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“Filling in That Which is Missing”: A Discussion and Selected Translation of *Ci Liushi jiu wen*

REBECCA DORAN
University of Miami

The proliferation and expansion of a body of literature that came to be termed *biji* 筆記 (“notes”) or *biji xiaoshuo* 筆記小說 (“notes and small talk”) during the Tang period in Chinese history is a well-known and important literary-historical development (Zhang 43–46, Fu “Preface,” Miao 1–6, and Wu 339–342). Works and collections classified as *biji* or *biji xiaoshuo* could include anecdotes about famous and less famous personages and historical events, records of unusual occurrences, geographical and/or ethnographic knowledge, discussions of literature and materials dealing with a range of other topics. This paper seeks to contribute to our understanding of these works by offering an introduction to and selected translation of Li Deyu’s 李德裕 (787–850) *Ci Liushi jiu wen* 次柳氏舊聞 (A Record of Past Events Recounted by Mr. Liu [Liu Fang]). *Ci Liushi jiu wen* is a relatively early example of a subgenre of *biji* devoted to the reign of Xuanzong 玄宗 (Li Longji 李隆基; r. 712–756), a period of particular fascination because of its tumultuous and dynasty-changing events. These included the splendor of the Emperor’s early reign, the sudden and permanent destruction of this era in 755 by the rebellion of Xuanzong’s one-time favorite, the frontier general An Lushan 安祿山 (c. 703–757), and the backdrop of tragic romance afforded by the relationship between Xuanzong and his consort, Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 (719–756), a passion that, in the popular imagination and official historical narrative, was blamed as triggering the rebellion.¹

Ci Liushi jiu wen in its present form is a one-chapter compilation of anecdotes, as purportedly told to historian Liu Fang 柳芳 (fl. 740s–760s) by Xuanzong’s close eunuch confidant Gao Lishi 高力士 (684–762). It was later related to Li Deyu by his father, Li Jifu 李吉甫 (758–814), who had served with Fang’s son Liu Mian 柳冕 (ca. 730–804). The ascription of authorship or compilation to well-known official and writer Li Deyu is well attested. According to various sources, including the introductory entry in *Ci Liushi jiu wen* itself, Li Deyu submitted the completed work to the throne in September of 834, during the eighth month of the eighth year of the Taihe 太和 or Dahe 大和 reign period (827–835) (Wang Qinruo et al., 556.25a, Wang Pu 36.662, Liu et al. 17b.55, and Ouyang et al. 58.1468).²

Li Deyu was one of the most prominent political figures of the early ninth century. His long and illustrious – though ultimately tragic – career in the imperial bureaucracy spanned about thirty years, from the 820s through his death in 850. Li Deyu’s career is closely linked to the infamous “Niu-Li Factional Conflicts” 牛李黨爭, which began in the 820s. The factional conflict is named after the leading partisans of opposing factions, Niu Sengru 牛僧孺 (780–849) and Li Deyu. Li Deyu ultimately died in exile on the southern island of Hainan 海南 after his faction lost the emperor’s favor and was purged (Fang Ch. 1).

As it stands, *Ci Liushi jiu wen*, completed while Li Deyu was serving in the central court, is comprised of the preface plus seventeen brief anecdotes that take place during Xuanzong’s rule, with a few additional anecdotes pieced together from various other sources.

¹ An Lushan’s rebellion led to staggering loss of life and permanently weakened the central imperial authority. See Liu et al. 200a.5367–5374 and Ouyang et al. 225a.6411–6424. The extreme favor shown to Yang and her family has traditionally been pinpointed as a major contributing factor in inciting An Lushan’s rebellion. For Yang Guifei, see Liu et al. 51.2178–2181 and Ouyang et al. 76.3493–3496.

² *Tang hui yao* places the presentation of the text in the ninth month. In *Cefu yuangui* and *Jiu Tangshu*, the text is called *Liu shi jiu wen* 柳氏舊聞 (“Past Events Recounted by Mr. Liu [Liu Fang]”). See Zhou 41.

