, as this story informs us, "promptly roam [in the Palace] with his brothers, sometimes enjoying themselves with a feast" after morning levees. The emperor's merrymaking is not considered simply personal indulgence, but an effort to bond with his brothers and to solidify his rule of the empire. The narrative then jumps to the "current time," the eve of the emperor's flight to Sichuan, and describes in detail the emperor's final visit to his palace. Even

under these extreme circumstances, the emperor still chose to surround himself of singers. The musical instrument the emperor selected for this special occasion is notable. To ensure readers understand this instrument's significance, the narrator, once again, breaks off the story to add information about a lute, passed down from the emperor's father. The inserted passage not only shows the father and son shared an interest in music, but also portrays Emperor Xuanzong as a dutiful son, who always treated his father's possessions with special care and respect. The son's careful handling of this inherited musical instrument has great symbolic significance, as well. A filial son who inherited his father's artistic talents would also fulfill his father's political legacies.

The music Emperor Xuanzong asked his court to play with the lute was called "Tune of Waters," a melody attributed to Emperor Yang of the Sui dynasty.[165] Like Emperor Xuanzong, Emperor Yang was also known for his artistic talent, but as a ruler, his personal pursuit of grandeur and sensual pleasure was cited as the cause of the fall of the Sui dynasty. Xuanzong's choice of this song suggests he probably sympathized with the Sui emperor in his loss of the empire. Notably, this narrative pointedly avoided equating Emperor Xuanzong with the notorious last Emperor of the Sui: Xuanzong was highly pleased by the lyrics not merely the old tune. The lyrics come from the long heptasyllabic "Ballad of Fengyin," by Li Qiao 李嶠 (644-713)," an influential official and renowned man of letters during the reigns of Emperor Wu (690-705) and Emperor Zhongzong (705-710).[166] Li's original ballad draws on an historical incident of the great Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (156 B.C.-87 B.C.), who offered a sacrifice to

[165] According to Liu Su's 劉餗 *Sui Tang jiahua* 隋唐嘉話, "The Tune of Waters" was first created by Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty when he started to dredge the Bian River, a part of the monumental construction project of the Grand Canal.

[166] Owen dates this poem between 660s and 670s based on its style. For Owen's discussion on Li Qiao's poems, see Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) p. 118.

Earth at Fenyin and brought to this minor county a short moment of glory. In his ballad, Li juxtaposed Fengyin's past splendor with its ruins today, and mourns the decline of a once-powerful dynasty. The last quatrain of this ballad, when taken out of its original setting, transcends its specific context and conveys a profound sense of sorrow for the impermanence of all things. Thus the anecdote transforms Xuanzong from a ruler who failed his duty into a tragic hero unable to escape the transitory nature of life.

A closer look into Li Qiao's life and political career adds an extra dimension to this story. Li Qiao passed *jinshi* examination at an early age and enjoyed Empress Wu's favor. Even during the turmoil at court from the late 690-710, Li Qiao was able to ride out the political storm and serve as Grand Councilor under several different emperors (698-700, 703, 704, 706-710). Nevertheless, his political career ended when Xuanzong became emperor. As to why he failed in politics, Li Qiao's biography offers a clue:

> Earlier, when Emperor Zhongzong passed away, Qiao once secretly presented his memorial suggesting that the sons of Prince of Xiang (e.g. the future Emperor Ruizong, Emperor Xuanzong's father) should not remain in the capital. When Emperor Xuanzong succeeded to the throne, Li Qiao's early memoir was discovered in the palace. Some suggested Li Qiao should be executed. Zhang Yue, nonetheless, said, "Li Qiao was indeed blind to political trends. Yet what he did back at the time was simply offering what he considered to be the best advice to those in power. Just like a dog, he would bark at everyone except his own master. Li Qiao should not be held guilty because of this early offense." The Son of Heaven also considered the fact that Qiao had already received several demotions and pardoned him.

初，中宗崩，嶠嘗密請相王諸子不宜留京師。及玄宗嗣位，獲其表宮中，或請誅之。張說曰：“嶠誠懵逆順，然為當時謀，吠非其主，不可追罪。”天子亦顧數更赦，遂免.[167]

In 713, Li Qiao died at the beginning of the young Emperor Xuanzong's regime. Now, forty-three years later, this once-powerful monarch had become an aged man and was forced to flee his palace. There are good reasons to believe that Emperor Xuanzong's appreciation of Li was not only about his literary merit. The man who was once said to be "blind to political trends" turned out to have a profound understanding of world affairs. In many ways, this story resembles the anecdotes of Xiao Zhizhong story (#4) and Huang Fanchuo (#17) in this collection, in which the emperor pardoned his disloyal subjects.[168]

Overall, this anecdote casts the emperor in a highly positive light as a wise ruler, loving father, and caring brother as does the collection as a whole. In what follows, I will now examine these different roles Xuanzong played in the anecdotes.

Emperor Xuanzong as an Exemplar Ruler: Anecdotes on Ruler-Minister Relation

According to the calculations of the modern scholar, Huang Yongnian, Emperor Xuanzong employed twenty-six Grand Councilors during his forty-four-year reign. Four Grand

[167] According to Li Qiao's biographies, although pardoned of a death penalty, he was still demoted to a minor position—Administrative Aide to the Prefect of Chuzhou. The emperor later accepted his request to follow his son Li Chang, then Prefect of Qianzhou, to a prefecture seat. Li Qiao was later appointed as Aide to the Prefect of Luzhou and died shortly thereafter at the age of seventy 貶滁州別駕, 聽隨子虔州刺史暢之官. 改廬州別駕, 卒, 年七十.

[168] *Tangshi jishi* records a variation of the anecdote as below. For an English translation of the *Tangshi jishi* version, see Stephen Owen, *Early Tang*, p.121.

Councilors of Xuanzong's early regime, Zhang Yue 張說, Yao Chong 姚崇 (651-721), Yuan Qianyao 源乾曜, Xiao Song 蕭嵩 are featured in Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Also briefly mentioned in this collection are Li Linfu 李林甫 and Yang Guozhong 楊國忠, two Grand Councilors who dominated Xuanzong's reign during his later years. The length and term of service for each Grand Councilor are displayed below:

Name	Term	Time in Office
Zhang Yue 張說 (667-731)	First term: 713 Second term: 721-726	4 months 4 years and 8 months
Yao Chong 姚崇 (651-721)	713-716	3 years and 2 months
Yuan Qianyao 源乾曜 (?-731)	First term: 716 Second term: 720-729	3 months 9 years and 6 months
Xiao Song 蕭嵩 (c. 669-749)	728-733	5 years and 2 months
Han Xiu 韓休 (673-740)	733	10 months
Li Linfu 李林甫 (?-752)	734-752	18 years and 7 months
Yang Guozhong 楊國忠 (?-756)	752-756	3 years and 8 months

In subsequent historical and popular narratives of Emperor Xuanzong's reign, Li Linfu and Yang Guozhong were often contrasted with early Grand Councilors, especially, Yao Chong and Song Jing. The "Biography of Li Linfu" in *JTS* reads in pertinent part:

> "During the Kaiyuan reign, Yao Chong and Song Jing were appointed, and [the nation was] in great order; [During the Tianbao reign], Linfu and Guozhong were favored, [and the nation] fell into chaos."
> 開元任姚崇、宋璟而治，幸林甫、國忠而亂.

Ci Liushi jiuwen makes this contrast between the early and later Grand Councilors, too. Yet, rather than simply fitting these historical figures into stereotypes, this collection reveals deeper aspects of them. A pair of back-to-back anecdotes in *Ci Liushi jiuwen* serves to broaden readers' understanding of the Grand Councilor Yao Chong:

> When Emperor Xuanzong first ascended the throne, he treated great ministers with respect and held old officials in great esteem. His attention was particularly concentrated on Yao Chong and Song Jing;[169] when they were presented to the emperor at the Hall for Casual Affairs (*Piandian* 便殿), His Highness would always stand up [to greet them]; when they departed, [the emperor would] go all the way to the veranda to see them off. No other Grand Councilors enjoyed comparable courtesies and privileges. Later on, Li Linfu, due to his royal origins and blood ties, was employed and promoted by His Highness. [The emperor] bestowed great favor on him, but treated him with less respect and fewer courtesies [than with Yao and Song].[170]

[169] Like his predecessor, Yao Chong, Song Jing (663-737) was also an experienced high official who served in such important positions as Vice Censors-in-Chief (*yushi zhongchen* 御史中丞) and Director of the Chancellery (*mengxia shizhong* 門下侍中). Together with Yao Chong, Song Jing supported the heir, Li Longji, against his aunt, Princess Taiping. Later, when Yao Chong stepped down as Grand Councilor in 716, he recommended Song Jing as his successor. Song Jing served as Grand Councilor for a little over three years and carried out most of Yao's policies to the end of his own tenure. See *JTS* 96. 3029-3037; *XTS* 124. 4389-4395.

[170] Li Linfu 李林甫 (?-752), was a distant descendant from the Tang royal family. He was promoted to Grand Councilor in 734 and remained in office for over eighteen years, the longest throughout Emperor Xuanzong's reign. In some sources, he was depicted to be an evil Grand Councilor who had "a tongue of honey, a heart of gall" 口蜜腹劍. He managed to dislodge from

When Yao Chong was still Grand Councilor, he once came before His Highness to ask for guidance in promoting subordinate officials [of the six ministries]. His Highness looked away without replying. Yao Chong repeated his question several times, hoping His Highness would pay a little more attention to his query. Eventually, His Highness looked up at the ceiling without replying. Yao Chong became increasingly fearful and hastened out [of the palace hall]. [Seeing Yao departing,] Gao Lishi commented: "Your exalted majesty has only just now succeeded to the throne. If any minister asks for your advice, it would be best to give him instant instructions face-to-face. But just now when Yao Chong was speaking of something, Your Highness did not even look at him. I am afraid Yao will be terrified." His Highness replied, "I have entrusted state affairs completely to Yao Chong. For important affairs that need to be addressed, he should submit a memorial and we can make decisions together. As for trivial issues such as promoting subordinate officials, isn't Chong just able to make a decision on his own? Why bother to ask me for guidance?"

After Yao Chong returned to his office in the Secretariat, he was still concerned [about the emperor's reaction]. It happened that Gao Lishi came over to proclaim an imperial order, so he informed Yao Chong about His Highness's thoughts [on official selections]. Having understood the emperor's actual intentions, Chong felt relieved and was filled with joy. Those who heard this story at the court all agreed that His Highness had the generosity of a ruler and knew the essence of appointing (the right) people to service.

玄宗初即位，體貌大臣，賓禮故老，尤注意於姚崇、宋璟，引見便殿，皆為之興，去則臨軒以送。其他宰臣，優寵莫及。至李林甫以宗室近屬，上所援用，恩意甚厚，而禮遇漸輕。及姚崇為相，嘗於上前請序進郎吏，上顧視殿

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office capable officials such as 張九齡 and Li Shizhi 李適之 and promote compliant officials such as Chen Xilie 陳希烈 and Niu Xianke 牛仙客. He also suggested employing non-Han generals to guard the Tang Empire's frontiers. In his final years, he engaged in a bitter political battle with Yang Guozhong but eventually lost. Yang replaced him as the last dominant Grand Councilor of Emperor Xuanzong. See *JTS* 106. 3235-3241; *XTS* 223.6342-6349.

宇不答，崇再三言之，冀上少售，而卒不對。崇益恐，趨出。高力士奏曰："陛下初承鴻業，宰臣請事，即當面言可否。而崇言之，陛下不視，臣恐宰臣必大懼。"上曰："朕既任崇以庶政，事之大者當白奏，朕與之共決；如郎署吏秩甚卑，崇獨不能決，而重煩吾耶？"崇至中書，方悸不自安，會力士宣事，因為言上意，崇且解且喜。朝廷聞者，皆以上有人君之大度，得任人之道焉。

Yao Chong was in his sixties when Emperor Xuanzong succeeded the throne, yet he was considered an "old official," not only for his age, but also his solid administrative experience of many years. Yao became Grand Councilor first in Empress Wu's reign and continued as an active leader at the court of Xuanzong's father, Emperor Ruizong. Yao's immediate appointment as Grand Councilor after Xuanzong took power derived from his previous invaluable contributions towards Xuanzong's succession.[171] These earlier connections between Yao Chong and Emperor Xuanzong were, nevertheless, not noted in this anecdote. Instead, Yao Chong's promotion is deployed in this anecdote to demonstrate the young emperor's respect for experienced officials in general.

Notably, in this anecdote, Yao Chong is contrasted with the later minister Li Linfu in terms of the relationships each developed with the emperor. This anecdote employs a pair of words to describe two types of minister-ruler relationships. When describing Li Linfu's relationship with the emperor, the text notes, "[The emperor] bestowed great favor on him, but

[171] To consolidate the position of the future Emperor Xuanzong, in 711, Yao Chong advised Emperor Ruizong to dispatch to provincial posts Li Chengqi 李成器 and Li Shouli 李守禮, the two royal princes who had claims superior to Xuanzong to the throne. Yao Chong was also a hard-line supporter of Xuanzong in his political struggles with Princess Taiping, Emperor Xuanzong's formidable aunt. Together with Song Jing, Yao Chong proposed the installation of Li Longji as regent and transferring Princess Taiping and her husband to Luoyang. Yao Chong's proposal undoubtedly offended Princess Taiping, who then pressured Emperor Ruizong to banish Yao. In 713, Li Longji assumed full power and immediately summoned Yao Chong back to the capital to serve as his Grand Councilor.

treated him with less respect and fewer courtesies [than with Yao and Song]" 恩意甚厚，而禮遇漸輕. Apparently, the emperor treated former great ministers Yao Chong and Song Jing with "respect and courtesies" (*liyu*, 禮遇) while granting Li Linfu only "great favor" (*enyi*, 恩意). It follows that the first type of minister-ruler relationship is healthy, bringing prosperity to a dynasty, while the second unhealthy, destroying a dynasty. Note the rhetoric of this comparison is similar to the *JTS* passage discussed above.

Within such a framework, the interaction between Emperor Xuanzong and Yao Chong in this story is purportedly demonstrates the emperor's respect for older officials. Surprisingly, the emperor appears, at first sight, to be extremely rude towards Yao Chong. When Yao Chong asked the emperor for guidance in promoting officials in the six ministries, the emperor looked up and said nothing. This unusual reaction leads the reader to look for a deeper meaning, and reassess the story in an entirely new light. As later revealed, through a private conversation between the emperor and Gao Lishi, the emperor refused to answer Yao's inquiry because he wanted to give Yao full control of Yao's own domains, without any interference even from the emperor himself. That emperor would always stand up to greet Yao Chong and Song Jing, and escorts them to the veranda to see them off show his basic respect for older ministers, thus, his seemingly "disrespectful" reaction in the later part of the anecdote redefines and elevates this "respect" to an even higher level.

Yao Chong's official biography incorporates this anecdote in the *Xin Tang shu*. A concluding note at the end of this story reads: "Hence, (Yao Chong) recommended properly qualified persons for service and rejected those who were wicked, thereby bringing the entire country to good order" 由是進賢退不肖而天下治. This comment further posits this anecdote within a larger context of Yao Chong's bureaucratic reforms at the start of Emperor Xuanzong's

regime. Towards the end of Yao Chong's official biography, the *XTS* editors summarize this reform and its positive effects:

> When Emperor Xuanzong first ascended the throne, he treated great ministers with respect and held old officials in great esteem, and particularly treated Yao Chong respectfully; whenever they came to the Hall for Casual Affairs, [the emperor] would always stand up [to greet him]; when [Yao Chong] departed, [the emperor] would then go all the way to the veranda to see him off. No other Grand Councilors enjoyed comparable courtesies and privileges. It was a time after powerful imperial relatives interfered with political affairs, thus the law and order fell into disuse. Towards the end of the Xiantian era (712-713), the total number of Grand Councilors was as many as seventeen, and appointees to important positions in the three departments (i.e. Chancellery, Department of State Affairs, and Secretariat) were innumerable. Yao Chong employed first the services of various officers himself, meanwhile reducing redundant personnel, and restored the [official selection] system. As a result, officials were all put in positions that best suited their talents. Yao Chong further asked the emperor not to promote Buddhism and Taoism, and not rotate functional officials. Hence, although the Son of Heaven entrusted all tasks to his subordinates, the power was still centralized in his own hands.
>
> 玄宗初立，賓禮大臣古老，雅尊遇崇，每見便殿，必為之興，去輒臨軒以送，他相莫如也。時承權戚干政之後，綱紀大壞，先天末宰相至十七人，台省要職不可數，崇常先有司，罷冗職，修制度，擇百官各當其材，請無廣釋道，無數移吏，繇是天子責成於下，而權歸於上矣。[172]

The first part of this passage clearly adopts the introduction to the anecdote on Yao Chong, which initially describes the political atmosphere Yao Chong was to enter. One of the most pressing challenges at the time, according to this *XTS* passage, was the personnel selection system. Note that in the original anecdote, official selection is exactly what Yao Chong wanted to discuss with the emperor. In this sense, one may regard the Yao Chong story in *Ci Liushi*

[172] See *XTS*.124. 4387.

jiuwen as a footnote to and vivid illustration of Yao Chong's bureaucratic reforms in Xuanzong's regime.

The message the Yao Chong story conveys is didactic, but is expressed in a highly engaging and entertaining way. Another story in the *Taiping guangji* employs the same plot as the Yao Chong story, suggesting its popularity. The *TPGJ* story, now titled "Yao Hong" 姚泓 under the theme of "immortals and deities," relates that Emperor Xuanzong did not respond to the request of senior ministers Yao Chong and Song Jing when they reported to him. Only later did the emperor confide to Gao Lishi that he was trying to recall a melody that he learned from deities in a recent dream. The *TPGJ* story is almost identical to Li Deyu's story in terms of language and structure, but the former plot was repackaged to convey a totally different message in the new story. While Li Deyu's anecdote discloses the emperor's trust in his Grand Councilors, the *TPGJ* piece, in contrast, highlights the emperor's near total absorption in music. [173]

In other words, if the same plot can be used to convey totally different messages, then how can a writer ensure his intended meaning would be understood "correctly"? *Ci Liushi jiuwen* employs strategies to spell out, in the voice of "a community of audience," how the stories are to

[173] As for the source of this new story, one version of the *TPGJ* attributes it to *Shenxian ganyu ji* 神仙感遇記, and the Chen Shan edition 陳鱣 to *Xuanshi zhi* 宣室志. Despite this discrepancy in attribution, the existence of this new story suggests its plot became part of the storytelling repertoire by the late Tang dynasty. *Shenxian ganyu ji* 神仙感遇記, in *10* juan, was compiled by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933). After Du reportedly failed his civil service exam for nine times, he become a Daoist master in the Tiantai mountain. Emperor Xizong 僖宗 (873-888) summoned him to the court, where he remained close to the emperor until the fall of the Tang dynasty. Du later served the Former Shu Kingdom and achieved high status. *Xuanshi zhi* 宣室志 was compiled by Zhang Du 張讀 (834-886), a grandson of Niu Sengru 牛僧儒. Modern scholar Li Dehui speculates that, based on Miao Taifu's 苗台符 preface to the collection, this work was compiled at the beginning of Emperor Yizong's 懿宗 (r. 859-874) Xiantong 咸通 reign (860-874). The original *Xuanshi zhi*, though no longer extant, was preserved in later anthologies such as *Baihai* 稗海 in ten *juan* with a supplement in one *juan*.

be read.[174] In the case of this anecdote, the postscript reads, "Those who heard this story at the court all agreed His Highness was a generous ruler who knew the essence of appointing (the right) people to service."

The other story on Yao Chong in *Ci Liushi jiuwen* unveils a completely different aspect of this historical figure:

> Thanks to Yao Chong's recommendation, Wei Zhigu[175] rose from humble beginnings as a clerk. Later, Zhigu ascended [to a higher position] in company with Yao Chong and became his colleague. Chong, however, displayed a rather profound contempt for Zhigu.[176] Before long, Yao Chong asked the emperor to appoint Zhigu as Acting Director of the Ministry of Personnel and dispatch him to Luoyang, the Eastern Capital, [to supervise the selection of civil officials]. Song Jing, the Director of Personnel, was assigned to substitute for Wei Zhigu to review recommended candidates at the Chancellery in Chang'an. Because of this exchange of duties, Zhigu harbored a grudge towards Yao Chong and was thinking about how he could best undermine him.
>
> At that time, Yao Chong's two sons were both serving in Luoyang. Knowing that Zhigu was indebted to their father, they visited Zhigu upon his arrival and brazenly sought his help in advancing the careers [of themselves and their acquaintances]. When Zhigu returned to Chang'an, he reported to His Highness,

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[174] Such a postscript also appears in stories in No. 4, No. 13 and No. 14 of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*.

[175] For this event, see also *JTS* 98, p.3064; *ZZTJ* 211, p.6700. Wei's biographies can be found in *JTS* 98, 3061-3066; *HTS* 126, p. 4413-4415.

[176] The term "*tong sheng*" 同升 echoes a story from the *Analects*, in which an open-minded minister promoted his family minister without reservation to be his colleague. The story from the *Analects* reads, "The great officer, Xian, who had been family minister to Gong Ming Wen, ascended to the prince's court in company with Wen. The Master (Confucius), having heard of it, said, 'He deserved to be considered WEN (the accomplished)'"公叔文子之臣大夫僎, 與文子同升諸公. 子聞之曰: 可以為文矣.

detailing the Yao brothers' attempt at favoritism. Sometime later, His Highness summoned Yao Chong and in a perfectly natural manner, asked, "You, my dear sir, are your sons talented? Where are they now and what positions are they currently holding?" Chong suspected the real purpose behind His Highness's questions, so he replied, "My two sons are serving in the Eastern Capital. Aggressive and careless as they are, they must have attempted to influence improperly Zhigu on his selection of officials. It's just that I haven't had a chance yet to ask my sons if they made this improper request." By asking these questions, His Highness planned to draw Yao Chong out, assuming that as a father, Yao Chong would treat his sons with partiality and conceal their misconduct. So when the emperor heard Yao Chong's answer, he was greatly pleased, and blurted out, "My dear sir, how did you know?" Yao Chong replied, "When Zhigu was living in obscurity, he was recommended to the court by your humble subject, and eventually rose to prominence. Ignorant as my sons are, they must have assumed that Zhigu would feel indebted to me and tolerate their misconduct. That's why I suspected they must have attempted to interfere with the selection process in this way." Now realizing that Yao Chong would not cover up for his sons' improper actions, His Highness came to think less of the ungrateful Wei Zhigu who had turned his back on Yao Chong. His Highness wanted to dismiss Wei Zhigu, but Yao Chong pleaded with the emperor on behalf of Wei Zhigu: "Your humble subject raised two untamed sons who violated Your Majesty's laws. I consider myself to be extremely fortunate that Your Majesty may pardon my two sons. Now if Your Majesty were to demote Zhigu because of me, all your officials and people within the four seas will think Your Majesty gave me special treatment. I am afraid playing favorites will diminish Your Majesty's moral authority. His Highness did not immediately accept Yao Chong's proposal. The next day, [His Highness] appointed Wei Zhigu as Minister of the Department of Works, but deprived him of the privileges in determining governmental matters.[177]

[177] Grand Councilor of the Tang dynasty generally refers to the Directors and Vice Directors of the Secretariat, the Chancellery, and the Department of State Affairs. In their capacity as Grand Councilor, these people met regularly with the emperor to discuss state affairs and make policy

魏知古起諸吏，為姚崇引用，及同升也，崇頗輕之。無何，請知古攝吏部尚書，知東都選士事，以吏部尚書宋璟門下過官。知古心銜之，思有以中之者。時崇二子並分曹洛邑，會知古至，恃其家君，頗招顧請託。知古歸，悉以上聞。他日，上召崇，從容謂曰：“卿子才乎？皆何官也？又安在？”崇揣知上意，因奏云：“兩人皆分司東都矣。其為人欲而寡慎，是必以事干知古。然臣未及問之耳。”上始以丞相子重言之，欲微動崇，而意崇私其子，或為之隱。及聞崇所奏，大喜，且曰：“卿安從知之？”崇曰：“知古微時，是臣之所慰薦，以至榮達。臣之子愚，謂知古見德，必容其非，故必干之。”上於是明崇不私其子之過，而薄知古之負崇也。上欲斥之，崇為之請曰：“臣有子無狀，撓陛下法，陛下特原之，臣為幸大矣。而由臣逐知古，海內臣庶必以陛下為私臣矣，非所以裨元化也。”上久乃許之。翌日，以知古為工部尚書，罷知政事。

According to Wei Zhigu's official biography, he passed the *jinshi* exam at twenty. He was Secretariat Drafter (*Zhongshu sheren* 中書舍人) during Empress Wu's Chang'an reign (701-705) and, concurrently, Assistant of the Establishment of the Prince of Xiang (*Xiangwang fu sima* 相王府司馬), serving with the future Emperor Ruizong early in his career. Wei achieved the status of Grand Councilor under Emperor Ruizong and, concurrently, as an adviser (*Zuoshu zi* 左庶子) to the future Emperor Xuanzong. Judging by Wei's career trajectory, he was one of the emperor's earliest supporters. In 713, according to his official biographies, he informed Xuanzong of Princess Taiping's intended rebellion, therefore, became the sole survivor of the preceding ministry after the coup was suppressed.

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decisions. In addition to the directors and vice directors of these three departments, other officials were also subsumed in the central government's decision-making process. To signify this supplementary duty, suffixes were often added to the regular titles of these officials, such as Participant in Deliberations about Court Policy (*Canyi chaozheng* 參議朝政), Participant in Deliberations about Advantages and Disadvantages (*Canyi deshi* 參議得失), and Participant in Determining Government Matters (*Canzhi zhengshi* 參知政事). In the story above, Wei Zhigu was transferred from the position of Director of the Chancellery to Minister of the Department of Works. Although both positions were rank 3, Wei lost his esteemed duty of "Determining Government Matters," which meant he was no longer a Grand Councilor to the emperor.

However, Wei Zhigu's term in office was very brief. In 714, he was demoted to Director of Ministry of Works and, only a year later in 715, passed away. As for why Wei Zhigu was demoted, his official biography in the *JTS* mentions only as follows:

> Yao Chong was both envious and afraid of him (i.e. Wei Zhigu), and slandered and defamed (Zhigu) behind his back. Only then was Zhigu demoted to be Minister of the Department of Works and deprived of privileges in determining governmental matters."
> 姚崇深忌憚之，陰加讒毀，乃除工部尚書罷知政事.[178]

This anecdote would be of great interest to those familiar with Wei Zhigu's career as it provides a reason for Wei Zhigu's sudden fall in the emperor's favor.

This story, a typical anecdote with a germ of truth, contains historical inconsistencies. For instance, Wei's official biographies confirm that in 713, upon Emperor Xuanzong's succession, Wei became Director of the Chancellery (*Huangmen jian* 黃門監, more generally known as *Mengxia shizhong* 門下侍中). He was then sent to Luoyang to supervise official selections. Contrary to this anecdote, Wei was in fact promoted rather than demoted after he returned to Chang'an. Emperor Xuanzong, having recognized Wei's competence, further promoted Wei Zhigu to Director of the Secretariat (*Ziwei ling* 紫薇令, more generally known as *Zhongshu ling* 中書令) in 714.[179] Moreover, Song Jing did not become Director of the Ministry of Personnel

[178] See *JTS*.98. 3064.

