DENIS TWITCHETT

The Seamy Side of Late T'ang Political Life: Yü Ti and His Family

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has read extensively in the writers of the late eighth and early ninth centuries will have been struck by the fundamental political and moral pessimism of the period; by the all-pervading conviction that men had been living, since the shattering upheavals arising from An Lu-shan's rebellion, in an era of shameful and inexorable decline, broken briefly for a few months after the accession to the throne of Te-tsung in 779, and again for perhaps three or four years at the beginning of Hsien-tsung's reign by high hopes of a real dynastic recovery, hopes which on both occasions had speedily proved ill founded.

Men of this period looked back on the secure and stable world of the T'ang before the rebellion as a happier "golden age" of confident self-assurance, rather as people of our generation sometimes look back nostalgically on the Western world in the Edwardian age, before it embarked on its orgy of self-destruction in 1914. The consequences of the rebellion had been costly beyond belief — the loss of the T'ang empire in Inner Asia, the occupation of the northwest to within 100 miles of the capital by the Tibetans, foreign influence on T'ang politics, collapse of central power and imperial authority within the empire, massive migrations and the dislocation of the lives of millions of the inhabitants of what had been its richest and most populous regions. But most disturbing to educated men was the complete loss of confidence in government, and in the imperial house.

The blame was placed squarely upon successive emperors who had failed in their direction of affairs. Their incompetence and inattention had provoked the rebellions; their incompetence and disastrous military decisions had prolonged the wars; their incompetence and political impotence had prevented them from gathering the reins of power into their hands again once the rebellions were settled. There had been catastrophic practical failures, but even more there had been a profound failure to maintain the center, to provide the exemplary wise leadership and to exert the moral guidance that was expected of a royal regime. Their failure was seen as a dereliction of duty. Successive emperors had improperly delegated their

own proper responsibilities, and had allowed the usurpation of power and authority by elements of society that the educated elite despised. As a result the whole body politic had become corrupt. The conduct of affairs had fallen into the wrong hands, not those of wise moral advisers who could admonish their emperor, but into those of the generals, the eunuchs, the financial wizards, the Buddhist and Taoist holy men, palace favorites, outsiders, and petty opportunists. The ideals of selfless public service that formed so large and crucial an element in the canonical teachings of Confucianism had been replaced by cruel oppression, by naked greed, the exploitation of office for personal gain, nepotism, influence peddling, and all-pervasive corruption.

These are familiar enough sentiments in any age that feels itself betrayed by the past and living on the dregs of former glories. But were contemporary writers' beliefs about the corruption of the age well founded? They usually expressed themselves in rather vague generalities, for it was hazardous to attack too openly the real offenses of powerful and ruthless men. We cannot subject corruption to any systematic or quantitative examination. The best we can do is to explore in detail such cases as we can, to provide concrete examples. This short study attempts to portray various forms of corruption and crime in high places by following the fortunes of a single great official and his family through these decades.

YÜ TI

The principal character in this story is Yü Ti 于頔 (d. 818). My attention was drawn to him in the course of a study of Po Chü-i's 白居易 "New Yüeh-fu" 新樂府 poems written between 808 and 810, in which the author vividly satirizes the ills of his times as he perceived them. "The Government Ox" ("Kuan niu" 官牛), no. 41 of these fifty poems,[1] is a satire directed against the harsh oppressive government of a contemporary Chief Minister, and in his magisterial commentary on these poems the late Ch'en Yin-k'o identified the target of this satire — "the new Assistant Chancellor of the Right" — as Yü Ti.[2] I have come to believe that in this instance Ch'en Yin-k'o identified the wrong man,[3] but Yü Ti was certainly a most suitable villain, with a deservedly sinister reputation. His career gives us a rare

[1] Ku Hsüeh-hsieh 顧學頡, ed., *Po Chü-i chi* 白居易集 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979) 3, p. 54.

[2] Ch'en Yin-k'o 陳寅恪, *Yüan-Po shih chien-cheng kao* 元白詩箋證稿 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1955; rpt. 1959), pp. 280–82.

[3] In my forthcoming book on these poems I suggest that a more likely target was not Yü Ti, but P'ei Chün 裴均 (d. 811).

opportunity to observe at close quarters the murky underworld of late T'ang officialdom, and to see how susceptible the world of politics was to influence, pressure, and manipulation, and how pervasive were corruption, crime, and casual violence even among the highest levels of the ruling elite. It shows a world far removed from the Confucian ideal, and equally remote from the world of high politics in later and more familiar ages.

Yü Ti came of a very distinguished Loyang family, which traced its descent from Yü Chin 于謹 (493–568), Duke of Yen and Grand Minister of Works during the Northern Chou dynasty. His descendants had held high offices under the Sui, and had subsequently produced officeholders in every generation during the T'ang. His grandfather had been Director of the Imperial Library (*pi-shu chien* 祕書監) and his father a deputy prefect in Ho-nan.[4]

He himself entered official service by hereditary privilege as an imperial swordsman-bodyguard, a member of the Ch'ien-niu 千牛, an elite cadet corps specially selected from among the sons of aristocratic families for their martial skills and imposing stature. They acted as the emperor's personal escort at the court assembly and as his ceremonial bodyguard on other public occasions. He then transferred, as was quite normal for such guards officials (*wei-kuan* 衛官), to an official career. This would have entailed passing an examination. There is evidence from later in his life that he was a well-educated and cultivated man, by no means a simple soldier. In 780 he was made Marshal of Hua-yin 華陰 county, close to the capital, a good early appointment which would give a young man broad experience in routine administration and might be a first step in a successful career.

He was now chosen for an important special assignment. He was appointed as the executive officer (*p'an-kuan* 判官) to Liu Wan 劉灣, the Commissioner sent out by the court in 780 to negotiate the terms of the *liang-shui* 兩稅 tax reform in the Kuan-nei region.[5] This reform, an attempt to restore some measure of central government control in the financial field by allocating a quota of taxes to each province, was the cornerstone of Te-tsung's premature attempt to reassert central authority over the provinces.

[4] The fullest account of his family background is to be found in the inscription written by Ch'üan Te-yü 權德輿 for his ancestral shrine established in 810 (see below). See *Ch'üan T'ang wen* 全唐文 (Kuang-ya shu-chü edn., 1901; rpt. Taipei: Hui-wen shu-chü, 1961; hereafter cited as *CTW*) 497, pp. 6b–8b; *Ch'üan Tsai-chih wen-chi* 權載之文集 (SPTK ch'u-pien edn.) 12, pp. 10b–12a.

[5] See *Chiu T'ang shu* 舊唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1975; hereafter cited as *CTS*) 156, p. 4129. We know from *Ts'e-fu yüan-kuei* 册府元龜 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1960; rpt. of Li Ssu-ching's 1642 edn.; hereafter cited as *TFYK*) 162, p. 16b, that Liu Wan was the Commissioner sent to Kuan-nei.

It was also a major factor in provoking the recalcitrant governors of Ho-pei into a new rebellion in 781. The rebellions in Ho-pei sparked off further rebellions by provincial governors in the Huai valley and elsewhere, and by 782 the court and emperor were in a desperate plight, their forces confined to the modern provinces of Shensi, Shansi, and western Honan. Surrounded by rebellious provinces, they were cut off from the sources of supply in the still loyal south, with access only to Szechwan.

THE TIBETAN TREATY NEGOTIATION

The court was particularly vulnerable in the west, where it faced a formidable potential danger in the Tibetans, who at this time occupied all but the eastern tip of modern Kansu province and with whom there had been constant skirmishing throughout the 770s. Since 763, when the Tibetans had occupied the T'ang northwest, the T'ang had lost all of its Inner Asian empire (although in the early 780s, an isolated T'ang garrison still survived in Tun-huang). The western frontier, which until 755 had been at the far end of the Tarim Basin over 1,500 miles from Ch'ang-an, was now only just over 100 miles distant, on the Ch'ing-shui 清水 river in southeastern Kansu. To secure its rear in its defense against the rebels, the T'ang court now desperately needed to reach a solid understanding with the Tibetans.

Negotiations had in fact been going on for some time.[6] In the spring of 780, shortly after his accession, Te-tsung had sent Wei Lun 韋倫 on a mission to Tibet, and toward the end of that year he had returned to Ch'ang-an accompanied by a Tibetan embassy. In 781 Ts'ui Han-heng 崔漢衡 was appointed ambassador to Tibet, and sent to escort the Tibetan envoys back home. He was accompanied by an "executive officer" (*p'an-kuan*), Ch'ang Lu 常魯, and also by a monk called Liang-hsiu 良修, the Tibetans having requested that the T'ang court send them Buddhist monks skilled at expounding doctrine. But negotiations broke down. The Tibetans objected to the edict from Te-tsung, which used the standard language of hierarchical tributary relationships, whereas the Tibetan king demanded that the Chinese emperor treat him as his uncle. The ambassadors were detained

[6] For general accounts of these events see *CTS* 196B, pp. 5247–48; *Hsin T'ang shu* 新唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1975; hereafter cited as *HTS*) 216B, p. 6093; see Paul Pelliot, *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* (Paris: Librairie d'Amerique et d'Orient, 1961), pp. 43, 46, 114; *TFYK* 653, p. 19a; 980, p. 13a; 981, p. 11a. See also Su Chin-jen 蘇晉仁 and Hsiao Lien-tzu 蕭錬子, eds., *Ts'e-fu yüan-kuei T'u-fan shih-liao chiao-cheng* 册府元龜吐蕃史料校證 (Ch'eng-tu: Ssu-ch'uan min-tsu ch'u-pan-she, 1982), pp. 215ff.

inside Tibetan territory, until the court sent a letter changing the wording of the offending edict, which was blamed on the now disgraced Chief Minister Yang Yen 楊炎. When this had been done, the Tibetans released some Chinese soldiers, monks, and nuns who had been captured years previously, and in the ninth month of 782 Ts'ui Han-heng finally returned to Ch'ang-an with another Tibetan envoy, a date for the signing of a frontier treaty having been set for the fifteenth of the first month 783, and the site at the Ch'ing-shui river in southeastern Kansu.

The emperor appointed as the chief T'ang negotiator an elderly Confucian official called Chang I 張鎰, who felt a deep sense of shame and distaste for the task; not without reason, for since the beginning of Hsüan-tsung's reign relations between the two countries had been a sorry catalogue of betrayal and bad faith on both sides. His chief deputies were Ch'i Ying 齊映 and Ch'i K'ang 齊抗 (not related), and there were four junior officials, Ts'ui Han-heng and Ch'ang Lu, who had been on the mission in 781, Fan Tse 樊澤, and Yü Ti, by now promoted to Registrar (*chu-pu* 主簿) of Li-yang 櫟陽, near Ch'ang-an, who was appointed as a provisional inspecting censor to act as one of the junior attachés (*p'an-kuan*) of the T'ang delegation.[7] The treaty was to be accompanied by a solemn blood oath, to be taken in the blood of a bull representing the agricultural Chinese and a stallion representing the Tibetan herdsmen. Chang I, however, demanded that the ceremony be downgraded, suggesting the threefold sacrifice of a ram, a boar, and a dog. However, there were no pigs in this desolate and depopulated area, and eventually the parties settled on sacrificing a ram, a billy goat, and a dog. The Tibetan envoy, after the oath had been taken and texts of the treaty exchanged, clearly still felt uneasy about Chang I's attitude, and insisted that both parties should also swear another oath before a Buddhist shrine.