In keeping with Li Deyu's offering of the text to the throne in his capacity as high-ranking minister and advisor, the content of *Ci Liushi jiu wen* is often concerned with the performance of good government (Hou 213–215). Prominent themes involve character evaluation, imperial father-son interactions, nostalgia for the Kaiyuan pre-rebellion period and the tragedy of the rebellion itself. The historical judgments indicated by the episodes that comprise *Ci Liushi jiu wen* are generally in keeping with the evaluations of events and personages found in standard historical sources, further suggesting the text's historical orientation and self-ascribed goal, stated in the preface to the text as translated below, of “filling in that which is missing” in the historical record. Xuanzong's famous interest in the supernatural arts is also suggested by the inclusion of several episodes with otherworldly themes.

Ci Liushi jiu wen appears in early catalogues, encyclopedias, histories, and other sources under several names, including *Liu Fang jiu wen* 柳芳舊聞 (“Liu Fang's ‘Record of Past Events’”), *Ci Liushi jiu shi* 次柳氏舊史 (“A Record of Past History Recounted by Mr. Liu” [Liu Fang]), and *Liushi shi* 柳氏史 (“Mr. Liu's History”) (Wang Qinruo et al. 556.25a, Wang Pu 36.662, and Li et al. 1). The original content and order has long been lost, and the collection has been reconstituted from Song compendia, including the tenth-century *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (“Extensive Records from the Taiping Reign”) and Zeng Zao's 曾慥 (1091–1155) *Leishuo* 類說 (“Categorized Tales”). I have indicated episodes that appear in *Taiping guangji* and *Leishuo* in the corresponding notes below.³ Several tenth- and eleventh-century works describe *Ci Liushi jiu wen* as a three-chapter work (Liu et al. 17b.555, Wang Qinruo et al. 556.25a, Zhou 41–42, and Ning 128). By later in the Song, however, only one chapter remained. As the preface mentions seventeen episodes (though several additional episodes have been culled from other texts), in various Song and later sources, beginning with *Leishuo*, the text appears under the alternative title of *Minghuang shiqi shi* 明皇十七事 (“Seventeen Episodes from Xuanzong's Reign”) (Zhou 41 and Ding, *Kaiyuan Tianbao* 286–288).

Most modern editions follow scholar Ye Dehui's 葉德輝 (1864–1927) pioneering text-critical efforts and base their editions on the text as preserved in Gu Yuanqing's 顧元慶 (1487–1565) *Gushi wen fang xiao shuo* 顧氏文房小說 (Anecdotes/Small Talk from Gu's Study), which is considered the most accurate and complete version, in consultation with other sources (Ding, *Kaiyuan Tianbao* 13, Gu Vol. 4, 1a–11b, and Zhou 42–43). I have chosen to follow this practice based on the general readability and completeness of the said edition. In my translation, I have mainly utilized critical modern editions published by Shanghai guji chubanshe (under the titles *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi shi zhong* 開元天寶遺事十種 [1985] and *Tang Wudai biji xiaoshuo da guan* 唐五代筆記小說大觀 [2000]) and Shangwu yinshu guan (under the title *Minghuang zalu* 明皇雜錄, with appended texts [1959]). Points of more significant divergence between the editions are noted in the references.