[179] See *JTS*.98. 3046 and *XTS*.126.4414.

until 716, that is, after Wei Zhigu's death. Thus the dramatic conflict involved in this position switching seems to have been impossible.[180]

Notwithstanding the story's historical inconsistencies, "a germ of truth" can still be found in the Yao brothers' intended bribery of Wei Zhigu. According to an official narrative, the Yao brothers were notorious for their interference with official selections, as the *JTS* notes, "[Yao Chong] winked at [misconduct of] his sons—[Yao] Yi 彝 , Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Entertainment (*guanglu shaoqing*, 光錄少卿) and [Yao] Yi 异, Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Clan (*zongzheng shaoqing*, 宗正少卿) as they enlisted retainers and clients, and took bribery and gifts. Hence (he was) derided and criticized by people 縱其子光錄少卿彝、宗正少卿异廣引賓客，受納饋遺，由是為時所譏.[181] If the above account is true, this anecdote probably derived from public criticism of Yao Chong at the time.

The primary interest of listeners and readers of this story is how the emperor tried to "bait" Yao Chong and how Yao Chong turned this "trust crisis" to his own advantage. Yao Chong not only dispelled the emperor's doubts about him, but also fashioned his own image as a loyal and trustworthy minister by "criticizing" on his own initiative his sons' misconduct. Yao also disclosed he once helped Wei Zhigu advance in his career, thus portraying his opponent as ungrateful. Later, when the emperor decided to demote Wei, Yao Chong even begged for the emperor's mercy on Wei's behalf, again, to show his generosity, tolerance and his concern for the best interest of the entire country.

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[180] For details, see the official biographies of Song Jing in *JTS*.96.3031 and *XTS*.123.4391.

[181] See *JTS*.96.3025.

This anecdote was later incorporated into the *Xin Tang shu* and heavily influenced Song historians' evaluation of Yao Chong. Although the *XTS* editors recognized Yao Chong's talents as a Grand Councilor, they had reservations about his personality, or, in their own words, "Yao Chong was crafty by nature and full of wily tricks and tactics" (*zi quanjue,* 資權譎). In addition to this anecdote, the *XTS* editors cited another anecdote about Yao Chong's conflict with Zhang Yue. [182]

Compared with the first Yao Chong story in the *Ci Liushi* jiuwen, there is no authorial voice at the end of this story. Hence, it is hard to tell if this anecdote is intended to illustrate Yao Chong's personality, the emperor's, or both. That is to say, this material had not been "processed" into a story with a clearly defined theme, or specific meaning by the time it was collected. Therefore, this story is still open to different interpretations.

The Yao Chong story also reveals the conflict between Xuanzong's ministers, a theme taken up by an anecdote about Xiao Song and Han Xiu (Anecdote # 5):

[182] Reportedly, Zhang sought to impeach Yao Chong. When Yao Chong became Grand Councilor, Zhang Yue was worried, so he met with Prince Qi to seek a solution to solve this problem. Word of their secret meeting reached Yao Chong who immediately reported it to Emperor Xuanzong. As a result, Zhang Yue was exiled. Like the earlier anecdote concerning Yao Chong and Wei Zhigu, the focus of this story is again on *how* Yao Chong drove his enemy far from the political center. As this story relates Yao Chong feigned foot problems after a morning levee to attract the emperor's attention. When asked what was wrong, Yao said it worried him to see a minister secretly visiting a prince at night. Yao Chong surely understood that for someone who had experienced several coups, Emperor Xuanzong would be especially sensitive about a secret meeting between high officials and the royal princes, often seen as a sign of an imminent revolt. Once again, Yao Chong brought his opponent down with consummate skill.

When Xiao Song[183] served as senior Grand Councilor, he recommended Han Xiu[184] to be his fellow Grand Councilor. Yet after assuming this position, Han Xiu did not get along very well with Xiao. Consequently, Xiao Song asked to retire.[185] His Highness comforted Xiao Song: "I never rejected you, so what need is there to leave me?" Song prostrated himself and replied, "I had the good luck to have served as your Grand Councilor,[186] which is the highest rank a subject could ever hope to attain. It is fortunate Your Majesty has not yet grown tired of me, so I am able to ask now to retire gracefully. If Your Majesty really becomes tired of me, I could hardly save my life [if you wish to kill me]. How can I freely leave Your Majesty, if not now?" With these words, Xiao Song burst into tears. His Highness was moved by Xiao Song's sentiments, so he replied, "Sir, perhaps you are overstating [that I would take your life]. I have thought about it but still uable to decide. Please go back home. By this evening, I will send a messenger over to your home to follow up on your request. But if you don't see my messenger, please come to the levee tomorrow morning, as usual." At sunset, the emperor asked Lishi to proclaim the imperial order for Xiao Song to retire at his residence, "I value you, Sir, and personally wanted to insist that you should stay. But as far as the relationship all along between a ruler and his ministers is concerned, it is

[183] Xiao Song descended from the royal house of Liang 梁 and entered officialdom through hereditary privilege. He was said to have little literary attainments but his administrative and military abilities proved to be extraordinary. For Xiao Song's biographies, see *JTS* 99, pp. 3093-3101, and *XTS* 101, pp. 3953-3954.

[184] Han Xiu (673-740) came from a prominent North-Western aristocratic family, and was a *jinshi* graduate with a strong literary reputation. Before his appointment as Grand Councilor, Han Xiu served as Assistant of the Right in the Department of State Affairs 尚書右丞, responsible for drafting imperial edicts. In 733, Han Xiu was designated as Vice Director of the Chancellery 黃門侍郎, Joint Manager of Affairs with the Secretariat-Chancellery 同中書門下平章事 as a result of Xiao Song's recommendation. For Han Xiu's biographies, see *JTS* 98, pp. 3077-3079; *XTS* 126, pp. 4432-4440. This event also appears in *ZZTJ* 213, p. 6893.

[185] The term *qi haigu* 乞骸骨, which literally means to beg to get back one's bones, was a common expression an official would use when he asked to retire.

[186] The expression "*daizui*" 待罪 literally means "to wait for punishment," a commonly used self-reference when addressing a ruler.

most precious to preserve the righteousness, which is also in the best interest of our state. You, Sir, will be transferred to a new position of Chancellor of the Right." On that same day, tribute oranges from the Jing Prefecture just arrived at the palace. His Highness himself handpicked two of these oranges, wrapped them in silk, and ordered them sent to Xiao Song.

蕭嵩為相，引韓休為同列。及在位，稍與嵩不協，嵩因乞骸骨，上慰嵩曰：“朕未厭卿，卿何庸去？”嵩俯伏曰：“臣待罪相府，爵位已極，幸陛下未厭臣，得以乞身。如陛下厭臣，臣首領之不保，又安得自遂？”因隕涕。上為之改容，曰：“卿言切矣，朕思之未決。卿第歸，至夕當有使。如無使，旦日宜如常朝謁也。”及日暮，命力士詔嵩曰：“朕惜卿，欲固留，而君臣始終，貴全大義，亦國家美事也。今除卿右丞相。”是日，荊州始進柑子，上以素羅包其二以賜之。

After the former Grand Councilor Zhang Yue's resignation, the harmonious relationship between Grand Councilors in the early reign of Emperor Xuanzong was rarely seen again. Instead, the emperor faced constant open disagreements between his newly appointed Grand Councilors. Zhang Yue was succeed by Li Yuanhong 李元紘 (?-733), whose conflict with his fellow Grand Councilor Du Xian 杜暹 (? 680-740) became intractable. As a result, both Li and Du were dismissed as Grand Councilors and exiled to provincial posts. Against such a background, Xiao Song 蕭嵩 (c. 669-749) entered the political arena as a senior Grand Councilor, assuming the position of the Director of the Chancellery. Like his predecessors, Xiao Song was on poor terms with his fellow Grand Councilor, Pei Guangting 裴光庭 (676-733). After Pei's death, Emperor Xuanzong granted Xiao Song authority to choose his own fellow Grand Councilor. Xiao Song originally recommended his close friend Wang Qiu 王丘 (?-743) as Pei's replacement. But Wang declined and instead highly recommended Han Xiu 韓休 (673-740) as Vice Director of the Chancellery 黃門侍郎, and Joint Manager of Affairs with the Secretariat-Chancellery 同中書門下平章事. Nonetheless, it turned out that Han Xiu would always oppose

Xiao Song in public, despite Xiao Song's help in promoting his career. In order to settle the conflict between these two Grand Councilors, the emperor transferred Xiao Song to the position of the Vice Director of the Department of State Affairs, and Han Xiu to be Director of the Board of Works.

The official biographies of Han and Xiao record their conflict (the *XTS* even cites this anecdote in full). A comparison between the two accounts in Xiao Song's biographies further illustrates the peculiarity of this anecdote. The *JTS* account notes that "Xuanzong had deep affection for Xiao Song"玄宗眷蕭嵩厚, as reflected by a series of events such as granting Xiao's wish to retire, promoting Xiao's son after the father's retirement, and, earlier in the text, treating the Xiao family with special courtesy.[187] In the anecdote, the emperor's "deep affection" for his old minister was demonstrated through seemingly trivial details—the two tribute oranges the emperor handpicked and wrapped in silk for Xiao Song after granting his request to retire. Moreover, the anecdote is less focused on the emperor's humanity and more on his ability to balance his personal feelings against political practicalities. When Xiao Song pressed the emperor to choose between Han and himself, citing possible retirement, the emperor was still able to handle properly the conflict of his officials—treating them with deep affection without sacrificing his impartiality and the court's stability and continuity.

A third theme often appearing in anecdotes on ruler-minister relationships is the selection of the emperor's ministers. Under ideal circumstances, a wise and prudent ruler knows his ministers well and appoints the right person to the right position. When meritorious officials

[187] The text earlier mentioned that Xiao Song's son Xiao Heng 蕭衡 married Xuanzong's daughter, Prince Xinchang 新昌. To show his intimacy and friendliness, the emperor addressed Xiao Song's wife as *qingjia mu* 親家母 (literally, the bride's mother).

were neglected and the unworthy ones promoted, anecdotes emerged to explain these "puzzling" phenomena:

> Emperor Xuanzong was skilled in one calligraphy style called *bafen shu*, [one branch of the Clerical Style]. Whenever he needed to appoint Grand Councilors, the emperor would always write down their names on imperial tablets in this unique style and then leave them on his desk. One time, [while the emperor was appointing Grand Councilors,] the heir came to attend upon the emperor. Seeing the heir approaching him, His Highness immediately covered the names with a gold porringer. With this, he said to the heir, "These are the names of the future Grand Councilors. Do you know who they are? You will get a drink if you guess right!" The future Emperor Suzong bowed and declared, "Aren't they Cui Lin and Lu Congyuan?" His Highness exclaimed, "Right!" The emperor then raised the gold vessel to reveal the names and presented the heir with a cup of wine. At this time, Lin and Congyuan both emerged as undisputed candidates for Grand Councilor and Emperor Xuanzong had earlier considered promoting them. But in the end, due to the concern that the Cuis and Lus were already dominating families, and those who would seek advancement through family connections were numerous, he finally did not employ them.
>
> 玄宗善八分書，凡命將相，皆先以御札書其名，置案上。會太子入侍，上舉金甌覆其名，以告之曰："此宰相名也，汝庸知其誰耶？射中，賜爾卮酒。"肅宗拜而稱曰："非崔琳、盧從愿乎？"上曰："然。"因舉甌以示之，乃賜卮酒。是時，琳與從愿皆有宰相望，玄宗將倚為相者數矣，終以宗族繁盛，附託者眾，卒不用。

Cui Lin and Lu Congyuan both descended from prominent clans—the Cui clan of Qinghe 清河崔 and the Lu clan of Fanyang 范陽盧, respectively. The preceding anecdote was incorporated into Cui Lin's official biography, which was attached to the biography of his

grandfather Cui Xuanyi 崔義玄 (586-656).[188] By Cui Lin's time, the Cui family had become so powerful that many clansmen held important positions in the capital. On the one hand, this anecdote reconfirms the Cui family's prosperity; On the other hand, it explains why Cui Lin was not promoted to the topmost position of Grand Councilor despite his family's background, political connections and strong reputation.

This anecdote further gives rise to phrases such as *jinou fuming* 金甌覆名 (literally, a name covered by the golden wine-cup), meaning one's name was recognized by the sovereign, and *oubu* 甌卜 (literally, to ask the golden wine-cup for an oracle), which came to designate "choosing Grand Councilor." These allusions were frequently expressed in poetry and prose since the Song dynasty. Such details depicting how the emperor chose his Grand Councilor candidates—to handwrite their names and cover them with a golden wine cup—were especially appealing to later readers. These accounts take the official business of appointing ministers down to a very personal level and showcase the emperor's elegant taste and refined pleasure. They also satisfy the readers' curiosity about this selection process and fulfill the literati's longing for respect from the emperor.

Emperor Xuanzong as a Filial Son, Caring Brother and Loving Father

[188] Cui Yixuan 崔義玄 (586-656) descended from the Cui clan in Qinghe 清河崔. Cui Yixuan served as censor-general under Emperor Gaozong and supported efforts to crown Wu Zetian as express.

The *Ci Liushi jiuwen* stories also established Emperor Xuanzong as a filial son, caring brother, and loving father and grandfather. Beneath these seemingly coherent narratives the crucial question of who should legitimately succeed to the throne still remained.

As the third son, Emperor Xuanzong would not have any claim to become the heir were it not for his leadership in deposing Empress Wei and elevating his father, Ruizong, to the throne. Xuanzong's position was further secured by the support of Grand Councilors like Yao Chong, Song Jing, Zhang Yue, as well as that of his own brothers. In both historical records and anecdotes, Emperor Xuanzong is depicted as a man of great personal warmth towards his brothers. According to the *JTS* account, the Li brothers shared their devotion to music, literature, and aristocratic sports.[189] Xuanzong was probably closest to his eldest brother, Li Chengji 李成器 (679-742), more commonly known as the Prince of Ning 寧王.

Li Chengqi played an important role in Emperor Xuanzong's early reign. In 710, Li Chengqi renounced his own claim for succession in favor of Xuanzong. Later, when Xuanzong succumbed to Princess Taiping's political attacks and was forced to resign as heir, Li Chengqi, again, refused to replace Xuanzong.[190] Also close to Xuanzong were his two younger brothers, Li Ye 李業 (d. 734), the Prince of Xue 薛, and Li Fan 李範 (d. 726), the Prince of Qi 岐. Both Li Ye and Li Fan became commanders of Xuanzong's bodyguard during his days as crown prince and supported him in the successful coup against Princess Taiping.

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[189] See *JTS* 95. 3011.

[190] Li Chengqi received the title of Prince of Ning in 716 and held several high-level posts including President of the Court of Sacrifices from 721 to 726. See *JTS* 95, p. 3010; *ZZTJ* 209, p. 6650.

However, the picture other sources try to paint is a much less harmonious relationship. Some suggest Xuanzong and his supporters considered the other brothers as Xuanzong's potential rivals, and took various steps to curb their power. For instance, when Xuanzong was still a crown prince, Yao Chong and Song Jing proposed to disarm these princes and dispatch them to provincial posts, thereby removing a potential threat. Some regarded the Palace of Ascendant Felicity as a symbol of the fraternal love between Xuanzong and his brothers. But others suspect Xuanzong required his brothers to live nearby in order to keep them under his control. An anecdote from Duan Chengshi's 段成式 (803-863) *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 describes Xuanzong's secret "controlling" in the name of brotherly love:

> Emperor Xuanzong once had people spy on the other princes. [It was reported that] the Prince of Ning was once soaked with sweat when fastening skin on a drum in summer. [It was also said that] all that the prince read [in leisure time] were simply musical scores from The Country of Qiuci 龜茲.[191] When His Highness heard about [the prince's musical interest], he was greatly pleased and said, "The brothers of The Son of Heaven should take pleasure in the utmost joy of wine and music."
>
> 玄宗嘗伺察諸王。寧王夏中揮汗鞔鼓，所讀書乃龜茲樂譜也。上知之，喜曰："天子兄弟，當極酒樂。"[192]

[191] Qiuci, also known as "Kucha" or "Kuche," was an ancient kingdom on a branch of the Silk Road. This area lies in present-day Xinjiang. Kuchean music, a specific style of music developed within the region gained popularity in the Tang dynasty. The musical instrument *pipa* (琵琶, lute) also originated in Kucha.

[192] The Chinese text is based on Zhang Guofeng, ed., *Taiping guangji huijiao* 太平廣記會校 (Beijing: Yanshan Chubanshe, 2011) vol.8. 3110. *Guangji* attributes this story to Duan Chengshi's *Youyang zazu*.

This anecdote affords another way to understand the Xuanzong brothers' zest for music. The phrase "*sicha*" (伺察, to spy on) starts the narrative with a tension, suggesting that Emperor Xuanzong still suspected his elder brother of disloyalty. It was not until Xuanzong was informed about his elder brother's intense interest in music did he feel relieved. In this context, the prince's dedication to music was no longer an aesthetic pursuit, rather, a gesture to show he wasn't interested in politics. This background will bring a new insight into the following anecdote:

> The fraternal love between Emperor Xuanzong and his brothers grew even deeper [after Xuanzong's succession]. For instance, the emperor still called Prince Ning *big brother* and ate at the same table with all his brothers. Once when they were enjoying a meal together, the Prince of Ning coughed. Food shot out of his mouth onto the emperor's mustache. The prince was ashamed and scared out of his wits. Seeing the prince was terrified, His Highness was about to soothe him when Huang Fanchuo said, "That was not a cough." His Highness asked, "What do you mean?" Huang replied, "Rather, it was a sneeze." His highness was greatly amused by this quick-witted reply.
>
> 玄宗於諸昆季，友愛彌篤，呼寧王為大哥，每與諸王同食。因食之次，寧王錯喉噴上髭，王驚慚不遑。上顧其悚悚，欲安之，黃幡綽曰："不是錯喉。"上曰："何也？"對曰："是噴帝。"上大悅。

The palace entertainer Huang Fanchuo's quick-wittedness is demonstrated through his word-play. The term *cuohou* 錯喉, or cough, literally means "food going down the wrong wind pipe." The terms *cuohou* 錯喉 and *cuohou* 錯侯, which can be rendered as the "erroneous Duke," are homonyms. Huang sought to replace *cuohou* with *penti* 噴嚏 (sneeze), which is close in pronunciation to *pendi* 喷帝, meaning to "spew (food) at the emperor." The point of this anecdote is clearly not so much to differentiate "cough" from "sneeze," but to make a pun of the

emperor and the prince. The pun that Huang Fanshuo made not only dispelled the embarrassment but also reconfirmed the ruler-subject relationship between the two brothers.

Like his father, Li Heng 李亨 (711-762, r. 756-762), more generally known under his posthumous temple name as Suzong, was born without any expectation of becoming emperor. As noted above, the An Lushan rebellion forced Emperor Xuanzong to flee the capital Chang'an to Sichuan, where Grand Councilor Yang Guozhong had many political connections and supporters. When Yang Guozhong was killed by the escorting troops at the Mawei Post Station 馬嵬驛, the question arose whether it was still prudent for the emperor and his entourage to go on to Sichuan. Emperor Xuanzong decided to seek refuge in Sichuan. His son, Suzong, however, stayed behind in the capital region to organize resistance in the north. In the seventh month of 756, Suzong, with a small military escort, arrived at Lingwu 靈武, headquarters of the Shuofang 朔方 command, where he proclaimed himself emperor and bestowed upon his father, Xuanzong, the title of "Retired Emperor" (*Shanghuang* 上皇). Technically, Suzong deposed his father and usurped the throne, although Xuanzong later gave his consent when the news of his son's succession reached Sichuan. It is hardly surprising, then, to uncover numerous historical accounts and anecdotes during Suzong's reign designed to "cover up" his usurpation of his father's emperorship. To justify on strictly moral grounds Suzong's actions, official histories tend to characterize Xuanzong's later years as a period of misrule and incompetence. These accounts also highlight Suzong's "reluctance" to ascend the throne and his followers "persistence" in compelling him to do so. Anecdotes have their own special way of "justification": supernatural stories showing Suzong's destiny to become emperor are commonly

invoked as narrative support. The following two miraculous birth stories concerning Suzong and his son Daizong 代宗 (r. 762-779) are good examples of this method.

The first story in *Ci Liushi jiuwen* relates that Emperor Xuanzong, as a crown prince, was pressured by his political rival, Princess Taiping, to abort his wife's pregnancy. The Grand Tutor Zhang Yue 張說 (667-731), however, actively protected and nourished the baby, who later became Emperor Suzong:

> When [the future] Emperor Xuanzong was in the Eastern Palace [i.e. Heir Apparent], he was envied by [his aunt] Princess Taiping.[193] She had people spy on him day and night, and would report his smallest errors to His Highness [i.e. Emperor Ruizong]. Even the heir's attendants straddled both sides in deference to the princess' power. At that time, [the future] Empress Yuanxian 元獻 had gained favor and had just become pregnant. Xuanzong was afraid of Princess Taiping and wanted his wife to take medicine and abort [the fetus], but he had no one to confide in about the situation. At that time, Zhang Yue, the Grand Tutor of the heir, had sole access to the heir's residence.[194] When Emperor Xuanzong told

[193] Emperor Xuanzong's aunt, Princess Taiping (d. 713), was the youngest daughter of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649-683) and Empress Wu (r. 690-705), who became the emperor of her own dynasty seven years after her husband's death. Like her mother, Princess Taiping was an ambitious woman and remained active in politics throughout her life. Her relationship with her nephew, the future Emperor Xuanzong, was complicated—they started as political allies but ended tragically as enemies. At the height of the princess' power, she managed to put five people onto the position of Grand Councilor: Lu Xiangxian 陸向先 (665-736), Cui Shi 崔湜 (671-713), Dou Huaizhen 竇懷貞 (?-713), Cen Xi 岑羲 (?-713) and Xiao Zhizhong 蕭至忠 (?-713). When it was revealed that Princess Taiping was plotting a rebellion against the new emperor, on the ninth day of the eighth month of 713, Emperor Xuanzong sent out troops to arrest the princess and her co-conspirators. Princess Taiping took her own life, leaving her sons to be executed and her immense wealth confiscated.

[194] Zhang Yue 張說 (667-731), from Luoyang in Henan 河南, served as Grand Councilor under both Emperor Ruizong (r. 710-712) and Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-756). Zhang played a crucial role in Emperor Xuanzong's succession as well as his early reign.

Zhang about his wife's planned abortion with him, Zhang secretly approved the matter. Later, when Zhang Yue came into [the residence] to serve, he accordingly concealed three doses of the abortion medicine in his robe and presented them to Xuanzong. Xuanzong was glad to get this medicine, and dismissing all his attendants, lit a brazier in the hall by himself. Before the medicine was ready, Xuanzong felt tired and dozed off. [The emperor saw] indistinctly, there was a god over ten feet tall clad in gold armor. With a dagger-axe in one hand, the god circled the pot three times and then the cooked medicine were all overturned, with nothing left [in the pot]. When Xuanzong rose to check the medicine, he was astonished at what he had just seen. So he stoked the fire, put in another dose of medicine and cooked it in the pot. Thence, the emperor moved towards his cot bed and watched over the pot without blinking. The god turned over the cooked medicine again. Only when all three doses were overturned did the emperor stop. The next day, when Zhang Yue arrived again, Xuanzong told him in detail what had happened. [Upon hearing Xuanzong's story,] Zhang descended the stairs to do obeisance and offer congratulations to the heir. Zhang proclaimed, "This fetus is mandated by Heaven and cannot be done away with." Later on, when the Yuanxian Empress had a craving to eat something sour, Xuanzong also told Zhang Yue. Every time when [Zhang] Yue came to deliver lectures on classics, he would take the advantage to bring quinces [secretly] in his sleeves. As a result, during the Kaiyuan reign (713-741), no one could rival the favor that Zhang enjoyed with the emperor. Emperor Suizong [i.e. the child born from this pregnancy] treated Zhang Yue's sons—Zhang Jun and Zhang Ji— like his own brothers.[195]

[195] Zhang Yue's two sons, Zhang Jun 张均 and Zhang Ji 张垍, enjoyed great favor with the emperor because of their father's meritorious service in the court. Zhang Jun served as Vice Director of Revenue and Vice Director of the Board of War, and later Director of Justice. Zhang Yue's younger son, Zhang Ji, even married a daughter of the emperor. The Zhang brothers both thought highly of themselves and had their eyes on the position of Grand Councilor. They became resentful and angry when they were not appointed as Grand Councilors and thereafter, served as An Lushan's ministers during his notorious rebellion. Zhang Ji died during the revolt while Zhang Jun was permanently banished to the farthest reaches of the empire after the

玄宗之在東宮，為太平公主所忌，朝夕伺察，纖微聞於上;而宮闈左右,亦潛持兩端，以附太平之勢。時元獻皇后得幸，方娠，玄宗懼太平，欲令服藥除之，而無可與語者。張說以侍讀得進太子宮中，玄宗從容謀及說，說亦密贊其事。他日，說又入侍，因懷去胎藥三煮劑以獻。玄宗得其藥，喜，盡去左右，獨構火殿中，煮未及熟，怠而假寐。 肹蠁之際，有神人長丈餘，身披金甲，操戈繞藥鼎三匝，煮盡覆而無遺焉。玄宗起視，異之，復增火，又投一劑，煮於鼎中。因就榻，瞬目以候之，而見神覆煮如初。凡三煮皆覆，乃止。明日，說又至，告其詳，說降階拜賀曰："天所命也，不可去。"厥後，元獻皇后思食酸，玄宗亦以告說，說每因進經，輒袖木瓜以獻。故開元中，說恩澤莫之與比，肅宗之於說子均、 垍 ，若親戚昆弟雲。

The ninth story in the same collection was about the birth of Daizong whose mother dreamed of a god, also in gold armor, coming through her left underarm into her belly. Once she awoke from this dream, she became pregnant and later gave birth to Daizong:

> When Emperor Suzong 肅宗 was in the Eastern Palace, Li Linfu, the Grand Councilor, was trying to frame him [for various falsely alleged offenses] and succeeded in putting him in several extremely dangerous situations. Before long, white hairs appeared on the heir's temples. One day at the morning levee, His Highness saw the heir and felt sad. He said to the heir, "Please go back to your residence now. I will soon come to see you." When His Highness arrived at the heir's residence, he looked around and found that the rooms were not swept, gardens not watered, and musical instruments collecting dust. Nor was there any courtesan at the heir's disposal. This untidy scene stirred the emperor, so he turned to his close attendant [Gao] Lishi and asked, "Why didn't you, my general, tell me that the heir has been living in such primitive conditions?" (Instead of calling Gao Lishi by name, His Highness, when they were in the palace alone, often addressed him as "general"). Gao Lishi replied, "I wanted to inform Your Majesty about this situation, but the heir would not allow me to do so and said,

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rebellion was put down. The Zhang brothers' biographies are attached at the end of Zhang Yue's biography in both *JTS* and *XTS*.

