

The Role of Confucian Revivalists in the Confucianization of T'ang Women

The T'ang dynasty (618–907) is commonly perceived as an era in which women led a life of greater freedom than their counterparts in subsequent dynasties. Marriage, or rather remarriage, of the imperial ladies in the early T'ang can in part bear out this point.¹ Many T'ang imperial princesses married twice, a few of them three times, and some even had colorful extra marital affairs.² The generally less restrained life style of T'ang women has also served as the subject of many scholarly works. Their participation in various outdoor activities such as polo being a frequently remarked case in point.³

Another indicator of T'ang women's greater freedom is that a number of powerful imperial ladies also dominated the early T'ang political scene. The unique political achievements of the famous Empress Wu 武后 (623?–705), China's one and only female emperor, is well known to students of the T'ang. We are also quite familiar with the remarkable political power enjoyed by a few other notable early T'ang imperial ladies. Empress Wu's daughter, Princess T'ai-p'ing 太平公主 (d. 713); Empress Wu's daughter-in-law and Emperor Chung-tsung's 中宗 (r. 684, 705–710) wife, Empress Wei 韋后 (d. 710), and their daughter Princess An-lo 安樂公主 (d. 710) come readily to mind.⁴ One modern historian characterizes

I WOULD like to thank Professor Denis Twitchett for reading the original draft of this paper and offering me both encouragement and valuable corrections. I also want to express my gratitude to *Asia Major's* anonymous readers for their kind comments and important suggestions for revision.

¹ Wang Shou-nan 王志南, "T'ang-tai kung-chu chih hun-yin" 唐代公主之婚姻, in Li Yuning 李文寧 and Chang Yü-fa 張玉法, eds., *Chung-kuo fu-nü-shih lun-wen chi* 中國婦女史論文集, vol. 2, Taipei: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1988: 122–23.

² According to Wang Shou-nan, among the 210 known T'ang princesses, 27 married twice while 3 married three times. These 30 princesses make up 23% of the 130 princesses who were married. For details, see *ibid.*: 90–144, esp., p. 122.

³ James T. C. Liu, "Polo and Cultural Change: From T'ang to Sung China," *HJAS* 45, 1 (1985): 203–24; for other types of outdoor activity engaged in by T'ang women, see Kao Shih-yü 高世瑜, *T'ang-tai fu-nü* 唐代婦女, Sian: San-Ch'in ch'u-pan-she, 1988: 117–37.

⁴ For Empress Wu's political success and the political domination of imperial women in

this strong female domination of early T'ang politics as emblematic of "proto-feminist sentiments."⁵ The imperial women's domination of T'ang political life was, however, brief. It ended when Emperor Hsüan-tsung 玄宗 (r. 712-755) took the throne.⁶

The life of T'ang women has also been portrayed as undergoing a process of change after the outbreak of the calamitous An Lu-shan rebellion (755-763).⁷ The rebellion fundamentally transformed the political structure of the T'ang empire. The previous political unity was replaced by a post-rebellion regionalism. The T'ang court did manage to restore its authority over the provinces in 817, but this victory was ephemeral.⁸ Intellectually, the rebellion served as a catalyst for the rise of the most significant development in the second half of T'ang history, namely, the mid-T'ang revival of Confucianism.⁹

This Confucian revival has been identified as the intellectual element that, together with other complex factors, led to the Confucianization of T'ang women after the mid-eighth century.¹⁰ By Confucianization is meant

the early T'ang, see Richard W. L. Guisso, "The Reigns of the Empress Wu, Chung-tsung and Jui-tsung (684-712)," in Denis Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 3, part 1, Sui and T'ang China*, 1979: 290-330; also see Guisso, *Wu Tse-t'ien and the Politics of Legitimation in T'ang China*, Bellingham: Western Washington U.P., 1978.

⁵ See Chen Jo-shui, "Empress Wu and Proto-Feminist Sentiments in T'ang China," in Frederick P. Brandauer and Chun-chieh Huang, eds., *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China*, Seattle: U. of Washington P., 1994: 77-116.

⁶ For the political domination of imperial women other than that of Empress Wu in the early T'ang and their ultimate failure, see Richard W. L. Guisso, "The Reigns of the Empress Wu, Chung-tsung and Jui-tsung (684-712)," pp. 321-30, and Chen Jo-shui, "Empress Wu."

⁷ See Sun-ming Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality: Transformation of the Institution of Marriage in T'ang China (A.D. 618-907)," Ph.D. dissertation, U. of Washington, 1979.

⁸ For the An Lu-shan rebellion and its impact on the T'ang, see E. G. Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan*, London, 1955, and his "The An Lu-shan Rebellion and the Origins of Chronic Militarism in Late T'ang China," in John Curtis Perry and Bardwell C. Smith, eds., *Essays on T'ang Society*, Leiden, 1976: 32-60; also see Denis Twitchett, "Varied Patterns of Provincial Autonomy in the T'ang Dynasty," in Perry and Smith, pp. 90-109.

⁹ For the nature, development and significance of mid-T'ang Confucian revival, see Chen Jo-shui, *Liu Tsung-yüan and Intellectual Change in T'ang China*, Cambridge U.P., 1992; T.H. Barrett, *Li Ao: Buddhist, Taoist, or Neo-Confucian?*, Oxford U.P., 1992; David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China*, Cambridge U.P., 1988; Charles Hartman, *Han Yu and the T'ang Search for Unity*, Princeton U.P., 1986. Also see Josephine Chiu-Duke, "To Rebuild the Empire: Lu Chih (754-803) and His Response to the Mid-T'ang Predicament," Ph.D. thesis, U. of British Columbia, 1992.

¹⁰ Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979, ch. 5. Wong argues that female rule in the early T'ang, the T'ang emperors' promotion of Confucian studies and policies and their desire to win the support of scholar-officials after the An Lu-shan rebellion, and women's lack of economic independence all gave rise to the Confucianization of T'ang women. Chen,

specifically a view that after the 760s T'ang women's conduct began gradually to conform to the prescribed Confucian marriage norms.¹¹ That is, divorce or remarriage by T'ang women was the object of increasing social disapproval in the post An Lu-shan rebellion era.

The revival of Confucianism did have something to do with the shift in women's virtues in the T'ang, or even in later times, but the precise role played by the majority of the leading Confucian revivalists in the Confucianization of T'ang women has not received thorough examination. As a consequence, the exact relationship between this resurgence of Confucian consciousness and the Confucianization of T'ang women remains unclear to us. Meanwhile, recent studies on the connection between Confucianism and women's virtues or their social position also require us to clarify further the idea of Confucianization.¹²

We know that there was already a burgeoning tendency to restrict the remarriage of widows in the later part of the Northern Dynasties (317-581), and that widow remarriage among the educated class was not uncommon in the Sung (960-1279), even though it was considered an inferior alternative to remaining a widow. We also know that the Chinese state and the Confucian scholar-officials in Ming and Ch'ing times (1368-1912) continued to elevate the position of chaste widows, and that the cult of widows' fidelity reached its climax only in the eighteenth and nineteenth

"Empress Wu" (p. 101) also accepts Wong's use of the term Confucianization to describe women's culture in the imperial clan after the 760s.

¹¹ The Confucian norms here mainly refer to the rules of female behavior in the *Li chi* 禮記, or the *Book of Rites*. For instance, in the "Chiao-t'e-sheng" 郊特性 section of the *Li chi*, we read that wives should not marry again after their husbands' death. For the English translation of this passage, see James Legge, *The Li Ki*, in Müller ed., *The Sacred Books of the East*, XXVII: III, reprinted by Motilal Banarsidass, 1966: 439. For details regarding the Confucian norms and the evolution of the T'ang marriage institution, see Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979, ch. 2, 3 and 4.

¹² For those studies most relevant here, see Jack L. Dull, "Marriage and Divorce in Han China: A Glimpse at 'Pre-Confucian' Society," in *Chinese Family Law and Social Change in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, edited by David C. Buxbaum, Seattle: U. of Washington P., 1978: 23-74; Jennifer Holmgren, "Widow Chastity in the Northern Dynasties: The Lieh-nü Biographies in the Wei-shu," *Papers on Far Eastern History*, 23 (1981): 165-86; Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period*, U. of California P., 1993; Mark Elvin, "Female Virtue and the State in China," *Past and Present*, 104 (1984): 111-32; Katherine Carlitz, "The Social Uses of Female Virtue in Late Ming Editions of Lienü Zhuan," *Late Imperial China*, 12, 2 (1991): 117-48; Susan Mann, "Historical Change in Female Biography from Song to Qing Times: The Case of Early Qing Jiangnan (Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces)," *Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan*, 30 (1985): 65-77.

centuries.¹³ In other words, the efforts of the Confucian scholar-officials, or of the Chinese state, to Confucianize Chinese women, so far as promoting widow chastity is concerned, did not originate simultaneously with or just after the emergence of the mid-T'ang Confucian revivalists. Nor did such a process of Confucianization stop when the T'ang formally ended in 907.

The mid-T'ang Confucian revivalists might have followed their Northern Dynasty predecessors in discouraging the remarriage of widows, but emphasis on widow chastity was probably never an essential concern universally shared by the Confucian revivalists in their Confucianization of T'ang woman during the second half of T'ang history. Two available Confucian revivalists' attitude toward women's remarriage seems to support this view.

It has been pointed out that Po Chü-i 白居易 (772-846), a great poet and an advocate of Confucian revival, had a negative attitude toward women's remarriage. At the same time, we also learn that the eldest daughter of Han Yü 韓愈 (768-824), the renowned prose master and the most representative mid-T'ang Confucian revivalist, married twice.¹⁴ These two conflicting situations lead us to wonder whether Han Yü held a completely different view of women's conduct from that of Po Chü-i. If he did, would that mean that this sort of contradictory attitude also existed among most of the distinguished mid-T'ang Confucian revivalists, among men like Tu Fu 杜甫 (712-770), Li Hua 李華 (715-766), Tu-ku Chi 獨孤及 (725-777), Liang Su 梁肅 (753-793), Liu Tsung-yüan 柳宗元 (773-819), and Li Ao 李翱 (772?-836)? If these men did not share a position on female ethics similar to that of Po Chü-i, especially on remarriage, what exact role did they then play in the Confucianization of T'ang women? To put this another way, did they broaden the meaning of Confucianization in the mid-T'ang historical context?

Other than emphasis on widow chastity or disapproval of women's remarriage, were there any specific Confucian virtues which the Confucian revivalists intentionally propagated and urged T'ang women to conform to and strive for? If so, what were they? Why and under what circumstances were these virtues particularly elevated by the representatives of Confucian

revival? In short, since the elevation of widow chastity does not seem to constitute the core of the majority revivalists' efforts to Confucianize T'ang women, can we discern other common grounds among the leading Confucian revivalists' views of women after the mid-eighth century?

In this essay, I intend to provide some preliminary answers to these questions. In the process of doing so, I hope to demonstrate how the mid-T'ang Confucian revivalists broadened the meaning of Confucianization, and come to a better understanding of the exact relationship between their endeavors and the Confucianization of T'ang women.

BASIC SOURCES AND RELATED ISSUES

The extant writings of the leading Confucian revivalists serve as my basic primary sources for an exploration of their views on women. Not very many leading Confucian revivalists wrote poems, legal judgments, or essays specifically dealing with female ethics, but many revival representatives composed epitaphs for their mothers, sisters, female relatives and the mothers or wives of friends. These funerary inscriptions are an invaluable source upon which one can rely to trace the kinds of women's conduct appreciated by the leading Confucian revivalists. For the sake of consistency, all of their epitaphs cited in this article are in the version provided by the *Ch'üan T'ang wen* 全唐文 (*Complete T'ang Prose*).

As a source, funerary inscriptions present some obvious problems.¹⁵ First, they are composed exclusively by members of the scholar-official class to commemorate someone with whom the author either had a close relationship, or was indirectly connected. Our inscriptions primarily involve female relatives of members of the scholar-official class. A few of them are dedicated to female members of the imperial clan, but information regarding women from the commoner class is significantly less abundant. As a result, our focus is unavoidably restricted to women from the scholar-official class.

The scholar-official class in the T'ang dynasty can be divided into a national elite and a provincial elite.¹⁶ Members of the national elite, espe-

¹³ Beverly Jo Bossler discusses some of these problems in her "Powerful Relations and Relations of Power: Family and Society in Sung China, 960-1279." Ph.D. dissertation, U. of California, Berkeley, 1991: 17-19.

¹⁶ See Denis Twitchett, "The Composition of the T'ang Ruling Class: New Evidence from Tunhuang," in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Perspectives on the Tang*, Yale U.P.,

¹⁴ See references in note 13 (with the exclusion of Jack Dull's essay).

