



Subversive Mythology

The Sensory and the Spectacular in the Cults of Zhu Xi

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Permit me to begin with a note of gratitude to our colleagues, Professors Michael Lackner and Thomas Fröhlich, who displayed the courage to imagine and the agency to realize a project that some might find quixotic or at least so strange as to be beyond reasonable reckoning—an effective research collaboration between medieval European historians and Sinologists on a topic of moment. Their vision and persistence, combined with the fortuitous favor of Klaus Herbers, resulted in the magnanimous support of the Ministry of Education and inauguration of the IKGF. For over two years now the Kolleg has drawn a wide spectrum of scholars here to labor in service of a common ideal of interdisciplinary research, the

benefits of which are already visible with the databases being compiled on augury, divination, prognostication, as well as colloquia, conferences, seminars, and workshops. There will be greater consequences of our shared work in the months and years ahead as we continue research under the grand arc of fate, freedom, and prognostication, concepts that are astonishingly critical to the modern.

I am particularly proud of all the participating faculty and visiting fellows, research fellows, graduate students, and coordinators who sedulously realize the objectives of the Consortium ensuring its success. And, as I am sure most all of you know, this success has bred the reward of the renewal of another six years of government underwriting. Mazal tov!! From my particular vantage this effort has been especially valuable because the full extent of our daily interchange has added significant dimension to my current work on an intellectual ecology of early and medieval China. My remarks this evening are culled from the larger project for which (thanks to Professor Fröhlich) I have been granted the opportunity to join you at the Consortium: This work is currently titled *Found and Lost in Tradition: The Mythhistories of Confucianism*.

The book is an experiment in intellectual history. It aims to unravel a web of intertwined stories constituting the mythhistories¹ of Kongzi (?0548-0479?) and Zhu Xi (1130-

1 I have chosen to use "mythhistory" to represent the indecipherability of myth and history in the records of the lives and thought of Kongzi 孔子 and Zhu Xi 朱熹. My use of mythhistory is neither flippant nor pejorative. Also, it does not mean that I do not believe in the possibility of historical fact. What it *does* mean is that a great deal of what we have taken as history, especially with Confucianism as foundational to the imperial state or uniquely

1200), the two foundational figures of “Confucianism” and “Neo-Confucianism.” Such unraveling I have tried to achieve through explication of canonical texts and apocrypha surrounding Kongzi, and the records of cultic prayer *dao* 禱 or *zhu* 祝 and sacrifice *ji* 祭 of Zhu Xi. At the same time that it is a historical reconstruction of myth and rite, the book is also a metahistory that analyzes the scholarly interpretation of Confucianism as it has been transmitted to the present day. In this second respect it attempts to develop what Professor Lackner recently called “a different language of interpretation” for middle period Chinese intellectual history. That is, a language sufficiently nuanced to capture the diverse mantic phenomena that cannot be paraphrased within the regnant interpretative habits of “religion,” “superstition,” “philosophy,” or even “natural philosophy” and which cannot be accommodated within the standard quadratic formula: Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, popular religion or, following Piet van der Loon, “le sustrat shamanique.”² My particular interest in Zhu Xi is a consequence of a common

symbolic of Chinese culture, is more akin to myth or story. Admitting this does not make “imperial Confucianism” meaningless, only meaningful in a manner very different than has been customary. The effort in the present to narrate the history of another era (say the Warring Kingdoms or the Southern Song) is storytelling that continues the very historical existence of that earlier time. Thus, if the people and events recalled in an earlier community of story are mythical, then our reconstruction of earlier time is an instance of mythistory, as we continue “the story-telling process through which the community constitutes itself and its actions.” See David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1986), 177.

² Piet van der Loon, “Les origines rituelles du théâtre chinois,” *Journal Asiatique* 265 (1977), 168.

historiographic or literary problem: an observed lack of fit between interpretation and texts. The common, persistent and ill-fitting interpretation is our subversive mythology of him as the genius of an essentially closed, rational philosophical system built in defense of native classical values, which became the dominant ideology of imperial China following the medieval decline of Buddhism and Daoism later becoming known in the west as Neo-Confucianism. The texts are those of Zhu Xi's literary collection, *Hui'an Xiansheng Zhu wengong wenji*, and his Classified Conversations *Zhuzi yülei* and my reading in them motivated me to place Zhu in a light I believe is more conducive to understanding, specifically those aspects of the written record of his life and thought that have been ignored or explained away because they are difficult to reconcile with the established guild account of Chinese intellectual history.

A brief list of the irreconcilable: Zhu's practice of divination (including the use of *tu* to represent the cosmic structure of mind and universe)³ exemplified here in Zhou Dunyi's

3 The instruction by way of *tu* 圖 is not merely heuristic; it is something more. It is ekphrastic: the *tu* resemble words used to describe visual art; however, these diagrams are in fact the visual art itself, an inspiration for the beholder. There is also the matter of sound in this instance. One does not read a *tu*, one *apprehends* it; indeed in the manner in which students of the *Zohar* זוהר believed that by meditation on the sacred letters of the text, produced by the hand of G-d and transmitted orally to Moses and Abraham, later transcribed, the meditator could assimilate unto himself the spirit of the divine. Doesn't the apprehension of the *tu* make a sound? If so, can we hear it? Unlikely for the apprehension is private not public. The graphs are animate and thus are a means to visualization of the kind we know from *neidan* 內丹. Have we committed a grand interpretive error by insisting on the philosophical status of *daoxue* when it resembles to a greater degree cosmology and phenomenology?

diagram of the Supernal Ridgepole or Supreme Ultimate and geomancy, his establishment of a sacred network of rural pilgrimage shrines (*citang* 祠堂) in honor of particular local figures, his conduct of cult to Kongzi, as well as his elaborate reflections on the existence and effects of demons and ghosts, widely documented in the “official” records of his work. These exceptions, which are not exceptional, tell us much about twelfth-century life, about Zhu Xi, and a great deal about the religiously unmusical modern day interpreters of medieval texts. It is also from these sources that one can obtain the context necessary to understand the principal components of his “philosophy,” which are in many respects the definitive, *non-denominational*, facets of the elaborate jewel of Chinese cosmology.

Rather than see Zhu as a rational systematizer of the entire Confucian project, I prefer to recognize him as the voice of a particular historical moment, perhaps much like any other, but the character of which was uniquely reflected in the record he left. I consider his texts to have at least four components: local culture, the persons (dead and living) to whom he is speaking, the referents of his commentary (what he is speaking about), and the human species. And, it in this definition of place and person, mind and world, I find the following formulation of Gregory Bateson very hospitable to any account of Zhu Xi:

Mind is thus not separable from its material base and traditional dualisms separating mind from body or mind from matter are erroneous. A mind can include nonliving elements as well as multiple organisms, may function for brief as well

as extended periods, is not necessarily defined by a boundary such as an envelope of skin, and consciousness, if present at all, is always only partial.⁴

Much as in the strophe and antistrophe of Greek chorus, Zhu Xi reciprocates the welcome:

Heaven, earth, and our bodies are collectively just one thing. That which we call spirits and ghosts are simply our *qi* 氣. When our mind reflects and becomes active, its *qi* extends outward, so that there is stimulus (*gan* 感) and response (*ying* 應).⁵

The sheer volume of Zhu's transmitted work has contributed meaningfully to our opportunity understand many dimensions of his world. In this respect we are the beneficiaries of several not entirely unrelated phenomena: the accelerated growth of xylographic printing south of the Yangzi River, effective mechanisms in the southeast for the production of paper from bamboo, the posthumous Zhu Xi hero cult conducted by his disciples but also spreading into Jiangxi where he became a spirit residing in Mt. Lu, and the steady appropriation and dissemination of his works culminating in the imperial promulgation of his annotated texts as the required syllabus for the bureaucratic placement examination.