"Do not disturb His Highness about my inadequate living conditions." His Highness thereupon directed Gao Lishi to issue an order to the Metropolitan Governor, asking him to select for the heir five slender, fair-skinned girls from the common people. Lishi hastened out but after a short while, he came back to the emperor, and said, "It just occurred to me that I issued a similar order for selecting girls for the Metropolitan Governor the other day. The order provoked a lot of discussion and debate among the common people and became fodder for your critics at court. If I may suggest, right here in the Annex Court, there reside some palace women who were brought here after their family properties were confiscated. In my humble opinion, these ladies would make good candidates for the heir's enjoyment." His Highness was greatly pleased by this proposal, so he asked Lishi to summon these palace women registered in the palace to an audience. As a consequence, three ladies were selected and presented to the heir including the future Empress Zhangjing 章敬.[196]Not long after, the future empress had an opportunity to serve the heir at night. She had a nightmare and could not wake up from it. Suddenly she started to moan as if she were in great pain. She had difficulty breathing. Unable to bring her back to consciousness, the heir became concerned and started to blame himself: "His Highness just gave her to me, but all of a sudden she cannot be awakened. His Highness must think that I did not take good care of her." The heir then lit a candle, held it with one hand, and stayed up all night to watch this lady. It took a long time before the future empress finally returned to consciousness. The heir asked her what had happened. The future empress covered her left underarm with her right hand, and said, "I just dreamed of a deity over ten feet tall in gold armor. He held a sword and said to me: 'The highest god ordered me to be your son.' With these words, he cut and then pass through my left underarm and made his way to my belly. The pain was too great to bear, and I can still feel it now." The heir took a close look at his

[196] Empress Zhangjing's biography can be found in *Jiu Tang shu*, 52. 2187 and *Xin Tang shu*, 77. 3499-50. The *Xin Tang shu* account resembles, in content and wording, this story under discussion, suggesting that the *Xin Tangshu* account was very likely based on the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*.

lady's left underarm in the candle light and found some curving red lines resembling cuts. The future empress' condition was immediately reported to His Highness. Soon the future Emperor Daizong was born.[197]

肅宗在東宮，為李林甫所構，勢幾危者數矣。無何，鬢髮斑白。常早朝，上見之，愀然曰：“汝第歸院，吾當幸汝。”及上至，顧見宮中庭宇不灑掃，而樂器久屏，塵埃積其間，左右使命，無有妓女。上為之動色，顧力士曰：“太子居處如此，將軍盍使我聞之乎？”上在禁中，不名力士，呼為“將軍”。力士奏曰：“臣嘗欲上言，太子不許，云：'無以動上念。'”上即詔力士下京兆尹，亟選人間女子細長潔白者五人，將以賜太子。力士趨出庭下，復還奏曰：“臣他日嘗宣旨京兆閱致女子，人間囂囂然，而朝廷好言事者得以為口實。臣以為掖庭中故衣冠以事沒其家者，宜可備選。”上大悅，使力士詔掖庭，令按籍閱視。得三人，乃以賜太子，而章敬皇后在選中。頃者，后侍寢，厭不寤，吟呼若有痛，氣不屬者。肅宗呼之不解，竊自訐曰：“上始賜我，卒無狀不寤。上安知非吾護視不謹耶？”遽秉燭視之。良久方寤。肅宗問之，后手掩其左脅曰：“妾向夢有神人長丈餘，介金操劍，謂妾白：'帝命吾與汝作子。'自左脅以劍決而入腹，痛殆不可忍，及今未之已也。”肅宗驗之於燭下，肅宗驗之於燭下，有若縫而赤者存焉。遽以狀聞，遂生代宗。

There are striking parallels between these two anecdotes—Emperor Xuanzong and Emperor Suzong were both crown princes in the story, both threatened by formidable political rivals, and both meekly accepted their situations. Yet both survived under the protection of a god in gold armor, and both succeeded to their respective thrones in the end. These two anecdotes portray Xuanzong and Suzong as meek and mild, other accounts, however, describe them very differently:

According to historical accounts, Zhang Yue played a key role in Emperor Xuanzong's succession and in the early years of his reign. In 711, rumors of an armed coup led Emperor Ruizong to believe that Xuanzong, heir apparent at the time, might be plotting a rebellion against him. When Ruizong asked his ministers for advice about dealing with the coup, Zhang Yue stood

[197] I consulted Luo Manling's rendition of this story before translating it. For Luo's original translation, see Manling Luo, "Remembering Kaiyuan and Tianbao: The Construction of Mosaic Memory in Medieval Historical Miscellanies," *T'oung Pao* 97 (2011), 275-276.

up for Xuanzong at this critical juncture. Not only did Zhang Yue squash the rumor mill, but also persuaded the emperor to install Xuanzong as a regent. Zhang's support of Xuanzong, however, earned him the enmity of Princess Taiping, who soon induced Ruizong to reassign Zhang Yue to Luoyang, the Eastern Capital. Both *JTS* and *XTS* describe how Zhang Yue, having heard that Princess Taiping was plotting an armed coup against Xuanzong, sent a dagger from Luoyang to Xuanzong, urging him to eliminate Princess Taiping and her clique at once.[198] This brief account notably forms a very vivid contrast with the anecdote, where Zhang Yue hides in his sleeves abortion medicine and then quinces for the heir. This shift from a dagger to quinces epitomizes *Ci Liushi jiuwen*'s tendency to downplay the bloody political struggles over Xuanzong's succession.

Nonetheless, in both anecdotes, the son, not the father, is the real protagonist since the son's miraculous birth makes him the legitimate successor. A closer look into the source of each anecdote further supports this hypothesis. The postscript of the first anecdote—Su Zong's miraculous birth story—reads:

> The historian Liu Fang, who entered officialdom through Zhang Yue's recommendation, heard Zhang Yue relate this story in person. Liu's version is consistent with what Gao Lishi said [to Liu Fang later in Qianzhong].
> 芳本張說所引，說嘗自陳述，與力士詞協也。

Minister Zhang Yue and Xuanzong's close attendant, Gao Lishi, both played important roles in Suzong's early life. According to the official biography of Suzong's mother, Empress

[198] For details, see *JTS* 97. 3051 and *XTS* 125. 4406.

Yuanxian, Zhang Yue was an early supporter of Suzong, and in fact became closely related to Suzong through marriage:

> During the Kaiyuan reign, the future emperor Suzong became the Prince of Zhong, thus the empress (i.e. Empress Jingxian) was given the title of "Imperial Concubine." She gave birth to Princess Qinning. During that time, Zhang Yue enjoyed special favor [from Emperor Xuanzog] because of his earlier achievements and merits. Yue was especially struck by Suzong's outstanding looks and demeanor, and knew that he was blessed with the fortunes of the state. Therefore, Princess Ningqing was married to Zhang Yue's son [Zhang] Ji.
> 開元中，肅宗為忠王，后為妃，又生寧親公主，張說以舊恩特承恩寵，說亦奇忠王儀表，心知運曆所鍾，故寧親公主降說子垍。

Gao Lishi, also fully supported Suzong when Emperor Xuanzong debated installing Suzong as heir apparent, or, alternatively, the son of his favorite consort, Lady Wu.[199] It is impossible to verify that Zhang Yue and Gao Lishi actually circulated this anecdote. But by claiming these two pro-Suzong figures as its sources, this anecdote is able to share with its readers and listeners relatively positive "inside" information, or "behind-the-scene stories."

The second anecdote's postscript on Emperor Daizong's birth notes: "Wu Cou once told my late father this story which is consistent with what Lishi said [later to historian Liu Fang in Qianzhong]." 吳湊嘗言於先臣，與力士說符. Like the above anecdote, this anecdote also has two sources—one is Gao Lishi, supposedly the informant of all stories in *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, and

[199] See *XTS*. 207. 5860.

the other is Li Deyu's father Li Jifu, who in turn heard it from Wu Cou, the younger brother of Empress Zhangjing.[200]

According to Empress Zhangjing's official biographies in both *XTS* and *JTS*, she arose from a humble origin. Her father held a low-level position as vice-magistrate but was convicted of a crime. The Wu family lost everything, and, as a consequence, Lady Wu assumed the role of a low-status "palace lady." Yet, in 725, she was fortuitously selected as a consort of the future Emperor Suzong and gave birth to Daizong in 726.

Apparently, the Wu family was not able to invest much political capital toward Daizong's ascent to the emperorship. After Daizong took over the reins of the state, he ennobled and promoted to major positions many people from his mother's side, including his uncle, Wu Cou, the informant of this anecdote. Against this background, this anecdote was very like created and used to legitimize Daizong's rule as well as the Wu family's rise to prominence. In fact, this anecdote was probably just one piece of a larger legitimating project at the time. The *JTS* account of Empress Zhangjing, for example, records yet another miraculous event about this woman. Shortly before Daizong's succession, he ordered the relocation of Empress Zhangjing's tomb and her interment next to her husband, Emperor Suzong. When her tomb was opened, the lid of her coffin lifted up, witnesses were amazed to see her lying peacefully in the coffin, as if she were still alive. This "paranormal" event was interpreted as an auspicious omen preceding her son Emperor Daizong's succession. Both events were incorporated into the official history and became part of the legend surrounding this major figure. Back at the time when these events

[200] The biography of Wu Cou 吳湊 (730-800) was placed in the "Biographies of the Consort Families" 外戚列傳 in *JTS*, according to which Wu Cou served both Emperor Daizong and his son Dezong 德宗 (742-805, r. 779-805), and was greatly favored and respected. Overall, Wu Cou was said to be faithful, humble, and highly responsible, and was known for exposing justice of his time. *Jiu Tang shu*, 183. 4746-9.

were reported as circulating anecdotes, they probably served more concrete purposes to legitimize and strengthen Daizong's status as the new emperor.

If the anecdote above legitimizes Daizong through his "miraculous birth", this following anecdote, also from Wu Cou, shows an alternative way to achieve this goal:

> Three days after [the future] Emperor Daizong was born, His Highness paid a visit to the East Palace to see his grandson. His Highness bestowed on the heir a gold basin and asked him to bathe the newborn in it. [The future] Empress Wu was young and weakened by this birth at the time, so her baby was not well nourished. The nannies were nervous and didn't know what to do, so they presented to His Highness another plump baby who was born on the same day as the royal grandson. His Highness took a look at the substituted grandson, and declared unhappily, "This is not my grandson!" The nannies [recognizing the emperor's acuteness], struck their foreheads on the ground in submission. His Highness eyed them askance, and said, "You don't understand, now bring my true grandson!" Only then did the nannies present the heir's son to the emperor. Holding the baby in his arms, the emperor moved towards the sunlight to look at it. He smiled and said, "This boy's fortune will surely surpass that of his father!" Later when His Highness was about to depart, he asked his musicians and dancers to stay and said to Gao Lishi "Is there anything more pleasing than having three Sons of Heaven in one palace hall? You should also stay and have a drink with the heir!" Wu Cou once told my late father this story, which is consistent with what Gao Lishi said later.
>
> 代宗之誕三日，上幸東宮，賜之金盆，命以浴。吳皇后年幼體弱，皇孫體未舒，負媼惶惑，乃以宮中諸子同日生、而體貌豐碩者以進。上視之，不樂曰：“此非吾兒。負媼叩頭具服。”上睨謂曰：“非爾所知，取吾兒來。”於是以太子之子進見。上大喜，置諸掌內，向日視之，笑曰：“此兒福祿，一過其父。”及上起還宮，盡留內樂，謂力士曰：“此一殿有三天子，樂乎哉！可與太子飲酒。”吳湊嘗言於先臣，與力士說亦同。

Stories of miraculous birth like those discussed above, often involve divine intervention, supernatural elements and omens to underscore the infant's uniqueness and superiority. To the contrary, this story initially directs the readers' attention to the "inferiority" of the newborn to other infants—he was so ill-nurtured that the nannies decided to substitute another infant for him when his grandfather Emperor Xuanzong came to visit. Surprisingly, not only was Xuanzong able to recognize his real grandson, he also saw a great future for him—he predicted the baby would succeed his father, Suzong, in the years to come. At play here are not so much supernatural elements as "family-bonds."

Towards the story's end, Xuanzong asked Gao Lishi, "Is there anything more pleasing than having three Sons of Heaven in one palace hall?" Through this private conversation between Xuanzong and Gao Lishi, the anecdote seeks to show that Emperor Xuanzong had already approved the succession of Suzong and Daizong since an early time. Possibly, this anecdote was designed to contest the accusation of usurpation surrounding Suzong's later succession. Interestingly, the anecdote's author seems more inclined to favor Daizong over his father, Suzong. If the previous anecdote relates how Suzong's status as a crown prince was constantly under threat by Grand Councilor Li Linfu, then this anecdote asserts that Daizong's birth enhances status of his father, Suzong. Again, this anecdote's sources in part accounts for this approach. For, according to its postscript, the anecdote was related by Daizong's uncle, Wu Cou.

3.4 Towards a Conclusion: Rethinking Collection and Circulation of Anecdotes

Now back to the question raised at the beginning of this chapter—how *Ci Liushi jiuwen* portrays Emperor Xuanzong. The foregoing series of thematic exerpts should make it clear that this collection casts Emperor Xuanzong in a positive light. That is not to say, however, this collection has an overarching framework neatly tying each of the stories together. To the contrary, anecdotal collections are often heterogeneous in nature, thus defying such precise summarization. Thus, it would go too far to assume the compiler of a collection always had a clear agenda in mind, then carried out through a careful selection, arrangement, and editing. Instead, I would argue for an alternative way to understand the form of an anecdotal collection, which in fact opens up relatively free literary space for literati to "narrativize" their experience, mostly, about what they heard or witnessed. This way allows them to preserve materials for future use, and reflect upon the recent past before the "master narrative" takes over.

Anecdotal collection is not always a final "home" for anecdotes. Among *Ci Liushi jiuwen*'s seventeen stories, *JTS, XTS* and *ZZTJ* later incorporated eight. Some stories are quoted at full length without much alteration, others revised and shortened. There are good grounds to hold that anecdote collections provide fertile soil for official histories and growth of more anecdotes. Chapter 4 will take up the topic of interactions between anecdote collections. In what follows, this paper will cite the following concrete example from *Ci Liushi jiuwen* to illustrate how official histories incorporated anecdotes:

The fourth anecdote about Yuan Qianyao 源乾曜 (?-731), a distant descendant of the Royal Family of the Toba Wei, deals with the question of the Grand Councilors' credentials.

Yuan, a *jinshi* graduate, first served as a censor in the capital and then assumed several important provincial posts before his brief tenure as Grand Councilor in 716, succeeding Lu Huaishen 盧懷慎 (?-716). This anecdote reads:

> Yuan Qianyao's[201] memorials always gratified the emperor, and, consequently, His Highness became very fond of him and promoted him all at once from the position of Vice Director of Ministry of Revenue, Metropolitan Governor, all the way to Grand Councilor. One day, His Highness confided to his close attendant Gao Lishi, "Do you know why I promoted Qianyao so fast?" Lishi replied, "I don't know." His Highness then explained, "I advanced him because he so closely resembles Xiao Zhizhong in appearance and speech.[202]" Lishi asked, "But didn't Zhizhong betray Your Majesty? Why does Your Majesty still remember him so favorably?" His Highness said, "It was only in Zhizhong's later years that he blundered [by attaching himself to Princes Taiping]. When Zhizhong first served at the court, can you say that he was not a worthy Grand Councilor?" His Highness always cherished the talents of his ministers and was tolerant of their mistakes. All those who heard this story [about Yuan Qianyao] were deeply touched and filled with joy.
>
> 源乾曜因奏事稱旨，上悅之，於是驟拔用，歷戶部侍郎、京兆尹，以至宰相。異日，上獨與力士語曰：“爾知吾拔用乾曜之速乎？”曰：“不知也。”上曰：“吾以其容貌、言語類蕭至忠，故用之。”力士曰：“至忠不嘗負陛下乎，陛下何念之深也？”上曰：“至忠晚乃謬計耳。其初立朝，得不謂賢相乎？”上之愛才宥過，聞者無不感悅。

Like his predecessor, Lu Huaishen, Yuan was eclipsed by his colleague, Yao Chong. As the *JTS* notes, "Grand Councilors who served concurrently, such as Lu Huaishen and Yuan

[201] Yuan's biographies can be found in *JTS* 98, pp. 3070-3073, *XTS* 127, pp. 4450-4452.

[202] For Xiao's biographies, see *JTS* 92, pp. 2698-71*; XTS* 122, pp. 4371-4.

Qianyao, served only as 'yes-men'." 同時宰相盧懷慎、源乾曜等，但唯諾而已.[203] Yuan Qianyao remained an average Grand Councilor throughout his term, as outlined in his own official biography in the *JTS.*

> Qianyao was at the helm of state for almost ten years. During this period, Zhang Jiazhen and Zhang Yue served in succession as Directors of the Secretariat. Qianyao dared not compete with them for power and would defer to them on each and every matter. Later, when Li Yuanhong and Du Xian started to participate in governmental decisions, Qianyao withdrew from deliberations. He was just a "yes-man" and would sign any document [put before him].
>
> 乾曜在政事十年，時張嘉貞、張說相次為中書令，乾曜不敢與之爭權，每事皆推讓之。及李元紘、杜暹知政事，乾曜遂無所參議，但唯諾署名而已。[204]

Although Yuan Qianyao did not appear to be as competent as Yao Chong and Song Jing, he served longer as Grand Councilor than these "more capable" ministers. Yuan held office a total of ten years, making him one of the longest serving Grand Councilors during Emperor Xuanzong's reign, second only to Li Linfu 李林甫 (?-752).

This anecdote addresses the "puzzle" as to why and how Yuan achieved a high status in view of his mediocrity. The anecdote's exposition sharply contrasts Yuan Qianyao's own limited ability with his major promotions. According to this anecdote, the emperor promoted Yuan Qianyao because he closely resembled the late Grand Councilor Xiao Zhizhong 蕭至忠 (?-

[203] See *JTS*.96.3025.

[204] See *JTS*.98. 3072.

713).[205] Xiao served as Grand Councilor under Xuanzong's father, that is, during Emperor Ruizong's reign. In 713, Xiao participated in Prince Taiping's revolt against Emperor Xuanzong and was later executed as a traitor. Through a purported "private conversation" with his close attendant, this anecdote claims to reveal the emperor's reflections on this revolt and its participants. This story, again, downplays the cruelty of this political struggle in order to highlight the emperor's tolerance and forgiveness of disloyal ministers.

The anecdote on Yuan Qianyao was later incorporated into the official biography of Xiao Zhizhong, part of a group biography in *XTS*. This story greatly interested the *XTS* editors, who in the concluding remark comment:

> How erratic was it that the emperor employed and respected Zhizhong—wasn't the emperor deluded at the time? Zhizhong was not worthy to begin with, but claimed to be worthy simply to reap profits; he would abandon virtues in order to seek profits: he sought marriage with the bewitching empress' (i.e. Empress Wei) family, relied on the privileged princess (i.e. Princess Taiping), snatched the position of Grand Councilor, and plotted to sow discord among the royal family. In the end, he himself was executed and his family ruined, leaving behind him only a bad name forever. Yet the emperor appointed Yuan Qianyao to be in

[205] Xiao Zhizhong 蕭至忠 (?-713) came from the distinguished Xiao family of Shandong. He served with distinction under Empress Wu's reign, and continued to enjoy special favor throughout Emperor Zhongzong's reign. Xiao was even linked to Emperor Zhongzong's empress through marriage. After Emperor Zhongzong's death, allegedly poisoned by his daughter, Princess Anle 安樂公主, or his wife, Empress Wei, the future Emperor Xuanzong along with his brothers, staged a coup: the Anle Princess and Empress Wei were both killed. Despite his close personal connection with the Wei fanily, Xiao survived the political turmoil. He was retained as Grand Councilor in the new regime of Emperor Ruizong, thanks to Princess Taiping's intercession. Xiao was thereafter induced to support Princess Taiping in her political struggles against the future Emperor Xuanzong. In 713, Xiao participated in Prince Taiping's revolt against Emperor Xuanzong. When the rebellion was crushed, Xiao was executed, his family disgraced and punished, and all his assets confiscated. For Xiao's biographies, see *JTS* 92, pp. 2698-71*; XTS* 123, pp. 4371-4.

charge of state affairs (i.e. to be Grand Councilor) simply because Yuan resembled Xiao. Neither did the emperor know that Zhizhong was disqualified to be employed, nor did he really understand what made Qianyao qualified for this position. Some appraised the emperor for not letting the offenses of the ministers to overshadow their talents, this is even more ridiculous! Alas, Lishi was indeed a stale and undistinguished person,[206]unable to pick out the emperor's infatuation. If only he said, "If Zhizhong was [truly] worthy at first, he would almost assuredly not blunder in the end; given that he did blunder in the end, he was certainly not worthy from the very beginning. I only wish that Your Majesty would reconsider your comments," this would have awakened the emperor to his previous faults and provided warnings for his future decisions. Later [the emperor] made Li Linfu his Grand Councilor and An Lushan his general—these [wrong decisions] all stem from his confusion [of the worthy and unworthy]. [In the end] the emperor was forced to flee the capital to remote regions, for this, he had only himself to blame.

異哉，玄宗之器蕭至忠也，不亦惑乎！至忠本非賢，而寄賢以姦利，失之則邀利以喪賢，姻豔后，挾寵主，取宰相，謀間王室，身誅家破，遺臭無窮。而帝以乾曜似之，遽使當國，是帝舉不知至忠之不可用，又不知乾曜之所可用也。或稱帝不以罪掩才，益可怪嘆。嗚呼！力士誠腐夫庸人，不能發擿天子之迷，若曰"至忠賢於初，固不繆於末；既繆於末，果不賢於初。惟陛下圖之"，如是，帝且悟往失而精來鑑已。其後相李林甫、將安祿山，皆基於不明，身播岷陬，信自取之歟。

This comment gives us an idea of the acceptance of this anecdote in later times. The historian argues that it is "ridiculous" to praise the emperor for not letting these offenses discredit his ministers. Note the *XTS* editor didn't challenge this anecdote's authenticity, but did question the interpretation of the story as expressed through the authoritative voice in the end. The historian adduces even more evidence from Xiao Zhizhong's biography to show that he wasn't as worthy as Xuanzong believed. Therefore, the emperor's appraisal of Xiao and his

[206] The term *fufu* 腐夫 is a personal attack, directing at the fact that Gao Lishi was an eunuch who had been castrated.

promotion of Yuan Qianyao because of Yuan's physical resemblance to Xiao only serve to illustrate the poor judgment of the emperor rather than his tolerance. The historian went further to assert the emperor's poor judgment led to even more severe results—his later employment of Li Linfu and An Lushan brought his dynasty down.

This case is especially noteworthy from the standpoint of anecdote circulation and reception. The authorial voice at the end of the original story attempts to direct the readers' attention to the emperor's appreciation of his ministers' talents and, more importantly, his tolerance of their faults including their disloyalty. Yet such a coda comes across more like a lesson imposed too forcefully on the story. That an emperor would promote a mediocre official to Grand Councilor solely based on his physical appearance nullifies the image of a wise ruler the narrator attempts to create.

The *XTS* editor harshly criticized Gao Lishi for failing to awaken the ruler to his mistaken handling of Xiao. More to the point, the historian further invented another version of Gao Lishi's response to the emperor, which, in his mind, would completely alter the story's direction, and maybe even the course of history. The way the historian imagined an episode through reading and revising an anecdote is a vivid example of how anecdotes can be construed in different ways to reconstruct and reflect upon the course of history.

CHAPTER 4

OTHER ANCEDOTE COLLECTIONS RELATED TO LI DEYU'S *CI LIUSHI JIUWEN*

In the preceding chapter, the collection and circulation of anecdotes was examined through the interaction between anecdote collections and official histories. That is, how anecdotes were removed from the original collections' context, and incorporated into a larger discourse in official histories. This chapter approaches the same question—collection and circulation of 9th century anecdotes—from a different angle, by determining how one collection may become fertile for the growth of further anecdotes. If Li Deyu was trying to "fill in the blanks" for Emperor Xuanzong's reign, he was hardly alone in this endeavor. As a matter of fact, Li's contemporaries and successors continued to fill in this period of history. This chapter analyzes anecdotes collected by Li Deyu's contemporaries, especially entries in Wei Xuan's 韋絢 (802-866?) *Rongmu xiantan* 戎幕閒談 (Idle Talks in the Military Headquarters), and Liu Cheng's 柳珵 (fl. 827) *Changshi yanzhi* 常侍言旨 (Essence of the Attendant-in-Ordinary's Accounts). Though these collections all claimed to be related to Li Deyu's in one way or another, they hardly form a set of homogeneous materials. Instead, this chapter shows each collection represents a different view about, and voice of the past, some complementing, others competing with the memory constructed by Li Deyu.

4.1 Liu Cheng and His *Changshi yanzhi*

Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* concludes with a story, set in the post-rebellion era, that relates when the imperial forces recaptured the central region, Huang Fanchuo, the quick-witted palace entertainer, was denounced for allying himself with the rebels and interpreting An Lushan's dream as an auspicious sign for military success. Facing these accusations, Huang made a totally opposite interpretation of the same dream to demonstrate his loyalty to the Tang court. Xuanzong was impressed and amused by his eloquent defense and pardoned Huang. This anecdote ends the collection happily and harmoniously. After the rebellions were quelled, the emperor regained control of his empire and graciously pardoned his disloyal subjects. Other sources present dissident voices over Xuanzong's later years. In any case, the old emperor no longer controlled the course of his later life, much less that of other people.

In 757, after Guo Ziyi recovered the two capitals from the rebels, Emperor Suzong summoned his father, Xuanzong, who by then had accepted the title of "Retired Emperor," back to Chang'an. In 761, the old emperor passed away at the age of 77. Not much is known about Xuanzong's final years in Chang'an, and what little we now know about this period depends mainly on anecdotal and literary materials, such as the following anecdote from Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi*:

> After Emperor Xuanzong abdicated, he lived in the Palace of Ascendant Felicity (*Xingqing gong* 興慶宮). One day, seeing that the sky finally cleared up after a downpour, the emperor decided to grace the Tower of Assiduous Administration

(*Qingzheng lou* 勤政樓) with his presence.[207] Townsmen and passersby under the tower were even more excited and commented to each other, "Never did I expect to see our Son of Heaven of Great Peace again today!" They exclaimed "Long live the emperor!" Their voices rose and fell, so loud as to shake heaven and earth. [This cacophony] made Emperor Suzong ill at ease, so Li Fuguo[208] falsely accused the old emperor's close attendants as follows: "These [public demonstrations of support for the emperor] are all a part of a scheme concocted by Jiu xian yuan, Gao Lishi and Chen Xuanli to overthrow Your Majesty."[209] Li Fuguo further fabricated an imperial decree to consign the old emperor to the Western Interior (*xinei* 西內).[210] This harsh order took away from Emperor Xuanzong all his guards, leaving him only a motley crew of about twenty to thirty, all old and feeble. The old emperor and his attendants were halfway towards the

[207] The Tower of Assiduous Administration is also located in the Palace of Ascendant Felicity (Xingqing gong 興慶宮), right next to the Tower of Blossom and Calyx in Mutual Radiance (Huae xianghui lou 花萼相輝樓).

[208] Li Fuguo 李輔國 (704-762) was a powerful eunuch throughout Suzong and Daizong's reigns. During the An Lushan rebellion, the emperor appointed Li Fuguo as Chief Administrator of the Armies on Campaign (*Yuanshuai xingjun sima* 元帥行軍司馬). Li Fuguo's personal status rose even farther after the courts return to Chang'an. As Li rose higher, he grew even more aggressive in court politics to the point that he even had an eye on the position of Grand Councilor. Although Li's desire to become the Grand Councilor was initially thwarted by high officials of Suzong's court, Li Fuguo finally realized his dream after crushing the conspiracy of Empress Zhang, Emperor Suzong's widow, and enthroning Emperor Daizong. But before long, the new emperor deprived Li of all his important positions, and, according to *XTS*, later had him assassinated. For details, see *XTS*. 208. 5855-60.

[209] *ZZTJ* refers to this lady as *Ru xian yuan*. Sima Guang's "Kaoyi" notes that she was most likely a maid who served Emperor Xuanzong before his fled to Sichuan. Tao Min writes that Jiu xianyuan was a maid of Princess Perfected Jade (Yuzhen, 玉真公主), the ninth daughter of Emperor Xuanzong.