In selecting which episodes to translate, I have attempted to reflect the range of themes found in the work as a whole. Several episodes deal with Xuanzong's interactions with his ministers. For example, the second translated episode describes the confidence placed by the young emperor in Zhang Yue 張說 (663–730), an influential statesman and literary figure from the 690s through the end of his life. This episode also references his early conflict with his aunt the Taiping Princess 太平公主, a powerful politician who reached the height of her influence in the first decade or so of the eighth century. Soon after Xuanzong's ascension to the throne, he became locked in a bitter power struggle with Taiping, ending with his execution of her in 713. The fourth translated episode likewise references the historical backdrop of Xuanzong's

³ As noted by Zhou Xunchu, *Leishuo* also incorporates five episodes that should rightly belong in *Rongmu xian tan* 戎幕閑談. See Zhou 42 and Zeng 21.669–670.

early reign by describing his impartial display of admiration for Xiao Zhizhong 蕭至忠 (d. 713?), a prominent official under Xuanzong's predecessors and an important partisan of the Taiping Princess. The third episode contrasts the early Kaiyuan period, when Xuanzong worked closely with the honorable and indispensable senior officials and policy-makers Yao Chong 姚崇 (650–721) and Song Jing 宋璟 (663–737), with the emperor's later reign, when imperial relative Li Linfu 李林甫 (d. 753) was appointed chancellor. Li Linfu served in this capacity for an unusually long tenure of eighteen years and has been blamed for fostering a climate of factionalism and in-fighting among Xuanzong's top officials. The second to last translated episode suggests another major theme in materials on Xuanzong, that is, his fascination with feats of superhuman prowess. In my translation, I have done my best to evoke the language of the original, which combines the terse style typical of classical historical prose with lively vocabulary and diction.

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Selections from *Ci Liushi jiu wen*
By Li Deyu

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Translated by Rebecca Doran

Preface

大和八年秋，八月乙酉，上於紫宸殿聽政，宰臣涯已下奉職奏事。上顧謂宰臣曰：故內臣力士終始事迹，試為我言之。臣涯即奏云：上元中，史臣柳芳得罪，竄黔中，時力士亦徙巫州，因相與周旋。力士以芳嘗司史，為芳言先時禁中事，皆芳所不能知，而芳亦有質疑者。芳默識之。及還，編次其事，號曰《問高力士》。上曰：令訪史氏，取其書。臣涯等既奉詔，乃召芳孫度支員外郎璟詢事。璟曰：某祖芳，前從力士問觀縷，未竟，復著唐歷，採摭義類尤相近者以傳之。其餘或秘不敢宣，或奇怪，非編錄所宜及者，不以傳。今按求其書，亡失不獲。臣德裕亡父先臣，與芳子吏部郎中冕，貞元初俱為尚書郎，後謫官，亦俱東出，道相與語，遂及高力士之說，且曰：彼皆目睹，非出傳聞，信而有徵，可為實錄。先臣每為臣言之。臣伏念所憶授凡有十七事。歲祀久，遺稿不傳。臣德裕，非黃瓊之達練，習見故事；愧史遷之該博，惟次舊聞。懼失其傳，不足以對大君之問，謹錄如左，以備史官之闕云。

In the autumn, on September 13th, 834, the eighth year of the Dahe reign period (827–835), the Emperor (Wenzong 文宗; Li Ang 李昂, r. 826–840) was holding court at Purple Polestar [Zichen] Palace,¹ and from Grand Councilor Wang Ya² on down ministers were attending to their duties and reporting on government affairs. The Emperor asked the Grand Councilor, “Tell me about events that occurred during the time of the former inner servant [Gao] Lishi.” Minister Ya replied: “During the Shangyuan reign [760–761] period, historian Liu Fang had offended the throne and been demoted to Guizhou. At the time Lishi was also demoted to Wuzhou, so the two got to know each other. Because Fang had worked as a historian for the imperial court, Lishi told Fang about the affairs of the inner palace [during the time Fang had been exiled],³ which Fang could not possibly have known about, and Fang in turn asked questions. Fang secretly remembered what Gao Lishi told him. When he returned [to the capital], Fang wrote down what Gao Lishi had told him and entitled his book ‘On Asking Gao Lishi.’” The Emperor heard this and said, “I order you to visit the historian’s [Liu Fang’s] clan and obtain this book.” Minister Ya and the others thereupon summoned Fang’s grandson, Vice Director in the Ministry of Revenue [Liu] Jing, to inquire about the book. Jing said, “Your subject’s grandfather, Fang, did not finish recording the details of his conversation with Gao Lishi. However, in his *Tangli* [Chronicle of Tang History], he selected the episodes that he saw fit for publication. As for the others, some were confidential and

¹ During the Tang, the Emperor received the court officials and foreign emissaries at Zichen Palace. Zichen is also used by extension to refer to the Emperor or imperial seat.