¹⁵ Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 177-78 and 194-95. Also see Huang-fu Shih 皇甫湜, "Han Wen-kung mu-chih-ming" 韓文公墓誌銘, *CTW* 687: 16, for Han Yü's daughter's remarriage.

cially those from the most prestigious Shan-tung aristocrats, are generally known to have paid the most attention to Confucian family order and rites, more so than other elite members, not to mention other classes in T'ang society.¹⁷ Women from the national elite class should thus have been very much Confucianized before the 760s. How then could the emergence of the mid-T'ang Confucian revival have any effect on them? Did Confucianization take place only among female members of the lesser aristocratic families? Surely, women of the national elite class must have received a certain amount of influence from the Confucian revival, especially since some leading Confucian revivalists were themselves members of the most prominent aristocratic families.

One way to find out the exact relationship between the mid-T'ang Confucian revival and the Confucianization of T'ang women from the scholar-official class is to examine the idea of female ethics, or rather, the conception of the ideal woman before and after the An Lu-shan rebellion. To do so one must investigate whether there are fundamental differences between the portraits of women in the women's epitaphs composed by leading Confucian revivalists compared to those composed by scholar-officials before the 760s.

The *Ch'üan T'ang wen* contains only a very limited number of women's epitaphs written before the An Lu-shan rebellion. Fortunately, the ongoing publication of a large collection of T'ang funerary inscriptions by the Academia Sinica in Taipei provides more than sufficient materials in this respect. Among the eighteen hundred funerary inscriptions published so far, I have found at least three hundred and eighty-six that are either related to, or composed exclusively for women.¹⁸ They will be analyzed in due course.

1973: 47-85, esp. 49-50.

¹⁷ Chen Jo-shui, *Liu Tsung-yüan*, 1932: 18-19, esp., note 41.

¹⁸ Most of the epitaphs discussed here were composed for individual women, but I have also included those which, though composed mainly for husbands, provide relevant information about their deceased wives as well. So far (by July 1995), eighteen volumes of this collection of T'ang funerary inscriptions have appeared. The chief editor of this extremely important work is Mao Han-kuang 毛漢光; see his *T'ang-tai mu-chih-ming hui-pien fu-k'ao* 唐代墓誌銘彙編附考 (hereafter, *TTMCM*), 18 vols., Chung-yang yen-chiu-yüan li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu-so 中央研究院歷史語言研究所 1984-94. The published epitaphs cover the period between 617 and 730. Although still twenty-five years before the outbreak of the An Lu-shan rebellion, this time interval should not compromise the validity of our findings. Besides, the epitaphs in the *Ch'üan T'ang wen* can actually make up for the missing information.

The second problem with funerary inscriptions as a source is that they usually contain only good words about the deceased. One naturally worries that such information amounts to an ideal type rather than the portrait of a living individual. This, of course, may not always be the case. In any event, an ideal type can have a positive function for our purposes here. It can help us to compare the exemplary woman as conceived by the revivalists with that presented in the epitaphs by T'ang scholar-officials before the 760s. The result of such a comparison should subsequently enable us to evaluate the exact role of the leading Confucian revivalists in the Confucianization of T'ang women. To start our inquiry, I shall first examine female ethics as portrayed in the epitaphs by the scholar-officials before the An Lu-shan rebellion.

WOMEN DEPICTED IN

T'ANG EPITAPHS BEFORE THE 760s

As far as I can determine, women from the three hundred and eighty-six families presented in the epitaphs prior to the An Lu-shan rebellion shared only one hundred and twenty-five surnames. Apparently, many women not only shared the same surname, but also came from the same geographic region. They can be regarded as members of the same clan.¹⁹ Indeed, the most frequent clan surname is that of the T'ai-yüan Wang clan 太原王 from the Shan-tung aristocratic block. Other prominent Shan-tung aristocratic surnames – the Ying-yang Cheng 滎陽鄭, the Fan-yang Lu 范陽盧, and the Chao-chün Li 趙郡李 – also appear often, though with much less frequency than the T'ai-yüan Wang and some other renowned aristocratic families, such as the Hung-nung Yang 弘農楊. These are the most eminent surnames in the T'ang.²⁰

¹⁹ The difference between a "clan" and a "lineage" defined by anthropologists is well known. See, for example, Hugh D. R. Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship*, Columbia U.P., 1979: 49-69. However, "clan" is used here in a very loose manner because scholars of the T'ang have pointed out that most prominent mediaeval lineages were so loosely knit that "clan" and "lineage" are generally used interchangeably for the sake of convenience. See Patricia Ebrey, *The Aristocratic Families of Early Imperial China: A Case Study of the Po-ling Ts'ui Family*, Cambridge U.P., 1978: 22.

²⁰ The T'ai-yüan Wang appear 22 times while other Shan-tung aristocratic surnames appear between 5 and 9 times. The Hung-nung Yang, however, appear more than 11 times. For women from the T'ai-yüan Wang, see *TTMCM* 1: 17 and 51 (where 1 refers to the volume number while 17 and 51 refer to the number of the epitaph in that particular volume); 3: 270; 4: 345, 358 and 374; 6: 563, 565 and 566; 7: 685; 8: 713, 724, 763, and 790; 10:

There are numerous less recognizable surnames whose geographical origins are spread all over the empire. While women from the north occupy most of these surnames, some women's original families were located in the middle or lower regions of the Yangtze River.²¹ Some women also had their origins in Tunhuang 敦煌, and Kao-ch'ang 高昌 (or Karakhoja in modern day Sinkiang province). Some women's surnames, furthermore, betray their non-Chinese origin.²² In addition, the official ranks of these deceased women's male relatives ranged from as high as Chief Minister to a mere assistant to the county Magistrate.²³

These epitaphs are written with a formulaic structure.²⁴ They usually include the natal family background of the deceased, her temperament and conduct as a daughter, her husband's family if she married, and her behavior after marriage. Besides her genealogy, her deportment after marriage occupies the main section of the epitaph. In many epitaphs, a woman's religious belief is also mentioned.²⁵ For our purpose, we shall concentrate mainly on the description of a woman's marital conduct.

If individual family background is not presented to distinguish one woman from another, when one reads these epitaphs, one finds that the

970; 11: 1020 and 1065; 13: 1269; 16: 1540; 17: 1651; 18: 1718 and 1738. For the Ying-yang Cheng women, see 1: 90; 2: 193; 8: 721; 14: 1399; 16: 1511, and 1586. For the Fan-yang Lu women, see 2: 126; 14: 1357; 17: 1688; 18: 1713 and 1747. For the Chao-chün Li women, see 12: 1120; 15: 1425, 1435, and 1488; 16: 1556; 17: 1643, 1684, and 1698; 18: 1743. For the Hung-nung Yang women, see 1: 30, 78 and 91; 2: 119, 145, and 192; 6: 536; 7: 605; 11: 1046; 13: 1263; 14: 1330. For the prestigious T'ang aristocratic families and their classification, see *Hsin T'ang-shu* 新唐書 (1975 Chung-hua shu-chü edn.; hereafter *HTS*) 199: 5676-80; Also see Twitchett, "T'ang Ruling Class," 1973: 50-51.

²¹ Four women were from the southern aristocratic families, that is, from the Chu 朱 and Lu 陸 clans of today's Chekiang province, see *TTMCM*, 5: 477; 7: 673; 13: 1400 and 16: 1504. In 14: 1304, a woman with an unusual surname, Wu 仵, was said to have come from the Ch'ü-kuo 楚國, or the state of Ch'ü, that is in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River. Also see *HTS* 199: 5676-80 for the southern aristocratic families.

²² There are at least twenty-one surnames which are of alien origin. See *TTMCM*, 1: 1 and 7; 2: 139, 167, 188 and 189; 3: 209 and 261; 4: 304 and 342; 5: 412 and 475; 6: 537 and 572; 7: 671; 10: 952; 12: 1168; 14: 1362; 15: 1442; 16: 1570; 17: 1628.

²³ See *TTMCM*, 11: 1081 and 17: 1609.

²⁴ Though dealing with a different subject, Beverly Bossler also mentions this formulaic description of T'ang eulogies. See "Powerful Relations and Relations of Power," 1991: 30.

²⁵ For more information regarding the content of T'ang epitaphs, see Chao Ch'ao 趙超, "Yu mu-chih ming k'an T'ang-tai te hun-yin chuang-k'uang" 由墓誌銘看唐代的婚姻狀況, *Chung-hua wen-shih lun-t'ung* 中華文史論叢, 1 (1987): 193-208; Keng Hui-ling 耿慧玲, "Yu mu-chih k'an T'ang-tai ch'ü fo-chiao-hua ming-hao te she-hui hsien-hsiang" 由墓誌銘看唐代取佛教化名號的社會現象, in *Chung-kuo T'ang-tai hsieh-hui pien-chi wei-yüan-hui* 中國唐代學會編輯委員會, ed., *T'ang-tai wen-hua yen-t'ao-hui lun-wen chi* 唐代文化研討會論集, Taipei, 1991: 693-724.

phrases used to describe women's disposition and behavior are quite similar. On some occasions, they are almost identical. With one exception, almost all the deceased women are said to be "intelligent and filial (*ts'ung-ming hsiao-yü* 聰明孝友)," "pleasant and submissive in speech and manner (*wan-i t'ing-ts'ung* 婉聽從)," "chaste and gentle (*chen-jou* 貞柔)," and to have "behaved in accord with [the norms] of the *Book of the Poetry* and the *Book of the Rites* (*tung ho Shih Li* 動合詩禮)." Many women are also described as beautiful, or talented in playing musical instruments, or versed in the Confucian classics. They obviously received some sort of cultural training.

A woman regarded as strict in managing her husband's household and her own conduct generally receives praise as well. After marriage a woman is usually evaluated according to the role she played in her husband's family. Almost all epitaphs mention whether a woman was submissive, humble and yielding to her husband and her in-laws, whether she correctly practiced the ancestral sacrificial rituals, whether she behaved properly, how diligent she was in weaving and needlework, how appropriate she maintained her appearance, or, if she was widowed, how determined she was to bring her children up properly. A few passages can illustrate these points.

A county Magistrate's wife with the non-Chinese surname Yü-wen 宇文 died in her late twenties in 682. She is commemorated in this way:

... the lady was beautiful; she had cultivated a fine deportment since childhood. At age fourteen, she married into the Kao 高 family..., she behaved in accord with the ritual norms; she was strictly respectful in dealing with [her husband's] family members, and was gravely dignified to be in harmony with her husband. As for being sincere and reverent in [tending] the ancestral temple, she was benevolent and filial; she was humble and submissive in getting along with the wives of her husband's brothers. Her deportment was revealed in [ritually] cleansing food and wine, and her needlework was shown in making sacrificial dresses embroidered with yellow and black strips. [She] extended these four virtues to attend her in-laws, ... [her conduct] was so refined that it offered a model of motherhood, and a bright exemplar of female decorum.²⁶

²⁶ *TTMCM*, 11: 1081. The Yü-wen family was of course the ruling house of the Northern Chou dynasty in the sixth century. Although much sinicized, it was still one of the most illustrious non-Chinese aristocratic families in the T'ang. See *HTS* 199: 5678.

A Chief Minister's wife, née 杜, who came from one of the most prominent aristocratic families in the Ch'ang-an capital area passed away in her mid seventies in 718. She is remembered in a similar manner:

...the lady was chaste and undefiled; her nature was most pure and she was generous, upright, benevolent and friendly. She was known for her filial piety when she was a child. Her appearance and virtues were praised by all... In her behavior, she always followed [the Confucian] principles, and her words were all in accord with the ritual norms. ... At age seventeen, she married the Chief Minister Ts'ui Chih-wen 崔知溫. Her chastity and submissiveness reached the utmost beauty of womanhood; her kind instruction perfected the virtue of a model mother. She dabbled extensively in ritual classics, and was especially good at Buddhist scriptures.

Six families [of Ts'ui Chih-wen's brothers or cousins] lived in the same residence at the time. She was kind to the old and the young; she raised her orphan nephews as if they were her own children. As far as the ritual norms of the women's quarters, and the rules and regulations for auspicious and unfortunate occasions are concerned, people from far and near all followed her as their model. She always attended every ancestral sacrificial ritual in person..., she was content to live a life of thrift herself, but was generous in helping the poor.²⁷

Another woman who was not a member of a notable aristocratic family is praised likewise for being "intelligent since childhood." She is said to have "followed the ritual [norms] without disobedience; fulfilled her promises without violation. Her weaving work exhausted the wonder of the skill; [when she talked about] the classics and historical works, her reasoning covered their various meanings. She kept herself clean and respectful. Her families never saw her appear lazy."²⁸

The composers of a widow's epitaph almost always describe her with the following phrases: "[she] persevered in her chastity as a widow and vowed never to remarry (*shuang-chü shou-chih, shih pu i t'ien* 孀居守志誓

不移天)."²⁹ Or "alone she lived in widowhood and she raised and instructed the children left behind [in her care] (*shuang-chü tu-shou, fu-hsün i-ku* 孀居獨守撫訓遺孤)."³⁰ Because few details are given, the narration tends to be perfunctory and demonstrates no particular respect or disrespect for deceased widows.