[210] The Western Interior, or The Western [Great] Inner Palace, was one of the three Great Inner [Palaces] (*danei* 大內) in the Tang capital Chang'an—Xinqing Palace 興慶宮 (The South Interior), Daming Palace 大明宮 (The East Interior) and Taiji Palace 太極宮 (The West Interior). Among the three, the Xinqing palace was most accessible while the Taiji Palace was most isolated.

Inner Palace when an array of gleaming swords dazzled them: it was an armed troop led by Li Fuguo. The old emperor was so terrified that he almost fell off his horse several times, were it not for his attendants who deftly caught him. [Seeing this,] Gao Lishi galloped forward and spoke sternly to the troop: "The Son of Heaven who maintained the great peace for fifty years is now here! Li Fuguo, you were merely a house servant back at that time. How can you be so rude and disloyal to the emperor now?" Hearing this, Li Fuguo immediately dismounted his horse. He was in such a hurry that he lost control of the reins. Then on behalf of the old emperor, Gao Lishi asked the soldiers, "How are my men doing?" Li Fuguo ordered his soldiers to sheath their swords thereupon. They all shouted: "Blessed is our old emperor" and, all at once, they bowed and danced for the old emperor. Lishi then commanded, "Li Fuguo, you lead the horse forward for the emperor!" On foot, Li Fuguo escorted the emperor on his horse to the inner palace together with the emperor's guards. After Fuguo retired with his soldiers, the old emperor took hold of Gao Lishi's hand and, in tears, said, "Without you, my general, Aman (Emperor Xuanzong's nickname), would have died by the sword." Hearing the emperor's words, Jiu xian yuan, Lishi and Chen Xuanli were all choked with tears. But Li Fuguo eventually framed them all [for crimes they did not commit]. The next day, Jiu xian yuan was ordered to leave the court and resettle in the Lingnan area, while Lishi and Xuanli were permanently banished to remote regions.[211] This episode was originally part of the sixteenth entry in *Liu shi* 柳史 (History Assembled by the Lius) compiled by the Defender-in-Chief of Zhuya's 朱崖太尉.[212] It would seem that to avoid sensitive political issues of the time it was thereafter expunged. [213]

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[211] The corresponding passage in the *ZZTJ* notes that in the eighth month of the first year of Shangyuan reign (760), Gao Lishi was banished to Wuzhou 巫州…Chen Xuanli was forced to resign his position. Ru xianyuan was sent away to resettle in Guizhou. Princess Yuzhen departed for the Yuzhen Monastery. "The Biography of Chen Xuanli" in *JTS* confirms that Chen "resigned post in the eighth month of the first year of the Shangyuan reign" 上元元年八月致仕 There is no mention of Chen's banishment.

[212] The Defender-in-Chief of Zhuya refers to Li Deyu. Li rose to the summit of his personal life as he became Duke of Wei 衛 and Defender-in-Chief 太尉 during the The Huichang 會昌 reign

玄宗爲太上皇時，在興慶宮。屬久雨初晴，幸勤政樓。樓下市人及往來者愈喜曰：”今日再得見我太平天子！”傳呼萬歲，聲動天地。時肅宗不豫，李輔國誣奏云：”此皆九仙媛[一]、高力士、陳玄禮之異謀也。”下矯詔，遷太上皇於西內，絕其扈從，部伍不過老弱二三十人。及中道，攢刃輝日，輔國統之。太上皇驚欲墜馬數四，左右扶持得免。高力士躍馬前進，厲聲曰：”五十年太平天子，李輔國舊爲家臣，不宜無禮！”李輔國下馬，失其轡。又宣太上皇語曰：”將士各得好在否？”於是輔國令兵士咸韜刃鞘中，高聲云：”太上皇萬福。”一時拜舞。力士又曰：”李輔國攏馬。”輔國遂攏馬著靴行，與將士等護侍太上皇平安到西內。輔國領衆既退，太上皇泣持力士手曰：”微將軍，阿瞞已爲兵死鬼矣。”九仙媛、力士、玄禮皆嗚咽流涕。翌日，竟爲輔國所搆，流九仙媛於嶺南安置，力士、玄禮長流遠惡處。此事本在朱崖太尉所續《柳史》第十六條內，蓋以避時事，所以不書也。[214]

The villain of this story is Li Fuguo李輔國 (704-762), a powerful eunuch during Suzong and Daizong's reigns. According to historical accounts, Li Fuguo, originally named Jingzhong 靜忠, came from a humble background and for a very long time only held a menial job as a horse-keeper in the palace. Reportedly, he also once served Gao Lishi but did not seem to win Gao's confidence. Not until Li's late forties did he finally serve the future Emperor Suzong, who soon recognized his talents. When Suzong succeeded to the throne in Lingwu灵武 in the midst

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period (841–846). But this glorious time quickly faded away when Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 846–859) took the throne. Under the new emperor, the Niu faction regained power. As a consequence, Li Deyu was exiled to far-off lands, serving in Chaozhou 潮州 (modern Chaoan 潮安, Guangdong province) as Assistant Administrator 司馬 and then as Revenue Manager 司戶 in Yazhou 崖州 (modern Qiongshan 瓊山, Hainan province), where he died in 850. By the people addressing Li Deyu as *Zhuya taiwei*, modern scholars maintain they were sympathetic to him in his struggle with his political fall.

[213] Zhang Zongxian's edition of *Shuofu* has *shiji* 時忌 (political sensitivity of the times) instead of *shishi* 時事 (current events). Since the title *Zhuya taiwei* should appear no earlier than the Dazhong reign period (847-859), modern scholars speculate that the last sentence was not part of the original story but, rather, a note from a later generation of commentators. Some scholars even argue that this note was mistakenly made a part of the main body of the story in circulation and reprinting.

[214] The base text for this translation from *Changshi yanzhi* is Tao Min's *Quan Tang Wudai biji.* 981.

of the An Lushan Rebellion, he appointed Li as Chief Administrator of the Armies on Campaign (*Yuanshuai xingjun sima* 元帥行軍司馬) and gave him his current name Fuguo 輔國 (literally "bulwark of the state"), showing his appreciation of, and confidence in Li. Li Fuguo's personal status rose even higher after the court returned to Chang'an, where he assumed various important positions simultaneously and handled important memorials, edicts and other communications to and from the emperor.[215]

In this anecdote, the villain Li Fuguo attempted to show up before Emperor Xuanzong and Gao Lishi, who presumably slighted him in the past. According to *XTS and JTS* official accounts, Li Fuguo, in the name of Emperor Suzong, forcefully relocated Xuanzong to a remote residence. Li also framed and sent Xuanzong's close attendants into exile, thus cutting the old emperor completely off from the outside world to the end of his life. This anecdote is especially interesting and valuable in providing a slightly different account of Xuanzong's suffering—the man who caused all these miseries was none other than Suzong, his own son. As this anecdote notes, Suzong was "indisposed" or "ill at ease" (*buyu* 不豫) to see his father still possessed immense power to rally his supporters. Since Suzong felt threatened by his own father, he probably gave tacit consent to Li Fuguo's hostile treatment of Xuanzong. Li Fuguo was only Suzong's agent in this dramatic story of disempowering Emperor Xuanzong. Suzong, on the other hand, actually pulled the strings, though he remained behind the scenes.

[215] As Li Fuguo rose higher, he grew so aggressive in court politics that he even had an eye for the position of Grand Councilor. Li's desire to become the Grand Councilor was first thwarted by high officials of Suzong's court. But after Li Feuguo enthroned Suzong's son, Emperor Daizong, his desire to become the Grand Councilor was granted. Yet before long, the new emperor deprived Li Fuguo of his important positions, and according to the *XTS*, even arranged for his later assassinated. For details, see *XTS*. 208. 5855-60.

The postscript of this anecdote is especially illuminating: “This episode was originally part of the sixteenth entry in *Liu shi* 柳史 (History Assembled by the Lius), put together by Defender-in-Chief of Zhuya. It would seem that to avoid sensitive political issues of the time it was thereafter expunged.” 此事本在朱崖太尉所續《柳史》第十六條內，蓋以避時事，所以不書也. The Defender-in-Chief of Zhuya refers to Li Deyu who became Defender-in-Chief 太尉 during Wuzong’s Huichang 會昌 reign period (841–846) but was later banished to Yazhou 崖州 (modern Qiongshan 瓊山, Hainan province), where he died in 850. The “*Liushi*” mentioned above is most likely *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, though the current 16th anecdote in Gu Yuanqing’s edition of *Ci Liushi jiuwen* is not consonant with the foregoing anecdote in either content or style.

It is very difficult, if not completely impossible, to verify if Li Deyu did initially include this anecdote but was later pressured to take it out. The inclusion of such a piece would have spoiled an otherwise coherent collection. As the previous chapter suggests, *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, as a whole, is rather positive about Xuanzong and his relationship with the royal family and his ministers. Li Deyu’s preface to *Ci Liushi jiuwen* reveals this collection probably went through some kind of “self-censorship.” Liu Jing noted his grandfather, Liu Fang, did not include in his collection these “inappropriate” stories from Gao Lishi that were either “too private,” or “too strange” to publicize. One may infer Li Deyu also screened all the anecdotes available to him before presenting the current 17 stories to the throne.

Whatever the case may be, to state that *Changshi yanzhi* “adopted” anecdotes “left out” by *Ci Liushi jiuwen* justifies the need for his own collection. The message this claim sent is that Liu Cheng’s collection is probably more inclusive and possibly even bolder in representing the past. This chapter will now closely examine Liu Cheng’s preface to his collection, and one

anecdote from this collection to illustrate the "past" Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* actually presents.

Who was Liu Cheng? What does his collection of anecdotes offer?

Little can be found about the life of the compiler, Liu Cheng. But scholars generally agree Liu Cheng was the grandson of the historian, Liu Fang 柳芳 (fl. 690-770), who met Gao Lishi in exile and wrote down stories later collected by Li Deyu.[216] Liu Fang had two sons, the elder one, Liu Deng 柳登 and the younger, Liu Mian 劉冕 (fl. 730-804). Liu Deng had one son, Liu Jing 柳璟 (fl. 839). Liu Cheng, the compiler of this collection, was Liu Mian's son and Liu Deng's nephew (see Figure 1).

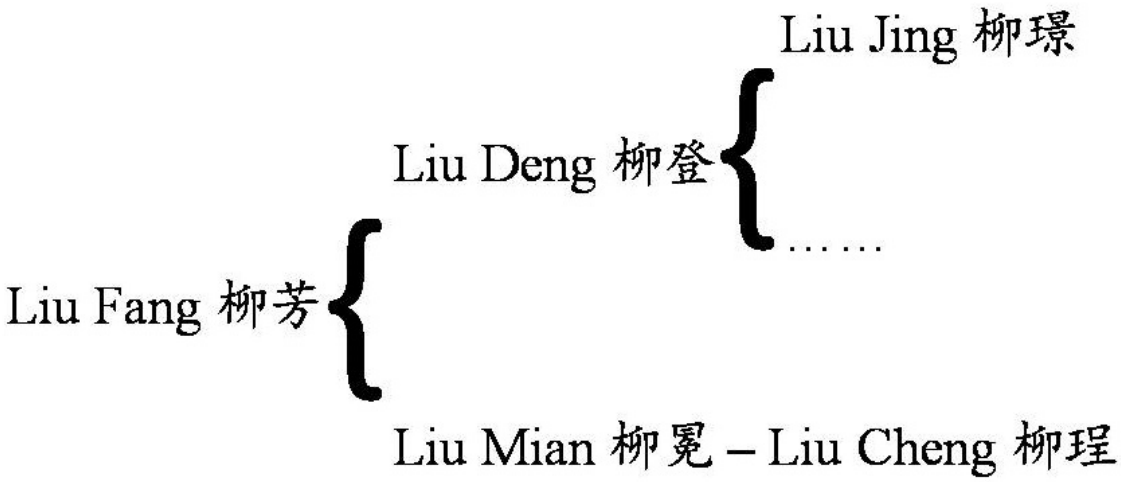

Figure 1

[216] Liu Cheng was a native of Hedong 河東 of Puzhou 蒲州 (modern Yongji of Shanxi Province 山西永濟). Liu Cheng's grandfather was the well-known Tang historian Liu Fang and his father, Liu Mian served as Surveillance Commissioner of the Tang dynasty towards the end of Emperor Dezong's 德宗 (742-805) Zhenyuan 貞元 (785-805) reigns. Historical records show that Liu Cheng befriended monks in Luoyang in 827. Liu Cheng's works and compilations include *Changshi yanzhi* 常侍言旨, *Liushi jiaxue yaolu* 柳氏家學要錄, *Tangli zuanyao* 唐禮纂要, none still extant. Not much is known about Liu Cheng's life but fragments can be gleaned from sources such as *Zong gaosen zhuan* 宋高僧傳鑑空傳, dynasty bibliographies such as "*yiwen zhi*" of the *XTS* and *History of the Song*, and *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志.

Liu Mian and Liu Jing's names also appear in Li Deyu's preface to his collection *Ci Liushi jiuwen:* the younger brother, Liu Mian, was a colleague of Li Jifu, Li Deyu's father, at the secretariat, and shared with Li Jifu stories from Gao Lishi when they were both banished to provincial posts. Later, when Emperor Wenzong wanted to locate Liu Fang's collection, he dispatched several ministers to summon Liu Jing, who was an officer of the Bureau of General Accounts 度支員外郎. Unlike Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen,* Changshi *yanzhi* 常侍言旨 featured two other members of the Liu family—Liu Deng and Liu Cheng. Liu Cheng, the anecdote collector, summarized stories told by a certain *Changshi* 常侍 (Attendant-in-ordinary) whom modern scholars identify as Liu Cheng's uncle, Liu Deng.[217]

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[217] There was some confusion as to the identity of this *attendant-in-ordinary*. Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (ca. 1179-1262), in his *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題, notes that the one-*juan Changshi yanzhi* was "written by Liu Cheng of the Tang dynasty. *The attendant-in-general* was his grandfather [Liu] Fang" 唐柳珵撰. 常侍者, 其世父芳也. Zhou Xunchu 周勳初 and Bian Xiaoxuan 卞孝萱, among other scholars, insightfully points out the error of this note, for Liu Fang never served in such a position as the *attendant-in-general*. Instead, Liu Fang's elder son, Liu Deng once served as *You sanji changshi* 右散騎常侍 (Right Mounted Attendant-in-ordinary) according to his biographies. This observation is also confirmed by the *Yuanzhou* 袁州 edition of Chao Gongwu's 晁公武 (ca. 1105-1180) *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志 (Record of Reading Books in the Commandery Study), where Chao notes "Liu Cheng wrote this collection to record his father's elder brother Liu Deng's (words)" 柳珵記其世父登所著. Also, the term *Shifu* 世父 customarily refers to the father's elder brother rather than the grandfather. *Mounted Attendant-in-regular* 散騎常侍 was an honorary office awarded to favored official in Former Han (202 B.C. - 8 A.D.), signifying their worthiness to be companions of the Emperor. In the Tang dynasty, this office was divided into Left and Right, referring to members at the Secretariat and the Chancellery, respectively. Duties of this honorary position were more likely to involve providing counsel than carrying out any administrative routines.

What do these relationships between informants and compilers tell us about this collection? This question should be put in a broader context: readers of Tang tales and anecdotes would be very familiar with a coda that points out the source of the story, often in the form of "Mr. *So-and-so* informed me of the story above," or "I heard this story from Mr. *So-and-so,*" or a preface to the collection detailing how these stories came into the collector's hand. But to what extent is this type of information reliable? It is very difficult to ascertain if a particular person actually transmitted a story. Yet, information about the story-teller and collector can still shed light on the relationship between different collections. In this case, that both Li Deyu's and Liu Cheng's collections identify the Liu family as their informants suggests that these two collections derive from the same source. Liu Cheng's collection records stories he heard from his uncle (rather than his own father, the informant of Li Deyu's collection) suggests his collection is not identical to Li Deyu's but rather a "complementary" and not "competing" narrative (see figure 2).

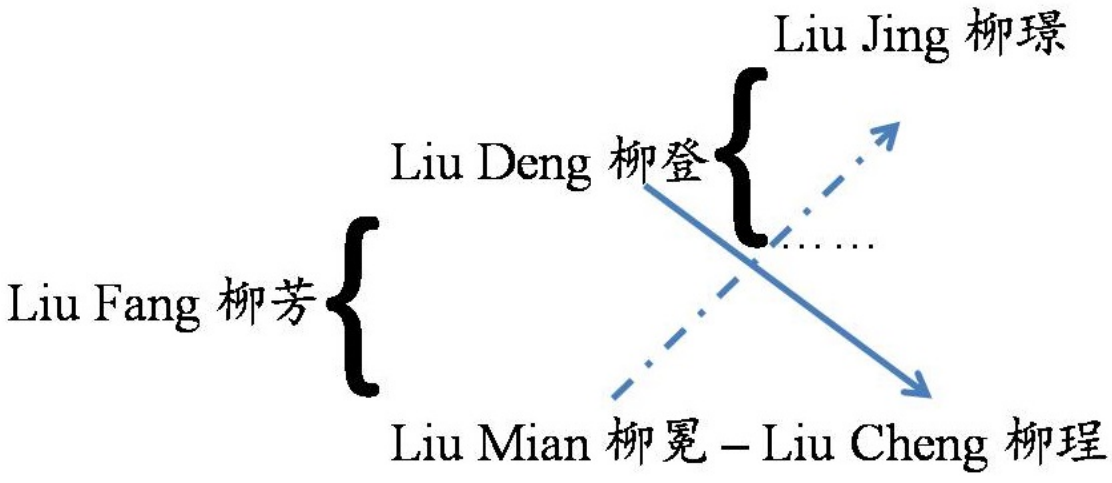

Figure 2

XTS contains the earliest mention of *Changshi yanzhi*. This collection's name continues to appear in significant bibliographies from the Song dynasty down to mid-Ming, indicating the collection was still in circulation by that time. With the loss of this collection, though, it is hard to determine if the content of the collection remains the same. Despite these bibliographic records, some scholars still doubt that *Changshi yanzhi* ever existed. Complete denial of this collection may be exaggerated but these scholars are probably correct to be suspicious about the existence of *Changshi yanzhi*. Not a single word has been said about this collection in *Taiping guangji*, arguably the most important collection of Tang stories assembled in the Song dynasty. Moreover, anecdotes attributed to this collection overlapped to a great extent with other collections, causing even more doubt about its origin. Indeed, some scholars argue that later compilers created this collection and attributed a Tang compiler.

The historical records, however, indicate *Changshi yanzhi* did exist, though mixed with other collections in circulation, notably Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* and Wei Xuan's *Rongmu xiantan*.[218] The earliest known synopses of *Changshi yanzhi* can be found in the Southern Song dynasty compilation, *Ganzhu ji* 紺珠集 (Maroon Pearl Collection),[219] where anecdotes from Li

[218] Extant bibliographical records on *Changshi yanzhi* all note this collection circulated in the format of one *juan*. *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志 and *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄題解 point out that this one-*juan* collection contains six *zhang* 章 (entries) and two longer tales—*Shangqing zhuan* 上清傳 and *Liu Youqiu zhuan* 劉幽求傳.

[219] The term *ganzhu* 紺珠 alludes to an anecdote about the Tang Grand Councilor Zhang Yue 張說 (667-731) in Wang Renyu's 王仁裕 (880-956) *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi* 開元天寶遺事 (Neglected Stories of the Kaiyuan and Tianbao Reigns). It was said that Zhang possessed a maroon pearl (*ganzhu* 紺珠), which, when held in hand, would help him remember things. As the content and title of *Ganzhu ji* suggest, this anthology aims to refresh memories of the details of a story or the origin of a phrase.

Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* and Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* were brought together under one title.[220] Yet, *Ganzhu ji* did not explain why it chose to group these two collections together, nor specify which stories came from which collection. Of the fourteen stories in *Ganzhu ji*, the last eight are summaries of stories from the current edition of Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Two stories, titled "Shang Qing" 上清 and "Lu Jiu" 陸九 respectively, are excerpts from two longer tales by Liu Cheng. The remaining four anecdotes are putatively entries from Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi*. Still, *Taiping guangji* attributes the longer version of these four stories to Wei Xuan's *Rongmu xiantan* 戎幕閒談.[221] An explanation of the mix up of these three collections might be they all claimed the same source—Li Deyu and Liu Cheng both cite the historian, Liu Fang, as their source. Wei Xuan asserts his stories came from Li Deyu, who presumably shared with Wei stories from Liu Fang. The two stories examined here come from the reconstructed edition of *Changshi yanzhi* in Tao Min's 陶敏*Quan Tang Wudai Biji*全唐五代筆記, containing careful textual criticism of this collection.

Having identified the compiler as Liu Cheng, the sources and textual history of his *Changshi yanzhi*, a closer look at the anecdotes in this collection is in order. These two cases

[220] *Ganzhu ji* collects synopses from both Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* and Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi.* A note beside the title of the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* shows that "Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* is also included" 柳珵常侍言旨附. However, *Ganzhu ji* does not specify which belong to Liu's and to Li's respective collections.

[221] Further, *Shuofu*, a Ming dynasty *collectanea* also claims to have preserved stories from *Changshi yanzhi*. Of the two most important versions of *Shuofu*, the Wanwei shantang edition attributes six stories to *Changshi yanzhi*. But none of these six stories overlap with those in *Ganzhu ji.* The Hanfenlou edition of *Shuofu* only lists one story, discussed above, under the title of *Changshi yanzhi*. The modern scholar, Zhou Xunchu, thus argues that the *Changshi yanzhi* in Weiwan shantang edition of *Shuofu* edition does not represent the appearance of the original collection in the Tang dynasty. The only entry Zhou regarded as possible from the original collection is Li Fuguo's disempowering of Xuanzong. *Taiping guangji*, however, attributes its version of this story to *Rongmu xiantan*.

illustrate the type of anecdotes Liu Cheng primarily collected and the kind of history he sought to represent through these stories.

Ganzhu ji preserved several entries concerning Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (709-785), who was conferred the title of Duke of Lu 魯公 in recognition of his loyalty during the An Lushan Rebellion, all attributed to *Changshi yanzhi*. One entry, "Yan Zhenqing dixian" 顏真卿地仙 (Yan Zhenqing, a deity inhabiting the human world), narrates that Yan Zhenqing became a deity after killed by Li Xilie 李希烈 (?-786), the Military Commissioner of Huaixi淮西節度使. Another titled "*Jiancai*" 翦綵 simply states that Yan Zhenqing had a maid who was named Jiancai. Longer versions of the Yan Zhenqing story, preserved in *Tang yulin* 唐語林 of the Song dynasty and *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 of the Ming dynasty, contain material from both synopses. According to the Tao Min edition, Yan Zhenqing once obtained an "immortality herb," and remained young and strong into his mid-seventies. However, when Li Xilie, the Military Commissioner of Huaixi, declared himself Emperor of Chu, Yan Zhenqing exhorted Li to surrender in behalf of the Tang court, but Li strangled him in the end. After Li's death, Yan Zhenqing's body was escorted back to the state capital. When people reopened Yan's coffin, they were astonished to see the corpse uncorrupted and its eyes wide open, as if angrily staring into space. Tang Ruoshan 唐若山, a recluse, commented that Yan's well-preserved body signaled he had already became "a deity inhabiting the human world" (*dixian*, 地仙).[222]

[222] The *Tang Yulin* edition is similar in structure to the *Yongle dadian* edition, but has more vivid details. For example, the *Tan yulin* text details how Yan Zhenqing demonstrates unusual physical strength in his seventies. The text also relates that Yan foreseeing that he would be killed prearranged an escort for his body to be taken back to Chang'an. There the people reopened his coffin along with Yan's niece and his maid Jiancai. Just as Yan Zhenqing was about to be strangled, he won over Li Xilie's executioner, who, though still carrying out the execution, did

Notably, Liu Deng, the informant of Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* also appears in story，as the text reads:

> "The next year, [Li] Xilie died, General Chen Xianqi (?-786) escorted the body of the Duke of Lu (i.e. Yan Zhengqing) back to the capital. [Yan's] nephew Yan Xianshi followed the Attendant-in-ordinary Liu [Deng], [Yan's niece] Lady Pei, and Jiancai welcomed the coffin at the Zengguo ren Temple 鎮國仁寺, all following the will [of Yan Zhenqing]."
> 至明年，希烈死，蔡帥陳仙奇奉魯公喪歸京师，猶子顏峴實從柳常侍與裴氏女及剪綵同迎喪於鎮國仁寺，咸遵遺旨.

Not only did Liu Deng witness this usual event, but he also composed an elegy for Yan Zhengqing, according to this anecdote's annotation, putatively by the compiler, Liu Cheng. Liu Deng's personal familiarity with Yan Zhenqing may also explain why there are multiple entries on him. Moreover, these Yan Zhenqing stories reflect Liu Cheng's interest in more recent historical figures. Compared with those figures in Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, active roughly between 712 and 756, Yan Zhenqing, lived through the An Lushan Rebellion into the 780's, and was about a generation closer to the compiler, Liu Cheng.

Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* also collected anecdotes about Emperor Xuanzong's reign. Liu's anecdote about Zhang Yue, featured in the first anecdote of *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, illustrates how the two collections, supposedly derived from the same source, complement each other. [223]

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not cut off Yan's head. That, according to the story, was crucial in Yan's later attaining immortality.

[223] Again, there is some confusion about the origin of this piece. *TPGJ* titles this story "Hong Shi" 泓師 (Master Hong) and attributes it to both *Datang xinyu* 大唐新語 and *Rongmu xiantan*. But more evidence supports its origin in *Changshi yanzhi*. The *Ganzhu ji* contains a synopsis of

The Zhang Yue anecdote consists of two parts. The first, the story's main body, relates that Master Hong examined the geomantic condition of Zhang Yue's residence in the Yong'an 永安 (Eternal Tranquility) Ward in Chang'an and warned him not to touch the soil on the residence's northeastern side. Later, when it was discovered that someone dug soil from the northeast and left three deep holes on the ground, Zhang Yue proposed to cover them with new soil. Master Hong replied, "Transported soil lacks *qi* (life-force or pneuma) [from this place], thus it won't be connected with the 'veins of land' here" 客土無氣，與地脈不相連. The second part of the story is a postscript noting that Zhang Yue's two sons later both served An Lushan's rebellion: "The Duke of Yan's (*i.e.* Zhang Yue) two sons [Zhang] Jun and [Zhang] Ji, were both employed by An Lushan and accepted high positions with the rebels. After [the lost territory] was recovered, Jun committed suicide pursuant to an imperial order.[224] Ji was sentenced to permanent banishment in remote places." 燕公子均、垍，皆爲祿山委任，授賊大官。克復後，均賜死，垍長流之。

Clearly, the anecdote's writer and collector were not just interested in Master Hong's predictions. Instead, they were trying to develop an explanation for the sudden fall of the once-prominent Zhang family, and, more specifically, why Zhang Jun and Zhang Ji, Grand Councilor Zhang Yue's sons, would make such an unwise decision to join the rebels.

Master Hong's comments on the geomantic configuration of Zhang Yue's residence, attributed to *Changshi yanzhi*. *Chang'an zhi* 長安志, a northern Song compilation, retains a longer version of this story and also attributes it to *Changshi yanzhi*. *Zizhi tongjian* quotes this story with attribution to *Changshi yanzhi*.

[224] *Cisi*, or to commit suicide by imperial order, is considered as an imperial favor as it spared the offender from the indignity of being executed.