² Wang Ya 王涯 (764–835), a decorated official and poet, was promoted to Grand Councilor in the seventh year of Dahe (833), one year before this episode supposedly took place. See Liu et al. 169.4401–4405 and Ouyang et al. 179.5317–5320.

³ The exact dates of Liu Fang’s exile from court are unclear. See Liu et al. 132.4536.

he did not dare to transmit them; others were fantastical and strange, and not appropriate for inclusion in the record, so he did not transmit them.”

Today, Liu Fang’s manuscripts had all been lost. Your Majesty’s former subject and deceased father of yours truly, your subject [Li] Deyu [Li Jifu], and Fang’s son, Director in the Bureau of Personnel [Liu] Mian, both served in the Secretariat during the early Zhenyuan reign [785–805]. Later they both were demoted from their positions and banished to the east. On the way, their conversation touched upon the subject of Gao Lishi. Liu Mian said, “Everything he [Gao Lishi] said was witnessed with his own eyes and not mere hearsay. The accounts are truthful and can be backed up by evidence, and should be made into a Veritable Record.” Your former subject [my father Li Jifu] often spoke of this to me. I can only humbly write down what I remember, which amounts to seventeen episodes. Many years had gone by and his words were never recorded. I, your subject Deyu, lack the perspicacity and practiced skill of Huang Qiong, who was well versed in the affairs of former times; I am ashamed before Historian [Sima] Qian’s profound and broad-ranging knowledge, in that I can only record these anecdotes about the past.⁴ I feared that this record would be lost and therefore would be unable to meet the inquiries of the ruler. In making this record, I have carefully followed in the tradition of the Historian of the Left [in recording the ruler’s actions],⁵ so as to fill in that which is missing in the historical record.

玄宗之在東宮，為太平公主所忌，朝夕伺察，纖微聞於上；而宮闕左右，亦潛持兩端，以附太平之勢。時元獻皇后得幸，方娠，玄宗懼太平，欲令服藥除之，而無可語者。張說以侍讀得進太子宮中，玄宗從容謀及說，說亦密贊其

When Xuanzong was the Crown Prince, [his powerful aunt] the Taiping Princess (d. 713) was threatened by his presence. She kept watch on him day and night and would report the minutest details to the Emperor

⁴ Huang Qiong 黃瓊 (86–114 CE) was a prominent official during the Eastern Han 東漢 (25–220 CE). Fan et al. 61.2032–2043. Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145 or 135–86 BCE) was a famous Western Han 西漢 (206 BCE–9 CE) historian and creator of the foundational work of history *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian). See Ban 62.2707–2738.

⁵ According to the classical text *Li ji* 禮記 (Record of Rites), the Historian of the Left recorded the ruler’s actions, while the Historian of the Right recorded the ruler’s words.

事。他日，說又入侍，因懷去胎藥三煮劑以獻。玄宗得其藥，喜，盡去左右，獨構火殿中，煮未及熟，怠而假寐。胎蠶之際，有神人長丈餘，身披金甲，操戈繞藥三匝，煮盡覆而無遺焉。玄宗起視，異之，復增火，又投一劑，煮于鼎中，因就榻瞬目以候之，而見神覆煮如初。凡三煮皆覆，乃止。明日，說又至，告其詳。說降階拜賀曰：天所命也，不可去。厥後，元獻皇后思食酸，玄宗亦以告說。說每因進經，輒袖木瓜以獻。故開元中，說恩澤莫之與比；肅宗之於說子均、垺，若親戚昆弟云。芳本張說所引，說嘗自陳述，與力士詞協也。