After the Ch'ing-shui treaty had been completed the Tibetans were still dissatisfied because the boundary had not been clearly defined. Ts'ui Han-heng was thereafter sent on another embassy to the Tibetan king, this time taking Yü Ti as his aide. Yü Ti was sent far into Tibetan territory to the area around Kokonor, to escort a Tibetan ambassador to Ch'ang-an to solemnize a further treaty demarcating the frontier. This was a journey fraught with danger, for Tibetan local lords had made a habit of seizing and imprisoning Chinese envoys.

[7] Posts as provisional or supernumerary members of the censorate were commonly conferred as officials engaged in some unusual mission, since the censors were given wide powers, not limited by their comparatively lowly rank in the official hierarchy.

Yü Ti and the ambassador arrived in the capital in the sixth month. The next month the emperor appointed Li Kuei 李揆, the Rector of the Imperial University, as the commissioner responsible for the treaty, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the Chief Ministers and a large party of other high-ranking officials, among them Yü Ti's older cousin Yü Ch'i 于頎, then President of the Censorate, solemnized the treaty at an altar specially built outside the western walls of Ch'ang-an. The same sort of blood oath as had been enacted at Ch'ing-shui was repeated, and the whole ceremony was conducted with great pomp and solemnity.

The treaty was concluded in the nick of time, for shortly afterward Te-tsung found himself in a plight even more desperate than in 782. In the tenth month of 783 a provincial force passing through the capital mutinied, and the mutiny developed into a full-scale rebellion in the Ch'ang-an area, led by a retired provincial governor called Chu Tz'u 朱泚, who proclaimed himself emperor. Te-tsung was forced to flee the capital and take refuge in Feng-t'ien 奉天 to the west. At the beginning of 784 he was forced to issue an edict pardoning and reinstating in their commands all the rebel leaders except Chu Tz'u, the immediate adversary.

His new-found Tibetan allies came to his aid, attacking Chu Tz'u's forces, but their expedition turned into a raid, pillaging various frontier districts. Although Chu Tz'u's rebels were soon put down, and Te-tsung returned to his capital later in 784, spasmodic hostilities on the Tibetan border continued through the 780s, sometimes on a large scale. There were several further diplomatic initiatives between 784 and 789 attempting to achieve a permanent settlement with the Tibetans.

As a result of this episode, Yü Ti made a reputation for himself as a courageous, loyal, and competent servant of the throne in a singularly dangerous and critical assignment. He was advanced in rank; he was appointed a Serving Censor (*shih yü-shih* 侍御史) and concurrently Under-secretary of the Department of Transit Authorization in the Board of Justice (*ssu-men yüan-wai-lang* 四門員外郎), with the lower sixth rank, upper division.[8] Both were elite "pure" posts. In addition he had participated in these crucial negotiations in close collaboration with a number of older officials who would later be in important positions of power at a crisis point in his own career; perhaps this involvement in an intricate network of influence was in the long run more important than his promotion.

As a Serving Censor, he was once again involved in diplomacy, and appointed Commissioner for negotiating a treaty with the Tibetans, as a result of his reputation as a fearless face-to-face negotiator.[9] The date of this second mission is not clear; it was probably in 787, but during the 780s there were repeated initiatives, and a great deal of bad faith, on both sides. Early in the 790s he was appointed Prefect of the important prefecture of Hu-chou 湖州, south of Lake T'ai, where he revived an old irrigation scheme to the great benefit of the local people.[10] He was then transferred to be Prefect of the rich neighboring prefecture of Su-chou 蘇州, where he carried out further irrigation works[11] and also devoted himself to rooting out local cults and destroying their shrines.[12]

IMPEACHMENT AND IMMUNITY

Although Yü Ti's administration in these posts was successful, he became notorious for his violence and cruelty, both toward the local populace and even toward his own staff, so much so that his superior Wang Wei 王緯, the Civil Governor of Che-hsi, impeached him at court. Wang Wei had himself a reputation of being an honest, but very severe and harsh governor, so Yü Ti's offence was probably not a trivial one.[13]

The emperor, however, paid no heed, even though Wang Wei stood high in his favor. Instead of being punished, Yü Ti was given a series of rapid promotions. He was first brought back to court as President of the Supreme Court of Justice (*ta-li ch'ing* 大理卿), a highly inappropriate post for a man who had just been impeached for maladministration. Then on the fourteenth day of the fourth month 797, he was appointed Prefect of Shan-chou 陝州 and Civil Governor of the small but strategically vital province of Shan-Kuo 陝虢,[14] which controlled the T'ung-kuan pass and

[8] *CTS* 156, p. 4129; *TFYK* 653, p. 19a.

[9] *CTS* 156, p. 4129; *TFYK* 653, p. 19a.

[10] See *T'ang hui yao* 唐會要 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1957; rpt. of Kuo-hsüeh chi-pen ts'ung-shu edn., Shanghai, 1937; hereafter *THY*) 80, p. 1472. According to *HTS* 41, p. 1059, this was completed in 797. However, this date does not fit in with the chronology, and is probably an error. No dates are given for Yü Ti's appointment to Hu-chou. From the preface he wrote for Chiao-jan's 皎然 collected poetry, Yü Ti was already Prefect of Hu-chou in 792. See *CTW* 544, p. 12a. Chiao-jan's biography, *Sung Kao-seng chuan* 宋高僧傳 29, p. 892b, gives the same date, 792, as the preface. He is very unlikely to have remained Prefect for more than five years. *Fou-tsu t'ung-chi* 佛祖統記, in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–32) 41, p. 379c; and 51, p. 454c, says that Yü Ti, Prefect of Hu-chou, was ordered to send in these collected poems to the Imperial Library in 794.

[11] *THY* 80, p. 1472.

[12] *CTS* 156, p. 4129. Unfortunately it is unclear what cults were involved. His biography simply says that the only shrines he spared were those to Wu Yüan 吳員 (Wu Tzu-hsü) and Wu T'ai-po 吳太伯.

[13] *CTS* 146, pp. 3964–65.

[14] *CTS* 13, p. 384.

the eastern approaches to the capital, as well as the vital supply route from the Huang-ho to the capital. In the ninth month of 798 he was transferred to be Prefect of Hsiang-chou 襄州 and Military Governor of the much larger province of Shan-nan Tung-tao 山南東道. He wrote scornfully to Wang Wei, "You tried to impeach me; but now I've been promoted three times instead!"[15]

Why did Yü Ti enjoy such immunity from prosecution, and then receive such special advancement? One probable answer is simple nepotism; two of his close relatives occupied positions of influence and power at the court. The first was an older cousin, Yü Ch'i (726–799).[16] Yü Ch'i had been one of the negotiators at the abortive treaty solemnized with the Tibetans in 784, in which Yü Ti had also taken part. He was also one of the small entourage that had subsequently accompanied Te-tsung in his flight to Feng-t'ien during the rebellion of Chu Tz'u at the capital in 783–784, and like many of this group subsequently remained closely in the emperor's personal favor. After the court's return to Ch'ang-an he was given high offices at the capital, as Imperial Counsellor and Grand General of the Ch'ien-niu bodyguard. Around 788 he was promoted to President of the Supreme Court of Justice, then later became Second Protector of the Heir Apparent, and about 794, President of the Board of Works.[17] By now he was an elderly man, long past his prime, and some time later he fell down during the morning audience, and had to be lifted to his feet by the attendant guards. The censors impeached him for this impropriety, and he was given a high-ranking sinecure as Second Tutor to the Heir Apparent. He died in the third month of 799.[18] In 797 Yü Ch'i was thus a high official, who still had personal influence with the emperor, even if he was no longer in a position of real executive power.

The probability that he could exert influence for his relatives is underlined by the fact that, just when Yü Ti was enjoying his sudden succession of high appointments in 797–798, his elder brother Yü P'ei 于頎 was also promoted to a very important post in central government. Yü P'ei was Chief Secretary of the Department of Public Revenues (*tu-chih lang-chung* 度支郎中), and thus executive head of the most important subdepartment

[15] *CTS* 13, p. 388.
[16] Biographies: *CTS* 146, pp. 3965–66; *HTS* 149, p. 4800.
[17] This date follows Yen Keng-wang 嚴耕望, *T'ang p'u shang ch'eng lang piao* 唐僕尚丞郎表, Chung-yang yen-chiu-yüan li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu-so chüan-k'an, 36 (Taipei, 1955) 1, p. 274; 4, p. 1054.
[18] *CTS* 13, p. 390.

of the Board of Finance. In the fifth month of 798 he succeeded Su Pien 蘇弁 as *p'an* 判 *tu-chih*, the acting head of the Public Revenue Commission.[19] This was the second most important financial post in the empire, only the Commissioner of Salt and Iron being more powerful. As head of the Public Revenue Commission, Yü P'ei controlled all the finances of northern China, and the commission's complex of manufacturing and construction enterprises in the capital. It was a post whose incumbents were usually Te-tsung's special choice, because since the time of the notorious P'ei Yen-ling 裴延齡 (728–796) they were expected to provide lavish funds for his private treasury. In the third month of 799 Yü P'ei was promoted to the nominal rank of Vice President of the Board of Finance,[20] and in the same year was responsible for a reorganization of the grain transport system on which the court in Ch'ang-an was completely dependent, making it less vulnerable to the constant mutinies of the garrison at Pien-chou 汴州 on the Grand Canal.[21] He remained in office until the fifteenth of the ninth month 800, when he and his close colleague and supporter, the Chief Minister Cheng Yü-ch'ing 鄭餘慶,[22] were disgraced, apparently because of Te-tsung's suspicions that they were forming a political faction.[23] Yü P'ei was disgraced and banished as administrator of the Finance Service in the coastal backwater of Ch'üan-chou 泉州 in southern Fukien, and nothing more is heard of him. But in 798 he was still an extremely powerful man.

APPOINTMENT TO SHAN-NAN

Thus, on the tenth of the ninth month 798, when Yü Ti was appointed Military Governor of Shan-nan Tung-tao, he had the support at court of his elderly but still influential cousin Yü Ch'i, and of his own older brother Yü P'ei, head of the powerful Commission of Public Revenue and a close associate of the Chief Minister Cheng Yü-ch'ing. Little wonder that he had survived Wang Wei's attempt to impeach him for his conduct in Su-chou, and had risen to higher things.

But another factor may have played a part in his selection as Governor of Shan-nan Tung-tao. In the latter years of Te-tsung's reign, provincial governors very frequently arranged their own succession. In the most

[19] *CTS* 13, p. 387. [20] *CTS* 13, p. 390. [21] *THY* 87, p. 1598.
[22] Cheng became Chief Minister in the seventh month 798.
[23] *CTS* 13, p. 393; *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 資治通鑑 (Peking: Ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1956; hereafter *TCTC*) 235, p. 7591; and the *K'ao-i* to this passage, citing the *Shih-lu*.

extreme cases, those of the semi-independent provinces of Hopei, this took the form of hereditary succession, the so-called ancient custom of Ho-pei. In other provinces, a governor was often succeeded by his adjutant (*ping-ma shih* 兵馬使) — that is, the commander of his army — or by his deputy governor (*fu-shih* 副使). An outgoing governor might also intervene directly at court to influence the appointment of his successor. This may well have happened in this case, for Yü Ti had longstanding connections with his predecessor in Shan-nan Tung-tao, Fan Tse 樊澤 (749–798). Fan Tse had been one of his superiors during the negotiations over the Tibetan treaty in 783, and like Yü Ti had made a reputation later in the 780s in further successful dealings with the fierce and treacherous Tibetans.[24] They must have known one another well.

Yet another member of the T'ang delegation at the desperate Tibetan treaty negotiations of 783–784 was also in a position of great influence at court in the last years of the eighth century. This was Ch'i K'ang (740–804); since 792 he had held high office, successively as Chief Secretary of the Chancellery, Governor of Loyang, Director of the Imperial Library, and President of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices. He would later (800–803) become a Chief Minister.[25] It seems quite possible that Yü Ti's appointment as a military governor may have been at least partially the result of personal links forged during the crisis of Te-tsung's early years.