The following anecdote in *Changshi yanzhi* recorded Emperor Xuanzong and Suzong's private conversation on handling the case of the Zhang brothers after the rebellion was put down:

> The Great Exalted Emperor [i.e. abdicated emperor] summoned Emperor Suzong and said to him, "Zhang Jun and his brother both served the rebels as high officials. Of the two, Zhang Jun even plotted with the rebels to ruin both our families.[225] Even dogs and pigs would not act [as immorally] as they did. Their offenses are unforgivable!" Suzong descended to the palace hall, knelt down, touched his forehead to the ground, bowed twice, and said, "When your subject was still living in the Eastern Palace,[226] I was falsely charged [as a usurper] by people. Three times I was so close to death. Thanks to Zhang Yue's protection, I survived. Now that Yue's two sons are about to die, I am not able to protect them. If people are conscious after death, how could I face Zhang Yue when we meet in the nether world?" With these words, [Suzong] laid face-down and began to sob. The Great Exalted Emperor said to his attendants, "Help the emperor get up [from the ground]." Only then did he say, "A'nu, leave it to you to handle Zhang Ji, but he ought to be permanently banished to remote and harsh areas; Zhang Jun ought to be executed. A'nu, you shouldn't try so hard to save him anymore. " In tears, Suzong accepted this imperial order with resignation.
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> 太上皇召肅宗謂曰：“張均弟兄皆與逆賊作權要官，就中張均更與賊毀阿奴、三哥家事，雖犬彘之不若也。其罪無赦。”肅宗下殿，扣頭再拜曰：“臣比在東宮，被人誣譖，三度合死，皆張說保護，得全首領以至今日。說兩男一度合死，臣不能力爭，倘死者有知，臣將何面目見張說於地下！”嗚咽俯伏。太上皇命左右曰：“扶皇帝起。”乃曰：“與阿奴處置張垍，宜長流遠惡處；張均宜棄市。阿奴更不要苦救這賊也。”肅宗掩泣奉詔。[227]

[225] A'nu is Emperor Suzong's nickname. San'ge refers to Xuanzong himself, as he was the third son of his family.

[226] The eastern palace is the residence of the crown prince.

[227] Compared with the Kaoyi passage which presumably comes from *Changshi yanzhi*, it is noteworthy that the Emperor Xuanzong's language was more colloquial in *Changshi yanzhi* whereas in *Zizhong tongjian,* not only did his language become more formal but his tones sounded firmer and stronger.

This anecdote is similar to the Huang Fanchuo story in *Ci Liushi jiuwen* in that Xuanzong was portrayed as a powerful ruler even after his retirement, and still able to determine if those disloyal subjects should be pardoned, or executed. Nevertheless, Emperor Xuanzong was no longer in a position to make these critical decisions. According to the first anecdote in *Changshi yanzhi*, he could not even protect his closest attendants when Li Fuguo sent them all into exile.

Tellingly, this anecdote contrasts the "good" and "evil" Grand Councilors as also seen in Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. In *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, Zhang Yue and Li Linfu are set up as Suzong's helper and villain. When Emperor Suzong intercedes in behalf of the Zhang brothers, he tearfully said: "When your subject was still living in the Eastern Palace, I was falsely charged [as a usurper] by people. Three times I was so close to death for three times" 臣比在東宮，被人誣譖，三度合死，皆張說保護，得全首領以至今日. Yet this sentence contains a serious historical inconsistency— Zhang Yue had already passed away when Suzong was installed as the crown prince. It suggests that the basic opposition of Zhang Yue and Li Linfu became so influential that even later anecdote writers and collectors who were not quite familiar with this period would adopt this dichotomy to flesh out their stories. Intriguingly, when Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086) came across this anecdote in *Changshi yanzhi* in the Northern Song, he noted this chronological error but still believed the anecdote contained a morsel of truth. To render this material historically accurate, he extended Suzong's recognition of Zhang Yue to the entire Zhang family and further explained his choice in a footnote:

> Zhang Yue had already passed away when Suzong came under Li Linfu's threat, so Suzong had to rely on Yue's sons [Zhang] Jun and [Zhang] Ji. Jun and Ji just followed his father's final wish to serve Emperor Suzong. Now I will keep the gist of this story [but leave out superfluous details].
> 司馬光按：肅宗為李林甫所危時，說已死，乃得均、垍之力。均、垍以說遺言盡心於肅宗耳。今略取其意。[228]

Sima Guang's choice confirmed that the contrast of Zhang Yue and Li Linfu became so widely accepted that later anecdote writers and even historians comfortably accepted this dichotomy, even if the supporting materials contained errors.

[228] *ZZTJ*.220, 7049-50.

4.2 Wei Xuan and His *Rongmu xiantan*

Another collection often associated with Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* is Wei Xuan's *Rongmu xiantan*. Wei Xuan, a native of Jingzhao京兆, one of the districts in the capital, was descended from the prominent Wei family. In 831, he joined Li Deyu's staff and shared Li's interest in collecting and circulating anecdotes. About twenty-five years later, Wei Xuan assembled the stories he heard from Li Deyu into a single collection, which he named *Rongmu xiantan*戎幕閑談 (Idle Talks in the Military Headquarter). Wei Xuan's other extant work—*Liu gong jiahua lu* 劉公嘉話錄 (A Record of Master Liu's Fine Discourses)—is a similar collection. [229] Despite Wei Xuan's distinguished family background, there is no biography of Wei Xuan in either *JTS* or *XTS*. The biography of Wei Xuan that modern scholars Zhou Xunchu and Bian Xiaoxuan put together draws on scattered records concerning his better-known family members, bibliographical materials and Wei's prefaces to his own collections.

One of the earliest extant records of Wei Xuan is in an annotation to the Bibliographic Treatise (Yiwen zhi, 藝文志) of *XTS*:

[229] Of those works citing Wei Xuan's compilation of Liu Yuxi's 劉禹锡 (772-842) words, some refer to it as *Liugong jiahua* while others call it *bingke jiahua.* Tori Richardson notes that the textual history of the *Liu gong jiahua lu* is quite complex. The "Bibliographic Treatise" of the *XTS* records the work *Liu gong jiahua lu* in one-*juan.* The "Bibliographic Treatise" of the *Songshu* 宋書, nevertheless, records that Wei Xuan had two one-*juan* works: *Liu gong jiahua* 劉公嘉話 and *Bingke jiahua* 賓客嘉話. Richardson argues that *Bingke jia hua* is just an alternative name for *Liu gong jiahua*. For details, see Tori Richardson, "'Liu Pin-k'o chia-hua lu' ['A Record of Advisor to the Heir Apparent Liu [Yü-hsi's] Fine Discourses']: A study and translation," Unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1995, pp. 6-7.

> Xuan, whose *zi* (字, style name) was Wenming 文明, was a son of [Wei] Zhiyi 執誼. During the Xiantong 咸通 period (860-874) he served as Regional Commander in Yiwu Military Prefecture.
> 絢字文明, 執誼子也. 咸通義武軍節度使.[230]

Wei Xuan's father Wei Zhiyi 韋執誼 (fl. 813-840) served as Grand Councilor in both Emperor Shunzong 順 (r. 805) and Emperor Xianzong's 憲 (r. 805-820) reigns.[231] Wei Xuan married Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779-831) daughter Yuan Baozi 元保子.[232]

Little is known about Wei Xuan's early life other than the preface to the *Liu gong Jiahua lu* 劉公嘉話錄. This preface in the *Quan Tang Wen* 全唐文still provides a glimpse of Wei Xuan's life: in the spring of the second year in the Changqing 長慶 reign (822), Wei Xuan left for the Kui 夔prefecture where he called upon Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842). In the next several years, Wei Xuan studied with Liu. From what he heard during this period, over thirty years later,

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[230] See *XTS*, 59.1542.

[231] Biographies of Wei Zhiyi appear in both *XTS*, 168.5123 and *JTS*, 135.3732. The "Zaixiang shixi biao" 宰相世系表 of the *XTS* (*XTS*, 74.3107) shows the lineage of the Wei family except for Wei Xuan's name. The table reveals Wei Zhiyi had four sons: the eldest son, Shu 曙; the second, Tong 暲, whose *zi* is Bingzhi 賓之, the third son Chang 昶, *zi* Wenming 文明, and the fourth son, Xu 旭, *zi* Jiuzhi 就之. Chen Yingque 陳寅恪 (1890-1969) speculates Wei Xuan was the third son Chang mentioned in this table. For details, see Chen Yingque 陳寅恪, "Li Deyu bian si nianyue ji guizang bianzheng" 李德裕貶死年月及歸葬說辯證 in *Chen Yingque ji* 陳寅恪集 (13v.; Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2001), 3: 18-19 and Zhou Xunchu 周勳初, "Wei Xuan Kao" 韋絢考, *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊 6 (1992), 35-7.

[232] See Zhou, "Wei Xuan Kao," p.35. Bian Xiaoxuan notes Yuan Baozi was Wei Xiaqing's 韋夏卿 (743-806) granddaughter. Wei Xiaqing and Wei Xuan's father Wei Zhiyi came from the same great grand father. See Bian Xiaoxuan 卞孝萱, "*Rongmu xiantan* xintan" 戎幕閑談新探, *Xibei shifan daxue xuebao* 西北師範大學學報 37 (2000), 36.

Wei Xuan compiled stories later known as the *Liu gong jiahua lu*.[233] These accounts range from anecdotes about Tang literati to odd dreams and the supernatural. The preface to this collection is rendered into English as below:

> I, Xuan, [had lived] three years less than Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303) when he went to Luoyang 洛陽, and two years more than Chonger's 重耳 (697-628 BC) exile, as I was carrying my bookcase from Xiangyang 襄陽 to Jiangling 江陵. I rowed a leaf-like boat, travelled upstream through the Wu 巫 Gorge and arrived at the White Emperor's [City].[234] [I] called upon His Honor Liu, the twenty-eighth of Zhongshan 中山, formerly, Minister of War. I sought to stay close to him so as to study with him. This was in the spring of the first year of the Changqing 長慶 reign period (821).[235] I was indebted to this elderly man for giving me a chance to wait on him, for clothing and feeding me, and for [allowing me] to rise at the dawn and rest at dusk together with his sons.[236] Sometimes he would take advantage of the gatherings and ask me to sit down and talk. [These] were mostly

[233] However, according to Tang Lan 唐蘭, stories in the *Liu gong jiahua lu* are not confined to the period when Wei Xuan studied with Liu Yuxi. Tang Lan dates some of stories to the last year of the Kaicheng reign period (840). For details, see Tang Lan "'Liu Bingke jiahua lu' de jiaoji yu bianwei" 劉賓客嘉話錄的校輯與辨僞, *Wenshi* 文史 4 (1965), 11.

[234] According to Zhou Xunchu, it was generally known Chonger 重耳, the Duke Wen of Jin 晉 spent nineteen years in exile and Lu Ji 陸機 went to Luoyang at the age of twenty-four. Therefore, the sentence implies Wei Xuan was twenty-one when he left for the Kui prefecture. See Zhou, "Wei Xuan Kao," p. 36.

[235] According to Liu Yuxi's "Kuizhou xie shang biao" 夔州谢上表, Zhou Xunchu notes Liu did not arrive at Kuizhou until the second year of the Changqing reign peirod (822). Therefore, Zhou suspects that Wei Xuan's calling upon Liu Yuxi was in the spring of the following year (822).

[236] The term *jieyi tuishi*, literally "to clothe someone with one's own clothes and feed someone with one's own food," refers to showing the utmost solicitude for someone. It alludes to the story that Han Xin 韓信 (ca. 231 B.C.-196 B.C.) was well treated by Liu Bang 劉邦 (256 B.C.-195 B.C.). For details, see Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145 B.C.-ca.87 B.C.), *Shiji* 史記 (Grand Scribe's Record) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), 92.2622.

meant to teach and guide [me] and explain [to me] errors in the classics and histories. As to contemporary literati's conversations during their leisure time, new tales about the ministers and councilors, unusual words from dreams, praising and jesting, divination and prophetic ballads as well as refined phrases and words that I heard at the gatherings, I would withdraw and quietly record them—on bamboo slips, or the end of my sash.[237] Those I had no time to record and were consequently forgotten are innumerable. Those in written form are but one out of a hundred. Now the day-by-day accounts of what was said at the time have been recorded without rearranging. I called it *Liugong jiahua lu*, hoping to pass it down to those who are fond of anecdotes, as sources for their conversations. The time is the second month of the tenth year of the Dazhong 大中 reign period (856). I, Wei Xuan, a native of Jingzhao, the Vice-Prefect of Jianglin, and Supreme Pillar of State, prefaced it.[238]

絢少陸機入洛之三歲，多重耳在外之二年，自襄陽負書笈至江陵。挐葉舟，溯巫峽，抵白帝。投謁故贈兵部尚書賓客中山劉公二十八丈，求在左右學問。是歲長慶元年春也。蒙丈人許措足侍立，解衣推食，晨昏與諸子起居。或因宴集，命坐與話論，大抵根於教誘，而解釋經史之錯謬。及國朝文人劇談，卿相新語，異常夢話，美譽善謔，蓊祝童謠，佳句廋詞，即席聽之，退而默記。或染翰竹簡，簪筆書紳。其不暇記錄，因循遺忘者，不知其數。在掌中焚灸者，百存其一焉。今悉依當時逐日所話而錄之，不復編次矣。號曰《劉公嘉話錄》。傳之好事，以爲譚柄也。時大中十年二月，朝散大夫江陵少尹上柱國京兆韋絢序。[239]

[237] The term *shushen* 書紳 appears in the "Wei Ling gong" 衛靈公 chapter of the *Analects*, in which Zi Zhang 子張 wrote Confucius' counsels at the end of his sash on how to conduct oneself, showing he would live by these words. See Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (1909-1992), annot. and trans., *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯註 (Translation and Annotation of the Analects) (Peking: Zhonghua Shuju, 1980), p. 171.

[238] I provide a more literal translation of the whole preface than Tori Richardson's abridged version. For Richardson's partial translation of the preface, see Richardson, "Liu Pin-k'o chia-hua lu," p. 13.

[239] The primary text is based on Dong Gao 董誥 (1740-1818) *et al*., eds., *Quan Tang wen* (11v.; Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 720.20b-21a.

In the fifth year of the Taihe 太和 period (831), Wei Xuan served as an inspector for Li Deyu, then Military Commissioner of Xichuan 西川.[240] Stories Wei Xuan heard during this period were compiled in *Rongmu xiantan*. The preface to this collection is found in *Shuofu* 說郛:[241]

> The Duke Zanhuang 贊皇 was erudite, fond of marvels, and especially good at telling unusual stories of the past and the present. While [he was] stationed in Shu 蜀, his guests and assistants would constantly tell stories, as if they would never tire. Once the Duke said to me, "Should you name and arrange these accounts, they will also be sufficient to broaden horizons." I, Xun, consequently picked up a brush to record them and titled [the collection] *Rongmu xiantan.* Wei Xuan, the inspector, quoted on the twenty-third day of the eleventh month in the fifth year of the Taihe reign period (831).
>
> 贊皇公博物好奇，尤善語[242]古今異事。當鎮蜀時，賓佐[243]宣吐纍纍，不知倦焉。乃謂[244]絢曰：能題[245]而紀之，亦足以資於聞見。絢遂操觚錄之，號爲戎幕閒談，大和五年十一月二十三日，巡官韋絢引。

[240] Both Zhou Xunchu and Bian Xiaoxuan note Li Deyu was on good terms with Wei Xuan's father-in-law, Yuan Zhen. Yu Zhen and Li Deyu were colleagues at the Hanlin 翰林 academy during the first year of the Changqin 長慶 reign period (821). Thus scholars suspect that Li Deyu hired Wei Xuan because of this connection. See Zhou Xunchu, "Wei Xuan Kao," p.36; Bian Xiaoxuan, "Xintan," p. 36. Wei Xuan was not the only person with connections to Li Deyu in the Wei family. Wei Guan 韋瓘 (789-?), one of Xuan's cousins, was also on good terms with Li Deyu. Biographical data on Wei Guan are at the end of his father Wei Zhengqin's 韋正卿 biography, see *XTS*, 162.4996.

[241] The Chinese text was based on the *Shuofu*. See Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (fl.1360-1368), comp., *Shuofu* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shudian, 1986), 7: 14a. The *Shuofu* edition has 戎幙閒談 for 戎幕閒談 in the title. The *Shuofu* text is also slightly different from the *Tang wen shiyi* 唐文拾遺 edition. See Lu Xunyuan 陸心源 (1834-1894), *Tang wen shiyi* 唐文拾遺 in *Quan Tang wen* (11v.; Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 11: 28.14b. All the textual differences are noted below.

[242] The *Tang wen shiyi* has 話 for 語.

Although this collection no longer exists, its title continues to appear in significant bibliographies since the Song dynasty. *Zending Siku jianming mulu biaozhu* 增訂四庫簡明目錄標註 suggests the collection was probably still in circulation by the Qing dynasty, but at times under a different title:

> *Dengxia xiantan* 燈下閒談 (Idle Talks by the Lamp), which has two *juan*, was compiled by Wei Xuan of the Tang dyansty. The Zhai family kept an old copy of the manuscript made by Feng Yicang 馮已蒼. This book appeared in the Palace Library catalogue and was printed by Chen Daoren's 陳道人 publishing house in the Song dynasty. An alternative title seems to be *Rongmu xiantan*.
> 燈下閒談二卷，唐韋絢撰。翟氏有馮已蒼舊鈔本，是書見舘閣書目，為宋陳道人書鋪刊行，一名似戎幕閒談。[246]

Fortunately, some of the stories from the *Romgmu xiantan* can still be found in other sources: nine stories in the *Leishuo* 類說, five stories as well as the preface in the *Shuofu* 說郛, and fifteen stories in the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記.[247] The two stories examined below are

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[243] The *Tang wen shiyi has* 資佐 for *bingzuo* 賓佐, thus the phrase becomes "he would aid and assist story-telling."

[244] The *Tang wen shiyi* has *yu* 語 for *wei* 謂.

[245] The *Tang wen shiyi* has 隨 for *Ti* 題, thus the phrase becomes "Should you be able to follow [what we said] and record them..."

[246] See Shao Yi 邵懿 (1810-1861), *Zending siku jianming mulu biaozhu* 增訂四庫簡明目錄標註 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2000), 605.

[247] However, according to Li Jianguo, the original collection did not include four of the stories found in the *Taiping guangji*. Li submits that although the stories "Hong shi" 泓師 (*TPGJ*, 77.484-485), "Li Fuguo" 李輔國 (*TPGJ*, 188.1408-1409) and "Fan shi ni" 范氏尼 (*TPGJ*,

based on the reconstructed edition of *Rongmu xiantan* in Tao Min's 陶敏*Quan Tang Wudai Biji* 全唐五代筆記.

One *Rongmu xiantan* story in *TPGJ* focuses on Yuan Qianyao, one of the Grand Councilors also mentioned in Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen.* This story consists of three parts:

Master Hong found a good location for a family grave plot with high geomantic qualities in the Eastern Capital, Luoyang, and wanted to find another person whose "allotted" luck or happiness would match up to this good place. In order to do so, the master asked the Grand Councilor, Zhang Yue, to ask for a few days' sick leave, upon hearing which, officials at the court all came to pay their regards to Zhang. Thus, the master was able to observe quietly these visitors from behind a drop-curtain. He did not find anyone until he saw Yuan Qianyao. Back then, Yuan Qiaoyao, still a non-entity at the court, was yet to inter his father at the family grave in Luoyang. The master told him about the good grave plot location and offered to accompany him to Luoyang to purchase it. But Yuan declined the master's offer, explaining that his family was not rich enough to purchase such a good grave plot.

Years later, when the master passed by the place again, he was astonished to know that it had already become the grave plot of the Yuan family. He was even more amazed to know that Yuan Qianyao happened to find this place with the assistance of a villager without any profound

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224.1724) are attributed to *Rongmu xiantan*, they actually came from another collection called *Changshi yanzhi* 常侍言旨 by Liu Cheng 柳珵. The story "Li Tang" is identical with Li Gongzuo's "Gu 'yuedu jing'" 古嶽瀆經 in the *Yiwen ji* 異聞集. Li Jianguo contends he found the story "Longqiu" 龍湫 in the *Bai Kong liu tie* 白孔六帖 (see *Bai kong liu tie*. 95: 35a in the *Siku congshu* edition). For details, see Li Jianguo 李劍國, *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xulu* 唐五代志怪傳奇敘錄 (Tianjing: Nankai Daxue Chubanshe, 1993), 600-601.

geomantic knowledge, and that Yuan simply purchased this blessed land on credit. The master thus predicted that Yuan's great fortune would be beyond description.

The last sentence of the story or part three is the realization of Master Hong's prediction: "Later, Yuan Qianyao rose to Grand Councilor from the position of Metropolitan Governor and served as Director of the Chancellery for almost twenty years" 乾曜自京尹拜相，爲侍中，近二十年。

Like the *Ci Liushi jiuwen* anecdote on Yuan Qianyao, this anecdote above also explains Yuan Qianyao's rise and remarkably long tenure as a Grand Councilor. This anecdote also employs a framework of explanation resembling the Zhang Yue anecdote in *Changshi yanzhi*. Like the Zhang Yue anecdote, this anecdote also features Master Hong, using geomantic quality of one's residency, or graveyard to foretell one's destiny. These anecdotes reveal a continuous interest in the life and career of historical figures from Emperor Xuanzong's reign.

Not only was Wei Xuan interested in old topics like those recorded in Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*, he collected unusual phenomenon that happened to his contemporaries. The following anecdote, very likely told by Li Deyu himself, reflects these literati's interest in collecting anecdotes on more recent events:

> The Hanlin Academy had a hanging bell, so as to alert for emergencies at night. [Officials would] pull the rope of the bell to signal when memorials coming in to, or going out from the court. During the Changqing 長慶 reign (821-824), the Duke of Zanhuang (i.e. Li Deyu) served as an Academician [of the Hanlin Academy]. When warfare broke out in Hebei, the bell rang several times, but nobody was seen to ring it. When the bell rang urgently, the situation would later turn out to be critical; when it rang gently, the situation was stable—the bell never made a mistake! At the time, The Grand Councilor Yuan Zhen was also serving at

> the [Hanlin] Academy, and had a line–"deities pulling the string to strike the bell"— in his poem which refers exactly to this event.
>
> 翰林院有懸鈴，以備夜中警急，文書出入則引索以代傳呼。長慶中，贊皇爲學士，時河北用兵，鈴數有聲，終不見人。聲急則軍事急，聲慢則軍事慢，曾莫之差。元相亦在院，元詩有'神撼引鈴緌'是也。

Yuan Zhen composed a poem in reply to Li Deyu's long regulated verse retelling a dream about his early days at the Hanlin Academy. The original couplet contrasts two types of sound: "Clerks passing along the tally to open the lock [in the morning], deities pulling the rope to strike the bell [at night]" 吏傳開鎖官府，神撼引鈴絛, highlighting the diligence of Li Deyu and himself who worked from dawn to dusk. Yuan Zhen also mentioned in a footnote to his poem this rare phenomenon. Yuan, clearly expecting more readers than those witnesses to this unusual event, felt the need to provide some background information for these "outsiders."

Wei Xuan's anecdote, to the contrary, seems to be more directed to recording the "strangeness" of this event. Perhaps these anecdotes were collected as "raw materials" for the future generation to use in their literary and historical works.

Anecdotes and stories collected in the ninth century greatly influenced the writing of Tang history after the fall of the dynasty to an extent not yet fully understood. These texts, including those not later classified as "miscellaneous history" (za shi 雜史) by Song bibliographers, were often cited in the annals, monographs, and biographies of the two Tang histories, as well as excerpted in many Five Dynasties and Northern Song anecdote collections. But what were the goals of the literati who compiled these anecdote collections? By examining the rhetoric of the prefaces to the above two collections after Li Deyu, and the anecdotes within, this chapter shows that literati came to see their work as essential in preserving the rapidly

disappearing memories and records of the Tang past, and sometimes, to explain and reflect, if possible, on “history” still in the making.

CONCLUSION

Let us return to the first anecdote that opened this thesis. Though created over a thousand years apart, the Xi Jinping anecdote still resembles in a fundamental sense Tang anecdotes examined in this thesis—both open a window on the private life of a political figure and provide, or at least claim to provide, an insider's knowledge otherwise unknown to the rest of the world. Yet Tang anecdotes we readers study today differ greatly from gossip-based "anecdotes" or "news" of what is now in wide circulation. Unlike their modern counterparts, earlier writers and collectors of Tang anecdotes seem preoccupied with the past and not the present. Anecdotes, or *yishi* (scattered matters) and *yiwen* (ignored stories) in their original Chinese context are, in a sense, recovered traces of the past. That is to say, for many Tang literati, to collect anecdotes was to catch fading memories of a recent past, and to offer explanations of, or pass judgments on this period of history. This thesis seeks to show how Tang literati like Li Deyu and his contemporaries, by collecting and publicizing anecdotes, actively participated in recording and reflecting on the Kaiyuan and Tianbao reigns before the formation of an official historiography.

A paramount feature of the Chinese anecdotes is that these stories "travel" from people to people, place to place, and across time and literary genres. Thus, this thesis hopes to have explicated not only the "transmitted texts" of Tang anecdotes, but their circulation and transmission in history. As this study suggests, Tang anecdotes were disseminated at different stages and on different levels. Some were initially "gossip" or oral stories and were then recorded. Others were collected into special anthologies, thus taking on new meanings in a new

context. Sometimes one anecdotal collection would stimulate the compilation of further collections, setting up a dialogue, or, a competition between their respective representations of the past. Last but not least, this thesis addresses the interaction between anecdotes and official historiography. Some anecdotes were incorporated and assimilated into standard histories, after undergoing different levels of editing; others were omitted and excluded altogether.

In tracking the transmission of these Tang anecdotes, this thesis reveals an interesting pattern—the negotiation between the center and the margin. On a theoretical level, anecdote, with its unorthodox content and marginalized status, stands in opposition to the center. Thus, the creation of anecdotes, in effect, constitutes a "criticism" or "challenge" of the center, implying that the center is somehow "incomplete." Meanwhile, through collecting and ordering these heterogeneous materials, anecdotes at the margin imitate the practice and rules at the center, thereby acknowledge and reinforce the center.

Anecdotes collected by Li Deyu and his successors are excellent demonstrations of this interesting relationship between the center and the margin above. The anecdotes on Emperor Xuanzong and his ministers were "happenings at the center" originally inaccessible to the outside world. During the decline of the Tang dynasty, and especially after the banishment of Xuanzong's close attendants like Gao Lishi, these stories spread to far corners of the empire, and were collected by those who had experienced similar political setbacks. Recall that the historian Liu Fang first learned of these anecdotes from Gao Lishi when they were both in exile. Likewise, Li Jifu, Li Deyu's father, heard these stories recited by Liu Fang's son, Liu Mian, once again when Li and Liu were both banished. Moreover, the final product—Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen*—was presented to the throne soon after Li Deyu staged his comeback and returned to the

capital, having been kept away from the center by his political rivals for so many years. In multiple ways, these anecdotes and their collectors were both marginalized and oppressed.

Once Li Deyu brought these anecdotes back to the capital, their dissemination took a completely opposite direction. These anecdotes gradually attained an important role in populating the collective memory of Xuanzong's era, as manifested by their use in later official histories, *Jiu Tang Shu, Xin Tang Shu,* and *Zizhi tongjian*. Nevertheless, the rise to prominence of Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* triggered reactions from the periphery, where further anecdotal collections were assembled, either to supplement or compete with Li Deyu's collection. When Li Deyu's collection became the center in a new network of anecdotal collections, it was in turn acknowledged and challenged by those stories emerged at the margins such as the ones preserved in Liu Cheng's *Changshi yanzhi* and Wei Xuan's *Rongmu xiantan*. This shift between the center and the margin would continue until these anecdotal stories themselves faded away along with the history they were trying to record.