[Xuanzong's father Ruizong; r. 710–712]. The attendants at the Crown Prince's palace also secretly played both sides in order to ally themselves with Taiping's strength.⁶ At the time, Empress Yuanxian [Xuanzong's consort] had received favor and was pregnant. Xuanzong was terrified that Taiping [might act against him] and wanted to make Empress Yuanxian have an abortion, but he didn't have anyone in whom to confide about this matter. At the time, Zhang Yue was admitted to the Crown Prince's palace as a tutor. Xuanzong discussed his plan with Yue, and Yue also approved of the idea.

One day when Yue came in to attend again, he used the opportunity to present three servings of abortion medicine to Xuanzong. Xuanzong was pleased upon receiving the medicine. He dismissed all of his attendants and, alone, started a fire in the inner palace to boil the medicine. Before the medicine could boil, he became tired and fell asleep. Rising into the air with the steam and vapor of the medicine,⁷ there appeared a divine being over a *zhang* tall,⁸ its body covered with metal armor. Grasping a spear, it circled the medicine three times and overturned the pot so that there was nothing left. Xuanzong got up to examine the situation and thought it was uncanny. He started the fire again, threw in another serving, and boiled it in the cauldron. Then he went back to his couch, kept his eyes wide open, and waited, whereupon he saw the spirit overturn the boiling cauldron as before. He started to boil the medicine a third time and [the spirit] overturned it again, so he stopped. The next day, Yue came again, and Xuanzong told him what had happened. Yue descended the stairs, bowed in praise, and said: "This is ordained by Heaven; you can't stop it." Later, Empress Yuanxian was craving sour foods. Xuanzong also told this to Yue, and whenever Yue came to expound on the

⁶ The Shangwu yinshuguan edition has *gongwei* 宮闈 (inner palace) instead of *gongque* 宮闕 (palace). See Zheng 1.

⁷ The Shangwu yinshuguan edition has *xi xiang* 盼蠶 instead of *xixiang* 胎蠶. See Zheng 2.

⁸ One *zhang* is 3.33 meters.

classics, he would always have a quince in his sleeve to present to her. This is why, during the Kaiyuan reign period (712–756), the favor shown to Yue from the throne was comparable to none, and Suzong (r. 756–762; the son born to Yuanxian and Xuanzong) treated Yue’s sons Jun and Ji as younger brothers. [Liu] Fang was originally recommended by Zhang Yue. Yue previously narrated these events himself, and what he said tallies with what [Gao] Lishi said.⁹

玄宗初即位，體貌大臣，賓禮故老，尤注意於姚崇、宋璟，引見便殿，皆為之興，去則臨軒以送。其他宰臣，優寵莫及。至李林甫以宗室近屬，上所援用，恩意甚厚，而禮遇漸輕。姚崇為相，嘗於上前請序進郎吏，上顧視殿宇不注，崇再三言之，冀上少售，而卒不對。崇益恐，趨出。而高力士奏曰：陛下初承鴻業，宰臣請事，即當面言可否。而崇言之，陛下不視，臣恐宰臣必大懼。上曰：朕既任崇以庶政，事之大者當白奏，朕與之共決；如郎署吏秩甚卑，崇獨不能決，而重煩吾耶？崇至中書，方悸不自安。會力士宣事，因為言上意，崇且解且喜。朝廷聞者，皆以上有人君之大度，得任人之道焉。

When Xuanzong took the throne, he treated his great ministers with respect and showed ritual deference to the elders of former regimes. He especially respected Yao Chong and Song Jing. Whenever he summoned them for audiences at his leisure palaces, he would always get up to receive them. When they left, he would stand on the balcony to see them off. None of the other grand councilors received the level of favor accorded to them. When Li Linfu was favored by the throne because he was a member of the imperial clan, the favor shown to him was very great indeed, but the ritual deference [between Emperor and ministers] was increasingly neglected. [Earlier] when Yao Chong became a Grand Councilor, he once went before the throne to request the promotion of regular officials and clerks according to their rank. The Emperor looked around the palace hall and didn’t pay him any attention. Chong requested three times, hoping that the Emperor would start to respond, but in the end he still did not. Chong became increasingly nervous and left the palace in a hurry.