And, there was so much more—administrative records, correspondence, debates, divination, dreams, famine, instruction,

4 Mary Catherine Bateson, "Foreword," to Gregory Bateson, *Steps to An Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

5 Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi yülei* 朱子語類, 98.6a, 8.

lectures, pilgrimage, poverty, prayer, quarrel, ritual, sacrifice, spirit possession, travel, travail, wine, and worship: 62 volumes worth. It is this fortunate, fuller embodiment of Zhu Xi—a benefaction of his admirers, commentators, enemies, followers, interpreters, and legacy guardians, that allows us hear in his voice the sound and sense of Southern Song life.

To our medieval history colleagues this well-documented name, Zhu Xi, may mean little and, in its Romanized form, I'm certain it seems quite strange. Still, I will attempt an introduction, so that you may learn what makes him a very appropriate presence in our IKGF research agenda, specifically his trafficking in what we might deem the supernatural, but I will call the sensory and the spectacular.

The presentation will proceed in four parts:

First, I will offer a recollection from a less remote time (the late 16th century and early 17th century) in which a fellowship of Sino-Jesuits advanced a bold claim of theological identity with Kongzi. This opening gambit should bring the non-Sinologist listener to recognize several key features of the ideology of Chinese “textual communities”⁶ (here intentionally employing Brian Stock’s term)—their impulse to claims of authenticity and originality reinforced through polemic, their identification with sacred figures (in this instance Kongzi or Confucius) as unique conduits to the divine with whom, by an inspired mechanism, they have direct communication.

Second, from the rhetoric of this missionary fellowship in honor of the sacred, specifically their denunciation by some

6 Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 30-51.

Chinese scholars, we will take up the matter of Zhu Xi's own proscription by imperial authorities and an obsessive interest in his last days of revising the prefatory comments to two of the works that would come to define the line of orthodox transmission of his teaching. This section will permit us to see what stands in company with Zhu's philosophy, that is, the elements of the story that have been transmitted to us but remain outside the narrative of intellectual history.

Third, I will attempt a partial reconstruction of the *lebenswelt* of Zhu Xi and his tradition, in particular the ecology of his intellectual life in southeast China. From this intellectual ecology the lecture will work to establish the foundation for the construction Zhu's philosophical program, specifically his heralded conception of *daotong* "legacy of the way" as advanced in one of his sacrifices to Kongzi. In this section our attention will be directed at the physical context of Fujian in the middle period, the intermingling of the dead and the living and the subjects of ancestral spirits, ghosts, spirit possession and personation of the dead: essential elements of the local cosmology.

Fourth, with a new understanding of the complexity of the intellectual ecology, especially the efficacy of magic and the cult of the dead, we will examine how it affected the making of one of Zhu Xi's most celebrated texts, the *Zhongyong zhangzhu shu* Preface to Redacted Commentary Doctrine of the Mean.

A coda will encourage us to see Zhu Xi's complex intellectual character as a reflection of the complete "vocation of his being," that is so long as we consider the culture of twelfth-century Fujian and Zhu's inscription upon it as bound immediately to an "exogenetic heredity" of body, earth, mind,

sky, and wind.⁷ This should offer an opportunity for us to think aloud about the consequences of this attempt to place Zhu Xi in a world, strange to us, but familiar to him.

We don't pretend to show how people think in myths, but how myths think themselves in people, and without their even knowing this occurs.

- Claude Lévi-Strauss

⁷ The quoted terms are from Robert Bringhurst, *The Tree of Meaning: Language, Mind and Ecology* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Books, 2008).

1. Opening: Fathers, Figures, Texts, and Figurations

Europe's earliest *effective* knowledge of the moral reasoning of the Chinese (*sapientia sinica*) was derived from the partial Latin renderings of the *Sishu* (*Lunyu*, Analects of Confucius, *Mengzi*, Book of Mencius, *Daxue*, The Great Learning, *Zhongyong*, Doctrine of the Mean) done over a century by several generations of Fathers from the Mission of the Indies. For this reason alone Zhu Xi should matter to us, because this collection was entirely of his making. But in the storytelling of his European relevance by way of the genius of irony we will become acquainted with a Jesuit cult of devotion to Zhu Xi's most revered master, Kongzi, who was for the first missionaries, a "santo," and the object of special veneration. What the Sino-Jesuit community built around these texts in honor of Kongzi/Confucio reproduced a practice of textual community and cult also evident in the learning of the way (*daoxue*) fellowship of Zhu Xi.

When in 1584 the accommodationist Jesuit missionaries, Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) continued their studies in Chinese at their newly established compound at Zhaoqing in the Guangzhou Delta, they were taught and later taught other Jesuits by rote memorization of the graphs of the *Sishu* or Quattro Libri. In their very first letters to Rome reporting on their historic establishment of this first Catholic mission in China proper, they admitted that they were not performing mass as yet, but had opened a *shuyuan* 書院 or academy for text study with their tutors and also interested Chinese. Their first partial translations of this collection organized the learning of most all of the Fathers subsequently posted to the China mission.

This was for them, as it was for more than two centuries of their Chinese predecessors, the syllabus. And, it became a source of admiration as Ricci, in particular, came to believe that the Quattro Libri (attributed to the Fathers' Confutio), bore witness to an ancient Chinese belief in the one God, *shangdi* (Lord on High). Between 1596 and 1608 when Ricci was asked to prepare a history of the Jesuit mission in China, *ru*, 儒 the Chinese term we render as "Confucians" or in Italian *legge d'letterati* and the Jesuits were so closely intertwined as to be indistinguishable, so much so that interpretation of Chinese cultural phenomena was inflected with the Jesuit favor for this tradition, in their eyes, so much like their own. The understanding of this tradition as a body of texts and a discipline of study founded by Confucius slowly emerged from the Jesuits' Chinese enculturation and was documented in the history of the mission's entrance into China.

By way of an ingenious pursuit of a common theological ground, they trained their minds in particular on rigorous study of the *Lunyu* and the *Daxue*. This focus was explicit a century after the mission's founding in the publication in 1687 of Philippe Couplet's grand Latin translation the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, which contained these first two of the Quattro Libri. But what was particularly noteworthy about the early Jesuit commitment to these texts was their insistence in the presence of Chinese academicians and officials that they, the Fathers, were followers of the *zhengxue* 正學 or "true teaching" of the *xianru* 先儒, the first *ru*, meaning Kongzi and his disciples.⁸ For them, *xianru* also meant the original

⁸ This last term, perhaps unknown to the Fathers at the time, was a specific elevated rank of Kongzi followers officially honored by admission

teaching, especially one not obscured by later commentaries, and suggested, at least for Ricci, that the divine message of Kongzi was immediately transmissible through the very texts on which the Fathers had labored.