The description of these deceased women by members of the T'ang scholar-official class before the 760s reveals that their perception of a model woman was not very different from that prescribed in the Confucian classics, or in Pan Chao's 班昭 (ca. 45-114/120) *Nü Chieh* 女誡 (*Commandments* [or, *Lessons*] for Women). Their conception of desirable female ethics matches well the Confucian conception of "the three forms of submissiveness and the four virtues (*san-ts'ung ssu-te* 三從四德)." A woman's role was still primarily defined in relation to her father, her husband and her son even though motherhood was especially respected.³¹ As detailed in the *Nü Chieh*,³² proper behavior, speech, needlework and appearance – the so-called four female virtues – continued to form the foundation of female ethics in the T'ang.

Furthermore, the pre-760s women's epitaphs also disclose that most of those deceased women were literate; some of them had a good understanding of the Confucian classics and some even had a good grasp of Buddhist scriptures. As shall be demonstrated, most women presented in the Confucian revivalists' epitaphs were also quite well educated. Literacy was not then regarded as something detrimental to women's virtue as it was gradually perceived to be in subsequent dynasties.

It should be noted that the female image presented in these epitaphs contradicts a late T'ang scholar-official's statement that the wives of the scholar-officials before the 760s were often jealous and dominant. It was

²⁷ Ibid.: 11: 1311.

²⁸ Ibid.: 12: 1167.

²⁹ It is well known that although women's status was generally inferior to that of men, mothers nevertheless enjoyed great respect and high status in traditional Chinese society. See Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 1993: 183-87; Lien-sheng Yang, "Female Rulers in Imperial China," *Excursions in Sinology*, Harvard-Yenching Studies, XXIV, 1969: 27-42.

³⁰ For the ideal female conduct prescribed in the Confucian classics, see Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 1993: 23-29; Richard W. Guisso, "Thunder Over the Lake: The Five Classics and the Perception of Woman in Early China," in Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen, eds., *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*, Philo Press, 1981: 47-62; For an analysis of Pan Chao's *Nü Chieh* and particularly of the concept of the *san-ts'ung ssu-te*, see Marina H. Sung, "The Chinese Lieh-nü Tradition," in Guisso and Johannesen, eds., *ibid.*: 63-74, esp. 69-70. The locus classicus of the *san-ts'ung ssu-te* is in the "Chiao-t'e-sheng" and "Hun-i 昏義" sections of the *Li chi*.

²⁷ *TTCM*, 17: 1609. Ts'ui Chih-wen served as Chief Minister between 681 and 683. For his life, see *Chiu Tang-shu* 舊唐書 (1975 Chung-hua edn.; hereafter *CTS*), 185A: 4791-92; *HTS* 106: 4040-41.

²⁸ *TTCM*, 3: 209.

said that these women's jealousy often resulted in the violent torture of their husbands' concubines.³³ Only four of these jealous and dominant wives have been documented as early T'ang figures, and it seems that the total number of such women was probably not particularly great. Otherwise, their husbands would not have been singled out as a laughingstock by their contemporaries.³⁴ Finally, it is also possible that this late T'ang scholar-official's statement may simply be somewhat exaggerated.

Of course, strong female domination of the political scene occurred during Empress Wu's reign and the subsequent few years, but it did not last very long, and a reaction against female rule also set in right after the beginning of the eighth century. It is thus difficult to gauge the real impact of this phenomenon on the entire T'ang society. Moreover, Empress Wu's efforts to elevate her own political position, and to promote women's status, were not consciously designed to uproot the Confucian family order. The success of her endeavors often actually depended upon her ingenious manipulation of the Confucian perception of women's submissive and supportive role in the family.³⁵ This probably also explains why the epitaphs composed for those palace ladies serving in Empress Wu's inner court continue to cherish the submissive, yielding and gentle virtues as desirable female ethics.³⁶

The point is that even though cases of jealous and dominant wives existed before the 760s, the collective female image from early T'ang epitaphs seems to indicate that the majority of the scholar-officials' wives still observed, or were still perceived as observing, the Confucian norms of behavior.

To be sure, as mentioned already, not every early T'ang woman's epitaph presents the deceased as submissive, yielding and gentle. One woman is in fact described as "resolute (*kang-i* 剛毅)," and as "thoughtful and far-seeing (*shen-mou yüan lü* 深謀遠慮)." This woman was the grandniece of Li Chi 李勣 (609-669), a Chief Minister and one of the most meritorious

generals of the early T'ang.³⁷ According to this epitaph, in 684 lady Li chose not to support her cousin's (Li Ching-yeh 李敬業 [d.684]) short-lived rebellion against Empress Wu's usurpation of the throne. She predicted the failure of the rebellion and this led her husband, then serving in a unit of the Palace Guards, to commit himself to the defense of the throne.³⁸ Her farsightedness helped to earn a court reward for her husband, and consequently saved her family and herself from being involved in the crime of treason.

There is no question that the author of lady Li's epitaph did not consider her dominant. Being a resolute woman with an independent mind was perceived as a positive quality. This shows that while submissiveness was a virtue much emphasized for women in the early T'ang, her intelligence in helping her husband to take the right course and thus preserving their family was equally appreciated. By providing such intellectual assistance to her husband, lady Li played her prescribed supportive role in the maintenance of the Confucian family structure with its finest logical result. In short, lady Li can serve as the best kind of "inner helper" according to the prescribed Confucian virtues for women.³⁹

Lady Li's husband died in the suppression of the rebellion. According to the writer of her epitaph, to remain faithful to her deceased husband, though only about thirty years old, lady Li decided not to remarry.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, around this time, her father also passed away. She lost the two most important men upon whom she was supposed to depend, but it was only in obedience to Empress Wu's strict order that lady Li finally remarried.⁴¹

What we can confirm here is that remarriage for a scholar-official's wife before the 760s, though not necessarily preferable behavior, clearly at-

³⁷ For Li Chi's life and his contribution to the establishment of the T'ang, see *CTS*, 67: 2483-90; *HTS* 93: 3817-22.

³⁸ *TTMCM* 16: 1574. For Li ching-yeh's rebellion, see *CTS*, 67: 2490-92; *HTS* 93: 3822-24.

³⁹ Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 1993: 119-20; also see Albert Richard O'Hara, *The Position of Women in Early China According to the "Lieh nü chuan," "The Biographies of Eminent Chinese Women,"* Taipei: Mei-ya shu-chü reprint, 1971: 49-101.

⁴⁰ Lady Li died in 716 at the age of sixty-three (Chinese *sui* 歲). Her first husband died in 684. See *TTMCM* 16: 1574.

⁴¹ The author of this epitaph did not explain why Empress Wu forced lady Li to remarry. Perhaps, as the compiler of the collection of T'ang epitaphs speculates, it was meant to humiliate lady Li since she was related to the rebel leader. See *TTMCM*, 16: 1574 for the comment attached to the end of lady Li's epitaph.

³³ See Tuan Ch'eng-shih 段成式, *Yu-yang tsa-tsu* 酉陽雜俎, Chung-kuo shih-hsieh ts'ung-shu hsu-pien edn. 中國史學叢書續編, Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chü, 1975, ch. 8: 47.

³⁴ In addition to these four wives, another similar case was also discovered after the 760s. For all of these five jealous wives and their husbands, see Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 161-63. Also see *CTS* 59: 2324 and 69: 2515; *HTS* 94: 3829.

³⁵ Chen, "Empress Wu," 1994: 85-88 and 100-4.

³⁶ See *TTMCM*, 3: 414; 6: 564, 567, 571, 572 and 582, especially see, 8: 799; 10: 951 and 952.

tracted no particular social disapproval. This attitude certainly had something to do with early T'ang government policy. To promote population growth, emperor T'ai-tsung 太宗 (r. 627-650) encouraged widows and widowers to remarry in accord with their age and personal situations.⁴²

It should be pointed out here that among all the early T'ang women's epitaphs that I have examined, lady Li is the only one who married twice. Among the three hundred and eighty-six women, sixty-four of them are said to have remained unmarried after the death of their husbands. The rest either died young, or passed away at about the same time their husbands did. If we discount those women whose age at widowhood is unclear, and those who started to live in widowhood only after they reached the age of fifty, an age that obviously offered them very little opportunity to remarry, only nineteen women can be said to have endured ten, twenty or sometimes even more than forty years of widowed life.⁴³

A lady with the last name of So 索 from the Tunhuang area married into a Chang 張 family in the Ho-nan region. Her husband died in 677, but she remained a widow for twenty-three years until she too passed away at age seventy (*sui*) in 700. Another lady, née Fang 房, married into a Ch'en 陳 family. When her husband died in 660, she was only in her mid-twenties, but like all the other widows, she vowed to be faithful to him and was determined to bring up their children. She kept her promise for forty-six years until her death in 706 at the age of seventy-two.⁴⁴

What is interesting here is that even though early T'ang society accepted remarriage without discrimination, almost all the women portrayed in early T'ang epitaphs, regardless of their natal family's standing in the hierarchy of the T'ang elite class, and their husbands' official ranks, chose not to remarry after the death of their husbands. Their choice was in a sharp contrast with that high percentage of remarriage among the imperial

princesses. From this particular point of view, it seems difficult to maintain that T'ang elite women necessarily led a life of greater freedom than their counterparts in subsequent dynasties.

The above discussion thus confirms our previous statement that before the 760s women of the most prestigious aristocratic families were already Confucianized. That is, before the An Lu-shan rebellion, women from all strata of the scholar-official class generally all observed the Confucian family order and rites. They carefully followed "the three forms of submissiveness and the four virtues" and usually remained widows after the death of their husbands. It is not unlikely that the burgeoning tendency to restrict the remarriage of widows, particularly from the elite class, in the later part of the Northern Dynasties actually had an impact on the life of these women. This makes it all the more necessary to find out what else the Confucian revivalists could exactly accomplish in their Confucianization of T'ang women after the 760s.

WOMEN ILLUSTRATED IN EPITAPHS BY LEADING CONFUCIAN REVIVALISTS

The resurgence of Confucian consciousness went through various stages and expressed itself in different intellectual activities, for instance in the *ku-wen* 古文 (or ancient prose) movement and in critical scholarship on the Confucian classics during the mid-eighth and ninth centuries. The fundamental concern of the leading Confucian revivalists, however, was to restore the T'ang state and to ameliorate the suffering of its people in the post rebellion era. To realize this goal, they searched earnestly for the living relevance of Confucian principles as preserved in the classics rather than focusing, as previously, on narrowly constrained exegetical and ritual studies.⁴⁵

Probably due to this reason, we find that many Confucian revivalists, when composing epitaphs for their wives and female relatives, or for their friends' wives, tended to highlight some significant deeds accomplished by the deceased rather than just praising their practice of "the four virtues" in conventional platitudes. In general their portraits of the deceased were less formulaic than the epitaphs written before the 760s, and some revivalists hardly ever paid attention to a woman's appearance or her needlework.

Of course not every leading Confucian revivalists composed epitaphs

⁴² *T'ang ta chao-ling chi* 唐大詔令集, the 1958 Commercial Press edition, ch. 110: 569-70.

⁴³ The following are the volume and epitaph numbers for those sixty-four women. An asterisk after the epitaph number refers to the nineteen long-term widows. *TTCM*, 1: 13, 90 and 96; 2: 101, 139 and 161*; 3: 274, 280 and 299; 4: 342, 358 and 399; 5: 438, 440* and 444; 6: 515, 536, 556* and 587; 7: 606, 612, 680* and 686*; 8: 712 and 747; 9: 816 and 820; 10: 917*; 11: 1004, 1018, 1068, 1072*, 1073 and 1082*; 12: 1127, 1167*, 1168, 1171 and 1184; 13: 1254, 1276 and 1285; 14: 1303, 1311*, 1327*, 1336, 1346*, 1368*, 1372 and 1400; 15: 1422*, 1424 and 1433; 16: 1502, 1513, 1517*, 1574 and 1577*; 17: 1643*, 1648*, 1686 and 1698; 18: 1707, 1730* and 1780.

⁴⁴ *TTCM* 14: 1346; 15: 1422.

⁴⁵ Chen, *Liu Tsung-yüan*, 1992.

for women. We shall concentrate in the following discussion, in chronological order, on those who did. It should be pointed out that a few of the epitaphs composed by the pioneer representatives of the Confucian revival may likely be dated before the 760s, but since the mid-T'ang Confucian revival is generally agreed to have begun around the outbreak of the An Lu-shan rebellion, I have included one of these few epitaphs in our discussion as well.