WU SHAO-CH'ENG'S REBELLION

Yü Ti's appointment as Governor of Shan-nan Tung-tao came at a very difficult time for the shaky regime, and he soon found an opportunity firmly to establish a personal claim to Te-tsung's favor. Since the winter of 797 Wu Shao-ch'eng 吳少誠 (750–809), Military Governor of the troublesome province of Huai-hsi 淮西, which lay to the southeast of Yü Ti's new province, had been openly flouting the court's orders. In the eighth month of 799, Ch'ü Huan 曲環 (726–799), the Military Governor of the neighboring province to the north, Ch'en-Hsü 陳許, died. Ch'ü Huan had been one of the generals responsible for suppressing Li Hsi-lieh's 李希烈 Huai-hsi rebellion in 786, and had been Governor of Ch'en-Hsü ever since. He had been a notably good governor, who had done much to repair the ravages caused in his province by Li Hsi-lieh, and to attract back to Ch'en-Hsü many of the people who had fled elsewhere during the disturbances. When

[24] *CTS* 122, pp. 3505–6. [25] *CTS* 136, pp. 3756–57.

he died he left his province in the hands of Shang-kuan Shui 上官涚, the Prefect of Ch'en-chou.

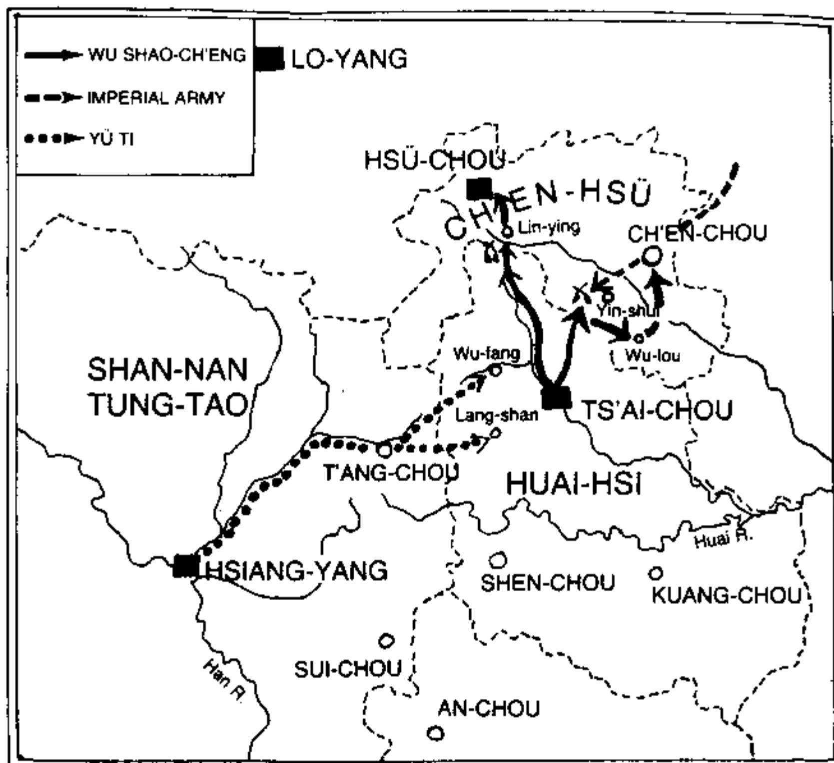
Wu Shao-ch'eng immediately seized the opportunity presented by Ch'ü Huan's death to invade Hsü-chou from the south and seize the county town of Lin-ying 臨潁. A relief force sent by Shang-kuan Shui was betrayed by one of the officers of his provincial garrison at Lin-ying, and was ambushed and captured by Wu Shao-ch'eng, who continued north and besieged the prefectural city of Hsü-chou in the ninth month.

The emperor ordered Wu Shao-ch'eng stripped of all his offices and titles, and orders were sent to no less than sixteen provinces[26] to mobilize detachments of troops and horses for a punitive expedition against Huai-hsi. In the twelfth month of 799 the patchwork T'ang forces engaged Wu Shao-ch'eng on the Hsiao-yin river 小溵水 and were given a bloody thrashing.

In the first month of 800 the emperor appointed as coordinating commander of the punitive force Han Ch'üan-i 韓全義, Military Governor of Hsia-Sui, who was given command of all the forces from the northern provinces, with Shang-kuan Shui as his deputy. Han Ch'üan-i proved a disastrous choice. A military incompetent, he owed his position and rank solely to the support of the eunuchs of the Palace Armies.[27] His campaign was a catalogue of disasters. He proved indecisive as a leader, always confused by the conflicting advice of the dozen or so eunuch superintendents attached to the different provincial detachments under his command. He lost many of his men through sickness by encamping them on marshy ground in the hot summer months. In the fifth month he fought a battle south of Yin-shui 溵水 with Shao-ch'eng's generals Wu Hsiu 吳秀 and Wu Shao-yang 吳少陽; he was defeated, and retreated southwest to Wu-lou 五樓. In the seventh month, the rebels launched a surprise attack on his encampment at Wu-lou and he was routed again. Fleeing northeast, Han's army fortified itself in the county town of Yin-shui. Under continued pressure from Wu Shao-ch'eng, Han left one of Shang-kuan Shui's local commanders, Meng Yüan-yang 孟元陽, with a detachment of the Palace Armies to hold Yin-shui and withdrew his main forces once again, to the prefectural city of Ch'en-chou 陳州. The provincial detachments of the punitive force now began to desert, and return to their home provinces.[28]

But the rebels, too, had begun to flag: the Ch'en-Hsü general Meng

[26] Sixteen according to *CTS* 145, p. 3946, 17 according to *TCTC* 235, p. 7586.
[27] *TCTC* 235, p. 7586.
[28] *CTS* 145, pp. 3945–47; *TCTC* 235, pp. 7583–92.



Wu Shao-ch'eng's Rebellion, 799–800

Yüan-yang at last defeated a rebel force in the field, and shortly thereafter, in the tenth month of 800, Wu Shao-ch'eng withdrew his forces inside his own provincial borders.[29] He had begun some time earlier to negotiate with some of the eunuch army superintendents to make a settlement with the court.[30]

[29] *CTS* 13, p. 393; *TCTC* 235, p. 7592.

[30] See *TCTC* 235, p. 7592, *K'ao-i*. There is some confusion about the exact train of events. Wu Shao-ch'eng is said to have been pardoned in the ninth month; this decision seems to have been taken in accordance with the opinion offered by Chia Tan 賈耽 at a discussion with the Chief Ministers on the seventh of the ninth month following Han Ch'üan-i's retreat to Wu-lou, according to the *Veritable Record* as cited in *TCTC K'ao-i*. But it also says that Wu Shao-ch'eng had previously been in touch with the eunuch army commanders, to whom he had sent both letters and bribes, and that the emperor based his decision also on their memorials.

After he had withdrawn his troops in the ninth month, Wu Shao-ch'eng surrendered on the eighth of the tenth month and sent in a memorial putting himself at the emperor's mercy. This is dated the sixth day of the tenth month. Presumably this is the day when his memorial arrived in Ch'ang-an. The edict pardoning him and restoring his ranks was promulgated on the twenty-third day.

The main reason for this was the pressure exerted on his rear by Yü Ti. Soon after Wu invaded Hsü-chou, Yü had dispatched the pick of his provincial force to T'ang-chou 唐州 and then, while the Huai-hsi army was engaged in operations against Hsü-chou in the north, had invaded Wu Shao-ch'eng's province from the west, occupying the two counties of Wu-fang 吳房 and Lang-shan 朗山, which lay immediately to the west of Wu's provincial capital at Ts'ai-chou.[31] Wu Shao-ch'eng was now faced with the prospect of fighting on two fronts at once, and the further his provincial army advanced eastward into Ch'en-Hsü the greater the threat to his own home base.

Having made peace with the court, Wu Shao-ch'eng was speedily pardoned, restored to all his ranks,[32] and confirmed in command of his province. As he knew perfectly well, Te-tsung was powerless to punish him. He remained Governor of Ts'ai-chou (Huai-hsi) until his death in the eleventh month of 809.[33] For his part, Yü Ti had proved himself indispensable: though his troops had never faced Wu Shao-ch'eng's main forces, he was the only loyal commander to have had any real success in the field, and it was the pressure that he had exerted that led to the end of the rebellion.

YÜ TI IN SHAN-NAN — "THE HSIANG MODEL"

Secure in the emperor's favor, Yü now built up in his capital at Hsiang-yang 襄陽 an enlarged and well-equipped army with which he was able to dominate not only the southeastern approaches to Ch'ang-an, but also the whole of the Han river basin. After his achievement in helping contain Wu's rebellion in 800, he was able to make almost any demand on the weak emperor Te-tsung, disobeying or flouting imperial orders at will while sending in a stream of lavish tribute gifts to ensure the grasping monarch's continuing favor.

Meanwhile, he rapidly achieved a nationwide reputation for arbitrary rule, for cruelty and violence, for avarice, for extravagant expenditure,[34] for rapacious exploitation of the people under his administration by his ruthless

[31] See *CTS* 156, p. 4130. *CTS* 13, p. 391, and *TCTC* 235, p. 7584, date this success in the eleventh month of 799. *TCTC* adds that forces from the neighboring provinces of An-Huang and Shou-chou also assisted in invading Huai-hsi from the south.

[32] *CTS* 13, p. 393; 145, p. 3947; *TCTC* 235, p. 7592.

[33] *CTS* 14, p. 429.

[34] See, for example, *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959; hereafter *TPKC*) 237, p. 1824.

subordinates,[35] and for harshness toward his own staff. He repeatedly denounced his subordinates to the court, and then repudiated the sentences they were given, acting in a completely arbitrary manner. In 807 he even occupied the prefectural city of T'eng-chou by force, without court approval.[36] The "Hsiang model governor" 襄樣節度 (a pun on "Hsiang yang," a famous contemporary style of lacquer and a reference to his administrative seat, Hsiang-yang) became a slang term for a tyrannical provincial governor.[37]

The last years of Te-tsung's reign were a period of general stability. The emperor and his ministers steadily restored the central government's military power through building up the eunuch-led Palace Armies. They greatly increased their financial resources through the new tax system and by the exploitation of monopolies, and also provided the emperor with his own financial reserves in the eunuch-controlled Palace Treasuries. These developments not only strengthened the center vis-à-vis the provincial governors, they also increased the power of the "inner court" of the emperor and his eunuchs at the expense of the "outer court" of bureaucrats. These measures secured in large part what direct confrontation with the provinces had failed to achieve in the early 780s. By Te-tsung's death early in 805, the central government was reestablished on a firm financial basis and had at its disposal large and well-trained central armies. Meanwhile the provincial governors for the most part had been left alone, and allowed very long tenures in office. During the last years of the reign many governors had ruled the same province for more than a decade, and a surprising proportion of them remained in office until their death.

The emperor allowed a great deal of autonomous power to his governors, so long as they refrained from hostile action. But they in turn were expected to contribute not only the regular tax quota for their province, but additionally to send lavish gifts in the form of "irregular tribute gifts," which were paid not into the public treasuries, but into the Palace Treasuries controlled by the eunuchs as part of the emperor's household.[38] Such gifts were sometimes justified by declaring them to be offerings of "surplus revenues." But in fact, since many provinces were years in arrears with their

[35] *CTS* 156, p. 4130. He was well known for the harshness of his own subordinates. An anecdote in *T'ang kuo-shih pu* 唐國史補 B, p. 43, tells of Yü Ti's subordinate Kao Hung 高洪, who was hated by the entire province for his harsh exactions. So severe were they that a minor officer called Ch'en I 陳儀 attempted to murder him in his own office.