It was their elemental faith in the transmissibility of antiquity through the written Sinograph, *shuwen* 述文, that permitted them to draw close to the meaning of the words of their admired *santo*, Confucio. As Li Madou (Ricci) put it in 1606:

At a distance of a hundred paces, voices do not carry, but when they are confided to writing for communication, then two men, although they live more than ten thousand miles apart, may converse, exchanging questions and answers, just like they were sitting face to face. I cannot know what kind of men there will be a hundred generations hence, who are not yet born, but because of the existence of this writing I can let those of ten thousand generations later penetrate into my mind, just as if they were of my own generation, and moreover, although former masters of a hundred generations ago have already vanished, yet we, of these later days, because of the writings they left, still may hear their authoritative words, look up to their admirable behavior, and know about the order and disorder of those times, exactly as though we were living in that age.⁹

to the sacrificial hall in the (Kongzi Temple) *Kongmiao* 孔廟 in Beijing.

9 “Shuwen zeng Yubo Chengzi,” 述文曾玉帛程子 in Tao Xiang 陶湘, ed., *Sheyuan mocui* 涉園摩萃, vol. 2 (Beijing, 1929), 1a-6b. See also the trans-

With confidence the early missionaries even used the term 真儒 *zhenru* or the “real *ru*,” in upholding the integrity and sanctity of the true teaching. This tradition they contrasted explicitly with *jinru* 今儒 “today’s *ru*” who they as well called “neo-terics.” Armed with this righteous understanding and the ability via texts to “hear their authoritative words,” the Jesuits proceeded to work through interpretations of other classic texts such as the *Shang shu* (Book of Documents) and the *Shi jing* (Book of Odes). Moreover, as they went about this work they guarded the purity of their Sino-Christian doctrine by asserting, to the evident dismay of other Chinese scholars, that the dominant intellectual traditions of Chinese literati, such as the “learning of way” (Zhu Xi’s *daoxue*) and the “learning of mind” (*xinxue* 心學) of Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529) were not transmitted from Kongzi.

For Li Madou and his cohort, these later figures may well have claimed descent from the *xianru*, but their doctrines were infected with a variety of Buddhist and Daoist concepts in explicit contradiction with the “true teaching.” In short, the Jesuits’ arguments—published in Chinese—argued against the common scholarly orthodoxy of the day, and in this charge referred not simply to Christianity but to their unique possession of the genuine teaching of Kongzi, the revered cultural forebear of all Chinese scholar-officials.

(Parenthetically, I must offer to the skeptical among us that in a day like ours in which a sculptor’s massive 31-foot bronze vision of

lation in J. J. L. Duyvendak, “Review of Pasquale d’Elia, *Le Origini Del’ Arte Christiana Cinese* (1583-1640),” in *T’oung Pao* 35 (1940), pp. 394-398. Here I follow Duyvendak with a few modifications.

Kongzi/Confucius may be erected on Tiananmen Square [now suddenly relocated to a nondescript courtyard within the interior of the National Museum], we should not blanch at the thought that these early Jesuits could be ardent followers of Kongzi and his teaching.)

However, in their study of Chinese by the inductive method, the Jesuits seemed unaware of their reliance on Zhu Xi. This said much about their understanding of the history of the texts' transmission, for at the same time as they were treating the Quattro Libri as a theological *clavis sinica*, they were also fulminating against the atheism of Zhu's teaching. Ricci, for example considered repugnant Zhu's doctrine of the primal, generative *taiji* (Supernal Ridgepole) because it was foreign to the *Lunyu* and betrayed the influence of the Buddhist concept *śūnyatā* or non-being and thus was *wuling wujue* 無靈無覺 "without spirit and without consciousness." Furthermore, if, as Zhu asserted, the *taiji* is the source of all things, then there was no presence for G-d the creator in this cosmology.

This contradiction between the letter of their sacred texts fashioned by Zhu Xi's hand and their devotion to the revered figure whose words were transmitted through them did not mar their enculturation. Within two decades of Ricci's burial in Beijing in 1610, the accommodationists had succeeded in entering the plural streams of late imperial discourse with proponents and opponents alike as their texts became the focus of attack by scholars concerned about the tendentiousness of their claims and their misunderstanding of the texts. In a contentious anti-Christian tract, the *Shengchao poxie*

ji (聖朝 破邪集 “The Sacred Dynasty’s Collection Exposing Heresy”) that appeared in Fujian in 1639 a litany of polemics were presented before the Jesuits, one of which by Chen Houguang 陳候光 querulously sets forth the errors of the *zhenru*:

Kongzi speaks of serving men and rectifying daily conduct. They (*ta* 他), contrarily, speak of serving the lord on high (*shangdi* 上帝) and filling the mind with fantasies. Kongzi speaks of understanding life and knowing how to stay in one’s place. They (*ta* 他), in contrast, speak of knowing death and winning favors in the next world. Kongzi takes the Supernal Ridgepole (*taiji*) as the directing principle of the cosmos considering it to be truly venerable and noble. They (*ta* 他), however, judge *taiji* to be dependent, low, and profoundly despicable...Unfortunately, half of those who esteem their teaching are prominent figures and educated men. Thus, if humble men like myself decide to stand up and fight them, there are many who will spit upon us and insult us.¹⁰

¹⁰ Chen Houguang 陳候光, “Bianxue chuyan,” 辨學芻言, in Xu Changzhi 徐昌治, ed., *Shengchao poxie ji* 聖朝破邪集(reprint; Hong Kong: Jiandao Shenxueyuan, 1996), 244. See also the translation of this same passage by Jacques Gernet in *China and the Christian Impact*, 53. Chen actually slanders Li’s (Ricci’s) interpretation of *taiji* 太極 in this instance; Ricci merely pointed out that *taiji* was not sui generis (*zili* 自立) and thus could not be equivalent to the Heavenly Master, *tianzhu* 天主. On the Jesuit contestation of the divinity *taiji*, see Li Madou 利瑪竇(Matteo Ricci), *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實意, in Li Zhizao 李之藻, ed., *Tianxue chuhan* 天學初函, vol. 1 (rpt., Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1965), 406-407. See Jacques Gernet, *China and*

Chen's complaint makes clear that Jesuits were indeed able to represent themselves as fierce defenders of *ru* canonical ground and, more importantly, indicates that Chinese from the region were persuaded by the teachings (*jiao*) of this group. It is perhaps not an accident that this text originated in the southeast province of Fujian, an area that had witnessed impressive growth in the popularity of accommodationist Christianity in the early decades of the seventeenth century. According to work done a century ago by Edouard Chavannes and Paul Pelliot we know that between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries Manichaeism, in the form of a cult devoted to the Buddha *Moni* 摩尼 (Mani),¹¹ had migrated into Fujian where, along with a staggering number of other cults all of which contributed to the growing condensation and diversification of rural practices. It is in this thicket of the magical and the religious that we again meet Zhu Xi, who was born in Fujian and lived and worked there for most of his 50 years of instruction and public administration.

the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures, Janet Lloyd, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

11 Paul Pelliot, "Les traditions manichéennes au Fou-kien," *T'oung Pao* 22 (1923): 193-208. Pelliot states that on the authority of "un texte de Lou Yeou," that "nous savons que des texts manichéens ont été imprimés au Fou-kien dans la première moitié du XII^e siècle" (208)—more testament to the diversity of religious presence in Fujian.