Around 742, Tu Fu, perhaps China's greatest poet and a man whose sympathy for public suffering is also well known, composed an epitaph to commemorate his aunt.¹⁶ In this funerary inscription, Tu Fu first delineates how his aunt had fully practiced "the four virtues." She is said to have been good at needlework, careful with family sacrificial rites, filial toward her elders and friendly to people below her. She is also said to be able to recognize all the words and understand their meaning when reading books. The most important event Tu Fu wanted to relate in this epitaph is really how his aunt saved his life when he was little. In his own words, Tu writes:

Fu was ill when I previously stayed in my aunt's place. My aunt's son was also ill at the time. A witch then came and said: "the person who is placed in the southeast corner of the room will be lucky." My aunt then removed her son from that place and settled me there. Consequently I survived, but my aunt's son died. I learned this later from a servant.¹⁷

Tu Fu's gratitude to his aunt was such that he decided that she should be given the posthumous title of "righteous aunt" (*i-ku* 義姑).¹⁸

Li Hua, an early *ku-wen* master and an initial representative of Confucian revival,¹⁹ once wrote a biography for his maternal grandmother. This

¹⁶ Tu Fu, "T'ang ku Wan-nien hsien-chün Ching-chao Tu shih mu-pei" 唐故萬年縣君京兆杜氏墓誌, *CTW* 360: 15-17. For Tu Fu's literary works and his Confucian consciousness, see Shan Chou, "Tu Fu's Social Conscience: Compassion and Topicality in His Poetry," *HJAS* 5: 1 (6, 1991): 5-53. Also see William Hung, *Tu Fu, China's Greatest Poet*, New York, 1952.

¹⁷ Tu Fu, "T'ang ku Wan-nien," *CTW* 360: 17. ¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ If not otherwise specified, for the life and deeds of Li Hua and the following Confucian revivalists, see E. G. Pulleyblank, "Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Legalism in T'ang Intellectual Life, 753-805," in Arthur F. Wright ed., *The Confucian Persuasion*, Stanford U.P., 1960: 77-114; David McMullen, "Historical and Literary Theory in the Mid-Eighth Century," in *Perspectives on the T'ang*, 1973: 307-44; Hartman, *Han Yi*, 1986; Chen, *Liu Tsung-yüan*, 1992.

biography is not an epitaph in the strict sense, but since with the exception of the title the entire biography functions exactly as an epitaph, I shall regard it as an epitaph in tracing Li Hua's idea of the ideal woman.

In this essay, Li Hua states that his grandmother died in 713, two years before his birth. According to Li Hua, his grandmother came from the same prominent Li clan of Chao chün 趙郡 that he did. She later married into the Lu 盧 family, another eminent Shan-tung aristocratic clan. Lady Li's mother-in-law was a certain lady Ts'ui 崔. We are told that

Lady Ts'ui treated her daughters-in-law very strictly. She was in her old age and had many illnesses. [But] after lady Li started to attend her, her health condition improved day by day.... Lady Li's [way] of bringing the servants under control was to conceal their small mistakes, but admonishment would soon follow so that serious mistakes would not occur later. When lady Ts'ui got angry, she scolded the young and the debased. Lady Li would then kneel down and tell her that this was contrary to the [way] of [Confucian] instruction.²⁰

We further learn that lady Li read the *Analects*, the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of History* and the *Book of Rites*. She also recited contemporary poems and prose, provided they were sufficiently refined and elegant. She even amused herself playing the zither. Her most impressive deeds, in Li Hua's view, were still her filial piety toward her elders and her kindness to people whose status was below hers. She often asked her mother-in-law to let her punish the young and the servants outside her room rather than in her presence. Her punishments were usually light and did not always meet her mother-in-law's standards. She would tell her mother-in-law that she did not adopt severe measures because she was afraid that her mother-in-law might later take pity on the punished ones and regret the punishment. At this juncture, "lady Ts'ui would clap her hands, smile and say: 'my new daughter-in-law Li not only pacifies me, but also transforms my nature.'" When her own mother went blind, lady Li's care also made her sigh and say: "as long as this daughter is with me, I forget my blindness."²¹

At the very end of this essay, Li Hua states that he would even venture

²⁰ Li Hua, "Li fu-chen chuan" 李夫人傳, *CTW* 321: 11-12.

²¹ *Ibid.*

to report lady Li's life to the official historians. He evidently believed that lady Li's filial conduct and her kindness deserved a place in the official dynastic history.

The epitaphs for women composed by Tu-ku Chi, another early Confucian revivalist, do not usually provide such concrete details about the deceased. In this regard, Tu-ku's presentation of T'ang women is not very different from that of the pre-760s epitaph writers. Unlike most of them, however, after his praise of a deceased woman as the embodiment of chastity, kindness, filial piety or thrift, Tu-ku would usually mention how the deceased earned this approbation.

In his remembrance of his first wife, née Wei 韋, Tu-ku writes that she treated herself poorly when it came to clothing and food; she was humble when receiving her husband's in-laws, and she managed the young and the servants with respect. Furthermore, "she urged them to do the good and the right thing. She forgave those who did not know [they were mistaken] and sympathized with those who did not have the ability [to do the right thing.]"⁵²

Tu-ku Chi's disciple Liang Su followed a similar style in composing women's epitaphs. Around 780 Liang wrote a funerary inscription for the elder cousin of his patron and close friend Hsiao Fu 蕭復 (732-788). In it Liang says that lady Hsiao was chaste, bright, gentle and submissive. She also observed the proper norms for the preparation of sacrificial dresses for ritual ceremonies. Liang clearly employs the conventional rhetoric here in his praise of lady Hsiao.

Nevertheless, as Liang's narration continues he begins to bring some particular deeds accomplished by lady Hsiao into focus. We are told that after the death of her husband, lady Hsiao "stopped preparing [the family's] food so that she could [have time to] instruct and guide her three daughters. She also conducted herself in accord with the rites. Within twenty years, her motherly deportment became increasingly exemplary, and her household instructions became more and more renowned."⁵³

Unlike Liang Su and Tu-ku Chi, Han Yü usually avoids using conventional rhetoric when composing epitaphs for women. He tends to give

succinct accounts of certain memorable deeds of the deceased. This is especially true if the deceased is close to him. His commemoration of his wet nurse Li 李 who died in the third month of 811 can partially demonstrate this point.⁵⁴

Though a short tomb inscription, it reveals why Han Yü held a commoner woman in high regard. Han writes that Li began to nurse him right after he was born. Unfortunately, he soon lost his parents and became an orphan. As Han writes, "Li took pity on me and could not bear to abandon me. She cared for and protected me even more attentively. She subsequently grew old in the Han household."⁵⁵ Han also recalls that he and his family often went home to celebrate Li's birthday, but now he was taking them to observe her burial.

Han Yü's appreciation for wet nurse Li reminds one of his respect for his sister-in-law, née Cheng 鄭. In a funeral ode, Han expresses his deep admiration for the way lady Cheng raised him. Han writes:

My birth was not auspicious. I was orphaned at two and raised by my older brother. It was my sister-in-law's kindness that rescued me from death to life. Before I was seven, my brother received a government post, so we left Lo-yang (their home region) to live in Ch'ang-an (the capital of the T'ang). When I was cold she clothed me, when I was hungry she nourished me, so that neither illness nor misfortune befell me. She pitied me and toiled mightily to protect such an ordinary foolish fellow [as me].⁵⁶

Either in late 780, or early 781 when Han Yü was around eleven or twelve, his older brother passed away.⁵⁷ According to Han Yü, lady Cheng continued to take care of the sacrificial rituals for the Han family, "treating me as her own son, and constantly teaching and influencing me."⁵⁸ We do not know lady Cheng's age, but she died in 794 after having lived thirteen years a widow.⁵⁹

Han Yü also dedicated an epitaph to a certain lady Ho 何 who passed

⁵² Han Yü, "Ju-mu mu-ming" 乳母墓銘, *CTW* 364: 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.* For Han Yü's life, see Hartman, *Han Yü*, 1986, ch. 1.

⁵⁴ Han Yü, "Chi Cheng fu-chen wen" 祭鄭夫人文, *CTW* 368: 5. With the exception of the last sentence, I have adopted Hartman's English translation of this passage. See his *Han Yü*, 1986: 20.

⁵⁵ Hartman, *Han Yü*, 1986: 23.

⁵⁶ Han Yü, "Chi Cheng fu-chen wen," *CTW* 368: 6. ⁵⁷ Hartman, *Han Yü*, 1986: 30.

⁵² Tu-ku Chi, "Ch'ien tso hsiao wei-ping ts'ao ts'an-chün He-nan Tu-ku kung ku fu-chen Wei shih mu-chih" 前左驍衛兵曹參軍河南獨孤公故夫人韋氏墓誌, *CTW* 391: 4-5.

⁵³ Liang Su, "Chien-ch'a yü-shih Li chün fu-chen Lan-ling Hsiao shih mu-chih-ming" 臨察御史李君夫人蘭陵蕭氏墓誌銘, *CTW* 321: 12.

away in the seventh month of 812. Han informs us that lady Ho took over the management of her family's affairs after her husband's death in 807. Her husband had five sons and two daughters, yet, only two sons and one girl were born of lady Ho. Nevertheless, "the lady treated all of them equally in their upbringing, education, and marriage [arrangements]. Even her husband's relatives did not feel there were any preferential differences. As for regulating boy servants and governing the household production, she always put things in order."⁶³

Among the mid-T'ang Confucian revivalists, Liu Tsung-yüan, Han Yü's friend and an important early ninth century revivalist, can be said to have written the most epitaphs for women.⁶⁴ This is perhaps because he was a prominent writer whose prose was often solicited by his friends, or because he happened to have quite a few female relatives who passed away before he did. Another fact about Liu Tsung-yüan is that his family, like Li Hua's, also belonged to one of the most illustrious T'ang aristocratic groups that originated from the southwest of present day Shansi province.⁶⁵ This explains why many of his epitaphs are for women with a similar aristocratic background. It also explains why he often outlined the specific life stages of women with such celebrated backgrounds. In one case we are told that the deceased "knew how to be humble at three, to act with caution at five, and was [also] skilled in needlework at seven."⁶⁶

Liu Tsung-yüan wrote epitaphs for women of humble origin too. In the fifth month of 810, the concubine of a friend who was banished to the south just as Liu had been,⁶⁷ passed away. In his remembrance of her, Liu tells us that her name was Ma Shu 馬淑. Ma Shu used to be a prostitute with some talent for singing. Her mother before her had also earned a living as a traveling prostitute. Tsung-yüan's friend admired Ma Shu's singing talent and subsequently took her as his concubine when he was on his way to the south. In their banished home, Ma Shu entertained Tsung-yüan and

many other literati with her singing. When they listened to her songs, "no one remained unmoved by her voice and [everyone] praised her fine appearance, and [we] forgot the remoteness of our banishment and the disgrace of our reputations."⁶⁸

There is no question that Liu Tsung-yüan, who had himself studied music for ten years in his childhood, greatly appreciated Ma Shu's singing talent.⁶⁹ However, she does not seem to have had any other virtues which he cared to mention. In Liu's view, Ma Shu did not perhaps have any other impressive virtues, but coming from such a lowly background as she did, he probably never expected her to acquire the sort of Confucian ethics women from his own class possessed. She probably was not expected even to behave like Han Yü's wet nurse Li. It is possible that Liu thought that a woman like Ma Shu was not prepared for Confucianization.

To Liu Tsung-yüan then, the ideal Confucian woman was best represented by his own mother. This does not mean that he did not pay high tribute to his other deceased female relatives, but his adulation of his mother clearly made her the model of models.⁷⁰ In recalling how his uncles used to teach him by referring to his mother's exemplary conduct, Liu notes their words to him this way:

Your clan is a great family. After [your mother] served her parents-in-law, she also promoted friendly relationships with relatives from other marriage connections. Your Liu family's filial and kind reputation became increasingly widely known. One year the harvest was poor and food was scarce. Your mother did not eat much, but she made sure that all the fatherless children had enough to eat. This is truly a rare virtue!⁷¹

⁶³ Liu Tsung-yüan, "T'ai-fu Li ch'ing wai-fu Ma Shu chih" 太府李卿外婦馬淑誌, *CTW* 599: 6.

⁶⁴ For Liu's love of music and his study of the subject, see Lo Lien-t'ien 羅聯添, *Liu Tsung-yüan shih-chi hsi-nien chi tzu-liao lei-pien* 柳宗元事蹟繫年資料類編, Taipei, 1981: 28.