APPENDIX

An Annotated Translation of Li Deyu's *Ci Liushi jiuwen* 次柳氏舊聞

Preface

It was the autumn of the eighth year of the Dahe reign (834). On the *yiyou* day of the eighth month (Sept. 29), His Highness (Emperor Wenzong) held court at the Purple Morn Hall (*Zichen dian*, 紫宸殿)[248]. All the ministers under the Grand Councilor [Wang] Ya 王涯 (?-835)[249] reported to the throne according to their respective duties. His Highness turned to the Grand Councilor and asked, "Could you tell me about the traces of the former eunuch [Gao] Lishi's deeds?" Minister [Wang] Ya duly replied, "During the Shangyuan reign (760-761), official historian Liu Fang was convicted of a crime and banished to *Qianzhong* 黔中,[250] as was

[248] The Zichen Hall 紫宸殿 was an audience hall behind Xuanzheng Hall 宣政殿, the principal audience hall used for daily court assembly in the Daming Palace 大明宮 in the Tang capital, Chang'an. The Zichen Hall, on the other hand, was used for less formal court meeting, and the atmosphere was thus much more relaxed. Such a setting made the emperor's inquiry about Gao Lishi seem more appropriate, especially given that the more serious discussions had been finished. For details, see Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 36.

[249] Wang Ya 王涯 (?-835) served as Grand Councilor under Emperors Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805-820) and Wenzong 文宗 (r. 827-840). During Wenzong's reign, Wang Ya was involved in a major political struggle between imperial officials and ennuchs and was thus killed by the eunuchs along with three other Grand Councilors—Li Xun 李訓, Jia Su 賈餗 and Shu Yanyu 舒元輿—in the "Sweet Dew Incident" in 835.

[250] The Qianzhong 黔中 circuit, whose seat is Qianzhou 黔州, covers the Southwest of modern Hubei, Southeast of Sichuan, the North of Guizhou and the West of Hunan. See Qixiang 譚其驤, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集 [Beijing: Zhongguo ditu chubanshe, 1996], 5: 59.

Lishi to Wuzhou 巫州 at the same time.[251] Consequently, Liu Fang and Gao Lishi became acquainted and got along well. Since Liu Fang was once in charge of writing the national history, Lishi told him what had gone on in the palace in former time, which otherwise would have been unknown to Liu Fang. Liu also asked [Lishi] to clear up questions [he had about Xuanzong's reign]. Liu silently memorized what Lishi told him and, upon returning home, transcribed and arranged those stories in chronological order. He then named this collection, *Asking Gao Lishi*…….My grandfather [Liu] Fang once had an opportunity to ask [Gao] Lishi about the details [of Xuanzong's reign]. [The records were left] unfinished when my grandfather turned to compile *Tangli* 唐歷 (Chronicle of the Tang). Therefore, [of the stories he heard from Gao Lishi], he selected those that are most similar to one another in content and category and passed them on to later generations as a part of his *Tangli*. The rest of these stories, either because they were too private to publicize, or too strange and marvelous, were not appropriate for inclusion in the collection, and so those stories were not passed on [to future generations]. Your former subject Deyu's deceased father was a colleague of [Liu] Mian 柳冕 (fl. 730-804), Liu Fang's son, and the Vice Director of the Bureau of Personnel. They both served as Secretarial Court Gentleman (*Shangshulang*, 尚書郎) during the Zhenyuan 貞元 reign period (785-805). Later, when they were banished, they left together for the east. As they conversed together along the way, [Liu Mian] touched on what Gao Lishi had said and noted, "Those were all things he (i.e. Gao Lishi) had personally witnessed—not mere hearsay. These stories are verifiable, and can be used as reliable records." Your former subject (i.e. Li Jifu, Li Deyu's father) always liked to tell me these stories. Of those recollections he passed on to me, there are seventeen in al. As the years passed,

[251] Wuzhou is now known as Qianyang Xian 黔陽, Hunan province.

the written version of these stories disappeared. Your subject, Deyu, though not as conversant with state affairs as Huang Qiong 黃瓊 (86-164), is still familiar with past events.[252] Lacking the Grand Scribe Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (145 B.C.-ca. 87 B.C.) erudition, all I could possibly do was to arrange some old stories. Still, I am deeply concerned about whether these stories will be [fully and accurately] transmitted to future generations, or whether they would still be insufficient to answer our lord's question [about the court life of Emperor Xuanzong]. I carefully recorded these stories, as you will see, to the left of this preface, hoping to fill in the blanks left by scribes.

大和八年秋，八月乙酉，上於紫宸殿聽政，宰臣涯已下奉職奏事。上顧謂宰臣曰：故內臣力士終始事跡，試為我言之。臣涯即奏云：上元中，史臣柳芳得罪，竄黔中，時力士亦徙巫州，因相與周旋。力士以芳嘗司史，為芳言先時禁中事，皆芳所不能知，而芳亦有質疑者。芳默識之。及還，編次其事，號曰《問高力士》。……某祖芳，前從力士問覶縷，未竟，復著唐歷，採摭義類尤相近者以傳之，其餘或祕不敢宣，或奇怪，非編錄所宜及者，不以傳。[253] 臣德裕亡父先臣、與芳子吏部郎中冕，貞元初俱為尚書郎。後謫官，亦俱東出。道相與語，遂及高力士之說，且曰："彼皆目睹，非

[252] Huang Qiong 黃瓊 (*zi* Shiying, 86-164), was a native of Jiangxia 江夏. Qiong was the son of Huang Xiang 黃香 (55-110), well-known for his filial piety. The *Hou Han shu* biography records that Qiong used to follow his father to the office of the minister, and was familiar with the old practices; later when Qiong took positions, he demonstrated his conversance with administrative affairs. 瓊昔隨父在台閣, 習見故事; 及后居職, 達練官曹. See "Zuo Zhou Huang liezhuan" 左周黃列傳 in Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445), *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965), 61.2033. For Huang Xiang's biographical information, see Fan Ye, *Hou Han shu*, 70.2613.

[253] The *Kaiyuan tianbao yishi shizhong* 開元天寶遺事十種 edition punctuated the text as 前從力士問覶縷，未竟，復著唐歷, which does not fit the context. 覶縷 is mostly used as a verb, meaning to describe or narrate in details, instead of a noun.

出傳聞，信而有徵，可為實錄。”先臣每為臣言之。臣伏念所憶授，凡十有七事。歲祀久，遺稿不傳。臣德裕，非黃瓊之達練，習見故事；愧史遷之該博，唯次舊聞。懼失其傳，不足以對大君之問，謹錄如左，以備史官之闕云。[254]

No. 1

When [the future] Emperor Xuanzong was in the Eastern Palace [i.e. before he had taken the throne], he was envied by [his aunt] Princess Taiping.[255] She had people spy on him day and

[254]See *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi shizhong* 開元天寶遺事十種 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), p. 1.

[255] Emperor Xuanzong's aunt Princess Taiping (d. 713) was the youngest daughter of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649-683) and Empress Wu (r. 690-705), who became the emperor of her own dynasty seven years after her husband's death. Like her mother, Princess Taiping was also an ambitious woman, and remained active in politics all her life. Her relationship with her nephew Li Longji, the future Emperor Xuanzong, was complicated—they started as political allies but ended tragically as enemies. After the death of her third brother, Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 684, r. 705-710), Princess Taiping joined Li Longji in removing Emperor Zhongzong's 中宗 ambitious widow Empress Wei from power and enthroned Emperor Ruizong 睿宗 (r. 684-690, 710-712), who was her fourth brother and Li Longji's father. Because of their support of the Emperor Ruizong, Princess Taiping and Li Longji both dominated his court and eventually became political rivals. At the beginning, Princess Taiping's attack on Li Longji was focused on the legitimacy of his succession and his ambition to take over the throne. Indeed, as the third son of Emperor Ruizong, Li Longji would have little claim to be the heir were it not for his leadership of the coup to depose Empress Wei. But with the support of some Grand Councilors and his elder brother Li Chengqi 李成器, who would have been the natural and therefore legitimate heir, Li Longji remained more powerful at court than his aunt. In 711, Emperor Ruizong installed the heir apparent as regent while the Princess Taiping was sent away from the capital to Puzhou 蒲州 (modern Yongji in Shanxi 山西永濟). After this initial success of ousting Princess Taiping, Li Longji tried to restore their relationship, or, at least, he made such a gesture, for in the fifth month of 711, Li Longji asked Emperor Ruizong to summon Princess Taiping back to Chang'an. But the princess' return was only to bring about an even more severe power struggle between the two sides. Once she returned to the capital, Princess Taiping actively sought to promote her supporters, with Emperor Ruizong's help, to consolidate and expand her influence at court. At the height of the princess' power, she managed to put five people onto the position of Grand Councilor: Lu Xiangxian 陸向先 (665-736), Cui Shi 崔湜 (671-713), Dou Huaizhen 竇懷貞 (?-713), Cen Xi 岑羲 (?-713) and Xiao Zhizhong 蕭至忠 (?-713). Emperor

night and would report his smallest errors to His Highness (i.e. Emperor Ruizong). Even the heir's attendants straddled both sides in deference to the princess' power. At that time, [the future] Empress Yuanxian 元獻 had gained favor and had just become pregnant. Xuanzong was afraid of Princess Taiping and wanted his wife to take medicine and abort [the fetus], but he had no one to confide in about the situation.

At that time, Zhang Yue, the Grand Tutor of the heir, had sole access to the heir's residence.[256] When Emperor Xuanzong brought up his wife's planned abortion with him, Zhang secretly approved the matter. Later, when Zhang Yue came into [the residence] to serve, he accordingly concealed (clasped to his bosom) three doses of the abortion medicine in his robe and presented them to Xuanzong. Xuanzong was glad to get this medicine and, dismissing all of his attendants, and lit a brazier alone in the hall. Before the medicine was ready, Xuanzong felt

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Ruizong's abdication further intensified the conflict between the princess and his nephew Li Longji, who became the new emperor. When it was revealed that Princess Taiping was plotting a rebellion against the new emperor, on the ninth day of the eighth month of 713, Emperor Xuanzong sent out troops to arrest the princess and her co-conspirators. The Grand Councilors whom the princess had appointed, with the exception of Lu Xiangxian, were all executed or ordered to commit suicide. Three days later, Princess Taiping took her own life, leaving her sons to be executed and her immense wealth confiscated. The anecdote is set against the background of this political battle between the future Emperor Xuanzong and his aunt Princess Taiping.

[256] Zhang Yue 張說 (667-731), from Luoyang in Henan 河南, served as Grand Councilor under both Emperor Ruizong (r. 710-712) and Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-756). Zhang played a crucial role in Emperor Xuanzong's succession as well as his early reign. In 711, when rumors of an armed coup rose at court, Emperor Ruizong was led to believe that Li Longji might be plotting a rebellion. The emperor asked his ministers for advice on forestalling the coup. Zhang Yue fully backed Li Longji at this critical juncture, by not only squashing the rumor mill, but also managing to persuade the emperor to install Li Longji as regent. Zhang's support of Li offended Princess Taiping. She soon dismissed Zhang to Luoyang, the Eastern Capital. Both the *JTS* (97. 3051) and the *XTS* (125.4406), in a brief piece, describe how Zhang Yue, having heard that Princess Taiping was plotting an armed coup against Li Longji, sent a dagger from Luoyang to Li Longji, urging him to remove Princess Taiping and her clique at once. This brief account makes a very interesting contrast with the anecdote under discussion, where Zhang Yue supported the heir by hiding in Zhang's sleeves medicine and quinces for the heir, so as to ease the tension between the princess and the heir.

tired and dozed off. [The emperor saw] vaguely that there was a god over ten feet tall clad in gold armor. With a dagger-axe in one hand, the god circled the pot three times, and then the cooked [medicine] were all overturned, leaving nothing [in the pot]. When Xuanzong rose to check the medicine, he was astonished at what he had just seen. So he stoked the fire, put in another dose of medicine, and cook it in the pot. Thence, the emperor moved towards his cot bed and watched over the pot without blinking. The god turned over the cooked [medicine] again. Only when all three doses were overturned did the emperor stop. The next day, when Zhang Yue arrived again, Xuanzong told him in detail what had happened. [Upon hearing Xuanzong's story,] Zhang descended the stairs to do obeisance and offer congratulations to the heir. Zhang proclaimed, "[This fetus] is mandated by Heaven and cannot be done away with." Later on, when the Yuanxian Empress had a craving to eat something sour, Xuanzong also told Zhang Yue. Every time when [Zhang] Yue came to deliver lectures on classics, he would take the advantage to bring in quinces [secretly] in his sleeves. As a result, during the Kaiyuan reign (713-741), Zhang enjoyed unrivaled favor from the emperor.[257] Emperor Suzong [i.e. the child born from

[257] Because Zhang steadfastly safeguarded the heir from his enemies at court, he was awarded the title of State Duke of Yan 燕公 right after Li Longji's succession to the throne. In 713, Zhang was dismissed as Grand Councilor due to his feud with Yao Chong. After serving in a series of provincial posts, in 721 Zhang was appointed as Director of the Board of War 兵部尚書, acting as a third *ad hominem* Grand Councilor together with Yuan Qianyao and Zhang Jiazhen 張嘉貞 (666-729). In 722, Zhang Yue succeeded his colleague Zhang Jiazhen as president of the Secretariat and completely dominated the court for four years until 726. While the *JTS* suggests that Emperor Xuanzong summoned Zhang Yue back to court because Zhang proved himself through achievements in the provinces. This story, however, was told differently in the *XTS*. There Zhang Yue is depicted to have actively lobbied with his careful tricks to return to court in good repute (*XTS*, 125. 4407). In 724, Zhang Yue attained the height of power when he requested and supervised Emperor Xuanzong's *feng* and *shan* sacrifices on Mount Tai in Shandong. This special service turned out to be a great personal success for Zhang but also offended many officials at court, who argued that Zhang Yue took advantage of this solemn occasion to promote his supporters. In 726 Zhang was impeached on a variety of proven charges and was imprisoned. Following Gao Lishi's advice, the emperor pardoned Zhang Yue in view of his past valuable contributions and services to the country. As a result, Zhang Yue retained all

this pregnancy] treated Zhang Yue's sons—Zhang Jun and Zhang Ji— like his own brothers[258] The historian Liu Fang, who entered officialdom through Zhang Yue's recommendation, heard Zhang Yue relate this story in person. Liu's version is consistent with what Gao Lishi said [to the compiler of this story collection].

玄宗之在東宮，為太平公主所忌，朝夕伺察，纖微聞於上;而宮闈左右,亦潛持兩端，以附太平之勢。時元獻皇后得幸，方娠，玄宗懼太平，欲令服藥除之，而無可與語者。張說以侍讀得進太子宮中，玄宗從容謀及說，說亦密贊其事。他日，說又入侍，因懷去胎藥三煮劑以獻。玄宗得其藥，喜，盡去左右，獨構火殿中，煮未及熟，怠而假寐。 肹蠁之際，有神人長丈餘，身披金甲，操戈繞藥鼎三匝，煮盡覆而無遺焉。玄宗起視，異之，復增火，又投一劑，煮於鼎中。因就榻，瞬目以候之，而見神覆煮如初。凡三煮皆覆，乃止。明日，說又至，告其詳，說降階拜賀曰："天所命也，不可去。"厥後，元獻皇后思食酸，

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his substantive offices except his position as Grand Councilor. Zhang Yue remained influential at court and stayed close to the emperor until Zhang's death in 731. The *JTS* notes that in Zhang Yue's last days, Emperor Xuanzong would dispatch court officials to visit him on a daily basis and would hand-copy medical prescriptions for him. Zhang Yue's biography can be found in *JTS* 97. 3049-3059 and *XTS* 125. 4404-4412.

[258] Zhang Yue's two sons, Zhang Jun 张均 and Zhang Ji 张垍, enjoyed great favor with the emperor because of their father's meritorious service in the court. Zhang Jun served as Vice Director of Revenue and Vice Director of the Board of War, and later Director of Justice. Zhang Yue's younger son, Zhang Ji, even married a daughter of the emperor. The Zhang brothers both thought highly of themselves and had their eyes on the position of Grand Councilor. They became resentful and angry when they were not appointed as Grand Councilors and thereafter, served as An Lushan's ministers during his notorious rebellion. Zhang Ji died during the revolt while Zhang Jun was permanently banished to the farthest reaches of the empire after the rebellion was put down. The Zhang brothers' biographies are attached at the end of Zhang Yue's biography in both *JTS* and *XTS*.

玄宗亦以告說，說每因進經，輒袖木瓜以獻。故開元中，說恩澤莫之與比，肅宗之於說子均、垍，若親戚昆弟雲。芳本張說所引，說嘗自陳述，與力士詞協也。[259]

No. 2

When Emperor Xuanzong first ascended the throne, he treated ministers with respect and held elder officials in great esteem. He was particularly attentive to Yao Chong[260] and Song Jing[261]: they were presented to the emperor at the hall for casual affairs (*piandian* 便殿). When

[259] I consulted Manling Luo's rendition of this story before translating this story. For Luo's original translation, see Manling Luo, "Remembering Kaiyuan and Tianbao: The Construction of Mosaic Memory in Medieval Historical Miscellanies," *T'oung Pao* 97 (2011), 275-276.

[260] Yao Chong (651-721) entered officialdom through a palace examination in 677. He was appointed Grand Councilor in Empress Wu's reign and remained in this high position until the empress' fall from power in 705. He became an active leader of the court again during Emperor Ruizong's reign, and helped to secure the position of the future Emperor Xuanzong in his political struggle with the formidable Princess Taiping. Yao Chong made a number of important contributions to Emperor Xuanzong's succession: Early in 711, Yao Chong advised Emperor Ruizong to dispatch Li Chengqi 李成器 and Li Shouli 李守禮 to provincial posts because these two royal princes had better claims to the throne than the heir Li Longji. Together with Zhang Yue, Yao Chong further proposed that Li Longji should be installed as regent and Princess Taiping and her husband be transferred to Luoyang. These suggestions obviously offended the princess, who pressured the emperor to banish Yao Chong to provincial post. It was not until Emperor Xuanzong assumed full power in 713 did he summon Yao Chong back to the capital to serve as his Grand Councilor. In the new regime, Yao Chong enjoyed far greater authority and scope for action than his predecessor Grand Councilors. Together with Lu Huaishen 盧懷慎 (?-716), Yao Chong served as Xuanzong's Grand Councilor, indisputably the dominant one, from 713 to 716, and remained an important influence on Emperor Xuanzong until Yao's death in 721. For biographies, see *JTS* 96. 3021-3029; *XTS* 124. 4381-4389.

[261] Like his predecessor Yao Chong, Song Jing (663-737) was also an experienced high official who served in such important positions as Vice Censor-in-chief (*yushi zhongchen* 御史中丞) and Director of the Chancellery (*mengxia shizhong* 門下侍中). Together with Yao Chong, Song Jing supported the heir Li Longji against his aunt Princess Taiping. Later when Yao Chong stepped down as Grand Councilor in 716, he recommended Song Jing as his successor. Song Jing served as Grand Councilor for a little over three years and carried out most of Yao's policies to the end of his own tenure. See *JTS* 96. 3029-3037; *XTS* 124. 4389-4395.

they arrived, His Highness would always stand up to greet them; when they departed, he would go all the way to the veranda to see them off. No other Grand Councilor enjoyed comparable honor and privilege. Later on, Li Linfu was appointed as Grand Councilor because of his royal origins. While the emperor bestowed more favor and special kindness on his later ministers, he treated them with less propriety.[262]

When Yao Chong was serving as Grand Councilor, he once asked the emperor for guidance in promoting subordinate officials of the six ministries. His Highness looked away without replying. Thus Yao Chong repeated his question several times, hoping His Highness would pay a little more attention to his query. But in the end, His Highness did not reply. Yao Chong was even more intimidated, so he hastened out of the palace hall. Seeing Yao departed, the emperor's close attendant Gao Lishi commented: "Your exalted majesty has only just now succeeded to the throne. If any minister asks for your advice, it would be the best to give him clear instructions face-to-face. But just now when Yao Chong was speaking, your highness did not even look at him. I am afraid Yao is deeply frightened." His Highness replied, "I have entrusted state affairs completely to Yao Chong. For important affairs that need to be addressed, we can make decisions together. As for trivial issues such as promoting subordinate officials,

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[262] Li Linfu 李林甫 (?-752), was a distant decedent from the Tang royal family. He was promoted to be Grand Councilor in 734 and remained in office for over eighteen years, the longest throughout Emperor Xuanzong's reign. In some sources, he was depicted to be an evil Grand Councilor who had "a tongue of honey and a heart of gall" 口蜜腹劍. He managed to dislodge from office capable officials such as Zhang Jiuling 張九齡 and Li Shizhi 李適之 and promote compliant officials such as Chen Xilie 陳希烈 and Niu Xianke 牛仙客. He also suggested employing non-Han generals to guard the frontiers of the Tang Empire. In his last years, he launched a bitter political battle with Yang Guozhong but eventually lost to Yang, who replaced him to be the last dominant Grand Councilor of Emperor Xuanzong. See *JTS* 106. 3235-3241; *XTS* 223.6342-6349.

couldn't Chong just make this decision on his own? Why bother to ask me for guidance?" After Yao Chong returned to his office in the Secretariat, he was still concerned [about the emperor's reaction]. It happened that Gao Lishi came over to proclaim an imperial order, so he filled Yao Chong in on His Highness's thoughts on official selections. Having understood the emperor's actual intentions, Chong felt relieved and was filled with joy. All who heard this story at the court agreed that His Highness had the magnaniminity of a (worthy) ruler and understood the way to appoint (the right) people to service.

玄宗初即位，體貌大臣，賓禮故老，尤注意於姚崇、宋璟，引見便殿，皆為之興，去則臨軒以送。其他宰臣，優寵莫及。至李林甫以宗室近屬，上所援用，恩意甚厚，而禮遇漸輕。及姚崇為相，嘗於上前請序進郎吏，上顧視殿宇不答，崇再三言之，冀上少售，而卒不對。崇益恐，趨出。高力士奏曰："陛下初承鴻業，宰臣請事，即當面言可否。而崇言之，陛下不視，臣恐宰臣必大懼。"上曰： "朕既任崇以庶政，事之大者當白奏，朕與之共決；如郎署吏秩甚卑，崇獨不能決，而重煩吾耶？"崇至中書，方悸不自安，會力士宣事，因為言上意，崇且解且喜。朝廷聞者，皆以上有人君之大度，得任人之道焉。

No. 3

Thanks to the Grand Councilor Yao Chong's recommendation, Wei Zhigu[263] rose from his humble beginnings as a clerk. Later, Zhigu ascended [to a higher position] along with Yao

[263] Wei Zhigu 魏知古 (647-715) was a *jinshi* graduate from Hebei. Under Empress Wu's reign, Wei rose through court offices to Vice Director of the Chancellery. Early in his career, Wei was connected with Li Longji and his father, the future Emperor Ruizong. When Emperor Ruizong ascended the throne, Wei Zhigu served as Grand Councilor and was concurrently appointed as President of the Heir's Personal Secretariat (*Taizi zuo shuzi* 太子左庶子). He remained a royal supporter of Li Longji and reportedly informed Li Longji of Princess Taiping's intended rebellion in 713. As a consequence, Wei became the sole survivor of the preceding ministry and continued to serve as Grand Councilor under Emperor Xuanzong. After Emperor Xuanzong assumed full power, Wei had a brief term as Grand Councilor together with Yao Chong from

Chong and became his colleague. Chong, however, displayed a rather profound contempt for Zhigu.[264] Before long, Yao Chong asked the emperor to appoint Zhigu as Acting Director of the Ministry of Personnel and dispatch him to Luoyang, the Eastern Capital, [to supervise the selection of civil officials]. Song Jing, the Director of Personnel, was assigned to substitute Wei Zhigu to review recommended candidates at the Chancellery in Chang'an.[265] Because of this

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713 to 714. But Wei was soon demoted to be Director of Ministry of Works in 714 and passed away a year later. The anecdote above provides an explanation for Wei Zhigu's sudden fall of favor with the emperor. For this event, see also *JTS* 98, p.3064; *ZZTJ* 211, p.6700. Wei's biographies can be found in *JTS* 98, 3061-3066; *HTS* 126, p. 4413-4415.

[264] The term "*tong sheng*" (ascending along with) echoes a story from the *Analects*, in which an open-minded minister promoted his family minister without reservation to be his colleague. The story from the *Analects* reads, "The great officer, Xian, who had been family minister to Gong Ming Wen, ascended to the prince's court along with Wen. The Master (Confucius), having heard of it, said, 'He deserved to be considered WEN (the accomplished)'"公叔文子之臣大夫僎，與文子同升諸公。子聞之曰: 可以為文矣.

[265] Tang officials were recruited through different channels, among which government-sponsored recruitment examinations were held at the two capitals. Gradually, these examinations became the most important career route to officialdom. The Ministry of Personnel would supervise the selection of civil officials. For individuals to get a position up to rank-six, they needed to pass two different examinations—the civil service recruitment test for knowledge of literature and the classics, and a placement exam, focusing on a candidate's administrative capabilities and general demeanor. Similarly, the Ministry of Military would administer these two types of recruitment examinations for military appointments. After passing these examinations, the dossiers of successful candidates would then be sent to the Chancellery for further review before making any final appointment. In this story, Wei Zhigu, who was Director of the Chancellery (*Huangmen jian* 黃門監, more generally known as *Mengxia shizhong* 門下侍中) at the time, should have stayed at Chang'an to make the final decisions on official selections. However, according to this anecdote, this more esteemed task was instead assigned to Song Jing due to Yao Chong's influence. For a brief introduction of civil service selection, see Penelope A. Herbert, "Civil service selection in China in the latter half of the seventh century," *Papers on Far Eastern History* (Canberra), 13 (1976) 1-40. Nonetheless, it seems unfair to say that Yao's decision to appoint Song Jing rather than Wei Zhigu was completely made for personal reasons. As a matter of fact, Yao Chong had always been active in reforming the state bureaucracy. Under Ruizong's reign, Yao Chong and Song Jing put a great effort into abrogating improper appointments made in earlier regimes. At Emperor Xuanzong's court, Yao Chong continued to tackle this problem of supernumerary posts at the central government. He also pushed for the exchange of metropolitan and provincial officials.

exchange of duties, Zhigu harbored a grudge towards Yao Chong and was thinking about how he could best undermine him.