2. Reconsidering the Place and Person of Zhu Xi

According to the conventional guild accounts Zhu Xi is not a figure associated with cults or spectacle. Indeed, in the inherited conception he is a rationalist philosopher whose contributions to the landscape of Chinese classical tradition are of such magnitude that they can only be mapped geographically. He was prolific but also exceptionally influential and for very good reason.

It is common—and appropriate—to credit him with the critical summation of *guwen* (古文 ancient text) learning and its synthesis with the many new interpretative traditions of rising scholar-officials (*shidafu* 士大夫), the recuperation of the *ru* 儒 focus on moral cultivation (*cun dexing* 道德性, literally “honoring the moral nature”), the completion of critical recensions on the principal works of the classical corpus (*wujing* 五經), the successful adaptation of the *xiangyue* 鄉約 “village covenant” in the rural southeast that included a community granary *shecang* 舍藏 and a school, the reconstruction of numerous academies, shrines and temples, most notably the Bailu tong “White Deer Cave” academy in Jiangxi (today a very popular tourist attraction), and perhaps most importantly, the compilation and annotation of what would become known as the *Sishu* 四書 “Four Books,” its popularity far exceeding tourist frenzy.

This is the common litany of his achievements. It is one, frequently told story of his celebrity. However, there is at least one other and unnecessarily esoteric reason for his fame, that being his formulation of a local Fujian, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang fellowship of study and prayer (*daoxue* 道學) that in its day was sufficiently unique to have caused Zhu, along with his

friends and followers, considerable difficulty, even peril as this fellowship was denounced at the Song court and throughout the provinces as practitioners of *weixue* 偽學 “false learning.”¹²

There are many stories about the reasons for this proscription and public humiliation and most are as reasonable as the allusive charges that have been “made” against Ai Weiwei (this tradition of government persecution of the inspired has a long history, unfortunately), but their net effect was to confirm that for one very anxious interval (1195-1200) this liminal community of practitioners was ominous. In existence for nearly twenty years at this point, Zhu’s *daoxue* was something on the order of an intellectual cult, its most vociferous critics complaining that the fellowship’s claim of a singular transmission of the teachings from high antiquity, the “legacy of the way” (道統, *daotong*) was as spurious as it was exclusivist. How could there be a singular teaching of the *dao* with a unique lineage of transmission from the sage kings through Kongzi that did not run through the Supreme Lord himself?¹³

12 The connotations of *wei* 偽 are not necessarily negative. In fact Xunzi 荀子 employed the term to refer to the necessary agency of moral actualization. Paul Goldin’s rendering of it as “artifice,” meaning the action of a human moral actor, stands in contrast to the use of *wei* by *daoxue* 道學 critics, whose dismay grew from the exclusivism and moral self-righteousness of Zhu Xi and his followers. There was an exceptionalist quality of the *daoxue* and its adherents, one observed my many, but as the reader will learn in the pages that follow, it was the singular product of a religious insight obtained, then guarded by Zhu Xi. Nevertheless, this unique conception, particularly of *daotong* 道統 would prove politically incendiary. See Paul Goldin, *Rituals of the Way: the Philosophy of Xunzi* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1999), 6-17.

13 Chu-ying Li and Charles Hartman, “A Newly Discovered Inscription by Qin Gui: Its Implications for the History of Song *Daoxue*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 70.2 (June 2010): 387-448, have reconstructed the

One account has it that Zhu narrowly escaped execution for his false teaching and was relieved of official appointment, thereafter living in obscurity in Fujian where he could spend his last years away from the capital, ensconced in the shadows of the lush vegetation and harsh economic foliage of the subtropical southeast. In his exile he spent the last two years of his life in persistent labor on his prefaces to the works that would later bring him a celebrity beyond imagination. Since the preface was commonly written in manuscript and appended to the opening of the printed book the preciousness of these carefully chosen words may be more easily recognized.

They were Zhu Xi's signature evidence in this instance of a tactical use of the person. None of the prefaces by Zhu Xi's hand survived to the Yuan and the earliest extant version of his redaction of the *Zhongyong* dates to the late thirteenth century (1252 according to Xu Deming), so I offer instead a few surviving images (both small and large) of his *shufa* 書法 or calligraphic imprint. (Actually merely a digital simulation of strokes) Linger among these images for just a moment affords the chance to appreciate Zhu's distinctive and much extolled calligraphy. More importantly, however, it serves as a reminder of the cognitive act of apprehending the written form as somatic expression and the psychophysical tie between readers and texts. Temperament, talent, and texture meet as vital vapor, *qi*, conducts the flow of the brush, the deftness of the stroke a delicate concert of intention and inspiration in the

complex political history of the official Song proscription of *Daoxue* emphasizing that the private conception of *daotong* was a direct and conscious threat to the *daotong* that had been celebrated as the grand achievement of the Supreme Lord Gaozong himself by his chief councilor, Qin Gui 秦檜, and leading to a series of violent purges.

execution of the movement. Writing is a ritual act, as Martin Kern and others assert, it is a gesture; an action the graphs yielded by it registered in the world of sense, available to our visible gaze. It is language—more than the art form, something that was grasped quite memorably by Marcel Granet when we wrote:

[I]t is beyond doubt that the disposition of gestural language to render concrete impressions with visual figures is at the root of the prodigious development of the Chinese language, achieved, so to speak, wholly by graphic means... In sum, we can say, I believe, that the Chinese vocabulary is basically made up of vocal imitations that were very early connected to a graphic figuration.¹⁴

In short, the graphic form is animated, an idea I will return to in the final section of the paper.

In his exile Zhu also conducted instruction in his changing understanding of these texts, setting the stage for a singular bequest that he called *daotong* 道統 “legacy of the way.” He wrote letters, accepted payment for colophons and eulogies, discoursed with his students in a special enclave of study called a lodge of wondrous remembrance (*jingshe* 精舍), which in a number of respects resembled a cloister, the daily choreography of which was organized around the figure

14 Marcel Granet, “Quelques particularités de la langue et de la pensée chinoises,” *Revue Philosophique* 89-90 (1920): 122-23 as translated by and quoted in Haun Saussy, “Impressions de Chine; or How to Translate from a Nonexistent Original,” in Eric Hayot, Haun Saussy, and Steven G. Yao, eds., *Sinographies: Writing China* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 69.

of Kongzi. The *jingshe* activities consisted of daily rites of framing¹⁵ in which students began the day with washing and greeting Zhu Xi, the master of the lodge. They were then joined by Zhu and all proceeded to the altar of the spirit of the earth god, where they performed worship to *tudi gong* 土地公. From this site the students and teacher processed to an enclosure on the *jingshe* grounds containing the altar to Kongzi. Here they performed a daily prayer of thanks, and then proceeded to the next phase, that of the rites of discipline: study and self-cultivation under the guidance of Zhu Xi.