⁶⁵ Liu's praise for his two sisters are fulsome, see his "Wang chieh ch'ien Ching-chao-fu ts'an-chün P'ei chün fu-chen mu-chih" 亡姊前京兆府參軍裴君墓誌, *CTW* 599: 21-23 and "Wang chieh Ts'ui shih fu-chen mu-chih kai shih-wen" 亡姊崔氏夫人墓誌蓋石文, *CTW* 591: 2-3.

⁶⁶ Liu Tsung-yüan, "Hsien t'ai fu-chen Ho-tung hsien t'ai-chün kuei-fu chih" 先太夫人河東縣太君歸附誌, *CTW* 599: 16.

⁶⁷ Han Yü, "Hsi-kuo fu-chen mu-chih-ming" 息國夫人墓誌銘, *CTW* 564: 10.

⁶⁸ If we count the eulogy as well, Liu Tsung-yüan composed 18 epitaphs, Han Yü 13, Liang Su 6, and Tu-ku Chi 8, while Li Hua only did 1. Among other leading revivalists, Li Ao wrote 2, and Lü Wen 3.

⁶⁹ For his family, see Chen, *Liu Tsung-yüan*, 1992, ch. 2.

⁷⁰ Liu Tsung-yüan, "Lang-chou Yüan-wai ssu-hu Hsüeh chün ch'i Ts'ui shih mu-chih" 郎州員外司戶薛君妻崔氏墓誌, *CTW* 589: 2.

⁷¹ Liu Tsung-yüan was banished to the south because he had been involved in the ill-fated 805 reform, for the latest account of his participation in this reform, see Chen, *Liu Tsung-yüan*, 1992, ch. 3.

Liu further recalled his other uncles telling him that when his mother heard them reading aloud from the ancient histories and the early philosophers, she could memorize them all without omission. Tsung-yüan himself also remembered how his mother, née Lu 盧, taught him quite a few ancient parallel prose works. His sisters received instruction on some classic such as the *Book of Rites* and on needlework from lady Lu as well. As a result, his sisters all married into eminent families. His own commendation of lady Lu was that she "treated her elders as respectful as a minister treats his ruler; treated people below her as kindly as a mother fostering a son; and treated people hostile to her as friendly as if they were her brothers."⁷⁰ Lady Lu died in 806 in her late sixties. She had been a widow since 793, being almost in her mid-fifties when her husband died.

Before we explore the implications of the above discussion, we need to bring in two more women's epitaphs. These two were composed by Li Ao and Po Chü-i respectively. Li Ao was a follower of Han Yü, and his scholarly treatise on human nature marked a crucial point in the development of the mid-T'ang Confucian revival. Po Chü-i, though not a prose master, was known both for his service as a conscientious censor and his concern for public suffering.⁷¹

The epitaph written by Li Ao was for his mother-in-law who was from a distinguished Wei family of the Ch'ang-an area. Lady Wei, in Li Ao's account, passed away in 802 at thirty-two years (sui) of age. She was married to one of Han Yü's cousins when she was about thirteen. Four years later her husband died and left her a seven-months-old daughter who was later to become Li Ao's wife.⁷¹ Li Ao writes that lady Wei had previously lost her own mother, and then:

...she took her daughter and returned to her father. In a few years her father also passed away. Madam cried her heart out; she lived frugally to raise her child. She observed the Confucian principles and was careful not to cause others to suspect or dislike her. Her chaste virtue

grew increasingly unshakable, even the will of a man of heroic virtue was no match for hers.⁷²

We are told that lady Wei stayed with Li Ao's family after her daughter's marriage to him. Unfortunately, she only lived two more years. Lady Wei lived a widow's life then for about fifteen years. It seems that she would have remained chaste longer than fifteen years if she had not died so early.

Around the second month of 808, Po Chü-i was asked to write an epitaph to memorialize the mother of his closest friend Yüan Chen 元稹 (779-831).⁷³ From Po's narrative, we know that Yüan's mother was from a branch of the Ying-yang Cheng family, one of the most distinguished Shan-tung aristocratic clans.⁷⁴ According to Po:

Previously when the lady was still a daughter [in her natal family], she was known for serving her parents with filial piety and for treating her brothers and sisters with affection and kindness. These acts occurred spontaneously and were not [the result of] instruction by teachers. Her nature was just that refined. When she became a wife, the Yüan family had been poor for generations. Nevertheless, the lady wanted to make the family's sacrificial rituals abundant and refined, to serve as instruction to her offspring. When the time approached for a sacrificial occasion, the lady would then stay up the whole night, [and then] she would personally attend to the [ritual] cleansing and cooking. Even in the hottest summer or the bitterly cold winter, she would serve [the spirits] diligently, offering [the sacrificial] food herself without a hint of her own fatigue. Her sincerity and reverence were just so extensive...

Her husband died leaving the lady alone as a mother. Chi 稹 (Yüan Chen's brother) and Chen were then only about seven and eight years old. Because the family was poor and could not afford to hire a teacher to instruct the children, the lady herself started to teach them tirelessly from the *Book of Poetry* and the *Book of History*. Within

⁷⁰ Ibid.: 17.

⁷¹ For Li Ao, see Barrett, *Li Ao*, 1992; for Po Chü-i, see Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i*, London, 1949.

⁷² Li Ao, "Ku Shuo-fang chieh-tu chang shu-chi tien-chung shih-yü-shih Ch'ang-li Han chün fu-chen Ching-chao Wei shih mu-chih-ming" 故朔方節度掌書記殿中侍御史昌黎君夫人京兆氏墓誌銘, *CTW* 639: 17-19.

⁷³ Ibid.: 18.

⁷⁴ For his life, *CTS*, 166: 4327-40; *HTS* 174: 5223-29; also see Angela Jung Palandri, *Yüan Chen*, Boston, 1977.

⁷⁵ Po Chü-i, "T'ang Ho-nan Yüan fu-chün fu-chen Ying-yang Cheng shih mu-chih-ming" 唐河南元府君夫人棠陽鄭氏墓誌銘, *CTW* 680: 3-4.

four or five years, as a result of their good understanding of the classics, both sons entered the government service. . . .

It has been almost twenty-five years since the lady took charge of the Yüan family. She got rid of whipping and beating and relied on [stern] warnings [as her only punishment]. She often cautioned the female members of the family to make their countenance proper; trembling with fear in their hearts, these female members felt that they [had to be] very much on their guard [as a result of her admonitions]; she also warned the various male descendants to be upright in their words. [As a result] they cultivated a sense of shame, just as though they had been flogged in the public market. Because of this, the lady guided the people below her to make less mistakes and brought great harmony to her family.⁷⁵

From Po Chü-i's description, Lady Cheng certainly appears to have been a remarkable woman. Po even asserts that her virtues could be extended to maintain a state or enrich the people. In that light, he admits that he did not compose this epitaph merely to manifest Yüan Chen's filial piety to his mother. He writes that he intended for people from hundreds of future generations to hear of lady Cheng's virtuous character. Po hoped her example would serve to "make shrewish wives gentle, harsh mothers kind and disobedient daughters submissive."⁷⁶ There is no question that Po Chü-i regarded lady Cheng as a perfect female paragon.

IMPLICATIONS

We can now explore the implications of our presentation of women's epitaphs composed by the leading Confucian revivalists. Three points appear to be worthy of comment.

First, although the composition of epitaphs often aimed at bringing the fine deeds of the deceased to public attention, among all the epitaphs that we have examined so far, only Li Hua and Po Chü-i consciously stated that they intended to have the women represented by them established as exemplars for future generations. This unequivocally demonstrates that

they had a genuine ambition, or a sense of mission, to Confucianize the women of future generations on the basis of their perceived ideal Confucian virtues for women: filial piety, resistance to adversity, household management, and education of sons for government service.

Second, the female ethics praised by the leading Confucian revivalists in the above epitaphs are clearly not in fundamental conflict with those extolled by scholar-officials before the 760s. In the period after the An Lu-shan rebellion, a woman's activities were still perceived as family oriented. A woman's conduct continued to be assessed according to her relationships with members of her natal family as well as her husband's family. While Li Hua advocated that "women also have to read books and understand their meaning so that they can know about events and situations in the ancient past and the present time," he nevertheless insisted that the purpose of women's education was to ensure that "when they serve their parents and their in-laws, they will make no mistakes."⁷⁷ Li also stated that by studying the Confucian classics, women would know that they should be submissive to their husbands.⁷⁸

Li Hua's position can partially explain why so many elite women in the mid-T'ang received fine literary training and classical education,⁷⁹ and it demonstrates equally that the Confucian conception of the "three forms of submissiveness and four virtues" continued to function as a basic frame of reference when reviewing a woman's life. Even the learned and talented

⁷⁵ Li Hua, "Yü wai-sun Ts'ui-shih erh hai shu" 與外孫崔氏二孩書, *CTW* 315: 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ The above-mentioned epitaphs already reveal that many famous T'ang scholar-officials were brought up and taught by their mother, or their sister-in-law. We also find other elite women earning a place in mid-T'ang history through their own talent and scholarship. The notable Sung sisters (to be discussed soon) and a precocious woman scholar Niu Ying-chen 牛應貞 (d. ca. 800) are just two examples. Niu Ying-chen died around the age of twenty-four. Her surviving prose and a biography written by one of the Sung sisters portray her as an exceptionally gifted young woman with broad knowledge and a penetrating mind. For her life and work, see *CTW* 98: 12-14 and 945: 1-3. Also see *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記, Chung-hua shu-chü 1961 edition, ch. 271. To be sure, T'ang imperial ladies are also known for their scholarship. Empress Wu is said to be the author of at least six works. Her long time palace assistant Shang-kuan Wan-erh 上官婉兒 (664-710) is another distinguished literary talent of her time. See Chen, "Empress Wu," 1994: 90-93. Besides these elite women, there are of course the famous courtesans and woman poets Hsüeh T'ao 薛濤 (ca. 768-831) and Yü Hsüan-chi 魚玄機 (ca. 844-868). For their life and work, see *Brocade River Poems: Selected Works of the Tang Dynasty Courtesan Xue Tao*, translated and introduced by Jeanne Larsen, Princeton U.P., 1987; *T'ang nü-lang Yü Hsüan-chi shih* 唐女郎魚玄機詩, SPPY edn. For T'ang women's writings in general see, Hu Wen-k'ai 胡文楷, *Li-tai fu-nü chu-tso k'ao* 歷代婦女著作考, Shanghai: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1985: 14-32.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*: 4-5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: 5-6.

Sung 宋 sisters, Jo-hsin 若莘 (d. ca. 820) and Jo-chao 若昭 (d. ca. 825), identified as "proto feminists" in the mid-T'ang due to their conscious pursuit of an official career normally monopolized by educated men, had to instruct other T'ang women to conduct themselves within the prescribed limits. Their work entitled the *Women's Analects* (*Nü Lun-yü* 女論語) corroborates this statement.⁸¹

There is then no dramatic change regarding the perception of female ethics before and after the 760s. It is clear, however, that, unlike the scholar-officials before the 760s, the leading Confucian revivalists tended to shift the point of emphasis in their evaluation of women's lives. For one thing, they no longer paid much attention to describing a woman's physical beauty, or her needlework. Instead, they gave a more detailed narration of a woman's knowledge of the Confucian classics and her application of that knowledge to the instruction of her children; of her willingness to sacrifice her own interests for the sake of her elders or her children; and, above all, of her perseverance in maintaining the Confucian family order and raising her children or her young relations during widowhood.

We can say that in order to Confucianize T'ang women, the Confucian revivalists placed a much greater emphasis on the substantial (moral deeds) than on the ritual parts (appearance or needlework) of "the four virtues." The Confucianization of T'ang women in this post-rebellion period clearly consisted in the narration of concrete female deeds that served to promote the revival of Confucian moral principles. What interested the revivalists most was to manifest a woman's, or an ideal mother's, ability to realize certain Confucian moral principles in her family life.

This interest parallels the leading Confucian revivalists' concern for the living relevance of the Confucian classics to government. In their collective view, a woman's realization of certain Confucian principles in her domestic life was perceived as equal to a scholar-official's application of those principles to government. Thus, Tu Fu wanted to praise his aunt because her conduct was a living example of the concept of "i 義, righteousness or rightness." Han Yü paid tribute to his wet nurse Li and his

sister-in-law because they realized through their behavior their sense of commiseration and their loyalty to the Han family. The same can be said about all the other women commended by the other leading Confucian revivalists.

It is true that our previous presentation of lady Tu, who died in 718, indicates that some scholar-officials before the 760s had already paid attention to women's ability to realize certain Confucian moral principles, but it should be noted that this was not the general trend and that the author of lady Tu's epitaph never neglected the necessity of stressing her appearance.

