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The Li 黎 Family of Hsiang-t'an County 湘潭縣,
T'an Sub-prefecture 潭州 during the Sung Dynasty

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Around 1146 Hu Yin 胡寅 wrote a letter to a literatus named Li 黎 who was resident in Hsiang-t'an county, T'an sub-prefecture, recommending that he should neither monopolize markets, buy official ranks, nor have jurisdiction over legal cases in his area. In the early days of the Southern Sung, Li Ming 黎明, alias Li Ts'ai-wêng 李才翁, the leader of Lis, helped Hu An-kuo 胡安國, the father of Hu Yin, to settle in Hêng sub-prefecture 衡州. Hu Yin and his brothers were on intimate terms with the Lis. According to Hu's letter, the Li family belonged to a newly risen social strata and a member of the Li family was a middleman. In those days it was common for rich merchants to buy the rank of military officers. People who managed *ti-tien* 邸店 usually ran both warehouses and lodging businesses, and also acted as judges in disputes among the people in counties where government offices were not located. As the Lis lived in Hsiang-t'an county where there was no government office, the family is thought to have engaged in the same businesses as mentioned above. In his letter Hu Yin did not describe what kinds of legal cases the Lis handled, but pointed out that the Lis acted as a reconciler or, in some cases, gave penalties as a judge in arbitrating disputes. In 1146 Hu Yin returned to his native place, Chien sub-prefecture, 建州 and deliberated on how the literati should act. It seems that this deliberation resulted in Hu's recommendation to Li.