[36] *CTS* 156, p. 4130.

[37] *T'ang kuo-shih pu* B, p. 37.

[38] *THY* 59, pp. 1015–16; *CTS* 118, pp. 3420–21.

regular tax quotas, such additional payments were almost inevitably the proceeds from irregular and oppressive supplementary levies. Not only provincial governors made such gifts; prefects and even lesser officers in the provincial administrations also sent similar barely concealed bribes to the emperor in the hope of advancement.[39] Yü Ti's extortion of extraordinary levies from the population of Shan-nan East, hard as it was on the people, was something common in other provinces of this time.[40] The same goes for the vast personal wealth that he accumulated. Many governors of rich provinces did even better for themselves.[41]

Te-tsung's death was followed by the short reign of Shun-tsung and his abdication in the eighth month of 805, engineered by a group of powerful provincial governors working in collaboration with the eunuchs, in favor of Hsien-tsung.[42] These events brought the golden years for the provincial magnates to an end. At last the court began successfully to restore central authority over one province after another. The suppression of the rebellion of Liu P'i 劉闢 in Szechwan (806), and that of Li Ch'i 李錡 in the lower Yangtze (807), made it clear that times had changed. Yü Ti remained extremely powerful. He was staunchly loyal to the dynasty, protecting the southeastern approaches to Ch'ang-an and its direct access to the middle Yangtze during the campaigns to suppress Liu P'i and Li Ch'i and continuing to pay regular and lavish tribute. In the eighth month of 807 Hsien-tsung ennobled him as Duke of the State of Yen 燕國公,[43] to add to his honorific rank as Nominal Acting Vice President of the Left of the Department of State Affairs,[44] one of the innumerable high-ranking nominal offices (*chien-chiao kuan* 檢校官) that were granted to provincial governors as marks of dignity during this period. Early in 808 the emperor married off his favorite eldest daughter, the Princess P'u-ning 普寧公主 (her title was later changed to Yung-ch'ang 永昌), to Yü Ti's fourth son, Yü Chi-yu 于季友.[45]

[39] See *CTS* 48, pp. 2087–88, for examples.

[40] See *CTS* 118, p. 3421; *THY* 83, p. 1536; *TFYK* 488, pp. 2a–b, trans. in Denis C. Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1970), p. 158.

[41] For a particularly flagrant example see Charles A. Peterson, "Corruption Unmasked: Yüen Chen's Investigation in Szechwan," *AM* NS 18.1 (1972), pp. 34–78.

[42] See *Shun-tsung shih-lu* 順宗實錄 4 (in *Han Ch'ang-li chi* 韓昌黎集, wai-chi 外集 9, p. 6 [Kuo-hsüeh chi-pen ts'ung-shu edn.]; Bernard S. Solomon, *The Veritable Record of the T'ang Emperor Shun-tsung* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1955], pp. 37, 45). This miswrites P'ei Chün's name as P'ei Chi 裴垍. This error is corrected in *TCTC* 236 (*K'ao-i*), pp. 7616–17. *CTS* 14, p. 409, confirms the intervention by provincial governors.

[43] This was the same as the fief of his famous ancestor Yü Chin in the sixth century.

[44] *CTS* 14, p. 422.

[45] *HTS* 83, p. 3667; *CTS* 156, p. 4130. It is worth noting that not only was Yü Chi-yu only the fourth son, he was also the son of a concubine, not of Yü Ti's principal wife.

The genealogy of Yü Ti's family given in *HTS* 72C, p. 2822, shows the first son as Yü

APPOINTMENT TO HIGH COURT OFFICE

Some of the more powerful provincial magnates had begun pressing the emperor for high-ranking appointments in central government as they saw the foundations of their regional autonomy and wealth slipping away. Yü Ti too, encouraged by his ambitious second son, Yü Fang 于方, soon began seeking a high court office,[46] though he was for a time placated by his son's marriage to Hsien-tsung's eldest daughter.

Other provincial governors, realizing that their days of untrammeled power might well be numbered, and that it might be advantageous to become a part of the central government, were more importunate. Perhaps the most notorious was Chang Mao-chao 張茂昭 (762–811), Governor of the small but strategically vital province of I-wu on the western border of Ho-pei. He had already begun pressing for a court post under Te-tsung; after making a formal visit to court in 804 he refused to return to his command.[47] The new emperor Shun-tsung placated him with a nominal appointment as Chief Minister, and then offered him a succession of lavish gifts in an attempt to make him leave Ch'ang-an.[48] Under Hsien-tsung he again came to the capital for an audience in 807 and remained in Ch'ang-an for months, defying the emperor's direct orders to return home.[49] Another case was that of P'ei Chün 裴均 (d. 811), Governor of Ching-nan, a notorious ally of the eunuch generals of the Palace Armies, who had been an assiduous contributor to Te-tsung's private treasuries, and one of the group of governors who, with the assistance of the eunuchs, had brought about Shun-tsung's abdication. Hsien-tsung himself wished to appoint P'ei to high office at court immediately after his succession to the throne, but met with strong resistance from the officials. Undeterred, P'ei Chün continued to press for a central government post.

In the fourth month of 808 Po Chü-i, in his capacity as Omissioner, sent the emperor a confidential memorial trenchantly opposing any high-

Cheng-fang 于正方, Vice Prefect of T'ai-yüan. This is an error. The *HTS* compilers have conflated the names of two sons, Yü Cheng and Yü Fang. See also Ts'en Chung-mien 岑仲勉, *Yüan-ho hsing-tsuan ssu chiao-chi* 元和姓纂四校記, Kuo-li chung-yang yen-chiu-yüan li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu so chüan-k'an 29 (Shanghai, 1948) 2, pp. 214–15.

[46] *TFYK* 849, p. 11a.

[47] *CTS* 13, p. 400.

[48] In the tenth month. See *CTS* 13, p. 400.

[49] *Shun-tsung shih-lu* 1, p. 87 (*Han Ch'ang-li chi*, wai chi, 6; Solomon, *Veritable Record*, p. 6); *CTS* 14, pp. 405–6.

ranking court appointment either for Yü Ti, or for the two other ambitious and overpowerful governors, P'ei Chün and Chang Mao-chao.[50] In Yü Ti's particular case, Po feared that were Yü to be allowed to hold high metropolitan office while retaining his military command, together with his special position as an imperial relative by marriage, his power would be unassailable and would allow him to dominate the country and to ride roughshod over all the traditions at court. Po Chü-i was not only afraid for the court, he was frightened for his own life; his memorial ended with an extraordinary plea that the emperor should not allow any of his attendants to see what Po had written: "As an outsider discussing an imperial relative, as an insignificant man discussing a person of great importance, my words are not opportune and my action likely to bring misfortune upon me. I know very well that I am endangering my life when I remonstrate in this matter."[51]

Clearly Po Chü-i hated and feared Yü Ti, who is accused in another of Po's memorials of having subjected the people of his province to endless harsh exactions so that he could send personal tribute gifts to the emperor, vast sums that found their way into the emperor's private treasuries.[52] Po Chü-i almost certainly had personal knowledge of Yü Ti's misgovernment in Hsiang-yang, since he had family links with the district. His own father, Po Chi-keng 白季庚 (730–794), had died in office as Vice Prefect (*pieh-chia* 別駕) of Hsiang-chou, the provincial capital where he had served under Yü Ti's immediate predecessor, Fan Tse.[53]

For the moment, his protests about Yü Ti and the objections of others at court carried the day. However, another of Po Chü-i's targets, P'ei Chün, was recalled to Ch'ang-an and on the twenty-fifth of the fourth month 808, was appointed a Chief Minister and head of the Public Revenue Commission. Hsien-tsung had previously tried to offer P'ei Chün a high office in 805, but then had been dissuaded by arguments that his long association with the eunuch Tou Wen-ch'ang 竇文場 had tainted him and made him unfit for pure office. In the event he proved generally unacceptable to the

[50] *Po Chü-i chi* 58, pp. 1232–34. For a complete translation see Eugene Feifel, *Po Chü-i as a Censor: His Memorials Presented to Emperor Hsien-Tsung during the Years 808–810* (The Hague: Mouton, 1961), pp. 195–98; commentary, pp. 56–64.

[51] *Po Chü-i chi* 58, p. 1234, ll. 6ff.

[52] *Po Chü-i chi* 58, p. 1233.

[53] Waley doubted whether Po Chü-i accompanied him there: see Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1949), p. 15. It is, however, quite certain that he did so, since in 815 when he passed through Hsiang-yang on his way to a post in Chiang-chou, he wrote a poem entitled "Arriving Again in Hsiang-yang I Call at My Old Home" (*Po Chü-i chi* 10, p. 198): see Chu Chin-ch'eng 朱金城, *Po Chü-i nien-p'u* 白居易年譜 (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1982), p. 16.

court: within days of his appointment he had caused lasting offense by ignoring court protocol; he had boorishly refused to stand in the appropriate position at the dawn audience, and when the Vice President of the Censorate showed him his correct place, where Yao Nan-chung 姚南仲 (the previous Vice President of the Right, who had died in 803,[54] since when the office had been vacant) had once stood, P'ei retorted, "Who was he?" He soon proved intolerable: on the eleventh of the ninth month he was replaced by Yü Ti, while he himself was made governor of Yü Ti's old province.

In one particular Yü Ti's appointment was very different from his predecessor's. P'ei Chün had been given a position of real power, as the second most important financial official in the empire. Yü Ti, on the other hand, when he came to the capital and assumed office as Chief Minister ad hominem, was appointed to the title *ssu-k'ung* 司空, Grand Master of Works. This was a title bearing the very highest upper first rank, one of the extremely prestigious titles of the "Three Dukes" (*san kung* 三公), in normal times reserved for unusually eminent statemen at the end of their careers. However, it entailed no actual duties, and its incumbent had no executive power.

Yü Ti was to all outward appearances a far more suitable candidate for court office than P'ei Chün, who had spent his early career as a subordinate of various military governors, and owed his advancement to the eunuch general Tou Wen-ch'ang, who was rumored, perhaps maliciously, to have adopted him as his son. Yü Ti's career, by contrast, had until his appointment as a military governor been passed entirely in regular court-appointed offices.

But this was not how those at court perceived him. After Yü Ti's appointment to the Chief Ministership, Po Chü-i, for example, had very real reasons to be afraid. He saw the new Chief Minister as a fearsome threat to the state, a man who had assured himself of the emperor's personal support, but who was a byword for extortion, cruelty, and ruthless treatment of colleagues and subordinates. Moreover, Po Chü-i knew that his own earlier denunciation of Yü Ti was there in the official files.

Po Chü-i soon had occasion to write yet another memorial concerning him, after Yü Ti's new daughter-in-law, the Princess P'u-ning, had chosen one of Yü Ti's favorite concubines, a famous singer and dancer, to be offered to the emperor for service in the palace.[55] The exact date of this memorial

[54] *CTS* 13, p. 3980.

[55] Yü Ti, apart from his reputation as a cruel and rapacious governor, was also famous in his time as a patron and amateur of poetry and music. For anecdotes connecting him with

is not certainly known, but it probably dates from late in 809 and shows that Hsien-tsung had in fact handled Yü Ti's appointment as Chief Minister very adroitly. To assuage Yü's pride, the emperor had acceded to his demand that, like the aged Tu Yu 杜佑, he should be granted the special privilege of an audience with the emperor three times each month. But although he had been granted high position and favor, "because Your Majesty knew that his character is evil, you have withheld real authority and power from him. Everybody agrees that this was the right way to deal with him. And Yü Ti himself is delighted." Po Chü-i suggested that the emperor return the girl to Yü Ti both to avoid any public scandal, and so as to retain Yü Ti's goodwill.[56] But his personal opinion of the Chief Minister remained unchanged; he still speaks (and again, one would think, at some considerable personal risk) of his "evil character."