Third and last, while the accomplishments of a widow bringing up her children, or her nephew in Han Yü's case, was deeply appreciated in itself, the main concern of the leading revivalists was not with the virtue of chastity per se. They aimed more at manifesting the unusual deeds accomplished either by their widowed mothers or female relatives. Their respect for these deceased females is obvious, but in their epitaphs, with the exception of Li Ao, the leading Confucian revivalists never particularly single out chastity as a celebrated virtue for widows. This is not to say that Li Ao was necessarily opposed to women's remarriage. There might be other explanations for his stress on his mother-in-law's chastity. Before we turn to these possible explanations, it is perhaps necessary first to state that the situation regarding remarriage after the An Lu-shan rebellion was similar to that prior to the 760s for women from the scholar-official class.

Besides all the women's epitaphs composed by the leading Confucian revivalists, I have also read all the other women's epitaphs in the *Ch'üan Tang wen* collection dated after 760.⁸² Like the pre-760 situation, from around two hundred and nine women's epitaphs, I have located only one case in which the deceased married twice. Forty-one women were said to have remained widows, but only eleven of them started their widowhood under the age of fifty.⁸³ This finding does not include the remarriage of

⁸¹ This edition of *CTW* also includes the *Tang wen shih-i* 唐文拾遺 [A Supplement to Tang Prose] and the *Tang wen hsü-shih* 唐文續拾 [A Second Supplement to Tang Prose]. I have read the epitaphs included in these two supplements whenever they were about T'ang women.

⁸² The chapter and page number of these forty one epitaphs in the *Ch'üan Tang wen*, the *Tang wen shih-i* (TWSI) and the *Tang wen hsü-shih* (TWSH) are as follows, the one with asterisk refers to those 11 women who became widows under the age of fifty: *CTW* 232: 6-8; 393: 1; 438: 9-10; 504: 6-7, 12-13 and *15-16; 521: *10-11, 11-13, 13-14, *14-15, and

⁸³ For the "proto feminist mindset" of the Sung sisters, see Chen, "Empress Wu," 194: 103-4. For more details regarding the life and work of the Sung sisters, see Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang*, Cambridge U.P., 1992: 49-50. Also see *CTS* 52: 2198-99; *HTS* 77: 3508-9; and Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979, 49-50.

Han Yü's elder daughter. Even if we add his daughter, we still have only two cases of remarriage. What seems to be apparent is that, like their counterparts before the 760s, a very limited number of women from the scholar-official class remarried after the 760s.

We do not know why Han Yü's elder daughter married twice, but the single epitaph from which we learn that a deceased woman married twice can give us some clues regarding the reasons for such a remarriage. This epitaph was composed by a man named Ku Fang-su 顧方肅.⁶³ Ku does not seem to have had an impressive official career, but he was related to the prominent Ku family of the native southern aristocracy in the lower Yangtze region. According to Ku, he was the second husband of the deceased. His wife was from a Chao 趙 family in the north.

Ku Fang-su specifically stated at the very beginning of the epitaph that lady Chao's family lacked male descendants. This made it difficult for the Chao to keep their family genealogical record. As a result, it was impossible to trace her family development. While lady Chao was not a member of a very distinguished aristocratic family, her father did serve the T'ang government. She, in short, still belonged to the scholar-official class.

Like most of the T'ang women from this class, lady Chao married into a family named Yang 楊 at age fifteen. We learn that she had a pleasant life in the Yang family for more than twenty years. In 811, her first husband died and left her with nine young children. Worse still, she soon contracted some kind of lower back disease that made it difficult for her to walk. Ku writes that although lady Chao could continue to regulate the household chores while seated, she was aging fast and her health continued to decline.

Moreover, it was not possible to keep one's chastity in poverty. [Since] the ritual norms are intended to be in accord with the appropriate current situation, and [since] widows and widowers were often suspected [by others], she was forced to take a [new] engagement.⁶⁴

16-17; 564: 2-3, 10-11 and 12-13; *568: 5-6; 590: 16-18 and 18-19; 631: 3-4 and 5-6; *639: 17-19; 655: 29-30; *680: 3-6; 725: 9-12 and 13-14; 780: 14-16; 782: 7-8; *785: 13-15; 791: 24-26; 792: *11-12 and 20-21; 887: 6-7; 996: 3-4, 6-7, *12-13 and 16; TWSI, 23: 14-15; 24: 17-18; 28: 24-25; *30: 4-5; *67: 6-7; TWSH, 15: 15-16.

⁶³ Ku Fang-su, "T'ang ku Chao shih fu-chen mu-chih-ming" 唐故趙氏夫人墓誌銘, in *T'ang wen hsi-shih*, 1983 Chung-hua shu-chü *Ch'üan T'ang wen* edn., 5: 6-7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: 7.

What happened subsequently is not particularly relevant to our present concern, but suffice it to say that after four or five years of her new life, lady Chao became seriously ill and died in 819. Lady Chao's life demonstrates that after the 760s women from the scholar-official class still preferred to preserve their chastity after the death of their husbands, but remarriage continued to be an acceptable practice if women from that class chose to do so.

Lady Chao's life also makes it reasonable to speculate that if an elite woman from a poor family was somehow forced to remarry, women from impoverished peasant families probably had very little chance to choose to remain widows. Economic imperatives seem to have been the main reason for women's remarriage, but social pressures might have played just as important a role.

We have seen through lady Chao's life that widows were often the subject of malicious gossip in T'ang society after the An Lu-shan rebellion. Lady Chao's second husband's statement apparently implies that remarriage would ease the pressure of such gossip. From this perspective, we can further explain why Li Ao held his young widowed mother-in-law in high esteem. His respect for a widow's chastity is more likely to have derived from his understanding of how difficult it was for a woman to be in that position than from any possible bias against remarriage. In other words, Li Ao's praise of his mother-in-law's chastity should not be regarded as the equivalent of moral opposition to female remarriage.

Similarly, even though a widow's ability to raise her children and maintain a Confucian family order receives a more detailed description from the leading revivalists than from the scholar-officials before the 760s, it does not follow that the leading Confucian revivalists were automatically opposed to women's remarriage. Still, the Confucian revivalists' shift of emphasis in women's virtues, particularly to a widowed mother's virtuous conduct, probably did cause the already Confucianized women of the scholar-official class to be even more conscious of bringing certain Confucian principles into practice. The possibility of being elevated to the position of a historical model after death might very well also have served as a strong incentive for a woman to attempt some heroic deeds in life.

To be sure, some leading revivalists did write specific essays exclusively to express their views on female conduct. A theoretical legal judgment, *p'an* 判, prepared by Po Chü-i for selection examination candidates and one of

his poems have also been cited as evidence that Po had a negative attitude toward women's remarriage.⁸⁵ We therefore cannot conclude our investigation without examining these works. We need to find out if certain particular forms of female conduct, other than those which had already been distinguished in their women's epitaphs, were *specifically* celebrated by the leading Confucian revivalists in other works. If so, we need to explain why this was the case. Our findings should help us to clarify further the exact role of the leading Confucian revivalists in the Confucianization of T'ang women.

FORMS OF FEMALE CONDUCT CELEBRATED IN WORKS OTHER THAN EPITAPHS

As far as we know, Li Hua, Liu Tsung-yüan and Li Ao are the only three leading mid-T'ang Confucian revivalists who wrote specific essays to manifest certain deeds accomplished by women between the mid-eighth and mid-ninth centuries. Li Hua's essay was written in parallel prose and entitled "Laments on a Chaste Woman" (Ai Chieh-fu fu 哀節婦賦).⁸⁶ This work has been dealt with elsewhere, but a short summary is provided here to assist our discussion.

Li Hua wrote this prose piece to honor a woman, née Po 薄. She was married to a county police officer in the lower Yangtze region (in present day Kiangsu province). Due to a local rebellion, she was captured by the rebels and was about to be humiliated by them. Having realized that there was no way to escape, she committed suicide. Li Hua writes in the preface that since he "heard that lady Po's righteous conduct had moved [the people] in the south, how could [I] not compose an essay to [record this event]?"⁸⁷

Li Hua apparently learned about lady Po's deed during his own retirement years in the lower Yangtze region. Li's essay on lady Po can be construed as a means to encourage T'ang women to be completely faithful to one spouse.⁸⁸ On the other hand, we can also argue that Li Hua probably did not intend to make chastity a woman's uncompromising virtue, and that chastity is not the main point of his essay. This argument

is made plausible due to an important incident in Li Hua's own life. During the An Lu-shan rebellion Li was himself forced to serve in the rebel court. When the rebellion subsided, he was subjected to a court trial in which his reluctant collaboration almost cost him his life. His career suffered from then on because he had not tried to preserve his integrity as a T'ang official.⁸⁹

Since Li Hua himself failed to demonstrate complete loyalty to the T'ang court, he probably would not expect others to do so, but he certainly would have great admiration for a woman who ended her life to avoid being humiliated by rebellious enemies of the state. While honoring lady Po's courageous conduct, Li Hua was not without sorrow about the loss of her life. It is not at all accidental that he should have used the word "lament" as the title of his essay. His mixed feelings of respect and sorrow for lady Po and his own collaboration with the rebels lead one to doubt that Li Hua was trying to propagate chastity as an absolute virtue for T'ang women. Perhaps Li Hua understood, as we would today, that there is a substantial difference between a woman dying to remain chaste for the sake of her husband and dying to avoid being raped.

As far as can be ascertained, Liu Tsung-yüan wrote two essays regarding women's conduct. One of these essays was composed to make known the unusual conduct of a filial daughter named Jao E 饒娥.⁹⁰ Jao E came from a fishing family in a southern province (in modern Kiangsi). Owing to a sudden storm, Jao E's father was drowned during a fishing trip. Liu records that Jao E died of exhaustion after spending three days without food in a fruitless search for her father's corpse.⁹¹ The following day, her father's corpse surfaced from the lake. The local population believed that this was a miracle granted by Heaven in recognition of Jao E's filial piety. They collected some money and buried Jao E and her father.

Because filial piety was the fundamental cohesive forces of Chinese

⁸⁵ Pulleyblank, "Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Legalism," 1960: 85-86.

⁸⁶ Liu Tsung-yüan, "Jao E pei" 饒娥碑, *CTW* 387: 9-10.

⁸⁷ I am aware that the famous Sung scholar Wang Ying-lin 王應麟 argued that Jao E did not die after that three day search. Wang believed that when Jao E's deed was transmitted orally, people simply passed on an inaccurate message. That is why when Liu Tsung-yüan recorded the event, he also wrote that Jao E died due to three days' exhaustion. However, since the issue of Jao E's death does not alter our basic explanation of Liu's concept of proper conduct for women, I shall leave it as it is. For Wang Ying-lin's comment, see his *K'un-hsiieh chi-wen* [困學紀聞], Taipei Shih-chieh shu-chü 1963 reprint, vol. 3, ch. 17. Also see Lo, *Liu Tsung-yüan shih-chi hsi-nien*, 1981: 281.

⁸⁸ Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 194-95 and 247-48.

⁸⁹ Li Hua, "Ai chieh-fu fu," *CTW* 314: 9-10. ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*: 9.

⁹¹ Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 179.

family life since the third century,¹² and because the T'ang emperors continued consciously to foster it,¹³ it is only natural that Liu Tsung-yüan would want to commend Jao E's unusual deed when he heard about her story. It is also worthwhile to note that when Liu dedicated an epitaph to his deceased sister, he provided many details about her filial conduct as well.¹⁴

Although Liu Tsung-yüan held his sister's filial conduct in high regard, such conduct was not particularly unexpected from a woman with her aristocratic background. Liu's great admiration for Jao E, then, was precisely because she did not come from a family of the Confucian scholar-official class.¹⁵ Liu's essay on Jao E can thus be seen as a deliberate attempt to Confucianize other T'ang women from the commoner class.

Liu Tsung-yüan's other essay concerning women's conduct is entitled "A Biography of A Woman from Ho-chien" (Ho-chien chuan 河間傳).¹⁶ Liu's own comments attached to the end of this essay make it more of a political allegory than a woman's life story, but the work itself contains certain of Liu's conceptions of proper female behavior.

Liu Tsung-yüan calls the female protagonist of his essay Ho-chien, the name of her hometown. This is because, Liu asserts, she was a lewd woman so he does not intend to reveal her surname. According to Liu, Ho-chien was originally a woman of fine virtue. She was filial to her mother-in-law and careful not to involve herself in street gossip. She respected her husband and his friends, and had a very close relationship with him. However, some of her wicked neighbors could not bear to see Ho-chien's virtues, and they tried to find a way to ruin her. They invited Ho-chien to go out with them. Their specified reason was that they wanted to model themselves upon her virtuous conduct. Ho-chien refused their invitation, but her mother-in-law eventually forced her to go out with these "admiring" neighbors.