But, on the first and fifteenth of the lunar month the ritual quotidian was punctuated by more elaborate worship that included sacrifice, action whose efficacy would ensure the descent of Kongzi to join their gathering. The usual rite of sacrifice to Kongzi was that for teachers and is described in the *Liji* (Book of Rites) as the *shicai* 釋菜. On these days, preparations were made in advance: the intercessors and performers were to fast from meat and odiferous vegetables like garlic or onion. Extra incense was placed in the braziers and mats were arranged in tidy rows before the altar with one directly centered at the front for Zhu Xi. Vegetable dishes and rice, fried dough, were arrayed on the altar at the base of the tablet bearing Kongzi's seated image. At the close of the service, the offerings—now animated by the presence of the sage's spirit—were consumed by Zhu and the students.

The active presence of the spirits of Kongzi dwelling in this

15 As I have described these in the third chapter of *Found and Lost in Tradition*, there were rites of framing peculiar to each day and also rites of discipline including work, reading, study of various sorts, and interchange with Master Zhu.

bamboo grove (*Zhulin jingshe* 竹林精舍) may help explain why Zhu could not escape the pull of these texts, his “masters” *zi* 子, that is the work that he and all of his disciples all knew as *Sizi*, the Four Masters or Four Teachers: the *Lunyü*, the *Daxue*, the *Zhongyong*, and the *Mengzi*. According to the *Zhuzi xingzhuang* written by Zhu’s son-in-law, Huang Gan 黃幹 (1152-1221), his final days, while marked by considerable pain, found him engaged in revisions to the prefaces. He had completed his emendations to the *Zhongyong* but was too weak to finish the *Daxue* preface.

Because Zhu had already returned to these prefaces on several previous occasions, one cannot help but wonder what possessed him to examine them yet again and in the final exertions of his life to rewrite them, in particular those of the Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean. One might speculate that the unfavorable treatment by officials, aspiring bureaucrats and the Supreme Lord Ningzong (r. 1194-1224) himself during the Qingyuan persecution (1195-1200) certainly contributed to the importance of the task, even as it placed Zhu and his teaching beyond the realm of the orthodox and confirmed its status as a dangerous cult. The proscription of *weixue* endured for a number of years following Zhu Xi’s death, his followers, appointed to prominent posts in the waning years of the Song and at the beginning of the Yuan were able to confer great honor and prestige on their teacher and his teaching, by arranging for Zhu’s posthumous promotion to *wengong* Duke of Accomplishment in 1230 and the placement of his honorary ancestral tablet in the *Kongmiao* 孔廟, the Confucian Temple, in 1241. The hagiography and hero cult were mutually sustaining and other perquisites would later attend the formal recognition

of his achievements including the imperial decree in 1313 making Zhu Xi's commentaries on the *Sishu* the official standard for examination preparation. When the *History of the Song* period (*Songshi*) was completed in 1345 *daoxue* was given its own chapter, indeed the *Songshi* proclaimed the triumph of *daoxue* ensuring its persistence as the foundation of scholarly orthodoxy. Biographies of its founders and followers were included, much in the way that the record of a distinguished lineage would be. Of course, such posthumous agitation on behalf of *daoxue* ensured that interpreters in subsequent centuries would have to work free of this thicket of overrepresentation in order to find another, less cluttered path to Zhu.

The ground of our considerations here turns to the concrete. If we are to understand Zhu Xi's distinct form of philosophy, it will be necessary to become a bit more engaged with the concrete particulars of the *lebenswelt*: earth, clouds, fire, trees, and the presence of body and mind within them. In recent years, attention to these concrete details has been added to the scholarly portfolio of some of those working on Daoism and Confucianism, in volumes dedicated to these official traditions and ecology. Such engagement with ecology is indeed critical to obtaining a greater appreciation of the context of thought; however, its effects are undermined by the reliance on the conventional framework of the official traditions: Daoism and ecology, Confucianism and ecology, rather than a phenomenology of the lifeworld itself, one in which creatures and creeds are, without singular sovereignty, vastly intermixed.

Twelfth-century Fujian was a remarkable place, the sheer fertility of its landscape made it singular, a difference in

degree rather than kind, because most all of southeast China, including Jiangxi and Zhejiang, was also remarkable. However, Fujian's diversity of flora and fauna simply reflected a numerousness of indigenous tongues and worldviews that for several centuries were barely contained within a kingdom unto itself—the Min 閩. Its climate was hospitable, for the most part, although the typhoons and summer rains could, and did, wreak havoc in the lowlands. The physiognomy of this circuit of the Song: mountains like the celebrated Wuyi shan in the north and the marsh along the south coast where the Minjiang empties into the South China Sea was one of contrasts, and one known for the fertile presence of spirits and demons, ghosts, among the riverine reaches and in the spaces between the sharp, angular rocks of Mt. Wuyi, or along the cataracts below Qinglong and the yang forces that snaked through the bends in Jiuqu (9 turns) Stream.

Yet, even with ample supernatural efficacy (*ling* , 靈) Fujian was very poor and unlucky. Visited far too often by famine and flood, and disadvantaged by economic miscalculations that hampered its food production, its fertility and its misfortune made it a wellspring of cults.¹⁶ This was a consequence of several factors, the most obvious of which was rapid population growth brought on by the collapse of the Song dynasty at Kaifeng in 1127 and the steady flight of hundreds of thousands of refugees to the south, where the dynasty

¹⁶ According to Wei Yingqi 魏應麒 Min 閩 was just before the Song a "society of religion and mythology." It was nominally a "Buddhist" country owing to the devotion of the ruling Wang clan's underwriting of temple construction and their sponsorship of Buddhist clergy and the promotion of the production of hundreds of sutras. Wei Yingqi, *Wudai Min shikao zhiyi* 五代閩史考志遺.

reestablished itself in Lin'an (Hangzhou).

Before that political and human tragedy, the population had already surged with a shift in economic fortune connected with increasing commercialization of land. [Loans pawnbrokers, buying and selling of property] By the end of the Min Kingdom in 980, the population of "China" was just over 100 million, 62 percent of which lived in the south—a dramatic reversal of the demographic figures in just under two centuries. The increase in population and the commercial growth of the southern Yangzi region continued through the Song bringing stress on the social order, a stress that was managed by the eruption of new gods and patrons, temples and shrines of a magnitude not seen before even in Fujian where the atmosphere had always been thick with religion.