However, away from his provincial power base Yü Ti's capacity for evildoing seems to have been effectively contained. He had been "promoted out of trouble," into a position of great prestige in which he could do no real damage. His ambitions remained frustrated, and he himself played little if any part in the court politics of these years.[57] But he and his family enjoyed the privileges and dignity of his position. He acquired a fine mansion in the very fashionable An-jen ward 安仁坊, on the east side of the great Chu-ch'iao boulevard 朱雀街 some three wards south of the administrative city,[58] and a country villa south of the city.[59] In 810 he took the step of setting up in Lan-ling ward 蘭陵坊 an ancestral temple to four generations of his ancestors, a mark of singular honor to which his post as one of the Three Dukes entitled him.[60] Ch'üan Te-yü 權德輿 (759–818), who became Chief Minister that same year, wrote a memorial inscription for it, the text of which survives.[61] He also used his influence to obtain high court posts

music or musicians, see *TPKC* 203, p. 1539; 204, p. 1546; 242, p. 1868; and *T'ang kuo-shih pu* C, p. 59. See also the somewhat sycophantic letter addressed to Yü Ti by Han Yü in 806, after visiting him in Hsiang-yang, discussing a musical piece and accompanying dance that Yü Ti had composed and presented to the throne. See *Han Ch'ang-li chi* 15, pp. 46–47.

[56] *Po Chü-i chi* 58, pp. 1238–39; trans. in Feifel, *Po Chü-i as a Censor*, pp. 199–200; commentary pp. 65–66.

[57] See *TCTC* 239, p. 7699, which says under the date 813 that "after staying for a long time at the capital he was frustrated and unable to realize his ambitions."

[58] See *Ch'ang-an chih* 長安志 7, p. 7b; Hsü Sung 徐松, *T'ang liang-ching ch'eng-fang k'ao* 唐兩京城坊考 2, p. 4b.

[59] Han Yü visited this some time between 813 and 815. See *Han Ch'ang-li chi* 9, p. 38, trans. Erwin von Zach, *Han Yü's Poetische Werke* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1952), p. 258.

[60] *THY* 19, p. 387.

[61] See *Ch'üan Tsai-chih wen-chi* (SPTK edn.) 46, p. 14b; *CTW* 484, pp. 15b–16b; *T'ang wen ts'ui* 唐文粹 (Wan-yu wen-k'u edn.) 60, pp. 7000–7001. See also *T'ang liang-ch'ing ch'eng fang k'ao* 2, p. 5b; *Ch'ang-an chih* 7, p. 8b. Another provincial governor, Ch'ü Huan (726–799), also had had his family temple in this ward.

for his sons. By 813 Yü Chi-yu, the princess's consort, had become Vice President of the Imperial Household Service (*tien-chung shao-chien* 殿中少監, rank 4B), Yü Fang was Assistant in the Imperial Library (*pi-shu ch'eng* 祕書丞, rank 5B), and Yü Cheng 于正 was Grand Admonisher of the Left (*tso tsan-shan ta-fu* 左贊善大夫, rank 5A) to the Heir Apparent. Nevertheless, Yü Ti had grown unsatisfied with his position at court, and was anxious to be given another governorship of a province in which he would have real power.

BRIBERY, EUNUCHS, AND MURDER

Yü Ti fell from power in circumstances that throw a sharp light on the ways in which corrupt influence could be exerted at court to gain high appointments. In the second month of 813 one of his sons, Yü Min 于敏, was arraigned in a sordid murder case.[62] The victim was a household servant boy belonging to a man called Liang Cheng-yen 梁正言, who had claimed to have influence with his kinsman, the very powerful eunuch Liang Shou-chien 梁守謙. Yü Min had cultivated Liang Cheng-yen's acquaintance, and with a large sum provided by his father attempted to bribe Liang Shou-chien to get a new appointment as a provincial governor for Yü Ti. When after a long time nothing whatever happened, and it became plain that they had been duped, Yü Min demanded his money back. When he was refused, Yü Min enticed away Liang Cheng-yen's servant and had him murdered and dismembered, and his remains concealed in a privy.[63] One of Yü Min's own slaves, Wang Tsai-jung 王再榮, subsequently revealed what had occurred to the authorities, presumably because of a grudge against his master.

The slave laid this accusation in a most unusual way, by informing the eunuch authorities of the Palace Domestic Service (Nei-shih sheng 內侍省),[64] rather than the civil authorities who should normally have had

[62] The case is described in *CTS* 15, p. 445; 156, p. 4131; *HTS* 172, p. 5200; *TCTC* 239, pp. 7699–7700.

[63] Ssu-ma Kuang assumes that the bribery incident occurred shortly before the trial, after Liang Shou-chien had become *shu-mi shih* (in 812).

[64] Our sources tells us that he reported the crime "at the Yin-t'ai Gate" 銀臺門. There were two gates with this name, on either side of the inner audience hall (the Tzu-ch'en tien or Pien tien) within the Ta-ming Palace. The eunuch Palace Domestic Service was inside the Right Yin-t'ai Gate, as was the emperor's eunuch-controlled Palace Treasury. For the position of the Palace Treasury see *Po Chü-i chi* 58, p. 1241, where silver vessels sent as personal tribute by P'ei Chün were paid in "at the Yin-t'ai gate." For the general layout of these buildings, see *Ch'ang-an chih* 6, p. 8a, and also plans 28 and 29 of *Chōan to Rakuyō* 長安と洛陽, Hiraoka Takeo 平岡武夫, comp. (Kyoto, 1956); neither, however, seems completely reliable. Hsü Sung's *Liang ching ch'eng-fang k'ao* 1, p. 18b, calls this the "separate office of the Palace Domestic Service" (Nei-shih pieh sheng 內侍別省). Presumably, the original premises were still in the old palace, the Hsi-nei or T'ai-chi kung.

jurisdiction.[65] He had good reasons for doing this. A slave who brought criminal charges against his master, except in cases of treason, was liable to death by strangulation, even if the charge was proved justified.[66] The ordinary judicial offices, moreover, would surely have been very reluctant to press charges against a member of such an influential family as Yü Ti's, merely on the basis of an illegal accusation by one of his slaves. Yü Ti was an immensely powerful member of the same bureaucratic machine as they themselves. The eunuchs, on the other hand, had no such qualms. Moreover, Liang Shou-chien,[67] the powerful eunuch who was involved in the background of this case, had just risen to an unprecedented position of power and influence. In 812 he had been appointed as the first Commissioner for the Palace Secretariat (*shu-mi shih* 樞密使).[68] This Palace Secretariat (Shu-mi yüan 樞密院), after its establishment in 812, gradually developed into a eunuch palace council, whose influence grew rapidly during the ninth century.[69] His post as its head gave Liang Shou-chien a formal institutionalized power in civil affairs such as no eunuch in T'ang times had ever before enjoyed. Since the victim had been a slave of the Commissioner's relative, it is not difficult to understand why the informer chose the eunuchs as the most likely way of getting satisfaction, and also presumably thought his own chances of escaping with his life were better.

After this unusual preliminary investigation by the eunuch Palace Domestic Service, who arrested and interrogated Yü Ti's major domo (*k'ung-mu kuan* 孔目官) and a dozen or more of his household slaves, the case was turned over to the regular judicial authorities. Yü Min was committed to the prison of the Censorate for trial and the emperor appointed commissioners from the three judicial offices (*san-ssu shih* 三司使) to conduct a full-scale investigation.[70] The three commissioners were the President of the

[65] The problem of jurisdiction of crimes committed in the capital was complex. The normal courts of first instance were the Metropolitan Administration (Ching-chao fu) and the county offices of Ch'ang-an and Wan-nien, which dealt with crimes as did the prefectures and counties elsewhere. But offenders arrested by the metropolitan police, the Chin-wu Guard, could be tried first by the Supreme Court of Justice (Ta-li ssu), which normally adjudicated cases tried elsewhere as an appellate court. Moreover, the various ministries of the capital could also act as courts of first instance, though normally for crimes committed by members of their own bureau.

[66] *T'ang-lü shu-i* 唐律疏義 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1983) 24, art. 349, pp. 438–39.

[67] Liang Shou-chien, in spite of his being one of the most powerful men of his time, has no biography in either standard history.

[68] He appears with this title in *TCTC* 239, p. 7695. He presumably succeeded the Eunuch Chief Secretary Liu Kuang-chi, who had just retired as *chih shu-mi* (see *TFYK* 665, p. 27a).

[69] See Liu Yat-wing, "The Shen-ts'e Armies and the Palace Commissions in China, 755–875," Ph.D. diss., U. of London, 1969, p. 241.

[70] Such a commission was set up ad hoc to investigate a major criminal case. It was quite distinct from another judicial body, also called the *san-ssu* 三司, which was a sort of permanent

Supreme Court of Justice (*ta-li ch'ing* 大理卿) Wu Shao-i 武少儀;[71] the Vice President of the Board of Justice (*hsing-pu shih-lang* 刑部侍郎) Wang Po 王播;[72] and the Vice President of the Censorate (*yü-shih chung-ch'eng* 御史中丞) Hsüeh Ts'un-ch'eng 薛存誠.[73] Yü Ti's mansion was searched, and the remains of the murdered slave discovered. Immediately the investigation began, Yü Ti attempted to throw himself on the mercy of the emperor. But he and Yü Chi-yu were denied admission at the palace gate, on the grounds that their official insignia were no longer valid, and were further humiliated by being kept waiting all day in the street outside the Ta-ming palace.

The results of this case affected the entire family. Although in theory a criminal investigation was supposed to be confined to the offense mentioned in the indictment, a series of related crimes came to light. Yü Min himself was found guilty and dispatched in fetters to permanent exile on the Lei-chou peninsula in the far south, then ordered to commit suicide on the road as he crossed the Ch'in-ling mountains. Yü Ti was demoted to be Tutor to one of the more obscure royal princes.[74] Yü Chi-yu, the consort of Princess Yung-ch'ang, was additionally accused of a flagrant affront to public morality by deceiving his royal wife who had died, still very young and to the great distress of the emperor, in 812,[75] and secretly smuggling various palace

review committee for capital cases, comprising the President of the Censorate, and the Chief Secretaries of the Chancellery and Secretariat.

[71] Wu Shao-i has no official biography. He was a *chin-shih* graduate of 778.

[72] Wang Po (759–830) was a graduate of both the *chin-shih* and a palace examination, and had had a distinguished career. In 810 he had made a name for himself while Vice President of the Censorate, by successfully prohibiting members of the Palace Armies and troops belonging to other provinces from carrying arms in the capital and its environs. He had also attacked the royal princesses' consorts and other members of powerful families for trying out their hunting dogs and hawks around the capital. In this context he may well already have come into conflict with the consort Yü Chi-yu. Both measures had been successful and had led to a decrease of crime and violence. In 811 he was made Vice President of the Board of Justice and also Commissioner for Salt and Iron; he was a legendary administrator, swift and certain in his decisions, knowledgeable about the fine detail of the regulations, and admired by all the officials for his skill. Biographies: *CTS* 164, pp. 4275–78; *HTS* 167, pp. 5115–17.

[73] *CTS* 153, pp. 4088–89.