To make a long story short, once Ho-chien went out with these

¹² Yü Ying-shih 余英時, "Han-Chin chih chi shih chih hsin tzu-chüeh yü hsin ssu-ch'ao" 漢晉之際士之新自覺與新思想, in his *Chung-kuo chih-shih chieh-ts'eng shih-lun* 中國近世階層史論, Taipei: Lien-ching, 1980: 324-27.

¹³ McMullen, *State and Scholars*, 1988: 88 and 300.

¹⁴ See his "Wang chieh ch'ien Ching-chao-fu Ts'an-chün P'ei chün fu-jen mu-chih," *CTW* 590: 22. Also see Chen, *Liu Tsung-yüan*, 1992: 46.

¹⁵ Liu Tsung-yüan, "Jao E pei," *CTW* 587: 10.

¹⁶ This essay is not included in *CTW*; it is in the second chapter of the "Liu Ho-tung wai-chi" 柳河東外集 which is included in the *Liu Ho-tung ch'üan chi* 柳河東全集, SPPY edn., vol. 2, Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chü reprint, 1970.

neighbors, in Liu's view, she eventually became a fallen woman. She not only enjoyed having a sexual affair with a handsome young man who originally raped her, but also successfully plotted to have her husband put to death by the local government. She later opened a wine shop and began to select all sorts of young men as sexual partners. Liu's description of Ho-chien's sexual activities is probably the most explicit one we can trace among scholar-official's writings in the mid-T'ang.

Liu Tsung-yüan tells us further that Ho-chien eventually died of over indulgence in sexual activity. After her death, when her name was mentioned, even her wicked neighbors felt disgusted and tried to avoid the topic. Liu's final comment is that if a wife who had originally been as good and respectable as Ho-chien can fall to such a low point, it is obviously difficult to depend upon the support of a mere friend when one is in danger, not to mention depending upon a ruler's favor. The political implication of Liu's essay is, as stated before, not the focus of our concern here.¹⁷ Neither shall we discuss the authenticity of Ho-chien's life. What we are interested in is Liu's idea of a fine woman as described in this essay.

Liu Tsung-yüan clearly approved of Ho-chien's behavior before her fall. The conduct he praises her for agrees with that applauded in most of the above mentioned women's epitaphs. When Ho-chien first refused to go out with her neighbors, she told her mother-in-law that she heard that "the way of a wife is to accept chastity, submissiveness, quietness and concentration as ritual [norms]. As for bragging about one's carriage and costumes, showing off one's jewelry, going out as a group for boisterous amusement and running around seeking food and drink — these things are not appropriate for women."¹⁸

Ho-chien's statement unquestionably represents Liu Tsung-yüan's own view of appropriate conduct for women. We are not sure about Ho-chien's family background, but her perception of proper conduct for women implies that she probably came from the scholar-official class, or at least, from the bottom rung of that class. The interesting point is that if Liu's portrait of Ho-chien is based on a real life contemporary, her life then demonstrates that T'ang women of the scholar-official class in the early ninth century could still enjoy a colorful life outside their own home. It

¹⁷ For a possible political interpretation of this story, see Wu Wen-chih 吳文治, *Liu Tsung-yüan p'ing-chuan* 柳宗元評傳, Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962: 69-70.

¹⁸ Liu Tsung-yüan, "Ho-chien chuan," in "Liu Ho-tung wai-chi," ch. 2: 2a.

further shows that some of these women could also manage their own businesses and become economically independent. These women could even enjoy a freely chosen sex life, though they were obviously shunned by women from the respected class.

It is quite clear that Liu Tsung-yüan himself did not believe that women from proper families should go out as a group and wander around looking for excitement. He was also opposed to women showing off in public. Such attitudes could certainly lead to complete disapproval of outdoor group activities for women, but Liu Tsung-yüan does not seem to have ever gone to such an extreme. Moreover, even though Liu accepted chastity as one of the ritual norms for women, he never in this essay promoted complete faithfulness as an absolute virtue for women.

Li Ao's two essays were aimed at manifesting some particular deeds accomplished by two females during another devastating provincial rebellion that occurred between 781 and 786. This is the so-called second Ho-pei rebellion and has been carefully dealt with elsewhere.¹⁰¹ Powerful provincial military governors had been a serious threat to the T'ang court since the An Lu-shan rebellion. When Emperor Te-tsung took the throne in 779, he attempted to restore the imperial authority. To do so, he started to restrain the semi-independent military governors in the Ho-pei region. This led to another chaotic period in mid-T'ang history.

One of the two females presented in Li Ao's essays is a seven-year-old girl named Kao Mei-mei 高妹妹, or Little Sister Kao.¹⁰² When the second Ho-pei rebellion broke out in 781, Mei-mei and her mother and brother were taken hostage by the rebels. The rebels believed that with these hostages they could prevent Mei-mei's father from joining the T'ang forces. When the rebels failed to achieve this goal, they decided to execute their hostages. Mei-mei's mother then begged the rebels to release the innocent young Mei-mei, but Mei-mei refused to live as the rebels' maid servant and see her mother and brother executed. When Mei-mei was about to be executed, unlike her mother and brother, she refused to pay tribute to the deities of the Four Directions. Her reason was that since a loyal family like hers was to be persecuted, the deities must simply have lost their sense of right and wrong and they did not deserve her tribute.

Li Ao tells us that a year after Mei-mei's death, the T'ang court granted her the posthumous name Min 愍, or Sympathy. Li Ao himself did not actually hear the story of Mei-mei's life until 797 when Han Yü related it to him. Li Ao said that it was strange that Mei-mei's deed was not known to every household. Because of this, he wanted to compose an essay to celebrate Mei-mei. He believed that if Mei-mei's virtue was made known to people, "even if they have a disobedient son, he will definitely change his behavior; and even if they have a shrewish wife, she will definitely change her mind. Praising [such] a young girl and thereby encouraging people [to do good] is also an important element of the [government's] civilizing influence."¹⁰³

The woman presented in Li Ao's second essay is lady Yang, wife of a county Magistrate.¹⁰⁴ Lady Yang, according to Li Ao, saved her husband's territory from attack by provincial rebels in 783. When the rebels first attacked, lady Yang's husband did not know what to do. Lady Yang told him: "You are the county Magistrate. When the rebels arrive, you should defend [your county]; even if your defense force is not enough and you will subsequently die because of it, that is also your duty. If you run away, who will then defend [the county]?"¹⁰⁵ After further discussion, lady Yang finally persuaded her husband to stay and defend the county.

Lady Yang later organized the people in the county and encouraged them to fight in their own defense. When her husband led the troops to fight against the rebels, lady Yang personally cooked and distributed rations equally to all the fighting men. After her husband was wounded in the hand, she still insisted that he continue to fight to boost the morale of his troops. They finally defeated the rebels and saved the county. Her husband was rewarded with a promotion by the court. After relating lady Yang's heroic deeds, Li Ao then offers his own comment:

If women and girls have such virtues as attending to parents-in-law with respect and obedience, keeping a harmonious relationship with the wives of their husbands' brothers, treating the young and those of lower rank with kindness and love, and maintaining their chastity, they are quite worthy already. As for distinguishing military ranks, and understanding the courageous principles of fighting and defense, even

¹⁰¹ C. A. Peterson, "Court and Province in Mid- and Late T'ang," *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 3, part 1*, 1979: 500-510.

¹⁰² Li Ao, "Kao Min Nü pei" 高愍女碑, *CTW* 638: 16-17.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*: 17.

¹⁰⁴ Li Ao, "Yang Lieh-fu chuan" 楊烈婦傳, *CTW* 640: 6-8.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*: 6.

understanding the courageous principles of fighting and defense, even ministers and officials have difficulty doing so.

Since the outbreak of the rebellion..., there have been those who lacked the courage to fight, the wisdom to defend [the land] and the loyalty to sacrifice their lives. There were some who [even] abandoned their towns and ran away. What kind of people were they then?

Lady Yang is only a woman. Confucius said: "a benevolent man is sure to possess courage." Lady Yang deserves to be the [benevolent man] of this phrase.¹⁰¹

Toward the very end of his essay, Li Ao particularly states that even the virtuous women of ancient times could not surpass the deeds accomplished by Kao Mei-mei and lady Yang. Again, Li explains that because he was afraid that their conduct would not be known to later generations, he has recorded their lives and will report them to the official historians.¹⁰² There is no doubt that Li Ao was deeply moved by Kao Mei-mei's and lady Yang's unusual courage when facing the threat of imminent death. He was especially impressed by lady Yang's loyalty to the T'ang state. Li specifically points out that most T'ang officials could not match lady Yang's loyal conduct. He even adopted the term "benevolent man," the greatest virtue according to Confucius, to praise lady Yang's accomplishments.

As mentioned before, living in an age when the T'ang state was in decline, Li Ao, as well as other leading Confucian revivalists, were primarily concerned with the restoration of the state and relief of public suffering. As a result, the concept of "loyalty" began to receive different interpretations, and some Confucian revivalists also tended to make "loyalty" an absolute virtue.¹⁰³ Scholar-officials who sacrificed their lives for the state were specifically elevated by the leading Confucian revivalists in their writings.¹⁰⁴ This

¹⁰¹ Ibid.: 7. For the phrase of Confucius saying, see D. C. Lau, *Confucius, The Analects*, Penguin Classics, 1979, book 14: 4.

¹⁰² "Yang Lieh-fu chuan," *CTW* 640: 8.

¹⁰³ For example, Yuan Chieh 元結 (719-72) and Tu-ku Chi 獨孤及 (723-77) both interpreted this concept and tended to make it absolute. See David McMullen, "Historical and Literary Theory in the Mid-Eighth Century," *Perspectives on the Tang*, 1973: 328-31; Chiu-Duke, "To Rebuild the Empire, Li Chih," 1992, ch. 8.

¹⁰⁴ For examples see, Han Yü, "Chang Chung-ch'eng chuan hou-hsü" 張中丞傳後敘, *CTW* 556: 11-13; Liu Tsung-yüan, "Tuan T'ai-wei i-shih chuang" 段太尉逸事狀, *CTW*

profound concern for the survival of the T'ang state explains why lady Yang received such high recognition from Li Ao. Li's elevation of lady Yang is no different from other revivalists' analogous promotion of loyal officials. In this regard, Li Ao's attempt at using lady Yang to Confucianize T'ang women is fundamentally the same as his and other revivalists' efforts in the Confucianization of T'ang male subjects.

What is clear is that neither Li Hua, Liu Tsung-yüan, or Li Ao made any conscious efforts to promote chastity as an absolute virtue for women. Their admiration for women who chose to die instead of being humiliated by rebels, who exhibited unusual filial piety and who had outstanding loyalty to the state demonstrate that they ascribed to these women an important part in the mid-T'ang revival of Confucianism. The virtuous deeds accomplished by these women were perceived as behavioral models not just for other T'ang women, but even for T'ang officials as a whole. The moral status of these women was portrayed as far superior to that of ordinary T'ang officials. From this particular perspective, we can certainly say that to some leading Confucian revivalists, women had equal if not greater potential to become moral worthies than men did.

To be sure, although mothers enjoyed high esteem in Chinese society, the general status of T'ang women remained complementary and supportive to men. Our discussion of T'ang women's epitaphs already confirms this point. Many poems composed by Po Chü-i to describe women's distress also demonstrate women's inferior status vis-à-vis men.¹⁰⁵ While Po Chü-i had great sympathy for women abandoned by their husbands, he is, on the other hand, seen as opposed to women's remarriage.

Po Chü-i once wrote a negative judgment in a theoretical legal dispute over a widow's remarriage. In this abstract legal case, we learn that the widow married her second husband out of gratitude because he had helped her achieve revenge on the bandit who murdered her first husband. She was accused by her contemporaries of being unfaithful to her late husband. Since, according to the *Classic of Rites*, widows should not remarry, Po Chü-i decided that she should never have remarried even though her motive was to take revenge on behalf of her late husband. Po's judgment was that a woman's loss of chastity was a greater shame than not being able to

591: 8-10.

¹⁰⁵ For example, see Po Chü-i, "T'ai-hang Lu" 太行路, or "Fu-chen K'u" 婦人苦, in *Po Chü-i chi* 白居易集, vol. 1, Peking: Chung-hua Shu-chü 1979 edn., ch. 3: 64, or ch. 12: 240. Also see Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 248.

retaliate against her husband's killer.¹⁰⁹

From his judgment on this hypothetical legal dispute Po Chü-i would seem to be an uncompromising follower of the teaching of the rites, but he did not always assume such an intransigent attitude. When dealing with political situations, Po often stressed the importance of flexibility in government. In other theoretical legal disputes about men divorcing their wives, he also demonstrates that he did not simply accept the teachings of the classics without taking the actual situation into account.¹¹⁰ One has to wonder why Po assumed an orthodox attitude toward this particular legal dispute regarding a woman's remarriage. Perhaps, he felt a negative judgment was the only possible answer suggested by the canonical teachings that he could offer to his intended audience, the examination candidates.¹¹¹

On the other hand, Po's negative decision is very likely further complicated because this hypothetical widow's remarriage was motivated by vengeance, a topic of controversy among T'ang officials at this time. Han Yü's famous essay on vengeance written around 811 illustrates this concern.¹¹² In his essay, Han made it clear that vengeance was not something the state should approve of, but since it was sanctioned by the Confucian classics, the state had to investigate the background of each case of vengeance before taking corrective action. From this perspective, Po's theoretical opposition to women's remarriage can probably be construed as an indirect response to an important contemporary issue. That is, his negative judgment reveals that he placed the legal authority of the state above individual retribution.