What made the region even more fertile for religio-genesis was the dramatic change that came over the organization and control of the prominent official religions of Buddhism and Daoism. Local spirit medium cults, lay societies attached to Daoist abbeys or Buddhist monasteries, therapeutic and exorcistic lineages, shrine cults, and more emerged in the wake of the twelfth century decline of centralized control and they entered urban and rural life as a wide vernacular web of inspiration and influence that ensnared the landscape of place and person.¹⁷ As Richard von Glahn notes:

¹⁷ Meaningful social heteronomy of lay groups and monasteries and temples in Song Fujian should be considered in evaluating the dynamics of shrine establishment and local cults to worthies, especially those of *daoxue* for it suggests the widespread understanding of the piety and devotion as a necessity of social life. While it is customary to refer to such behavior as "religious," I remain suspicious of this habit. The suspicion grows from two sources: one linguistic, the other epistemological and phenomenological.

...[T]he vernacularization of ritual and communication with the divine, in addition to the development of new liturgical practices for laity in both Buddhism and Daoism, gave ordinary people greater access to the gods. Elaborate hierarchies of gods and cults were constructed in response to changes in social life and religious needs, and these cults in turn transformed the religious landscape, redefining ritual time (festival) and space (temple). The diffusion of religious lore accelerated through the spread of the printed word and image, while the greater mobility of society was echoed by the expanded circulation of cults and worthies.¹⁸

Examination of local records, government documents, and local gazetteers of the twelfth century disclose that Zhu Xi's Fujian was a region in distress, von Glahn also having observed, moreover, that the economic privation produced "acute class antagonisms within Song society," so that even the much-heralded *shecang* 舍藏 community granary "became an instrument of exploitation."¹⁹ Circumstances this dire are part of the behest of Zhu to his later interpreters as

Terminology need not handicap us in this respect, only offer a reminder of the necessity of care for what we are reading and interpreting.

18 Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 179.

19 Richard von Glahn, "Community and Welfare: Chu Hsi's Community Granary in Theory and Practice," in Conrad Schirokauer and Robert Hymes, eds., *Ordering the World*, 222-254. This fact and its interpretation raises questions as to the validity of the long held presumption that the *xiangyue* was an effective alternative social and economic community of mutual sup-

recorded in his rain sacrifices and appeals to the Supreme Lord himself for grain reserves to meet the needs of people starving on his magistracy watch. In addition to these requests for celestial succor and provision, Zhu was known to have discovered systemic petty corruption and in response had the miscreants cashiered and then called on the wealthy to provide insurance for the needy and to recognize that without a broader definition of welfare lives would continue to be lost.

But with time, the weight of growing evidence of the degree of privation, and the many complaints Zhu voiced over his administrative assignments and his own poverty, he seems to have understood well how hopelessness and suffering eroded faith in the government. For the same reasons I suspect his belief in the reciprocity of visible and invisible was reinforced by his observations of and experience with the efficacy of local healers and newly emerging cults. These events made for a dissolution of the once rigid registers of class that segregated the learned from the laboring, the ravages of war and retreat, in short social subversion created new networks of relations, something that has been documented by Ned Davis, Barend ter Haar, and Hubert Seiwert.²⁰ And because Fujian's history could "be traced

port. Certainly its viability could not be guaranteed in such a predatory rural ecology. E. B. Vermeer, ed., *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 5-34.

²⁰ Edward L. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural in Song China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), Barend ter Haar, *Telling Stories: Witchcraft and Scapegoating in Chinese History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005), and Hubert Seiwert, *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003).

in the single and multi-surname settlements of Chinese immigrants since the Han dynasty, the cult to gods and the cult to ancestors were often conflated.”²¹

This conflation of territorial and familial cults favored the distinctive reinvention of ancestral worship and patronage advanced by Zhu Xi. Adopted, abducted perhaps from the everyday for its power and efficacy. The framework of *daoxue*, specifically as it was grounded in the autochthonous practice of *jingshe*, was made of the therapeutic material of local cults, spirit possession, and divination. In this way, the two-tiered model is unsuitable for analysis of the novel reinvention of cults and sacrifice to emblematic figures of *daoxue* honor. It is possible, I believe, to consider the dissemination of these cults as an attempt to invigorate opposition to the orthodoxy promoted by the state by providing a charismatic, immediate alternative, as well as a counter to local mantic practice under the aegis of *fashi* and similar practitioners. Let us explore how this was done.

²¹ Edward L. Davis, “Arms and the Dao, 2: the Xu Brothers in Tea Country,” Livia Kohn and Harold. D. Roth, eds., *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 160.

3. Making Sense of the Zhuzi Cult Complex

Although his avowed master, Kongzi, who putatively stated a predilection to keep spirits at a remove,²² Zhu Xi was keenly aware of their ubiquity—ancestors, inspired forebears, tutelary deities, mountain and water sprites as he discloses here in an exposition for his students: 山之怪曰夔魍魎; 水之怪曰龍罔象; 土之怪曰犼羊 “monsters of the mountains are called *kui* and *wangliang*; the monsters of the water are called *long* and *wangxiang*; and monsters of the earth are called *fenyang*.”²³ The folklore surrounding these beasts can be found in texts of the Warring Kingdoms as well as the Han, so Zhu’s acknowledgment of them here is an assertion of fact for his inquiring audience. He held the worldview of his time and it was from its features that he developed the philosophical conception that latter-day interpreters know as “Neo-Confucianism.” “The dragon is a water animal, when it appears and interacts with vital vapor (*qi*) to generate humidity, there is rain.”

Other passages, indeed quite a few others, bring us closer to the sensitivity of his understanding of the spiritual agency of the physical world. Here Zhu “responds” to a student’s inquiry about the activity of *gui* 鬼 and *shen* 神:

雨風露雷, 日月晝夜, 此鬼神跡也, 此是白日公平正直之鬼神。若所謂有嘯於梁, 觸於胸, 此則所謂不正邪暗, 或有或無, 或去或

²² *Lunyu zhengyi*, 126. The key passage from Book 6, Chapter 22 reads: “To respect ghosts and spirits and yet remain distant from them, this may be deemed wisdom.” 敬鬼神而遠之, 可謂知矣。

²³ Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi yǔlei* 朱子語類, vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 37.

來, 或聚或散者. 又有所謂禱之而應, 祈之而獲, 此亦所謂鬼神, 同一理也. 世間萬事皆此理, 但精粗小大之不同爾. 又曰: 以功用謂之鬼神. 即此以見.

Rain, wind, dew, lightning, sun, moon, day and night: all of these are traces of demons and spirits. These are the fair, even, correct, and straight demons and spirits of the bright day. As when it is said if there are howls near a bridge, knocking in the chest, this is what is called the incorrect, wicked and obscure; some exist, some do not, some go, some come; some concentrate and some disperse. There are also sayings that in praying to them, there is a response, and in addressing a wish to them, it is granted. All of these sayings about demons and spirits have the same principle (理). The countless events of this world all have this principle; what distinguishes them are the qualities of their being exquisite or coarse, small or large. [He] further said: "Because they have these effects they are called demons and spirits, and [they] are visible."²⁴

The passage reflects a confident grasp of cause and effect and while one might regard it as quaint in its "superstition" it is best to recognize it as pertaining to a different kind of understanding. Language of this kind is not merely poetic, but fundamentally unlike our own. We are reminded in these instances of the bodily, gestural fact of language and its immediate presence in the physical world of sight, smell,

²⁴ *Zhu zi yulei*, vol. 3, 34-35.

sound even texture²⁵ and must recognize that the human being is unusually resonant with his immediate environment. In light of the far greater volume of Zhu's classical commentary, philosophy, and literature with which we are so familiar, passages of this nature are salient because strange. In other instances of his commentary on natural phenomena some might be inclined to employ the terms "primitive mentality," or "pre-logical thinking" (à la Levy-Bruhl or Radcliffe-Brown) to account for Zhu's sensuous embeddedness:

論及請紫姑神吟詩之事曰：亦有請得正身出見，其家小女子見—不知此是何物。且如衢州，有一箇人事一箇神只錄所問事目於紙而封之祠前。少間開封，而紙中自有答語...