[74] The Prince of En 恩王 (d. 817). The sixth of the twenty sons of Tai-tsung, he had been enfieffed in 776: *CTS* 116, p. 3392.

[75] See *CTS* 148, pp. 3994–95, for two memorials by Li Chi-fu 李吉甫 regarding the proposed erection of an oratory shrine in her memory. The Department of Public Revenue also objected to the proposed cost of her funeral, which they compared with the lesser costs of the obsequies of the I-yang 義陽 and I-chang 義章 princesses, the second and third daughters of Te-tsung. Their protest was successful: see *HTS* 83, p. 3667. What is interesting here is that although no scandal is recorded touching Princess Yung-ch'ang herself, and she can have been little more than a child when she died, both the proposal for an oratory, and the complaint about the costs of her funeral compare her with the I-yang princess. The I-yang princess had led a notoriously scandalous life, and her name was a byword for immorality. Te-tsung eventually

women to his brothers, who set them up in a house outside the palace.[76] He was stripped of his offices, confined to his house, and ordered to cultivate and reform himself. Two of Yü Ti's other sons were also dismissed from their offices and demoted, his major domo was publicly flogged and exiled to Ling-nan, and the two slaves who had actually committed the murder were sent to the authorities of the Metropolitan administration for summary execution. So were Liang Cheng-yen, whose intriguing and acceptance of the bribe had started off the whole train of events, and a monk called Chien-hsü 鑒虛, who was also implicated in the case.[77]

Chien-hsü had been notorious for years as a sort of a "lobbyist," a skillful intermediary adept at placing bribes for provincial governors seeking favors at court. The vast wealth he had accumulated over the years was confiscated.[78]

THE BUDDHIST CONNECTION

Chien-hsü was not only involved in the case of Yü Ti's family, but also in another sensational bribery scandal involving him with Tu Tsai 杜載, a son of the deceased Chief Minister Tu Huang-shang 杜黃裳 (738–808), who had been notorious in his lifetime for accepting bribes for official appointments.[79] Chien-hsü had enjoyed free entry to the inner palace to visit the Palace Chapel (Nei tao-ch'ang 內道場), and we are told that he enjoyed complete immunity owing to the patronage of the imperial household (that is, the eunuchs and the palace ladies), and that the officials dared not touch him. Even when these very serious bribery cases came to light, both the emperor and "powerful men both within and outside the palace" still tried to intercede on his behalf. Only the stubborn resistance to these pressures of the incorruptible Vice President of the Censorate, Hsüeh Ts'un-ch'eng, prevented his being pardoned.[80]

It is unclear whether this Chien-hsü is the same person as the monk

had her sequestered in the palace, while her equally infamous husband Wang Shih-p'ing (who was subsequently banished to Ling-nan for having adulterous relations with one of the palace women) was for a time confined to his residence in fetters. See *HTS* 83, p. 3664. See also, for an anecdote relating to the public scandal they aroused, *T'ang Kuo-shih pu* C, p. 56.

[76] Presumably, he was able to do this thanks to his high post in the Imperial Household Service.

[77] *CTS* 15, p. 445; 156, p. 4131; *TCTC* 239, pp. 7699–7700; *HTS* 172, p. 5200.

[78] *TCTC* 239, p. 7700.

[79] *CTS* 147, pp. 3974–75.

[80] *CTS* 147, pp. 3974–75; 153, pp. 4089–90; *THY* 40, p. 726; 60, p. 1051; *T'ang Kuo-shih pu* B, p. 45.

Chien-hsü to whom Liang Su 梁肅 (753–793) had long before addressed an undated letter of parting when he was about to return from the capital to Mt. T'ien-t'ai in Chekiang. In this letter Liang Su, himself deeply immersed in the study of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, commends him to his friend the T'ien-t'ai monk Yüan-hao 元浩.[81] If they were one and the same, one can only speculate that in the latter years of his life Chien-hsü's devotion to religion was neglected. One ninth-century source gives us a flash of insight into Chien-hsü's contemporary worldly reputation: his name was widely associated in Ch'ang-an with his favorite recipe for shoulder of lamb.[82] It is hardly surprising that this meat-eating gourmet is not mentioned in the Buddhist histories and collections of biographies of the period.

Yü Ti himself had strong personal connections with Buddhism: of the three surviving pieces of his prose writing, one is a preface to a collection of poetry by a monk, another an inscription for a Buddhist cloister.[83] At Hsiang-yang he is known to have patronized lavish Buddhist lantern illuminations[84] and to have been connected with a Ch'an hermit called P'ang Yün 龐蘊.[85] He also became a disciple of the aged Ch'an master Tao-t'ung 道通 (731–813), who moved from Shan-nan to the capital at much the same time as Yü Ti.[86]

It should also be remembered that Chien-hsü, as a monk, would also have been a natural channel of communication to the all-powerful eunuch Liang Shou-chien, who was himself a pious Buddhist, and served as one of the two Commissioners for Religion (*yu-chieh kung-te shih* 右街功德使) of the capital.[87]

[81] *CTW* 518, pp. 21a–b; *Wen-yüan ying-hua* 文苑英華 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1966; rpt. of 1567 edn., pref. T'u Tse-min; hereafter *WYYH*) 726, pp. 6b–7a. (Yüan-hao may be a miswriting for Yüan-tsao 元造, the T'ien-t'ai master with whom Liang Su is known to have studied.)

[82] *T'ang Kuo-shih pu* B, p. 45.

[83] *CTW* 544, p. 12a; *WYYH* 712, pp. 7b–8b; 817, pp. 7a–8b. The preface, written in 792 while Yü Ti was Prefect of Hu-chou, is to the collected poetry of the famous monk-poet Chiao-jan (?ca. 734–799), with whom Yü Ti exchanged poems. See *Ch'üan T'ang shih* 全唐詩 473, p. 5366; *T'ang Ts'ai-tzu chuan* 唐才子傳 4, p. 68, and Nunome Chōfū 布目潮渢 and Nakamura Takashi 中村喬, *Tōzaishiden no kenkyū* 唐才子傳の研究 (Osaka, 1972), pp. 229–33. See also Chiao-jan's biography in *Sung Kao-seng chuan* 29, pp. 891c–892a, which identifies Yü Ti and Yen Chen-ch'ing among his friends. Chiao-jan was also a T'ien-t'ai monk, and a friend of Liang Su.

[84] *TPKC* 237, p. 1824.

[85] See *Shih-shih chi-ku lüeh* 釋氏稽古略 3, pp. 832a–b; *Fou-tsu t'ung-chi* 53, p. 466c.

[86] *Sung Kao-seng chuan* 10, p. 767c; *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* 景德傳燈錄 6, p. 248c; 10, p. 274a.

[87] See the memorial inscription written for him by his successor as Commissioner for the Palace Secretariat, Yang Ch'eng-ho 楊承和, in *CTW* 998, pp. 3b–13a; and *Chin-shih ts'ui-pien* 金石萃編 107, pp. 27b–37a. Unfortunately, we do not know the date when Liang was appointed to this post. Liang was *chang shu chi* 掌樞機 from 810: *CTW* 998, p. 5b.

AFTER THE FALL: YÜ TI'S LATER CAREER

After such a disastrous scandal one would assume that Yü Ti was finished. But this was far from what happened. By the end of 813 he had been promoted to the "pure" office of Adviser (*pin-k'o* 賓客) to the Heir Apparent,[88] a strange post indeed for a man with such a murky past. This post carried the upper third rank. There were, in theory at least, four such persons; their charge was to accompany the Heir Apparent on ceremonial occasions, and to instruct him in ritual and appropriate etiquette. Such an appointment was often a pure sinecure, but in this instance this is unlikely because a new Heir Apparent, the future Mu-tsung, now a young man of eighteen, had very recently been appointed, in the tenth month of 812.[89]

In the tenth month of 815 Yü Ti was promoted yet again to be President of the Board of Finance, by this time a relatively powerless, but still prestigious post.[90] He also remained extremely wealthy. In 815 the provincial magnates all once again offered to submit special tribute payments to help pay for the campaign against Wu Yüan-chi 吳元濟, the rebel Governor of Huai-hsi.[91] Yü Ti, true to his old form, sent in a massive gift — no less than 7,000 ounces of silver and 500 ounces of gold — but the emperor refused to accept it.[92]

In 817 he was in trouble again on account of one of his sons. Yü Chi-yu, the princess's consort, was found guilty of feasting and drinking through the night while in mourning for his father's principal wife. For this grave offense against propriety he was stripped of his office and noble titles, flogged, and banished to live in seclusion in Chung-chou 忠州, a backwater in the

[88] See the memorial congratulating the emperor on this appointment presented by the Chief Minister Ch'üan Te-yü, in *CTW* 484, pp. 15b–16b; *Ch'üan Tsai-chih wen-chi* 46, pp. 14b–15b.

[89] *CTS* 16, p. 475; *THY* 1, p. 11. His appointment had followed the premature death of Hsien-tsung's original Heir Apparent, Li Ning 李寧 (posthumously entitled the Hui-chao Heir Apparent 惠昭太子), on the twentieth of the intercalary twelfth month, 811 (actually in January 812).

[90] *CTS* 15, p. 454.

[91] On this extraordinarily ill managed campaign see Charles A. Peterson, "Regional Defense against the Central Power: The Huai-hsi Campaign 815–817," in Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank, eds., *Chinese Ways in Warfare* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P. 1974) pp. 123–50. It dragged on from 815 to the autumn of 817. Military costs reached such a level that Hsien-tsung himself was forced to pay out large sums from the Palace Treasuries in the sixth month of 815 (300,000 lengths of silk and 300,000 strings of cash; *CTS* 15, p. 463) and again in the ninth month (100,000 bolts of silk; *CTS* 15, p. 464), which were transferred to the Public Revenue Commission.

[92] *CTS* 156, p. 4131.

Yangtze gorges in eastern Szechwan.[93] Yü Ti was demoted once more for having failed to bring up his son properly.[94]

Yü Ti again weathered the storm. Later in 818 he asked permission to retire, and the Chief Ministers asked that he be appointed Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent.[95] But the emperor, presumably considering that Yü Ti's past doings had made him unsuitable for a post of such moral pre-eminence, gave him a lesser post, reappointing him Adviser to the Heir Apparent. He died later in the same year.

His death was followed by a heated argument over what posthumous title and name should be granted him, led by Wang Yen-wei 王彥威, Erudit Scholar of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, who suggested the unflattering posthumous name Li 厲, "Severe,"[96] and attacked Yü's past misdeeds. Clearly Yü Ti remained a controversial figure to the end. Wang Yen-wei's opinion prevailed, and Yü Ti was posthumously named "Li."[97] But this was not the end of the matter. Nor was it the end of public scandal involving his family.

A CONSTRUCTION SCANDAL: YÜ HUI AND HSIEN-TSUNG'S TOMB

On the night of the twenty-seventh day of the first month 820, the emperor Hsien-tsung died, poisoned some said by the hand of his eunuch Ch'en Hung-chih 陳弘志, but possibly as a result of ingesting the lethal

[93] In 819–820, Po Chü-i was appointed as the Prefect of Chung-chou. It seems probable that Yü Chi-yu was still living there in banishment. At all events the two became acquainted, for in 834, when Po Chü-i was living in semiretirement in Loyang, he wrote three quatrains to be sent to Yü, then Prefect of Ming-chou (mod. Ning-po). See *Po Chü-i chi* 32, pp. 718–19.

[94] *CTS* 15, p. 459.