Po did not discourage vengeance by directly advocating the state's

¹⁰⁹ Po Chü-i, "Te Hsin shih fu yü tao erh ssu, sui ch'ü sha-tao-che erh wei chih ch'i, huo tse ch'i shih chen-hsing chih chieh, pu-fu" 得辛氏夫遇盜而死，遂求殺盜者而為之妻，或責其失貞行之節，不伏，*CTW* 672: 2. Also see Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 194-95.

¹¹⁰ For the pragmatic side of Po's political approach, see his "Chung, ching, chih, wen sun-i" 忠敬賢文損益，*CTW* 670: 15-16. For his flexible approach to the divorce cases, see "Te Chia ch'i yü ku ch'ien ch'ih kou, Chia nu erh ch'u chih, su ch'eng fei ch'i-ch'u, Chia yün puching" 得甲妻於姑前叱狗甲怒而出之，訴稱非七出甲云不敬，and "Te Chia ch'u ch'i ch'i su yün wu shih fu-tao, I yün, fu-mu pu yüeh tse ch'u, ho-pi yu-ko" 得甲出妻，妻訴云，無失婦道乙云父母不悅則出何必有過，*CTW* 672: 17 and 673: 6. Also see, Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 189-92.

¹¹¹ My interpretation of Po Chü-i's theoretical judgment greatly benefited from discussions with Professor Denis Twitchett.

¹¹² Han Yü, "Fu ch'ou chuang" 復讎狀，*CTW* 349: 5-6.

authority. Instead, he presented a widow's remarriage as a greater shame than her inability to take revenge, even though he knew that vengeance was also sanctioned by the canonical teaching. Because of this, it is understandable why Po's position on this particular hypothetical legal case could make him appear to be the only leading Confucian revivalist who deliberately propagated chastity as an absolute virtue for women from the commoner class.¹¹³

It is of course also possible to view Po Chü-i's advocacy of absolute female chastity in a theoretical legal dispute as an attempt to influence the education of the T'ang imperial princesses. Some recent studies point out that the T'ang imperial family also underwent a process of Confucianization after the An Lu-shan rebellion. Besides completely giving up the practice of "levirate" after the 760s,¹¹⁴ T'ang emperors further encouraged the imperial princesses to conform to Confucian teachings on feminine ethics.¹¹⁵

Among these T'ang rulers, Emperor Hsiüan-tsung 宣宗 (r. 847-860)¹¹⁶ is considered the one most concerned about educating his daughters to follow the Confucian norms of behavior for women. He often instructed his daughters not to humiliate their husbands and not to interfere in political affairs. He especially warned them about the disasters caused by female domination of politics in the early T'ang.¹¹⁷ In 851, five years after Po Chü-i's death, Emperor Hsiüan-tsung issued an order to prohibit imperial princesses and *hsien-chu* 縣主 (daughters of imperial princes) from remarriage if they had children by their late husbands.¹¹⁸ The emperor's

¹¹³ There are of course other T'ang Confucian literati, such as Meng Chiao 孟郊 (751-814), who advocated absolute chastity on women's part, but since I am mainly interested in the role played by the leading Confucian revivalists, I shall not include those literati in my discussion. For Meng Chiao's and other literati's position, see Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979, 247 and 180. I am also aware that Yü I-fang 于義方, a T'ang local official about whom we have very little information, but who definitely served after empress Wu's reign, wrote a short work in which he not only opposed women's remarriage but men's as well. See his *Hei-hsin fu* 黑心符 (*Black Heart Charm*), Tsung-shu ching-ch'eng edition. Also see Wong, *ibid.*: 52-53.

¹¹⁴ Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 124-27; Chen, "Empress Wu," 1994: 102.

¹¹⁵ For details, see Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 132-34.

¹¹⁶ I follow the conventional practice of using the romanization Hsiüan, instead of Hsüan, to avoid confusing this emperor with the famous eighth-century ruler Hsüan-tsung 玄宗.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 137-38.

¹¹⁸ *CTW* 81: 6-7; *T'ang hui-yao*, 6: 74; *HIS* 83: 3672; Also see Wang, "T'ang-tai kung-chu," 1988: 123; Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979: 137.

paramount concern was undoubtedly a mother's care for her fatherless children.

Emperor Hsiüan-tsung's edict can be regarded as a result of the gradual influence of Confucian ideas of proper female conduct.¹¹⁹ It might even have been influenced by Po Chü-i's negative attitude toward remarriage. We should, nevertheless, keep in mind that Hsiüan-tsung's strong views about marriage may be related to the fact that he had a very close relationship with his own mother, who lived with him in the Palace, an exceptional practice for a dowager.¹²⁰ His own childhood experience probably led him to value the mother's role in raising children, and to the promulgation of his 851 edict about remarriage. Furthermore, this 851 edict did not forbid female remarriage in toto. It did not in any sense make female chastity an absolute virtue. All this makes it seem unlikely that Po Chü-i's theoretical insistence on absolute female chastity had any substantial bearing on the 851 edict.

In addition, although it has been pointed out that after 806 T'ang imperial princesses ceased the practice of remarriage, it is nevertheless important to note that information concerning the marriage or remarriage of the imperial princesses after 824 is scarce and incomplete.¹²¹ This lack of information makes it difficult to conclude that the marital practices of T'ang imperial princesses underwent a genuine Confucianization. This again implies that, as far as promoting widow fidelity is concerned, Po Chü-i's hypothetical opposition to female remarriage probably had little to do with Confucianizing T'ang imperial princesses. If our exploration of the possible reasons for Po's negative attitude toward women's marriage is acceptable, it is then safe to say that none of the leading Confucian revivalists examined here genuinely promoted female chastity as an absolute virtue.

Similar conclusions can equally be reached about scholar-officials like Tu Mu 杜牧 (803-852?) and P'i Jih-hsiu 皮日休 (834-883) who have been considered upholders of the cause of Confucian revival in the late

T'ang.¹²² Both Tu Mu and P'i Jih-hsiu composed specific essays to praise women who had also accomplished some unusual deeds. Their essays, quite similar to those written by Li Ao and Liu Tsung-yüan, dealt mainly with a woman who tried to eliminate a rebel general for the court even though she herself had been the concubine of this rebel, or one who attempted to save her father's life in every possible way.¹²³ What is extolled then is again loyalty, public spiritedness and filial piety, but not absolute chastity on women's part.

In the end, the first concern of the majority of leading Confucian revivalists, be it in the mid-T'ang, or the late T'ang, was still the restoration of the T'ang state. In the eyes of the majority of leading revivalists, the reputations of anyone, including women, who performed deeds that were crucial to the stability of the T'ang state and society ought to be elevated.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the composition of T'ang epitaphs on women, we have discovered that the general conception of an ideal woman remained the same from the beginning to the end of the dynasty. The "three forms of submissiveness and the four virtues" continued as the ideal norms for women's conduct. However, the emergence of the mid-T'ang Confucian revival after the An Lu-shan rebellion did cause a shift of emphasis regarding the ideal conduct for women in the writing of T'ang women's epitaphs. After the 760s, the leading Confucian revivalists began to provide increasingly substantial details about certain virtuous deeds accomplished by women to whom they dedicated their epitaphs. They no longer paid that much attention to the formalistic part of "the four virtues." Nor did they treat these epitaph writings as a mere intellectual exercises and portray the deceased women in the conventionally formulaic manner. Their main interest was to demonstrate how these deceased women had realized certain Confucian moral principles in their striving to maintain a Confucian family order. Through their behavior these women are seen to establish the

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of the various reasons for the Confucianization of the imperial princesses, see Wong, "Confucian Ideal and Reality," 1979, ch. 5.

¹²⁰ *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien*, 249: 8052-53.

¹²¹ See *Tang hui-yao*, 6: 66. Wang Shou-nan notices the problem of information regarding the marriage of the imperial princesses after 824, but he still states that after 806 T'ang imperial princesses did not practice remarriage. See his "T'ang-tai kung-chu," 1988: 103 and 123.

¹²² For Tu Mu's and P'i Jih-hsiu's Confucian consciousness, see Yung S. Teng, "A Study of the Confucian Thought in Tu Mu's Literary Works," *CHHP*, NS 13: 1 and 2 (Dec. 1981): 133-60; William H. Nienhauser, Jr., *P'i Jih-hsiu*, Twayne Publishers, 1979, ch. 3.

¹²³ See Tu Mu, "Tou lieh-nü chuan" 竇烈女傳, *CTW* 756: 17-19; P'i Jih-hsiu, "Chao-nü chuan" 趙女傳, *CTW* 799: 22-23.

living relevance of certain Confucian moral principles.

This shift of emphasis confirms again that the core of the mid-T'ang Confucian revival was not the ritual or exegetical aspects of the Confucian teaching, but rather how to reinvigorate the Confucian moral principles in practice. It is then not fortuitous that the Neo-Confucian scholars, who were primarily oriented toward moral philosophy, actually followed this mid-T'ang epitaph writing for women in the early years of the Sung dynasty.¹²⁴

Furthermore, although only two of the above mentioned leading revivalists consciously stated that they intended to elevate the women for whom they composed epitaphs to the status of an ideal model, the kind of praise given by the rest of the leading revivalists in their epitaphs would also increasingly motivate T'ang elite women to conform to Confucian norms of behavior. This is not to deny that many T'ang women of the scholar-official class probably wanted to pursue a kind of Confucian moral life, but the possibility of enjoying eternal fame in history must have also led to a stronger desire to accomplish some substantial moral deeds among T'ang elite women after the 760s. It is fair to say that the ideal female established in the epitaphs by the leading Confucian revivalists indirectly encouraged T'ang women to become further Confucianized in the sense of realizing some Confucian moral principles.

Finally, with the possible exception of Po Chü-i, the other leading Confucian revivalists, though expressing great admiration for a widow's perseverance in bringing up her children, never advocated chastity as an absolute virtue for women. As we have seen, what they wanted most was to establish those filial and loyal women and girls as behavioral models, and that not just for women, but also for men. Their fundamental concern for the restoration of the T'ang state even led them to assert that some T'ang women had far more superior moral stature than most of their male counterparts. They felt compelled to write essays specifically extolling the behavior of women and girls whose loyalty and filial conduct they deemed necessary to the survival of the T'ang state and society.

While it is possible that when there was no imminent danger to the state, their elevation of loyalty and filial piety could be used by Confucian

scholar-officials of later dynasties as a pretext to demand the complete faithfulness of a woman to her husband, or to make female chastity into a moral absolute that contributed to a decline in the quality of life for women, this is certainly not what the majority of leading Confucian revivalists intended to achieve in the T'ang. In order to rebuild the T'ang empire, the majority of leading Confucian revivalists felt an urgent need to elevate loyalty and filial conduct, and that is precisely what those we have studied set out to do. It is worth noting that all the loyal and filial T'ang women presented in the revivalists' essays were later included in the *New Tang History*.¹²⁵ Apparently the mid-eleventh century compilers of this work felt that these essays were important to the preservation of the Sung state. We can thus say that the mid-T'ang Confucian revivalists' elevation of loyal and filial women not only constitutes their conscious contribution to the Confucianization of T'ang women, but also helped to establish further the position of loyalty and filial piety in the official Chinese political ideology.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CTS	<i>Chiu Tang-shu</i> 舊唐書
CTW	<i>Ch'üan Tang wen</i> 全唐文
HTS	<i>Hsin Tang-shu</i> 新唐書
TTMCM	<i>T'ang-tai mu-chih-ming hui-pien fu-k'ao</i> 唐代墓誌銘彙編 附考

¹²⁴ Bossler, "Powerful Relations and Relations of Power," 1991: 42. While Bossler states that the shift of emphasis in epitaph writings started in the ninth century, as demonstrated here, it actually started around the mid-eighth century.

¹²⁵ See HTS 205. The compilers of CTS only included Li Hua's essay on lady Po. More than three quarters of the thirty biographies of virtuous women in CTS: 193 concern their filial piety and chastity; less than one quarter emphasize loyal conduct. This is probably related to the frequent changes of dynasty and the problematic nature of loyalty during the Five Dynasties period (907-960).