[His students] were discussing the affair in which the Purple Maiden spirit had been invited to recite some verse and [Zhu Xi] said: "When they invited her to appear in the flesh, a little girl from the household appeared—we don't know what this is. Just as in Quzhou 衢州 there was a man worshipping a certain spirit who simply recorded a list of inquiries on paper and sealed it in an envelope in front of the spirit's temple. After a little time passed, he opened up the sealed list and on the

25 On the animistic properties of the written text, see David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 93-135.

paper he found the answers to his inquiries..."²⁶

Theatrical, yes, as so much of the therapeutic cults of Southern Song were, because as van der Loon and more recently Poh Sim Plowright have demonstrated the links in Fujian between the rites of ancestor worship and the themes and dramatis personae of both human and puppet theatre were direct and immediate.²⁷ Spectacular, hardly, since this was a common occurrence. In the first instance of the mantic, the context is one of summoning the Purple Maiden to assume bodily form (*zhengshen chujian* 正身出見) and in response the spirit appears as a girl from the household who speaks for the summoned being. In a sentence this is spirit possession, and the standard call and response dynamic joining the visible and invisible worlds. The second event, like the first, is hearsay concerning an instance of the widely practiced divinatory rite of spirit writing. Although not in this exchange but in another dealing with shamans, later in *juan* 90 of the *Yulei*, Zhu Xi actually explains the choreography of spirit possession by means of child mediums *tongji* 童乩. The seriousness with which Zhu Xi approached these matters is evident in the inclusion of a portion of his complete literary

26 *Zhuzi yülei*, vol. 3, 54. The disciples seek a philosophical explanation here for stories and legends pertaining to the phenomenon of automatic writing. This is clearly an instance of the inclusion of antecedent *zhiguai* 志怪 material into the "transcripts" of oral conversations, and is reminiscent of the popular *biji* 筆記 genre exemplified by Hong Mai's 洪邁 (1123-1202) *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 wherein the anecdotal, the observed, and the experienced were often wonderfully intermingled.

27 Poh Sim Plowright, "The Birdwoman and the Puppet King: A Study of Inversion in Chinese Theatre," *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 13, issue 50 (1997): 106-118.

collection devoted to prayers and invocations accompanying sacrifice *zhuwen* 祝文. One finds here prayers for rain, for the alleviation of drought, self-admonishment and confession and a number of intercessions in which he summons the dead, usually revered ancient figures, like Kongzi and Mengzi. The language is highly scripted, in agreement with the rhetorical practice of prayer and petition, but what is intended in these lines is not for the eyes of the living but for the ears of the dead. Virtually all of these inscriptions dedicated to the sages and teachers are identified by Zhu as *gao* 告, a “report,” and in using this term he calls, quite self-consciously, on a divinatory and exorcistic language employed to speak directly to the dead that has been used by Chinese for thousands of years.²⁸ One shouts or reports (*gao*) to spirits and ghosts in the delicate interlocution that sustains living and dead, as in this report of 1181 when Zhu Xi held a post as prefect in Nankang and in a period of self-doubt sought direct advice from Kongzi:

屏弟子負告先聖文

熹不肖。昨以布衣諸生推擇為此縣吏，而得
參聽其學事。而行能寡溥治教不孚。所領

28 On the appearance of *gao* or “telling ritual” in Dong Zuobin’s 董作賓 Period V inscriptions of the Shang, see Kwang-chih Chang 張光直, “On the Meaning of *Shang* in the Shang Dynasty,” *Early China* 20 (1995), 70-71. On a number of excavated oracle bones from the Shang there is a notation *ergao* 二告 “a second report” that is linked to the verification of prognostication performed by the king. Considering that the divination was identified as a “telling ritual” it is reasonable to presume that the notation refers to a second report received from the ancestors to the charge of the living Shang king—an audible confirmation of the ancestors’ receipt of the message.

弟子負有某某者乃為淫慝之行以瀕有司。熹竊自惟身不行道無以率勵其人使至於此。又不能蚤正刑辟以彈治之則是德刑兩弛而士之不率者終無禁也。是故告于先聖先師請正學則恥以明刑。夫扑作教刑而二物以收其威：固先聖先師學校之政所以遺後世法也。唯先聖先師臨之在上熹敢不拜手稽首。

“Transcript of a Report to the First Sage on the Offense of Toileting a Student”

I, Xi, am not a worthy man. I have been recently appointed as an official overseeing this county, and thus became responsible for directing school affairs here. However my behavior and ability are so meager and my ministering and teaching cannot be trusted. Of the students under my tutelage there is one [who will remain] nameless who, because of his poor behavior, was deputed to clean the latrines. I (熹) believe that because I have been unable to put the *dao* into practice and have not been able to lead and shape others, matters have come to this. Furthermore, because I did not establish proper regulations from the start, I disciplined [this student] with subjugation. I am reporting to the First Sage and First Teacher to seek direction in rectifying school rules and in employing the punishment of public disgrace to shame the students. [As it is written] “a cane is used to instruct and to punish” and “two canes are effective in bestowing awe”: these are models that the First Sage and First Teacher left to later

generations in order that they could administer schools. As we entreat the First Sage, First Teacher from above to draw near, I, Xi, dare place my palms on the ground and bow.²⁹

I suspect that many scholars, noting the scripted honorifics of such reports, chose to take these passages as merely formulaic and thus passed over them. However, there is greater reason to look again at the rhetoric of what Michel Strickmann has called, the “termina technica” of the oracular embedded in the ritual everyday of spiritual encounter.³⁰

This is necessary because Zhu’s many comments on prayer and sacrifice make explicit his presumption of their efficacy in conjuring the dead. On this subject there is little temporizing; no effort to explain away strange phenomena (to be distinguished from the normal functioning of spiritual beings). These comments are clearly not philosophical rationalizations of the ceaselessly alternating compression and rarefaction of *qi* as the late Wing-tsit Chan and Julia Ching were inclined to assert. These *Classified Conversations*, so reconstructed or invented, were intended as an authentic record of exchange and thus we must take them as transcripts. Whether the dead can return, or people may be possessed by demons, who is responsible for ancestral cult—these are issues of moment. They must be addressed but not explained away. Zhu’s stu-

29 *Zhuzi wenji*, 1543.1-2. See also Hoyt Tillman, “Zhu Xi’s Prayers to the Spirit of Confucius and Claim to the Transmission of the Way,” *Philosophy East and West*, 54.4 (October 2004): 489-513, 502. These disciplines to encourage proper deportment should be understood as figurative attributions to Kongzi.