Gao Lishi said to the Emperor, “When Your Majesty first took the throne,

⁹ This episode is included in Li et al. 136.973 (minus the final lines describing how Liu Fang was recommended by Zhang Yue and also heard the story from Yue), where it is attributed to *Liushi shi*. The episode is also preserved, with minor variations, in the Korean anthology *T’ae p’yōng Kwang ki sang chōl* 太平廣記詳節, a partially surviving version of *Taiping guangji* that was published in 1487 and seems to have been based on a Song text (in contrast to Chinese printings, which seem to have been based on Yuan texts). See Sōng Vol. 5, 10.263–264. The account of Suzong’s divinely sanctioned birth appears in condensed form in the biography of his mother, the Yuanxian Empress, in both *Jiu Tangshu* and *Xin Tangshu*. See Liu et al. 52.2184 and Ouyang et al. 76.3492.

whenever a councilor made a request, you would always answer in front of them whether it was allowed or not. But now, when Chong spoke to you, Your Majesty didn't even look at him. Your humble subject is afraid that the councilor must be extremely worried." The Emperor said, "I appointed Chong to take care of various tasks of the government. When it comes to major issues, of course he should report to me, and I shall make the decision. But when it comes to something as minor as the order of officials, how is Chong not able to make a decision by himself and has to repeatedly bother me?" When Chong reached the Secretariat, he felt apprehensive and ill at ease. When he met with Lishi, who explained the Emperor's intention to him, he then felt relaxed and happy. When the court heard about this, they all thought that the Emperor showed great open-handedness of being the ruler and knew how to trust his ministers.

源乾曜因奏事稱旨，上悅之，於是驟拔用，歷戶部侍郎、京兆尹以至宰相。異日，上獨與力士語曰：爾知吾拔用乾曜之速乎？曰：不知也。上曰：吾以其容貌言語類蕭至忠，故用之。力士曰：至忠不嘗負陛下乎？陛下何念之深也？上曰：至忠晚乃謬計耳。其初立朝，得不謂賢相乎？上之愛才宥過，聞者無不感悅。

Because Yuan Ganyao's reports were in accordance with the Emperor's wishes, the Emperor was very pleased with him, and Ganyao was rapidly promoted. He served successively as Vice Director in the Ministry of Revenue, Metropolitan Governor, and reached to the rank of Grand Councilor [in 716].¹⁰ One day, the Emperor said to [Gao] Lishi, "Do you know why I promoted Ganyao with such speed?" Lishi said, "I don't know." The Emperor said, "His appearance and his way of speaking resembled Xiao Zhizhong's; this is why I promoted him." Lishi said, "Didn't Zhizhong betray Your Majesty? Why do you think of him so fondly?" The Emperor said, "In his later years Zhizhong made some terrible mistakes. [But] at the beginning of his career, didn't he deserve to be called a worthy minister?" The Emperor valued talent and forgave mistakes, and all

¹⁰ For Yuan Ganyao 源乾曜 (d. 731), see Liu et al. 98.3070–3073 and Ouyang et al. 127.4450–4451.