[95] The *t'ai-tzu t'ai-pao* 太子太保 was one of the Three Grand Preceptors of the Heir Apparent (*t'ai-tzu san-shih* 太子三師), the equivalents at his court-in-miniature of the Three Senior Statesmen (*san kung*) at the emperor's court. The Heir Apparent was expected to treat them with extraordinary deference. They held the lower first rank, and followed in court protocol only the Three Senior Statesmen and the Three Dignities (*san-kung, san-shih*), and the Royal Princes. They thus outranked all the highest ministers in the central government. See Robert des Rotours, *Traité des fonctionnaires et Traité de l'armée, traduits de la Nouvelle histoire des T'ang* (Leiden: Brill, 1948) 2, p. 571.

[96] The posthumous title "Li" was not a very desirable one. It was defined in the *Shih fa* 謚法 as being appropriate for "one who executes the innocent."

[97] Quite a lot of documentation survives from this controversy and is collected in *THY* 80, pp. 1472–73. This includes Wang Yen-wei's hostile opinion suggesting the posthumous name Li, an objection to his proposal, and Wang Yen-wei's rejoinder. See also versions of the memorials of Wang Yen-wei in *CTW* 729, pp. 8b ff., 13b; and *WYYH* 841, pp. 12a ff. There is also a memorial by an Omissioner, Kao I 高釴, supporting Wang Yen-wei's suggestion. See also *CTW* 725, p. 6b; *CTS* 156, pp. 4131–33.

"elixirs" provided by his alchemists. Veiled rumors circulated later in the century implicating the new emperor Mu-tsung in his father's death.[98] On the nineteenth of the fifth month his body was interred in his mausoleum, the Ching-ling tomb 景陵. Within a few weeks a shocking new scandal came to light, once again involving the Yü family.

The Ching-ling mausoleum was built on Chin-chih mountain 金熾山, about three miles northwest of Feng-hsien county 奉先, somewhat more than sixty miles northeast of Ch'ang-an, a district where there were already the mausolea of Jui-tsung (the Ch'iao-ling), and of Hsüan-tsung (the T'ai-ling), and the tombs of Hsüan-tsung's brothers Li Wei, Li Fan, and Li Yeh, all of whom were buried in the precinct of Jui-tsung's mausoleum. The county had been specially established at the time of Jui-tsung's burial in 716, and placed under the administration of the Metropolitan District (Ching-chao fu).[99] At the time of Hsien-tsung's death the county magistrate was Yü Hui 于翬, the third son of Yü Ti's cousin Yü Ch'i who, as we have seen, had been of crucial importance at a difficult point in Yü Ti's career.[100]

As soon as Hsien-tsung died, the Vice President of the Chancellery and ad hominem Chief Minister Ling-hu Ch'u 令狐楚 was put in charge of the obsequies, appointed Commissioner for the Mausoleum (*shan-ling shih* 山陵使), and commissioned to compose the deceased emperor's eulogy.[101] Much of the work must already have been completed, but he held overall responsibility. Public works were of course a major responsibility of every county magistrate, who was responsible for levying the necessary labor force and procuring supplies. He would normally do this in collaboration with the administrator of the Department of Finance (*hu-ts'ao ts'an-chün* 戶曹參軍) of the prefecture of which his county formed a part. In the case of the new mausoleum Yü Hui, as magistrate, had been given special responsibility for all the masonry and stonework for the tomb, while the Administrator of Finance under the Metropolitan District, Wei Cheng-mu 韋正牧, was given overall responsibility for the construction.

The two engaged in fraud on a monumental scale, abetted by unnamed "experts on Yin and Yang" from the Han-lin Academy, presumably the officials responsible for selecting a suitably auspicious site. By simply not paying for the work being done, Yü Hui accumulated the huge sum of

[98] *TCTC* 241, pp. 7776–77 and the *K'ao-i*.

[99] See *Yüan-ho chün-hsien t'u-chih* 元和郡縣圖志 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983) 1, p. 9; *T'ai-p'ing huan-yü chi* 太平寰宇記 28, pp. 1a–13a; *HTS* 37, p. 965.

[100] *HTS* 72C, p. 2820.

[101] *CTS* 172, p. 4460. The text is preserved in *CTW* 543, pp. 13a–15b; *T'ang wen ts'ui* 32, pp. 594–95.

150,000 strings of cash.[102] This money was then declared to be "surplus" and presented to the emperor. Such "surpluses" usually found their way into the emperor's privy treasury, and were commonly considered as a tolerated form of high-level bribery, and a means of buying the imperial favor.[103] However, the manner in which this money had been accumulated was too scandalous to be concealed; complaints and accusations flooded in.

On the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month Ling-hu Ch'u, who was responsible for completing the mausoleum, and was thus held responsible for the criminal acts of his subordinates, was sent out to a provincial post in disgrace.[104] Yü Hui and Wei Cheng-mu, who had also been skimming off great sums earmarked for the work, were put on trial. In addition to the sum Yü Hui had fraudulently converted into "surplus funds" he was found to have taken another 13,000 strings of cash for himself, while Wei Cheng-mu was found to have misappropriated 8,700 strings of cash out of the funds allocated to feed the work force. On the tenth of the eighth month both were found guilty and sentenced to be summarily flogged to death.[105]

YÜ TI'S POSTHUMOUS REHABILITATION

Yü Chi-yu, the former princess's consort, seems to have thrived under his imperial brother-in-law Mu-tsung. Long freed from his exile in Chung-chou, early in the new reign we find him riding to the hunt with the new emperor in the Imperial Park, and taking the opportunity to reopen the issue of Yü Ti's posthumous name. Yü Ti had of course been a prominent member of Mu-tsung's household administration before he came to the throne. Eventually the emperor's favorite Han-lin scholar, Yüan Chen 元稹 (779–831), was ordered to draft an edict changing the posthumous name to Ssu 思, "considerate."[106]

AN ASSASSINATION PLOT: YÜ TI AND YÜAN CHEN

Another, even more serious trial for the Yü family, and involving this same Yüan Chen, was still to come. In 822 Yü Ti's son Yü Fang, who was

[102] See *CTS* 16, p. 480, under seventh month *ting-mao* (27th) day; *CTS* 172, p. 4460; *HTS* 166, p. 5099. *HTS* says that Ling-hu Ch'u actually presented the "surplus funds" to the new emperor. *TCTC* 241, p. 7781, gives a very brief account of the affair, recording Ling-hu Ch'u's dismissal on account of the defalcations of his subordinates, but without mentioning Yü Hui or Wei Cheng-mu by name.

[103] See, for example, *CTS* 48, p. 2087; *HTS* 52, p. 1358.

[104] *CTS* 16, p. 480; 172, p. 4460; *HTS* 166, p. 5099; *TCTC* 241, p. 7781.

[105] *CTS* 16, p. 480; 172, p. 4460.

[106] See *Yüan Chen chi* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1982) 50, pp. 551–52; *CTW* 647, p. 25b.

now the Tutor to Prince Ho 和王李綺, the eleventh son of Shun-tsung, was accused of complicity in a plot alleged to have been instigated by the Chief Minister, Yüan Chen, to hire assassins to murder his colleague the powerful minister and general P'ei Tu 裴度 (765–839).

The circumstances of this astonishing allegation were very complicated.[107] P'ei Tu was a successful and influential minister and general, who had finally crushed the rebellion of Wu Yüan-chi in Huai-hsi in 817 and subsequently reduced the large and powerful province of P'ing-lu (in modern Shantung) in 819. After Mu-tsung's accession to the throne the dynasty firmly controlled all of China except the northeastern provinces in Ho-pei, and now attempted to exert court control there as well and to appoint new governors of the provinces. This foolish and unnecessary attempt at intervention provoked a new rebellion in Ch'eng-te 成德 province (in central Ho-pei) led by Wang T'ing-ts'ou 王廷湊, and eventually led to the permanent loss of direct control over the northeastern provinces. An imperial punitive force under P'ei Tu's command was sent against Wang T'ing-ts'ou. P'ei believed that Yüan Chen, who had rapidly risen to favor under the new emperor and was now head of the Han-lin Academy, had been interfering with his reports to the capital, and was trying to undermine his position. Certainly at the beginning of 822 Yüan suggested that the emperor pardon Wang T'ing-ts'ou and suspend the campaign against him.[108] In the second month of 822 the emperor, disregarding the protests of many ministers who suspected Yüan Chen's close links with one faction of the eunuchs, appointed Yüan Chen as Chief Minister.[109] The campaign continued, but P'ei Tu was recalled to the capital. After an abortive attempt by Yüan Chen to have him appointed Military Governor of Huai-nan, in the third month P'ei Tu was appointed as Yüan Chen's fellow Chief Minister.[110] The two hated one another cordially.

Yüan Chen now entered into a conspiracy with Yü Fang, which throws light not only on Yüan Chen's devious character, but also on Yü Fang. Yü Fang was notorious not only for his great wealth and his ambition for advancement and power, but also for his association with "knights errant"[111] — a euphemism for political hit men willing to undertake dirty

[107] In general I follow the accounts given in *CTS* 166, p. 4334 and in *TCTC* 242, pp. 7807–18. See also Waley, *Po Chü-i*, p. 140, which is mistaken in its surmise that P'ei Tu 裴度 was responsible for spreading the rumors about Yüan Chen plotting the assassination. See Pien Hsiao-hsüan 卞孝萱, *Yüan Chen nien-p'u* 元稹年譜 (Chinan: Ch'i Lu shu-she, 1980), pp. 407–11, for the relevant sources and some critical comment on this incident.

[108] *TCTC* 242, p. 7810. [109] *CTS* 16, p. 495; *TCTC* 242, p. 7809.

[110] *CTS* 16, p. 496; *TCTC* 242, pp. 7810–15. [111] *CTS* 156, p. 4133.

and dangerous work, even to murder, for their patron. The circumstances are somewhat obscure, but what seems to have happened is this. The T'ang general who had been designated Governor of Ch'eng-te province, Niu Yüan-i 牛元翼, was besieged in Shen-chou by Wang T'ing-ts'ou, and a relief expedition was being discussed at court. Yü Fang suggested to Yüan Chen that he should bribe the clerks in the Board of Civil Office and the Board of War to forge twenty blank fake credentials of appointment to office, and that two of his associates who were familiar with the Ho-pei region, Wang Chao 王昭 and Yü Yu-ming 于友明,[112] should go secretly to Shen-chou and use these as bribes to induce Wang T'ing-ts'ou's commanders to allow Niu Yüan-i to escape from the beleaguered city. Yüan Chen agreed to this unlikely plan. However, somebody called Li Shang 李賞 got to hear of the plot, and reported it to P'ei Tu in a perverted form, claiming that Yüan Chen had arranged for Yü Fang to hire assassins to murder him. When P'ei Tu kept quiet about this unbelievable accusation,[113] and refused to act, Li Shang reported it to the eunuchs of the Shen-ts'e Palace Armies, who were deeply involved with P'ei Tu's political enemies.

The eunuchs reported the accusation to the court, and on the twenty-seventh day of the fifth month a formal investigation was ordered, the minister Han Kao 韓皋 presiding over commissioners from the three judicial offices,[114] as in the earlier case of Yü Min. They found the charges to be completely groundless. In the course of the investigation, however, the real plot had come to light, and Yü Fang was found guilty on this count. At first he was sentenced to death,[115] but subsequently he was reprieved on the grounds of his father's great services to the royal house, and because his brother was married into the imperial family, and was sentenced to banishment.[116] We know nothing more of Yü Fang's life.

Mu-tsung acted decisively, and decided that the only solution to the tensions at court was to dismiss both P'ei Tu and Yüan Chen from their

[112] The name of Yü Fang's second henchman is given as Wang Yu-ming 王友明 in *CTS* 166, p. 4334. However, the Veritable Record of Wu-tsung's reign cited in the *K'ao-i* to *TCTC* 242, p. 7817, gives his surname as Yü, although it gives two versions of his personal name. Ssu-ma Kuang accepted Yü Yu-ming as his correct name, and it is possible that he was a relative of Yü Fang, although this name does not appear in the *HTS* 72B genealogy.