At that time, Yao Chong's two sons were both serving in Luoyang. Knowing that Zhigu was indebted to their father, they visited Zhigu upon his arrival and brazenly sought his help in advancing the careers [of themselves and their acquaintances]. When Zhigu returned to Chang'an, he reported to His Highness, detailing the Yao brothers' approach for favoritism. Sometime later, His Highness summoned Yao Chong and in a perfectly natural manner, asked, "My dear sir, are your sons talented? Where are they now and what positions are they currently holding?" Chong suspected the real purpose behind His Highness's questions, so he replied, "My two sons are serving in the Eastern Capital. Aggressive and careless as they are, they must have attempted to improperly influence Zhigu's selection of officials. It's just that I haven't had a chance yet to ask my sons if they made this improper request." By asking these questions, His Highness planned to draw Yao Chong out, assuming that as a father, Yao Chong would probably treat his sons with partiality and conceal their misconduct. So when the emperor heard Yao Chong's answer, he was greatly pleased, and blurted out, "My dear sir, how did you hear about this matter?" Yao Chong replied, "When Zhigu was living in obscurity, he was recommended to the court by your humble subject, and eventually rose to prominence. Ignorant as my sons are, they must have assumed that Zhigu would feel indebted to me and tolerate their misconduct. That's why I suspected they must have attempted to interfere with the selection process in this way." Now realizing that Yao Chong would not cover up for any of his sons' improper actions, His Highness came to think less of the ungrateful Wei Zhigu who had turned his back on Yao Chong. His Highness wanted to dismiss Wei Zhigu, but Yao Chong pleaded with the emperor on behalf of Wei Zhigu: "Your humble subject raised two untamed sons who violated Your

Majesty's laws. I consider myself to be extremely fortunate that Your Majesty may pardon my two sons. Now if Your Majesty were to demote Zhigu because of me, all your officials and people within the four seas will think Your Majesty gave me special treatment. I am afraid playing favorites will diminish Your Majesty's moral authority. His Highness did not immediately accept Yao Chong's proposal. The next day, [His Highness] appointed Wei Zhigu as Minister of the Department of Works, but deprived him of the privileges in determining governmental matters.[266]

魏知古起諸吏，為姚崇引用，及同升也，崇頗輕之。無何，請知古攝吏部尚書，知東都選士事，以吏部尚書宋璟門下過官。知古心銜之，思有以中之者。時崇二子並分曹洛邑，會知古至，恃其家君，頗招顧請託。知古歸，悉以上聞。他日，上召崇，從容謂曰：“卿子才乎？皆何官也？又安在？”崇揣知上意，因奏云：“兩人皆分司東都矣。其為人欲而寡慎，是必以事干知古。然臣未及問之耳。”上始以丞相子重言之，欲微動崇，而意崇私其子，或為之隱。及聞崇所奏，大喜，且曰：“卿安從知之？”崇曰：“知古微時，是臣之所慰薦，以至榮達。臣之子愚，謂知古見德，必容其非，故必干之。”上於是明崇不私其子之過，而薄知古之負崇也。上欲斥之，崇為之請曰：“臣有子無狀，撓陛下法，陛下特原

[266] Grand Councilor of the Tang dynasty generally refers to the Directors and Vice Directors of the Secretariat, the Chancellery, and the Department of State Affairs. In their capacity as Grand Councilor, these people meet regularly with the emperor to discuss state affairs and make policy decisions. In addition to the directors and vice directors of these three departments, other officials were also subsumed in the central government's decision-making process. To signify this supplementary duty, suffixes were often added to the regular titles of these officials, such as Participant in Deliberations about Court Policy (*canyi chaozheng* 參議朝政), Participant in Deliberations about Advantages and Disadvantages (*canyi deshi* 參議得失), and Participant in Determining Government Matters (*canzhi zhengshi* 參知政事). In the story above, Wei Zhigu was transferred from the position of Director of the Chancellery to Minister of the Department of Works. Although both positions were rank three, Wei lost his esteemed duty of "Determining Government Matters," which meant he was no longer a Grand Councilor to the emperor.

之，臣為幸大矣。而由臣逐知古，海內臣庶必以陛下為私臣矣，非所以裨元化也。”上久乃許之。翌日，以知古為工部尚書，罷知政事。

No. 4

Yuan Qianyao's[267] memorials always pleased [the emperor], and, consequently, His Highness became very fond of Yuan and promoted him all at once from the position of Vice Director of Ministry of Revenue, Metropolitan Governor, all the way to Grand Councilor. One day, His Highness confided to his close attendant Gao Lishi, "Do you know why I promoted Qianyao so fast?" Lishi replied, "I don't know." His Highness then explained, "I advanced him because he so closely resembles Xiao Zhizhong in appearance and speech.[268]" Lishi asked, "But

[267]Yuan Qianyao 源乾曜 (?-731) was a distant descendent of the royal family of the Toba Wei in Hebei. He was a *jinshi* graduate, served as a censor in the capital and also took several important provincial posts before his brief tenure as Grand Councilor. In 716 Yuan succeeded Lu Huaishen 盧懷慎 (?-716) to serve as a Grand Councilor. Like his predecessor, Yuan was also dominated by his colleague Yao Chong. The anecdote above addresses this issue of Yuan Qianyao's relatively mediocre administration compared to his predecessors. But it is interesting to note that although Yuan Qianyao did not seem to be as capable as Yao Chong and Song Jing, he served longer as Grand Councilor than these "more capable" ministers. Yuan serviced as Grand Councilor twice in his life. His second term from 720 to 728, following Song Jing's resignation, makes him one of the longest serving Grand Councilor during Emperor Xuanzong's reign, second only to Li Linfu 李林甫 (?-752). Yuan's biographies can be found in *JTS* 98, pp. 3070-3073, *XTS* 127, pp. 4450-4452.

[268] Xiao Zhizhong 蕭至忠 (?-713) came from the distinguished Xiao family of Shandong. He served with distinction under Empress Wu's reign and also enjoyed special favor throughout Emperor Zhongzong's reign. He was even connected to the family of Emperor Zhongzong's wife, Empress Wei, through marriage. Despite of his close personal connection to the empress, Xiao survived the coup Li Longji launched against Empress Wei. Xiao was retained as a Grand Councilor in the new regime, thanks to Princess Taiping's intercession on his behalf. Consequently, Xiao was drawn over to support Princess Taiping in her political battle against Li Longji. In 713, he participated in Prince Taiping's revolt against Li Longji and was immediately executed when the rebellion was crushed. For Xiao's biographies, see *JTS* 92, pp. 2698-71; *XTS* 123, pp. 4371-4.

didn't Zhizhong betray Your Majesty? Why does Your Majesty still remember him so favorably?" His highness said, "It was only in Zhizhong's later years that he blundered [by attaching himself to Princess Taiping]. When he first served at the court, can you say that he was not a worthy Grand Councilor?" His Highness always cherished the talents of his ministers and was tolerant of their mistakes. All those who heard this story about Yuan Qianyao were deeply touched and filled with joy.

源乾曜因奏事稱旨，上悅之，於是驟拔用，歷戶部侍郎、京兆尹，以至宰相。異日，上獨與力士語曰："爾知吾拔用乾曜之速乎？"曰："不知也。"上曰："吾以其容貌、言語類蕭至忠，故用之。"力士曰："至忠不嘗負陛下乎，陛下何念之深也？"上曰："至忠晚乃謬計耳。其初立朝，得不謂賢相乎？"上之愛才宥過，聞者無不感悅。

No. 5

When Xiao Song[269] served as senior Grand Councilor, he recommended Han Xiu[270] to be his fellow Grand Councilor. Yet after assuming this position, Han Xiu did not get along very

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[269] Xiao Song descended from the royal house of Liang 梁 and entered officialdom through hereditary privilege. He was said to have little literary talent but his administrative and military abilities proved to be extraordinary. For Xiao Song's biographies, see *JTS* 99, pp. 3093-3101, and *XTS* 101, pp. 3953-3954.

[270] Han Xiu (673-740) came from a prominent Northwestern aristocratic family, and was a *jinshi* graduate with a strong literary reputation. Before his appointment as Grand Councilor, Han Xiu served as Assistant of the Right in the Department of State Affairs 尚書右丞, responsible for drafting imperial edicts. In 733, Han Xiu was designated as Vice Director of the Chancellery 黃門侍郎, Joint Manager of Affairs with the Secretariat-Chancellery 同中書門下平章事 as a result of Xiao Song's recommendation. For Han Xiu's biographies, see *JTS* 98, pp. 3077-3079; *XTS* 126, pp. 4432-4440. This event also appears in *ZZTJ* 213, p. 6893.

well with Xiao. Consequently, Xiao Song asked to retire.[271] His Highness comforted Xiao Song: "I never rejected you, so what need is there to leave me?" Song prostrated himself and replied, "I had the good luck to have served as your Grand Councilor,[272] which is the highest rank a subject could ever hope to attain. It is fortunate Your Majesty has not yet grown weary of me, so I am able to ask now to retire gracefully. Should Your Majesty really grow weary of me, I could hardly save my life [if you wish to kill me]. How can I freely leave Your Majesty, if not now?" With these words, Xiao Song burst into tears. His Highness was moved by Xiao Song's sentiments, so he replied, "Sir, perhaps you are overstating [that I would take your life]. I have thought about it but am still unable to decide. Please go back home. By this evening, I will send a messenger over to your home to follow up on your request. But if you don't see my messenger, please come to court tomorrow morning, as usual." At sunset, the emperor asked Lishi to proclaim an imperial order for Xiao Song to retire at his residence, "I value you, Sir, and personally wanted to insist that you should stay. But regarding the vassal-ruler relationship in its entirety, it is best to preserve righteousness, which is also in the best interest of our state. You, Sir, will be transferred to a new position of Chancellor of the Right." On that same day, tribute oranges from Jing Prefecture just arrived at the palace. His Highness himself handpicked two of these oranges, wrapped them in silk, and ordered them sent to Xiao Song.

蕭嵩為相，引韓休為同列。及在位，稍與嵩不協，嵩因乞骸骨，上慰嵩曰：“朕未厭卿，卿何庸去？”嵩俯伏曰：“臣待罪相府，爵位已極，幸陛下未厭臣，得以乞身。如陛下厭臣，臣首領之不保，又安得自遂？”因隕涕。上為之改容，曰：“卿言切矣，朕思之未決。

[271] The term *qi haigu* 乞骸骨, which literally means to beg to get back one's bones, was a common expression an official would use when he asked to retire.

[272] The expression "*daizui*" 待罪 literally means "to wait for punishment," a commonly used self-reference when addressing a ruler.

卿第歸，至夕當有使。如無使，旦日宜如常朝謁也。”及日暮，命力士詔嵩曰：“朕惜卿，欲固留，而君臣始終，貴全大義，亦國家美事也。今除卿右丞相。”是日，荊州始進柑子，上以素羅包其二以賜之。

No. 6

Emperor Xuanzong once graced the Eastern Capital with his presence.[273] It was hot and dry that year. In these times, an Indian Buddhist monk named *wuwei* 無畏 (literally, fearless),[274]

[273] According to the *JTS* (8.21), Emperor Xuanzong visited the Eastern Capital Luoyang in the eleventh month in the year 724 and returned to Chang'an after nineteen days.

[274] The Indian Monk Wuwei (637-735), also known as Shanwuwei 善無畏 (literally, Adept at Fearlessness), was among the early great masters of tantric Buddhism, which he helped introduce to China in the eighth century. According to the 20th century historian Zhou Yiliang, Wuwei's full Sanskrit name was "Śubhakarasimha (or Jingshizi 靜獅子 in Chinese)," or by yet another tradition, "Śubhakara." However, Zhou Yiliang argues that the name *Shanwuwei* 善無畏 has no relation to either of these two Sanskirt names. Zhou speculates that Śubhakara adopted *wuwei* as his Chinese name or *hao* (style name) because the term "*wuwei*" appeared in Śubhakara's translation of the *Biluchena jing*, meaning the state of fearlessness, a bodhisattva hope to achieve in spiritual progress. For details, see Chou I-liang, "Tantrism in China," *HJAS*, 8(1945) 241-332. Wuwei's biography can be found in the *Song Gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (Buddhist Masters Known in the Song Dynasty) by Zanning's 贊寧 (919-1001), who very likely consulted Li Hua's 李華 *Shanwuwei beaming bing xu* 善無畏碑銘並序 and probably even Duan Chengshi's 段成式 (803-86) *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 before Zan composed his own version of Wuwei's biography. According to Zan's account, Wuwei descended from a royal family in Central India and succeeded to the throne at the age of thirteen. His jealous brothers organized an armed rebellion against him, which this capable young king soon crushed. But Wuwei decided to relinquish the throne to his elder brother, and became a monk at Nālandā monastery 那爛陀寺. At the behest of his master, Dharmagupta 達摩笈多, Wuwei embarked on a journey to China through Tibet, and in 716 arrived at the capital Chang'an. Emperor Xuanzong and the royal family reportedly received Wuwei warmly. Wuwei stayed at the Ximing Temple 西明寺 to translate Sanskrit texts. In 724, Wuwei accompanied Emperor Xuanzong to the Eastern Capital Luoyang, where Wuwei, together with Yixing 一行 (?-727), translated the Vairocanâbhisaṃbodhi 大日經, Wuwei's best known work. Towards the end of Wuwei's life, he asked permission to return to India, but Emperor Xuanzong did not grant his request. In 735,

who was also called a "Tripiṭaka Master,"[275] lived at the Shengshan Temple 聖善寺.[276] This monk was famous for the esoteric art of summoning dragons and gathering rain clouds.[277] His Highness asked Gao Lishi to immediately summon Wuwei to the court to pray for rain. Wuwei told the emperor, "The drought today is a matter of fate. If dragons are summoned to produce rain clouds, they will also bring along wind and thunder and damage living things. I am afraid

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Wuwei passed away in Luoyang and was said to be buried in the Western Hills of Longmen 龍門 in Luoyang. For more information, see Charles Orzech, *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, and Richard Payne, *Tantric Buddhism in East Asia*

[275] According to Zanning's "Biography of Shanwuwei," Wuwei studied with Master Dharmagupta and received the title of Tripiṭaka. Tripiṭaka, as a title, was given to monks who had mastered the "Three Baskets" of the Buddhist canon--sūtra, vinaya, and śāstra.

[276] In 705, the Shengshan Temple 聖善寺 was built in the southeastern part of Luoyang in the Zhangshan fang 章善坊 (the name was changed to Shengshan fang 聖善坊 a year later). Zhou Yiliang speculates that Master Wuwei stayed at the Shengshan temple in Luoyang till his death. Zanning's Biography of Wuwei, however, notes that Wuwei lived in the Fuxian Temple 福先寺, located in the Yanfu fang 延福坊 in the western part of Luoyang.

[277] Tantric Buddhism, which originated in India, was officially introduced to China in the eighth century. Compared with other higher forms of Buddhism such as Chan 禪 and Tiantai 天台, Tantric Buddhism did not focus as much on discussion of profound doctrines, but instead, made extensive use of magical spells, incantations and mystical techniques. Consequently, this sect of Buddhism gained popularity with common people and the upper class alike but at the same time, people also held it in contempt for its lack of profound teachings. This Buddhist school died out about 250 years after its introduction to China and had to wait another three hundred years before its revival in the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). According to modern historians: "…the Tantric masters at court were expected to compete with Taoist adepts in such skills as rain-making and healing" which provides an historical context for the following anecdote of Master Śubha's success at rain-making (See *The Cambridge History of China*, p. 412). In both Li Hua's epitaph and Zanning's biography for Master Wuwei, Wuwei is associated with rain-making on several occasions. Before Master Wuwei travelled to China, he was asked to pray for rain and was able to save local people from suffering a severe drought. The technique Wuwei used in this particular case was nonetheless quite different from that described in the story under discussion. In this rain-making in Central India, readers are told that "Avalokiteśvara was seen in the Sun's disk, with a water jar in hand pouring water on the ground." Zanning's biography also reports that after Master Wuwei' death, people kept coming to pray at the cave where he was buried whenever a drought, or flood occurred. This account confirms the association of Master Wuwei's name with miraculous rain-making in those earlier times. See Chou, p. 259 and p. 271

that we should not pray for rain." His Highness insisted: "Now that people are suffering from the heat, even the strong wind and thunder will be pleasurable." Unable to change the emperor's mind, Wuwei had to dutifully carry out this imperial order. The emperor's officials in charge of court rituals set up all kinds of rain-inducing devices for Wuwei including pennant streamers, icons, and statues. Wuwei laughed and said, "These charms are not sufficient to bring the rain." He had all this paraphernalia taken away. Instead, he filled an alms bowl with water. With a knife, he stirred the water and chanted over it an incomprehensible mantra of a hundred or so words. Soon, a red dragon-like creature, about the size of a finger, appeared in the bowl of water. This creature lifted its head above the water but re-submerged right away. Wuwei stirred the water again with his knife as he repeated the mantra three times. White vapor like incense arose from the alms bowl and went high into the air. The creature then retreated a little bit before it suddenly flew away from the palace hall. Wuwei told Lishi, "Please leave right now. The rain is coming." Lishi rushed out of the temple on horseback. Looking back, he saw white vapor spiraling towards him from the west side of the hall like a bolt of white cloth. The skies turned dark, winds rose, thunder grumbled, and it was about to rain. Just as Lishi reached the south of the Tianjin (Heavenly Ford) Bridge, winds and rain also arrived. Along the road, numerous big trees were uprooted. Lishi' robe was soaked from rain by the time he reported back to the emperor. Meng Wenli,[278] who was Administrator of Henan at the time, also witnessed this

[278] Meng Wenli was a native of Zongcheng 宗城 of Beizhou 貝州 (modern Wei county 威縣 of Hebei province). He entered officialdom through examination in 687 under Empress Wu. In 720, he was appointed Metropolitan Governor 京兆尹 and in 731, he was appointed as Governor of Henan 河南尹. It is anachronistic to assign Meng Wenli as the Governor of Henan to the year of 724, when Emperor Xuanzong visited Luoyang. The Tang dynasty inherited the two-tier system of local administration initiated by the Sui dynasty: a *xian* 縣 (district), the lowest official unit, was administered by a *ling* 令 (Magistrate) and a *zhou* 州, superior to district, was head by a *cishi* 刺史 (prefect). In addition to these regular administrative units, three especially prestigious localities were designated as *fu* 府 (Superior Prefecture). The three superior prefectures were

sudden storm. Wenli's son Jiao once told my late father about this dramatic episode. The son's account turned out to be identical to Gao Lishi's version. Li Hua, a Court Gentleman in the Ministry of Personnel, then inscribed a text for a stone stele dedicated to Wuwei, which also states: "[Wuwei] carried out the imperial order to pray for the rain. That he extinguished fire and brought back the winds was well known to all the people at that time."[279] Today by the Tianjin Bridge in the Eastern Capital of Luoyang, a temple still stands, called the "Temple of Blessings from Heaven." On the day Gao Lishi asked Monk Wuwei to pray for rain, the rain started to pour just as Gao Lishi reached the very spot where this temple now stands. So the emperor ordered his people to build a temple to commemorate this storm. This temple still stands there to this day.

玄宗嘗幸東都，天大旱且暑。時聖善寺有竺乾僧無畏，號三藏，善召龍致雲之術。上遣力士疾召無畏請雨，無畏奏云：“今旱，數當然耳。召龍興雲，烈風迅雷，適足暴物，不可為也。”上強之曰：“人苦暑病矣。雖暴風疾雷，亦足快意。”無畏不得已，乃奉詔。有司為陳請雨具，而幡幢像設甚備。無畏笑曰：“斯不足致雨。”悉令撤之。獨盛一鉢水，以刀攪旋之，胡言數百呪水。須臾，有如龍狀，其大類指，赤色，首嗽水上，俄復沒於鉢水

Chang'an *fu* 長安府 (the Chang'an area), Henan *fu* 河南府 (the Luoyang area) and Taiyuan *fu* (homeland of the Tang ruling family in modern Shanxi 陝西). Each superior prefecture was nominally headed by an Imperial Prince, with the title *mu* 牧 (Governor) but was actually governed by a local administrator, also known as *yin* 尹 (administrator).

Wen's information appears in Lin Bao 林寶 ed., Yuanhe xingzuan 元和姓纂, 9.15B; Zhao Yue 趙鉞 and Lao Ge 勞格 ed., Tang Langguan shizhu timing kao 唐郎官石柱題名考, 5.10B, 26.4B and Tang yushitai jingshe timing kao 唐御史台精舍題名考, 1.5B.

[279] Just like Li Deyu, the compiler of this collection, Li Hua was also born in Zanhuang. Li was said to be known for writing biographies and monumental inscriptions for people. Li Hua converted to Buddhism in his later days and died, most likely, in the early years of the Dali 大曆 (766-779) reign. Li Hua's biography can be found in *XTS*. 203, pp. 5775-5779.

中。無畏復以刀攪水呪者三。頃之，白氣自钵中興，如爐煙，徑上數尺，稍引去，出講堂外。無畏謂力士曰：“宜去，雨至矣。”力士絕馳而去，還顧見，白氣疾旋，自講堂西，若一匹素者。既而昏霾，大風震雷以雨。力士才及天津之南，風雨亦隨馬而馳至矣，衢中大樹多拔。力士比復奏，衣盡沾濕。時孟溫禮為河南尹，目睹其事。溫禮子皦，嘗言於臣亡祖先臣，與力士同。吏部員外郎李華撰《無畏碑》，亦云:奉詔致雨，滅火返風，昭昭然遍於耳目也。今洛京天津橋有荷澤寺者，即高力士去請呪水祈雨，回至此寺前，雨大降，明皇因於此地造寺而名荷澤焉。寺今見存。

No. 7

Emperor Xuanzong was fond of the supramundane, so he often asked officials at both the state and local level to summon people with extraordinary people powers. There was a man named Zhang Guo, who was known to Empress Wu. She attempted but did not succeed in summoning him to court. It was not until His Highness himself summoned Zhang Guo that he finally came to court accompanied by the emperor’s messengers. What Zhang Guo performed at court were rare, strange, and unpredictable. There was another man called Xing Hepu, who excelled at geomancy. If Xing saw a man, he could make a divination and tell immediately whether the man had good or bad fortune, and whether he would enjoy a long life or die before his time. But when Xing Hepu was asked to divine Zhang Guo’s future, he seemed lost and even unable to tell Zhang’s age. There was yet another man called Master Yeguang, who was known for his ability to see ghosts. The emperor asked Master Yeguang in private to determine if Zhang Guo was, in reality, a ghost. His Highness then invited Zhang to sit with him. After a while, Master Yeguang came forward and asked the emperor, “May I inquire where Zhang Guo is? Your subject would love to see him now.” But, in fact, Zhang Guo had been sitting with His

Highness all this time. From beginning to end, Master Yeguang did not even catch sight of Zhang Guo.

His Highness said to his close attendant Gao Lishi, “I heard that for people with extraordinary powers, normal things cannot harm them. Try to have Zhang Guo drink some aconite. If this would not hurt Zhang, he can truly be called an extraordinary man.” So it happened that it was extremely cold one day. The emperor took this opportunity to give Zhang Guo some aconite. After drinking three cups of the juice, Zhang Guo became tipsy. He turned to the attendant who brought the juice and commented, “This was not very good alcohol!” Zhang Guo then went to sleep, but before long, he got up to fetch a mirror. He saw in the mirror that his teeth had all been burnt and turned black. So he asked his attendants to bring over an iron scepter (*ruyi* 如意), with which he knocked out all his teeth. He then carefully stored these teeth in a bag, and only then did he take out some medicine, slightly red in color, from his bosom. He applied the medicine to his gums and went back to sleep. After a long while, he woke up and looked into the mirror again: new teeth had already grown all glistening white and crystal clean! Only then did the emperor realize that Zhang Guo was not a charlatan.

玄宗好神仙，往往詔郡國征**奇異士**。有張果者，則天時聞其名，不能致。上亟召之，乃與使偕至。其所為，變怪不測。又有刑和璞者，善算心術,視人投算,而能究知善惡夭壽。上使算果，懵然莫知其甲子。又有師夜光者，善視鬼。後召果與坐，密令夜光視之。夜光進曰：“果今安在？臣願得見之。”而果坐於上前久矣，夜光終莫能見。上謂力士曰：“吾聞奇士至人，外物不足以敗其中，試飲以堇汁，無苦者乃真奇士也。”會天寒甚，使以汁進果。果遂飲，盡三卮，醇然如醉者，顧曰：“非佳酒也。”乃寢。頃之，取鏡視其齒，已

盡焦且黧矣。命左右取鐵如意以擊齒，盡墮，而藏之於帶。乃於懷中出神藥，色微紅，傅于墮齒穴中。復寢。久之視鏡，齒皆生矣，而粲然潔白，上方信其不誣也。

No. 8

Emperor Xuanzong was skilled in one calligraphy style called *bafen shu* [a type of the Clerical Style]. Whenever he needed to appoint Grand Councilors, the emperor would always write down their names on imperial tablets in this unique style and then leave them on his desk. One time, [while the emperor was appointing Grand Councilors,] the heir came to attend upon the emperor. Seeing the heir approaching him, His Highness immediately covered the names with a gold cup. With this, he said to the heir, “These are the names of the future Grand Councilors. Do you know who they are? You will get a drink if you guess right!” The future Emperor Suzong bowed and declared, “Aren’t they Cui Lin and Lu Congyuan?” His Highness exclaimed, “Right!” The emperor then raised the gold vessel to reveal the names and presented the heir with a cup of ale. At this time, Lin and Congyuan both emerged as undisputed candidates for Grand Councilor and Emperor Xuanzong had earlier considered promoting them. But in the end, due to the concern that the Cuis and Lus were already powerful families, and those who would seek advancement through family connections were numerous, he did not end up employing them.

玄宗善八分書，凡命將相，皆先以御札書其名，置案上。會太子入侍，上舉金甌覆其名，以告之曰：“此宰相名也，汝庸知其誰耶？射中，賜爾卮酒。”肅宗拜而稱曰：“非崔琳、盧從愿乎？”上曰：“然。”因舉甌以示之，乃賜卮酒。是時，琳與從愿皆有宰相望，玄宗將倚為相者數矣，終以宗族繁盛，附託者眾，卒不用。

No. 9

When Emperor Suzong 肅宗 was the heir apparent in the Eastern Palace, Li Linfu, the Grand Councilor, was trying to frame him [for various falsely alleged offenses] and succeeded in putting him in several extremely dangerous situations. Before long, white hairs appeared on the heir's temples.[280] One day during the morning audience, His Highness saw the heir and felt sad. He said to the heir, "Please go back to your residence now. I will soon come to see you." When

[280] As the third son of Emperor Xuanzong, Li Heng 李亨 (711-762), originally named Li Yu 李玙, was born without any expectation of succeeding to the throne. In 737, the former heir apparent Li Ying 李瑛, Emperor Xuanzong's second son, came under a series of attacks from Lady Wu, Emperor Xuanzong's favorite consort, and was reduced to a commoner. Li Ying was accused of plotting with other princes a rebellion against Emperor Xuanzong. Li Ying was ordered to commit suicide. Much as Lady Wu hoped that her own son Li Mao 李瑁, Emperor Xuanzong's eighth son, would become next heir, her dream came to an end with her sudden death later that year. Following the advice of the eunuch Gao Lishi, Emperor Xuanzong installed as his heir apparent Li Heng, known posthumously as Emperor Suizong 肅宗. Li Heng remained as the heir apparent for the rest of Xuanzong's reign and ascended to the throne amid the chaos of the An Lushan rebellion in 756. That Li Heng's succession did not meet much opposition doesn't mean his position was never threatened. According to historical records, Li Linfu, who allied himself to Lady Wu, made several attempts to depose Li Heng. At the beginning of 746, charges were made that Li Heng's brother-in-law Wei Jian 韋堅 (?-747), a finance expert in the capital, as well as Li Heng's close friend Huangfu Weiming 皇甫惟明 (?-747), military governor of Longyou, met in a small temple in the capital to plot a coup against Emperor Xuanzong. Although the case against Wei and Huangfu was not proven, they were banished. The heir, although not directly implicated, had to divorce his wife, Wei Jian's sister, to prove his innocence and demonstrate his loyalty. Towards the end of 746, however, Li Heng was reportedly involved in another plot. This time, the father of his senior concubine Du Youlin 杜有鄰, was accused of making prophecies. Again, the emperor was convinced of Li Heng's innocence but nonetheless, Li Heng had to divorce this concubine. Yet, the most serious challenge to Li Heng came in the year 747, when Wang Zhongsi 王忠嗣, Li Heng's close friend since childhood and military governor of Hexi and Longyou, was charged with assisting Li Heng in attempting to overthrow Emperor Xuanzong. Li Heng eventually survived all these threats but, in general, his days as heir apparent were very difficult. The story unfolds against a background, where readers are told that Li Heng's hair turned white at a young age after constant political pressure and endless personal attacks. For Details of Wei and Huangfu's case, see *Zizhi tongjian* 215, pp. 6873-4. For biographies of Wang Zhongsi, see *JTS* 105, pp. 3197-201; *XTS* 133, pp. 4551-5.