those who heard of it [what he said about Xiao Zhizhong] were glad.¹¹

玄宗好神仙，往往詔郡國徵奇異士。有張果者，則天時聞其名，不能致。上亟召之，乃與使偕至，其所為變怪不測。又有邢和璞者，善算心術，視人投算，而能究知善惡夭壽。上使算果，懵然莫知其甲子。又有師夜光者，善視鬼。後召果與坐，密令夜光視之。夜光進曰：果今安在？臣願得見之。而果坐於上前久矣，夜光終莫能見。上謂力士曰：吾聞奇士至人，外物不足以敗其中，試飲以葶汁，無苦者，乃真奇士也。會天寒甚，使以汁進果，果遂飲盡三卮，醇然如醉者，顧曰：非佳酒也。乃寢。頃之，取鏡，視其齒，已盡燋且齧矣。命左右取鐵如意以擊齒，盡墮而藏之于帶。乃於懷中出神藥，色微紅，傳於墮齒穴中，復寢。久之，視鏡，齒皆生矣，而粲然潔白。上方信其不誣也。

Xuanzong was fond of the supernatural and often commanded the Territorial Administrations¹² to summon those with supernatural powers. There was one Zhang Guo, of whom he had heard during the reign of Empress Wu Zetian (Wu Zhao; r. 690–705) but whom he hadn't been able to bring to court. Since then, the Emperor had repeatedly summoned him, and he finally arrived with the messenger. He could accomplish transformations and strange marvels that were beyond comprehension. There was also Xing Hepu, who was good at the art of divination. Just by reading someone and casting a calculation, he was able to know everything about their future: the good and the bad, and how long they would live. The Emperor made him do a calculation about [Zhang] Guo, and [Xing Hepu] responded with a blank look and couldn't even determine Guo's age. There was also Shi Yeguang, who was good at seeing ghosts. Afterwards the Emperor summoned Guo to sit with him and secretly commanded Yeguang to read him. Yeguang reported, "Where is Guo now? I wish to take a look at him." All this time, Guo was sitting before the Emperor, but Yeguang was unable to see him.¹³

The Emperor said to [Gao] Lishi, "I've heard that when it comes to remarkable eccentrics and sages, external things are unable to affect them. Test him by having him drink the juice of the *jin* plant.¹⁴ If he doesn't find it bitter, he's truly a remarkable eccentric." At the time, it was extremely cold. A messenger presented the juice to Guo. Guo drank three cups at once.

¹¹ This episode appears in Li et al. 202.1521 but is attributed to *Guo shi bu* 國史補 (Supplement to the National History), another collection of anecdotes compiled by Li Zhao 李肇 (fl. 806–820).

¹² *Jun guo* 郡國 (Territorial Administrations) refers collectively to Commanderies (*jun* 郡), Princedoms (*wang guo* 王國), and Marquisates (*hou guo* 侯國) – that is, to all regional units of territorial administration.

¹³ A shortened version of part of this passage appears in *Lei shuo* (where *Ci Liushi jiu wen* is referred to by its alternate title *Minghuang shiqi shi*), under the heading "Zhang Guolao" 張果老. See Zeng 21.670.

¹⁴ *Jin* (third tone) 葶 (*Viola verecunda* A. gray) is used in Chinese medicine and supposedly is efficacious in treating knife wounds. *Jin* (fourth tone) can be a synonym for *wutou* 烏頭 (*Aconitum carmichaeli* Debx), a poisonous plant that also has medicinal uses.

He was tipsy as if drunk and said, “This isn’t good wine.” Then he fell asleep. After a little while, he took up a mirror and looked at his teeth, and they were all scorched and dark. He commanded his attendants to take an iron *ruyi* scepter to poke his teeth.¹⁵ They all fell out and he collected them in his belt. Then he took out some divine medicine from his chest. It was light red. He put it in the apertures of the teeth that had fallen out and went to sleep again. After a while he looked in the mirror and the teeth were all back in his mouth, brilliant and gleaming white. The Emperor then knew that [Zhang Guo] was not a fraud.