[113] Political violence was not unfamiliar at this time. Some years earlier, in 815, P'ei Tu had been the target of a real assassination attempt, in which he sustained a head wound, and the Chief Minister Wu Yüan-heng 吳元衡 was killed. See *TCTC* 239, p. 7713. After this chief ministers were escorted through the streets of Ch'ang-an by escorts with drawn weapons, and many officials were afraid to leave their houses before dawn to attend the audience.

[114] *TCTC* 242, p. 7818.

[115] *CTS* 156, p. 1433; *HTS* 172, p. 5201; *TFYK* 924, p. 10a.

[116] See the edict in *TFYK* 150, pp. 14a–b.

posts as chief ministers. This was done immediately, on the fifth of the sixth month,[117] in spite of the protests of many of the courtiers, who felt it was unjust to P'ei Tu, who was after all completely innocent, and unduly lenient to Yüan Chen, who had unscrupulously abused his own authority and blatantly broken the law.[118]

Yüan Chen, whose complicity in the bizarre plot must also have come to light, escaped criminal punishment as an accomplice, although in the memorial accepting his new post in T'ung-chou he admitted his involvement. Typically, he tried to shift the blame onto Yü Fang for thinking up their crazy scheme, and in the same breath claimed that he was only anticipating the emperor's wishes.[119] Whatever his literary reputation, he does not come out of this story in a very pleasant light.

EPILOGUE

There is a happy postscript to the story of Yü Ti's ill-starred family. In 833 Po Chü-i and Liu Yü-hsi 柳禹錫 exchanged poems lamenting the ruined former glories of the mansion once owned by Yü Chi-yu and his royal wife. Po Chü-i's poem is entitled "With Other Guests Visiting the Former Mansion of the Princess Married into the Yü Family."[120]

> Few visitors come to the old mansion of P'ing-yang,[121]
> And those who do arrive are saddened.
>
> The "grain-pounding bird" cries in the Peach and Plum Court,
> The crickets chatter in the Phoenix Tower.
>
> On crumbling terrace, slippery stones — remnants of stone steps,
> Screens torn, with no real pearls to fill their hooks.
>
> I've heard it said that even now Hsiao Shih lives on,
> Mustache and whiskers turned snow white, in Ming-chou.

[117] *CTS* 16, pp. 497–98.

[118] *TCTC* 242, p. 7818.

[119] *Yüan Chen chi* 33, pp. 383–85.

[120] *Po Chü-i chi* 31, p. 704; *WYYH* 307, p. 5b.

[121] It is unclear to me precisely what P'ing-yang refers to. It is also mentioned in a quatrain addressed by Po Chü-i to Yü Chi-yu (see *Po Chü-i chi* 32, p. 718) as the symbol of his former magnificence. In no. 24 of Po Chü-i's "New Yueh-fu," however, it is used clearly referring to the Princess P'ing-yang, eldest sister of Han Wu-ti and referring to her splendid residence. Here it is presumably an oblique reference to the Yung-ch'ang princess who was Hsien-tsung's oldest daughter. P'ing-yang might also be a place name: it could be a historical allusion to several places in the Kuan-chung region. I am unable to resolve this problem.

The "princess married into the Yü family" was of course the Yung-ch'ang princess married to Yü Chi-yu. We do not know exactly when she had died, but it seems to have been before Hsien-tsung's death in 820. Hsiao Shih was a very appropriate literary allusion by which to refer to Yü Chi-yu. Yü Chi-yu was a patron, at least, of music. Hsiao Shih was a famous flute player who was married to Nung Yü, daughter of Duke Mu of Ch'in (r. 660–621 B.C.), who built a Phoenix Tower for their residence. Hsiao Shih taught Nung Yü his transcendent skills on the flute, and they would roam the universe, he mounted on a dragon and she on a phoenix.

At first reading I had assumed that Liu Yü-hsi and Po Chü-i had actually visited the mansion together, but they were living far apart at this time, and Liu's poem was probably written as a literary response to Po's.[122]

On the Former Mansion of the Princess Married into the Yü Family

Trees crowd the crumbling terrace, leaves choke the lake,
Sound of flutes silenced forever, insects' sad sounds in the grasses.

Neighbors still tell of the palace ladies' tresses,
Of visitors jostling to steal sprigs of the royal fruit.

Overgrown horse paddock now a hide for wily hares,
From the Phoenix perch, sad hooting of owls.

Ho-lang is still alive — but out of favor
Quite changed from before, when his face was fair as if powdered.

The Ho-lang in Liu Yü-hsi's poem is a reference to Ho Yen (190–249),[123] who in his youth was said to have been so fair that people thought he powdered his face. Married to a daughter of Ts'ao Ts'ao, he was perhaps a more apt parallel to Yü Chi-yu, since he was famed for his dissipation, and for some time was kept out of office by his imperial brother-in-law Ts'ao P'ei (Wei Wen-ti). However, Yü Chi-yu could hardly have been thought comparable to Ho Yen in terms of literary talent.

Po Chü-i not only heard of Yü Chi-yu's still being alive, he addressed a group of poems to him in Ming-chou. These prove, incidentally, that Yü Chi-yu had inherited his father's interest in music. Further evidence of his artistic interests and of his literary acquaintances is given by two poems of

[122] *Liu Yü-hsi chi* 柳禹錫集 (Shanghai: Shanghai Jen-min, 1975) 32 (*wai chi*) 2, p. 308. This edition misprints Yü 于 in the title as Ting 丁.
[123] This epithet is also used by Po Chü-i in a quatrain addressed to Yü Chi-yu himself. See *Po Chü-i chi* 32, p. 718.

unknown date addressed to him by Yang Chü-yüan 楊巨源,[124] another poet friend of Po Chü-i and once the teacher of Yüan Chen.

Yü Chi-yu also served as Prefect of two other important prefectures, Chiang-chou 絳州 in modern Shansi, and Sung-chou 宋州 in Honan.[125] His family continued to have successful official careers after his death. Of his five sons one became Vice President of the Court of Agriculture, three became prefects, albeit of minor places, and one a county magistrate, and eight out of nine of his recorded grandsons held office, both as local officials and in central government.[126] Nothing is known of their lives, but in their modest way Yü Chi-yu's descendants continued the tradition of their lineage, whose members served as officials in every generation down to the collapse of the dynasty, a truly remarkable record, and one that seems not to have been seriously disturbed by the crimes and scandals I have recounted.

What does this catalogue of crime and misbehavior tell us about the period? In the course of a quarter-century members of the Yü family were impeached for violent maladministration, convicted of murder, bribery, sexual abuse of palace servants, lack of filial piety, malfeasance in construction of a royal tomb, forgery of imperial documents, bribery of official clerks, conspiracy to offer rebels fake brevets of appointment, and tried for involvement in an alleged plot to assassinate one chief minister on behalf of another. Yü Ti's elder brother was banished on suspicion of forming a political clique. Yü Ti himself fell from office as one of the highest members of the civil bureaucracy because of the misdeeds of his family. One of his sons was convicted of bribery and murder, and ordered to commit suicide; another was convicted and banished for involvement in a bizarre and illegal covert operation that he claimed to have undertaken to promote the emperor's wishes; a third abused his position as a member of the royal family to procure women from the imperial harem for his brothers, and was later found guilty of offending against filial piety, one of the unforgivable "Ten Abominations," yet ended his career in a series of prized provincial posts. A nephew was summarily executed for malfeasance of official funds.

Yet this family survived, and prospered down to the end of the T'ang. Yü Ti escaped responsibility after Yü Min's conviction for murder, and was promptly appointed to the staff of the Heir Apparent. Yü Chi-yu escaped any serious consequences of two convictions — for procuring palace service

[124] On Yang Chü-yüan, see *T'ang Ts'ai-tzu chuan* 5, p. 83 (Nunomes's edn., pp. 279–81). A *chin-shih* graduate in 789, he was Rector of the Imperial University in the early 820s, and under Wen-tsung became Deputy Governor of Ho-chung and Chief Secretary of the Board of Rites.
[125] *HTS* 72B, p. 2822. [126] *HTS* 72B, p. 2822.

women for his brother, and for unfilial behavior — that would have involved death for a lesser man. Yü Fang escaped the death penalty after his plot with Yüan Chen simply because of his family connections. Clearly they were part of a charmed circle, to whom ordinary standards were not applied. We have seen some clues of how their privileged position was built up — by special services that made Yü Ti indispensable to the emperor, by nepotism and the backing of a group of powerful patrons, by the accumulation and unscrupulous employment of a huge fortune, and by the entry of his son into the favored and privileged group of royal consorts, royal princes, and princesses. Moreover, the family's position was further strengthened by Yü Ti's service as one of the tutors of the future emperor Mu-tsung.

We have startling evidence of their involvement in a network of bribery, involving Chief Ministers, the highest-ranking eunuchs, generals, and corrupt members of the clergy. We find lobbyists specializing in the placement of bribes. We see how the emperors themselves became the recipients of illegal and corrupt payoffs, barely disguised bribes for official advancement, and how high officials engaged in illegal tax levies and fraud in public works to make such payoffs.

Lastly, we see repeated evidence of that easy resort to violence that also was characteristic of this period: Yü Ti abusing his official subordinates and the local population under his jurisdiction, and driving a subordinate to suicide; his son Yü Min taking vengeance on the man who had welched on a bribe by murdering his servant; the royal princes, the princesses, and their consorts endangering the population of the capital with their hunting dogs and hawks; Yü Fang with his stable of bravos. This was, we should remember, an era when one Chief Minister was cut down in the streets of the capital, and his murderers never apprehended; when the problem of vendetta — whether it was to be considered a crime or an honorable revenge for mistreatment — was a matter of public debate; when one of the emperors in our story was poisoned, while his successor died of injuries sustained in a melee on the polo field.

Yü Ti's family was certainly exceptional. But its misdeeds were symptomatic of a general disregard for law and propriety and a decline in public behavior affecting the whole ruling elite at the capital. The writers with whose complaints I began certainly had much to complain about. Yet even they were part of the same scene. Yüan Chen, Yü Fang's co-conspirator, was one of the principal social satirists of the first years of Hsien-tsung's reign. Po Chü-i, whose poems of protest led me to Yü Ti, remained loyal to his old intimate Yüan Chen after he was deprived of the highest office

following the scandalous plot involving him with Yü Fang. He remained on apparently cordial terms with the moral reprobate Yü Chi-yu.

The "corruption of the age" was in the eye of the beholder, and this should remind us that men of the early ninth century lived in a world very different from our own, and from the Neo-Confucian China of more recent centuries, a world of everyday violence and flaunting of the law, and a world of remarkably casual sexual freedom by the standards of later Chinese history. My friend and colleague James Liu in a recent study drew attention to the immense difference in social mores between the T'ang and late Sung periods.[127] The events I have described underline his point. Such a story would have been simply unimaginable in later times.

[127] James T. C. Liu, "Polo and Cultural Change: From T'ang to Sung China," *HJAS* 45.1 (1985), pp. 203–24.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CTS	*Chiu T'ang shu* 舊唐書
CTW	*Ch'üan T'ang wen* 全唐文
HTS	*Hsin T'ang shu* 新唐書
TCTC	*Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 資治通鑑
TFYK	*Ts'e-fu yüan-kuei* 册府元龜
THY	*T'ang hui yao* 唐會要
TPKC	*T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記
WYYH	*Wen-yüan ying-hua* 文苑英華