His Highness arrived at the heir's residence, he looked around and found that the rooms were not swept, gardens not watered, and musical instruments were collecting dust. Nor was there any courtesan at the heir's disposal. This untidy scene stirred the emperor, so he turned to his close attendant [Gao] Lishi and asked, "Why didn't you, my general, tell me that the heir has been living in such primitive conditions?" (Instead of calling Gao Lishi by name, His Highness, when they were in the palace alone, often addressed him as "general"). Gao Lishi replied, "I wanted to inform Your Majesty about this situation, but the heir would not allow me to do so. He said, "Do not disturb His Highness about my inadequate living conditions." His Highness thereupon sent Gao Lishi to issue an order to the Metropolitan Governor, asking the governor to select for the heir five slender, fair-skinned girls from the common people. Lishi hastened out but after a short while, he came back to the emperor, and said, "It just occurred to me that I issued a similar order for selecting girls for the Metropolitan Governor the other day. The order provoked a lot of discussion and debate among the common people and became fodder for your critics at court. If I may suggest, there reside some palace women right here in the Annex Court, who were brought here after their family properties were confiscated. In my humble opinion, these ladies would be fine choices." His Highness was greatly pleased by this proposal, so he asked Lishi to summon these palace women to an audience according to the court register. As a consequence, three ladies were selected and presented to the heir, including the future Empress Zhangjing 章敬.[281]

[281] Empress Zhangjing's biography can be found in *Jiu Tang shu*, 52. 2187 and *XTS*, 77. 3499-50. The *XTS* account resembles, in content and wording, this story under discussion, suggesting that the *XTS* account was very likely based on the *Ci Liushi jiuwen*. Empress Zhangjing was the daughter of Wu Zhen, a former vice-magistrate of the Pi district. Wu Zhen was later convicted of a crime, and the family lost everything. She came to serve in the place as a low-status palace lady and in 725, was selected to be a consort of Li Heng, the future Emperor Suzong. In 726, she gave birth to Li Yu, the future Emperor Daizong (726-779, r. 762-779) but died four years later at a young age. It was not until her son Li Yu succeeded to the throne that she received the posthumous title of Empress Zhangjing. Although the *Jiu Tang shu* account did not contain as

Not long after, the future empress had an opportunity to wait upon the heir at night [while she slept with him]. She had a nightmare and could not wake up from it. Suddenly she started to moan as if she were in great pain. She had difficulty breathing. Unable to bring her back to consciousness, the heir became concerned and started to blame himself: "His Highness just gave her to me, but all of a sudden she cannot be awakened. His Highness must think that I did not take good care of her." The heir then lit a candle, held it with one hand, and stayed up all night to watch his lady. It took a long time before the future empress finally returned to consciousness. The heir asked her what had happened. The future empress covered her left underarm with her right hand, and said, "I just dreamed of a deity over ten feet tall clad in golden armor. He held a sword and said to me: 'the highest god ordered me to be your son.' With these words, he cut through from my left underarm and made his way to my belly. The pain was too great to bear, and I can still feel it now." The heir took a close look at his lady's left underarm in the candle light and found some curving red lines resembling cuts. The future empress' condition was immediately reported to His Highness. Soon the future Emperor Daizong was born. Wu Cou[282] once told my late father this story, which is consistent with what Lishi said later.

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much supernatural coloration as its counterpart in the *XTS*, it also records a mystical anecdote regarding Empress Zhangjing: when the people were going to bury Empress Zhangjing's coffin next to that of Emperor Suzong, they opened the tomb, lifted up the lid of her coffin and were amazed to see that she looked as if she were still alive. This strangely morbid episode was taken to be an auspicious omen to legitimize the new ruler—her own son, Emperor Daizong. The editors of the *XTS* adopted this anecdote as well.

[282] The biography of Wu Cou 吳湊 (730-800), the source of this anecdote, can be found in the "Biography of the Consort Families" 外戚列傳 in *JTS*, 183. 4746-9. Wu Cou was Empress Zhang Jing's elder brother. As an official and the grand-uncle of Emperor Dezong 德宗 (742-805, r. 779-805), Wu served the young emperor for sixteen years and was greatly favored and respected. Wu Cou was faithful, humble, and highly responsible, and was known for exposing injustice of his time.

肅宗在東宮，為李林甫所構，勢幾危者數矣。無何，鬢髮斑白。常早朝，上見之，愀然曰：“汝第歸院，吾當幸汝。”及上至，顧見宮中庭宇不灑掃，而樂器久弆，塵埃積其間，左右使命，無有妓女。上為之動色，顧力士曰：“太子居處如此，將軍盍使我聞之乎？”上在禁中，不名力士，呼為“將軍”。力士奏曰：“臣嘗欲上言，太子不許，云：'無以動上念。'”上即詔力士下京.兆尹，亟選人間女子細長潔白者五人，將以賜太子。力士趨出庭下，復還奏曰：“臣他日嘗宣旨京兆閱致女子，人間囂囂然，而朝廷好言事者得以為口實。臣以為掖庭中故衣冠以事沒其家者，宜可備選。”上大悅，使力士詔掖庭，令按籍閱視。得三人，乃以賜太子，而章敬皇后在選中。頃者，后侍寢，厭不寤，吟呼若有痛，氣不屬者。肅宗呼之不解，竊自訐曰：“上始賜我，卒無狀不寤。上安知非吾護視不謹耶？”遽秉燭視之。良久方寤。肅宗問之，后手掩其左脅曰：“妾向夢有神人長丈餘，介金操劍，謂妾白：'帝命吾與汝作子。'自左脅以劍決而入腹，痛殆不可忍，及今未之已也。”肅宗驗之於燭下，肅宗驗之於燭下，有若縫而赤者存焉。遽以狀聞，遂生代宗。吳湊嘗言於先臣，與力士說符。[283]

No. 10

Three days after the future Emperor Daizong was born, His Highness paid a visit to the East Palace to see his grandson. His Highness bestowed on the heir a gold basin and asked the heir to bathe his newborn son in it. The future Empress Wu was young and weakened by this birth at the time, so her baby was not well nourished. The nannies were nervous and didn't know

[283] It is interesting to note some parallels between this anecdote and the first one, including dangerous political environment, a god clad in gold armor, as well as the heir's attitude towards injustice.

what to do, so they presented to His Highness another plump baby who was born on the same day as the royal grandson. His Highness took at look at the substituted grandson, and declared unhappily, “This is not my grandson!” The nannies [recognizing the emperor’s acuteness], struck their foreheads on the ground in submission. His Highness eyed them askance, and said, “You don’t understand, now bring my true grandson!” Only then did the nannies present the heir’s real son to the emperor. Holding the baby in his arms, the emperor moved towards the sunlight to look at it. He smiled and said, “This boy’s fortune will surely surpass that of his father!” Later when His Highness was about to depart, he asked his musicians and dancers to stay and said to Gao Lishi, his close attendant, “Is there anything more pleasing than having three Sons of Heaven in one palace hall? You should also stay and have a drink with the heir!” Wu Cou once told my late father this story, which is consistent with what Gao Lishi said later.

代宗之誕三日，上幸東宮，賜之金盆，命以浴。吳皇后年幼體弱，皇孫體未舒，負媼惶惑，乃以宮中諸子同日生、而體貌豐碩者以進。上視之，不樂曰：“此非吾兒。負媼叩頭具服。”上睨謂曰：“非爾所知，取吾兒來。”於是以太子之子進見。上大喜，置諸掌內，向日視之，笑曰：“此兒福祿，一過其父。”及上起還宮，盡留內樂，謂力士曰：“此一殿有三天子，樂乎哉！可與太子飲酒。”吳湊嘗言於先臣，與力士說亦同。

No. 11

When Emperor Suzong was still the heir, he once attended on His Highness during a meal. The Matron for Food displayed some cooked dishes on the table, including a stewed lamb leg. His Highness turned back to the heir and motioned him to carve the leg of lamb. The heir did so and his knife became rather oily after cutting. So the heir cleaned his knife by wiping it on a

wheat cake. His Highness watched carefully at the heir's action for a while, feeling rather upset. The heir, however, picked up and ate the wheat cake. Seeing that the heir did not throw away the rest of the cake, His Highness was pleased, and said to him, "Good fortune should be cherished this same way."

肅宗為太子時，嘗侍膳，尚食置熟俎。有羊臂臑，上顧使太子割。肅宗既割，餘污漫在刃，以餅潔之。上熟視不懌，肅宗徐舉餅啖之，上甚悅，謂太子曰："福當如是愛惜。"

No. 12

The Palace of Ascendant Felicity (Xingqing gong 興慶宮) was the place where His Highness dwelt before ascending to the throne. At the start of the Shengli 聖歷 era (698-699), it was the Residence of The Five Princes.[284] His Highness was very close to his brothers. After he ascended the throne, [Xuanzong] had a tower erected at the southwestern wall of the Palace [of Ascendant Felicity] and wrote an inscription, which read: "The Tower Where Stems and Buds Shine on Each Other" (*Hua e xiang hui lou*花萼相輝樓).[285] When he left court, he would promptly roam [in the Palace] with his brothers, sometimes enjoying themselves with a feast. At that time, there had been no war in the empire for almost fifty years—thus it was a great time of tranquility and prosperity. Later on, an urgent message was brought to the court that the Northern

[284] The palace was formerly a mansion located in the *Xingqing* Ward 興慶坊, where Li Longji and his brothers lived after they were released from virtual imprisonment under Empress Wu's reign. After Li Longji assumed the throne, he renovated and expanded the mansion into a detached palace for himself, with his brothers living nearby. For details, see *JTS* 95, p. 3011.

[285] The name "Stems and Buds Shine on Each Other" (*Hua e xiang hui lou* 花萼相) symbolizes Xuanzong's close relationship with his brothers.

Barbarians had invaded the capital. The emperor decided to leave the palace. Before his flight, His Highness graced the palace with his [imperial] presence for the last time. There the emperor climbed up the tower and had people set up wine at its top. Looking in all directions, His Highness's heart was filled with sorrow, and so he asked attendants to bring Jade Ring (*yuhuan*, 玉環), a lute that his father Emperor Ruizong once played. In the past, when His Highness set up drinks and music in this palace, he would always place the lute on a separate couch and cover it with a yellow handkerchief, so that it wouldn't be mixed in the other instruments. Never had anyone played this lute after his father died. That day, however, when His Highness arrived, he asked the musician He Huaizhi to tune the lute and Master Jiashi, a Buddhist monk from the Chanding temple, to play it. Among the emperor's attendants, there were three beautiful girls who sang, thus His Highness asked one of these girls to sing the "Tune of the Waters." When she finished this song, His Highness still seemed reluctant to leave. He had people see if there was any singer near the tower who was well versed in singing and was especially good at the "Tune of the Waters." A young man understood His Highness's feelings and claimed he could sing. So the young man was asked to ascend the tower and sing the "Tune of Waters" for the emperor. The "Tune of the Waters" went as follows:

Mountains and rivers fill my eyes, tears soak my robes,

Wealth, esteem, glory, and honor—how long can they endure?

Don't you see right now, there above the Fen River,

Only autumn geese flying by year after year.

On hearing the tune, His Highness wept. The emperor turned to his attendants and asked, "Who wrote these lyrics?" "It was the Grand Councilor Li Qiao," someone replied. His highness

commented, “Li Qiao is a truly talented man.” His Highness left the palace before the tune came to an end.

興慶宮，上潛龍之地，聖歷初五王宅也。上性友愛，及即位，立樓於宮之西南垣，署曰："花萼相輝。"朝退，亟與諸王遊，或置酒為樂。時天下無事，號太平者垂五十年。及羯胡犯闕，乘傳遽以告，上欲遷，幸之，登樓置酒，四顧淒愴，乃命進玉環。玉環者，睿宗所禦琵琶也。異時，上張樂宮殿中，每嘗置之別榻，以黃帕覆之，不以雜他樂器，而未嘗持用。至，俾樂工賀懷智取調之，又命禪定寺僧假師取彈之。時美人善歌從者三人，使其中一人歌《水調》。畢奏，上將去，復留眷眷。因使視樓下有工歌而善《水調》者乎。一少年心悟上意，自言頗工歌，亦善《水調》。使之登樓且歌，歌曰："山川滿目淚沾衣，富貴榮華能幾時不見只今汾水上，唯有年年秋雁飛。"上聞之潸然出涕，顧侍者曰："誰為此詞？"或對曰："宰相李嶠。"上曰："李嶠真才子也。"不待曲終而去。

No. 13

Emperor Xuanzong was going to grace the west with his presence.[286] As the imperial carriages went out through the gate of Protracted Autumn, Yang Guozhong,[287] the Grand

[286] This is a polite way to say that the emperor was going to flee to Sichuan.

[287] Yang Guozhong 楊國忠 (?-756), originally named Yang Zhao 楊釗, was a distant relative of Precious Consort Yang who enjoyed great favor and incomparable privilege throughout the Tianbao reign (742-756) of Emperor Xuanzong. Yang overcame a dissolute youth when he joined the army in Sichuan. There he received the patronage of Xianyu Zhongtong 鮮于仲通, a wealthy local man, and obtained a post under Zhangqiu Jianqiong 章仇兼瓊, the military governor of Jiannan 劍南. Yang also became acquainted with Lady Yang’s family, which later provided him with invaluable political capital. After Lady Yang became the Precious Consort of Emperor Xuanzong, Yang’s patrons sent him as an envoy to Chang’an to make connections through Lady Yang. Not only did Yang Guozhong achieve goals set by his patrons, he also

Councilor, asked the emperor and his entourage to pass through the Depository on the Left. [288] His Highness approved. As they marched on, His Highness saw, in the distance, hundreds of people waiting with torches in their hands. The emperor stopped his horse and asked, "What's going on?" Guozhong replied, "I propose that we set the depository on fire so that it wouldn't come under the control of the outlaws." His Highness assumed a serious expression and said, "If the outlaws could not get these treasures when they arrive, then they will simply appropriate [what they need] from the common folk instead. Better to give all these treasures to them. Don't let them oppress my children again." The emperor ordered people to take all the torches away before they moved on. Those who heard this story were all moved to tears. They said to each other, "Our lord treasures his people like this— his fortune hasn't come to an end yet. Even what Sage King Tai, did when he fled his native country Bin cannot surpass that of our lord.[289]

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began to fulfill his own ambitions on this trip: Yang obtained an initial position as an Examining Censor, in the capital and rose rapidly in the area of finance in the years to follow. Within only six years, Yang Guozhong replaced Li Linfu as the last dominant Grand Councilor of Emperor Xuanzong's reign. Although Yang had no strong political rivals at court during this time, he did have to curb the increasing power of An Lushan, a formidable military governor in the northeast. In the eleventh month of 755, An Lushan rebelled, purporting to remove the "evil" Grand Councilor Yang Guozhong from court, but actually seeking to overthrow the emperor. The rebellion led to Emperor Xuanzong to flee the capital, Chang'an, to Sichuan, accompanied only by a few members of the imperial family, close attendants, and a handful of high ministers including Yang Guozhong. This flight to Sichuan was extremely difficult: only two days after the Emperor's entourage left the capital, Yang Guozhong was killed by the escorting troops at the Mawei Post Station 馬嵬驛. For Yang Guozhong's biographies, see *JTS* 106, pp. 3241-67; *HTS* 206, pp. 5846-52; For more details on his origins, see *ZZTJ* 215. Pp. 6867-8; Pulleyblank, *Backgroud*, pp. 164-5.

[288] The Depository on the Left, one of the two large supply depots of the capital, was burned by rampaging commoner right after Emperor Xuazong fled to Shu, according to the *Zizhi tongjian*.

[289] When the Duke Wen of Teng asked how to serve large kingdoms, Mencius told him a story of King Tai's fleet to Bin. It is said that when Duke Wen fled to Bin, his people all followed him. The passage reads, "Formerly, when King Tai dwelt in Bin, the barbarians of the north were constantly making incursions upon it. He served them with skins and silks, and still he suffered from them. He served them with dogs and horses, and still he suffered from them. He served them with pearls and gems, and still he suffered from them. Seeing this, he assembled the old

玄宗西幸，車駕自延英門出，楊國忠請由左藏庫而去，上從之。望見千餘人持火炬以俟，上駐蹕曰：“何用此為？”國忠對曰：“請焚庫積，無為盜守。”上斂容曰：“盜至若不得此，當厚斂於民。不如與之，無重困吾赤子也！”命撤火炬而後行。聞者皆感激流涕，迭相謂曰：“吾君愛人如此，福未艾也。雖太王去豳，何以過此乎？”[290]

No. 14

When His Highness entered Slanting Valley (*xiegu*, 斜谷), it was still early in the evening. Yet the valley, enveloped in smoke and fog, was quite dim. Wei Tiao, Vice Commissioner Cognizor of the Gests 知頓使給事中, obtained a jug of ale from the countryside. Wei Tiao went on his knees before the emperor's horse to present the ale, but His Highness would not drink it despite Wei's repeated requests. Wei Tiao was terrified, therefore he poured some ale into another vessel and drank it before the emperor. Seeing this, His Highness asked, "did you, Sir, think that I disbelieved you? When I first presided over the empire, I once got drunk on ale and killed a person. I mourned the loss of his life and stopped drinking due to this terrible incident. Now it's been more than forty years since my last drink." He then pointed to Gao Lishi and his other close attendants, and said, "They all knew that I don't drink. You will

men, and announced to them, saying, 'What the barbarians want is my territory. I have heard this - that a ruler does not injure his people with that wherewith he nourishes them. My children, why should you be troubled about having no prince? I will leave this.' Accordingly, he left Bin, crossed the mountain Liang, built a town at the foot of mount Qi, and dwelt there. The people of Bin said, 'He is a benevolent man. We must not lose him.' Those who followed him looked like crowds hastening to market."

[290] The *Zizhi tongjian* version reads: As His Highness was passing the Depository on the Left, Yang Guozhong requested that it be set afire, saying, "Let it not come under the outlaws' control." His Highness blanched and replied, "If the outlaws, upon their arrival, do not gain it, they will be certain instead to appropriate [what they need] from the common folk. Better to give it them, and let them not oppress my children heavily." See Kroll, p.36.

know that I am not deceiving you." Followers who heard this story were all deeply moved. His Highness had assiduously admonished himself in this way. The fact that he presided over the kingdom for nearly fifty years, does it not result from this Way of [self-discipline]?[291]

上始入斜谷，天尚早，烟霧甚晦。知頓使給事中韋倜，於野中得新熟酒一壺，跪獻於馬首者數四，上不為之舉。倜懼，乃注以他器，引滿於前。上曰：「卿以我為疑耶？始吾御宇之初，嘗飲，大醉損一人，吾悼之，因以為戒，迨今四十餘年，未嘗甘酒味。」指力士及近侍者曰：「此皆知之，非紿卿也。」從臣聞之，無不感悅。上孜孜儆戒也如是。富有天下，僅五十載，豈不由斯道乎？

No. 15

During the Tianbao reign, a little dragon residing in the pond of the Ascendant Felicity Palace swam into the southern ditch of the palace. Many people witnessed this marvelous phenomenon of the dragon snaking through the ditch. Later on, as the emperor was gracing the west with his presence (that is, when the emperor was fleeing to the west), one night, the dragon rose from the pond. Riding on clouds and rain, the dragon flew all the way to the Southwest. When His Highness and his entourage reached the Jialing River, they were about to cross when suddenly they saw a dragon coming to the side of their boat. In tears, His Highness turned to his attendants and said, "This is the dragon from my pond!" He ordered his people to offer libations in honor of the dragon. Thereupon, the dragon contracted its scales and flew away.

[291] *Zizhi tongjian* records several passages on how the followers in the entourage suffered from lack of food. In this case, the shortage of food and drink has been transformed into another story with moral teaching.

天寶中，興慶池小龍嘗出遊宮垣南溝水中，蜿蜒奇狀，靡不瞻睹。及鑾輿西幸，龍一夕乘雲雨，自池中望西南而去。上至嘉陵江，將乘舟，有龍翼舟而進。上泫然流涕，顧謂左右曰：“此吾池中龍也。”命以酒沃酹之，於是龍振甲而去。

No. 16

The fraternal love between Emperor Xuanzong and his brothers grew even deeper [after Xuanzong's succession]. For instance, the emperor still called his eldest brother Prince Ning *big brother* and dined with the other brothers.[292] One time when they were having a meal together, Prince Ning coughed. Food shot out of his mouth onto the emperor's mustache. The prince was horrified and scared out of his wits. Seeing how the prince was terrified, His Highness was about to soothe him when Huang Fanchuo, a well-known entertainer in the palace, said, "That was not

[292] In both historical records and anecdotes, Li Longji is depicted to be a man of great personal warmth towards his brothers. According to some sources, Li Longji was on excellent terms with his brothers throughout his life. The Li brothers were also said to share their devotion in music, literature, and the upper-class sports of the time (*JTS* 95. 3011). Among all his brothers, Li Longji was probably closest to his eldest brother, Li Chengqi 李成器 (679-742), or the Prince of Ning according to this anecdote. Li Chengqi was Emperor Ruizong's eldest son. He played an important role in Emperor Xuanzong's early reign. In 710, Li Chengqi renounced his own claim for succession in Li Longji's favor. Later Li Longji succumbed to Princess Taiping's political attacks and was forced to resign as heir to the crown. Li Chengqi refused to replace his younger brother Li Longji as heir. Li Chengqi eventually received the title of Prince of Ning in 716 and held several high-level posts, including president of the Court of Sacrifices from 721 to 726 (*JTS* 95, p. 3010; *ZZTJ* 209, p. 6650). Also close to Li Longji were his two younger brothers, Li Ye 李業 (d.734), the Prince of Xue 薛, and Li Fan 李範 (d. 726), the Prince of Qi 岐. Li Ye and Li Fan both became commanders of Li Longji's bodyguard during Li Longji's days as crown prince. They supported Li Longji in his successful coup against Princess Taiping and only then did Li Longji assume full power as an emperor. Other sources, however, suggest that Li Longji and his supporters still considered Li's brothers as rivals and potential threats, and took various measures to curb their power. Thus, when Li Longji was still a crown prince, Yao Chong and Song Jing proposed to disarm potential threats posed by these princes and dispatch them to provincial posts. While some regarded the Palace of Ascendant Felicity as a symbol of the fraternal love between Li Longji and his brothers, others suspect that the real reason that Li Longji required his brothers to live nearby was to keep an eye on them under his control.

a cough (cough, or *cuohou* 錯喉, literally meaning “food going down the wrong wind pipe.” In Chinese, *cuohou* 錯喉 and *cuohou* 錯候, which can be rendered as “choking duke,” are homonyms. The latter also puns Prince Ning’s status). His Highness asked, “What do you mean?” Huang replied, “Rather, it was a sneeze (sneeze, or *penti* 噴嚏, is close in pronunciation to *pendi* 喷帝, meaning to spew (food) at the emperor).” His highness was greatly amused by this quick-witted reply.

玄宗於諸昆季，友愛彌篤，呼寧王為大哥，每與諸王同食。因食之次，寧王錯喉噴上髭，王驚慚不遑。上顧其悚悚，欲安之，黃幡綽曰："不是錯喉。"上曰： "何也？"對曰："是噴帝。"上大悅。

No. 17

When An Lushan’s rebellion broke out, Emperor Xuanzong was force to leave in haste for Shu. Most officials were unaware of his sudden departure. When the central region fell into the rebels’ hands, some of those who stayed behind were coerced into serving An Lushan. Among those who surrendered to An Lushan’s army, there was Huang Fanchuo, who became a close attendant of An Lushan, leader of the rebellion. Later when the lost lands were recaptured, all the rebels and those who had served them were accordingly arrested. Huang Fanchuo was also captured and brought to the emperor’s temporary residence. His Highness, who was always very fond of Huang Fanchuo’s quick-wittedness, released him. Someone in his court said to the emperor, “When Huang Fanchuo was with the rebels, he interpreted dreams for An Lushan, catering to his every whim, and completely forgetting the favors Your Majesty bestowed on him all these years. When An Lushan dreamed of his sleeves growing longer and falling over the

steps, Huang Fanchuo explained, “This dream means that by letting fall your robes, and folding your hands, the empire will become orderly (*chuiyi er zhi* 垂衣而治).”[293] Lushan then dreamt that all the window grids of the palace hall fell down, to which Huang Fanchuo observed, “This dream means abandoning the old and following the new.” Such were his interpretations. Fanchuo said, “Your humble subject really did not know that Your Majesty was forced to move to Shu.[294] Given that I was in the rebels’ hands, how could I not please An Lushan in exchange for a few more days of life? The reason why I was still able to see Your Majesty today is only because I anticipated, while interpreting dreams for the rebels, that their uprising would not succeed.” His Highness asked, “How did you know?” Huang replied, “The rebel dreamed of sleeves growing, which signaled that he would not able to take action. He then dreamt of window grids falling down, which foretold that “the barbarians were not going to succeed” [windows grids falling down suggests the papering of the windows failed, that is, *hu bude* 糊不得. Because the word *Hu* 糊 (to paper a window) and *Hu* 胡 (barbarian) are homonyms, the phrase *hu bude* (糊不得) thus translates into “the Barbarians would fail” (*hu bude*胡不得)]. His Highness could not help laughing [at his witty explanation] and released him.[295]

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[293]The term *chui gong er zhi* 垂拱而治 or sometimes *chui yi er zhi* 垂衣而治 refers to the idea of non-interference governing. It is seen in texts such as “Wucheng” 武成 (Successful Completion of the War) in *Shangshu* 尚書 (The Book of Documents), which reads, “He honoured virtue, and rewarded merit. Then he had only to let his robes fall down, and fold his hands, and the kingdom was orderly ruled.” 惇信明義, 崇德報功, 垂拱而天下治.

[294] The term *Mengchen* 蒙塵 literally means to be covered with dust, implying that the emperor lost the throne and took flight to another place.

[295] In this anecdote, Huang attempted to explain away his betrayal of the emperor. The emperor forgave him with a laugh.

安祿山之叛也，玄宗忽遽播遷於蜀，百官與諸司多不知之。有陷在賊中者，為祿山所脅從，而黃幡綽同在其數，幡綽亦得入左右。及收復，賊黨就擒。幡綽被拘至行在。上素憐其敏捷，釋之。有於上前曰：“黃幡綽在賊中，與大逆圓夢，皆順其情，而忘陛下積年之恩寵。祿山夢見衣袖長，忽至階下，幡綽曰：‘當垂衣而治之。’祿山夢見殿中樞子倒，幡綽曰：‘革故從新’。推之多此類也。”幡綽曰：“臣實不知陛下大駕蒙塵赴蜀，既陷賊中，寧不苟悅其心，以脫一時之命？今日得再見天顏，以與大逆圓夢，必知其不可也。”上曰：“何以知之？”對曰：“逆賊夢衣袖長，是出手不得也。又夢樞子倒者，是胡不得也。以此臣故先知之。”上大笑而止。

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