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

Flourishing Fortune [Xingqing] Palace was the place where the Emperor went to relax. At the beginning of the Shengli reign period [of Wu Zhao’s Zhou dynasty; 697–700], it had been the residence of the Five Princes.¹⁶ The Emperor was by nature friendly and generous, and when he took the throne, he erected a tower by the southwestern wall of the palace. The sign on the tower said, “Flower and stems shine upon each other.”¹⁷ When the Emperor left court, he would often go there to spend leisure time with his brothers. Sometimes they would hold a banquet and make merry. At the time, there were no problems in the empire, and peace had descended for fifty years. When the barbarian stormed the bordering walls,¹⁸ the message was urgently relayed to the Emperor. The Emperor was about to leave, but he climbed the tower once again, set out a banquet, looked around sorrowfully, and commanded them to bring forward “jade ring.”¹⁹ “Jade ring” was the imperial *pipa* during Ruizong’s time.²⁰ At other times,

¹⁵ A *ruyi* scepter is a ceremonial scepter in Chinese Buddhism. *Ruyi* can also indicate a talisman that brings good fortune.

¹⁶ Xuanzong’s five brothers: Li Chengqi 李成器 or Li Xian 李憲 (679–742); Li Hui 李撝 (683–724); Li Fan 李范 (686–726); Li Ye 李業 (686–735); and Li Longti 李隆悌 (692–702).

¹⁷ *Hua’e* 花萼 (flower and stem) is a metaphor for older and younger brothers.

¹⁸ A reference to An Lushan, who was of non-Han origins.

¹⁹ Incidentally, “jade ring,” or *yuhuan* 玉環, was also the personal name of Xuanzong’s favorite, Yang Guifei, or Yang Yuhuan 楊玉環.

²⁰ A *pipa* 琵琶 is a four-stringed musical instrument that is played by plucking the strings. The *pipa* is somewhat similar to the lute.

when the Emperor had held musical entertainments in the palace, he would always place “jade ring” on a separate couch and cover it with a yellow veil. He wouldn’t mix it together with the other instruments and had never picked it up to use it. When it arrived, the musician He Huaizhi picked it up to tune it, and the Emperor commanded the monk Duanshi from Profound Meditation [Chanding] Temple to pluck it.²¹ There were three Beauties in attendance who were good at singing, and the Emperor selected one to sing the song “Shui diao” (Water Tune).²²

The song was over and the Emperor was about to leave, but he lingered on tenderly. He sent someone to look below the tower and call out to ask if there were any singers who were good at singing “Shui diao.” A young man understood what the Emperor meant and said that he himself was quite a singer and was also able to sing “Shui diao.” The Emperor had him climb the tower and sing. The song went, “Mountains and rivers fill my eyes, tears soak my clothes, / How long can wealth and glory last? / Don’t you see now atop the Fen River, / year after year only the autumn geese flying by.” When the Emperor heard the song, he started to cry. He asked his attendants, “Who composed that song lyric?” Someone answered, “The [former] Grand Councilor Li Jiao.”²³ The Emperor said, “Li Jiao was a true talent.” He didn’t wait for the end of the song and left.²⁴

²¹ *Chanding* is a joint reference to *chana* 禪那, the Chinese transcription of the Sanskrit dhyāna, which refers to profound meditation leading to enlightenment, and *ding* 定, the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit samadhi, which refers to intense concentration achieved through meditation.

²² “Shui diao” refers to a particular tune format, not a specific, fixed song. Songs with different lyrics could be written to the tune of “Shui diao.”

²³ Li Jiao 李嶠 (d. 714?) was a prominent minister and literary figure from the time of Wu Zhao through the early years of Xuanzong’s reign. In addition to serving in high-ranking political posts, he was a very well-known poet and writer. See Liu et al. 94.2992–2995 and Ouyang et al. 123.4367–4371.

²⁴ Two abbreviated accounts from this episode are included in *Leishuo*, under the headings “Li Jiao Zhen Caizi” 李嶠真才子 (Li Jiao was a True Talent) and “Yuhuan Pipa” 玉環琵琶 (Jade Ring Pipa). See Zeng 21.668.