30 Michel Strickmann, *Poetry and Prophecy: The Written Oracle in East Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1-6, 87-97.

dents want to make sure that they understand these forces in and of themselves and also as an aspect of Zhu's philosophical system.

As Liao Hsien-huei 廖咸惠, one of the visiting fellows of the Kolleg has shown, the cult of the dead was active in the homes of Fujianese peasants as well as that of its elites and, the Southern Song was marked by heightened concern about ancestors and their influence on the fate of the living.³¹ A fair portion of *juan* 90 of the *Zhuzi yulei* contains several reconstructions of energetic conversations between Zhu and his students on matters of spirit possession or the personation of the dead (*shi* 尸). Just as one finds in the cult of the saints in the Roman world of late antiquity, these relations were dynamic; there was not an ontological divide between living and dead, more like a delicate membrane the permeability of which was affected by the attitude, posture, reverence of the living. The dead were, as Peter Brown has described them, "very special friends." Chinese cosmology has it that the soul is dispersed after death and is combined with *qi*, the stuff of the living universe. Everything is made from *qi* and, thus, the spirits (*shen* 神) of the dead also partake in it, consequently eternal friendship is possible and in some unusual cases in Fujian even guaranteed by the intriguing use of *beiyin* 碑裡 or reverse tablets.

31 Liao Hsien-huei, "Popular Religion and the Religious Beliefs of the Song Elite, 960-1279," Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2001. "Believing that the inhabitants of the unseen world possessed the power to interfere in the lives of both the living and the dead, and constantly engaging in intimate contact with supernatural beings, the Song elite, like the common people, played a significant role in the development of popular religion" (293).

4. The Daotong Ancestral Cult and the Ecology of Sacrifice

The dead, then, are never gone, and as a result the sense of loss that accompanies death is negated, but preserved along the magic current of continuity joining living and dead.

問：「人之死也，不知魂魄便散否？」
曰：「固是散。」又問：「子孫祭祀，
卸有感格者，如何？」曰：「畢竟子孫
是祖先之氣。他氣雖散，他根卻在這裡
；盡其誠敬，則亦能呼召得他氣聚在此
。如水波樣，後水非前水，後波非前波
，然卻通只是一水波。子孫之氣於祖考
之氣，亦是如此。他那箇當下自散了，
然他根卻在這裡。根既在此，又卻能引
聚得他那氣在此。此事難說，只要人自
看得。」

Someone asked: "With a person's death I do not know whether or not the ethereal and the terrestrial souls disperse." Zhu said: "They do disperse." Someone further asked: "How about the descendants' sacrifice, can this elicit summoning?" [Zhu] said: "In the end the descendants are of the same *qi* as the ancestors, so even though the ancestors' *qi* may have dispersed, their roots exist right here. By fully exercising sincerity and reverence we are able to summon their *qi* so that it coalesces right here. It's the same with water and waves: the later water is not the earlier water, the later waves are not the earlier waves; and yet all of it is just the same water and waves. The

relationship between the *qi* of descendants and the *qi* of ancestors is just like this. The ancestors' *qi* may promptly disperse of itself, yet their root exists right here; the fact is that we are able to induce their *qi* into coalescing right here.³²

This current is conveyed through a dialectic of sympathy between *gan* (feeling, incipience, stimulus) and *ying* (address, answer, respond, react) conducted along the infinite lines of *qi*'s force. One way of understanding this ceaseless interplay is to think of it in terms of the place of humanity in the larger cycle of the heavens and the earth.

The phenomenology of the medieval material world enables us now to discern what provoked Zhu Xi's obsessive interest in revising his Sishu prefaces. The answer lies in words anchored to sacrifice, a report to Kongzi of a sacrifice conducted in honor of the invention of the daotong the legacy of descent from the ancients, alive in the present day.

On the on the thirteenth day of the lunar month in 1194 Zhu Xi conducted a special sacrifice at his newly constructed *Cangzhou jingshe* or *Zhulin jingshe* in Fujian. The oral proceedings of prayer were transcribed³³ and are among the records of prayer and sacrifice included in the *zhuwen* 祝文 section of the *Wenji*.

Stating his intention to retire from active service (evidence of the initial pressures of the imperial proscription), Zhu summons his master, Kongzi, through sacrifice³⁴ and reports

³² Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi yulei* 3.15a 7.

³³ It is also possible that Zhu had already prepared the text for this sacrifice and then passed it along to his disciples to contribute to the official record of the *jingshe*. This is not clear.

³⁴ Zhu was very practiced at sacrifice, of course, and devoted much to the

(*gao* 告)—as one does in the common rites of the cult of the dead—his discovery of the *dao* legacy:

Text of the Cangzhou Lodge of Wondrous
Remembrance Report to the First Sage

滄州精舍告先聖文

後學, 朱熹, 敢昭告於先聖至聖, 文宣王. 恭
惟道統遠自羲軒! 集厥大成允屬元聖述古
垂訓萬世作程. 三千其徒化若時雨. 維顏曾

particular ritual theatrics of the cult of the dead in the *Zhuzi jiali* 朱子家禮. The *jiali* has been translated by Patricia Ebrey and many have commented on its effect on popular practice. However, Ebrey's implicit reading of the rites as a kind of enforced constraint by elites is interpretively problematic in its two-tiered (high and low culture) segregation of popular religious practice. Furthermore, this reading of Song quotidian never gets at the relations that obtain between sacrifice and prayer, an area that requires considerable investigation in the "cult of the worthies," the founding of *jingshe* 精舍, and the practice of the ancestor cult. A good start on treating this problem may be found in David L. Lieber and Jules Harlow, eds., *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2001) where one reads:

Ritual sacrifices were offered in the sanctuary in the wilderness. Yet the Torah prescribes virtually no prayers, blessings, or verbal formulas for recitation during the sacrificial ritual...Individuals came to pray, and at various occasions prayer gatherings were held within its precincts. None of this, however, was linked to the sacrifices... Verbal forms of worship developed at the same time that sacrificial rituals were practiced. Prayers became the sacrifices of our lips; sacrifices became non-verbal prayers. (emphasis mine) Neither was considered acceptable if the individual was insincere.... Once the Temple was established in Jerusalem, silence was overcome. (*Etz Hayim*, 1453)

氏傳得其宗。逮思及輿益以光大。自時厥後口耳失真千有餘年乃曰有繼。周程授受萬理一原。曰邵曰張爰及司馬，學雖殊轍道則同歸俾。我後人如夜復旦。熹以凡陋少蒙義方中靡常師。晚逢有道。載鑽載仰，雖未有聞賴，天之靈幸無失墜逮。茲退老同好鼎來落此一丘羣。居伊，始探原推本敢昧厥。初冀以告廈尚其昭格陟降庭止惠我光明。傳之方來永永無斁。今以吉日，謹率諸生恭修釋菜之禮以先師兗國公顏氏郕侯曾氏沂水侯孔氏鄒國公孟氏配濂溪周先生明道程先生伊川程先生康節邵先生橫渠張先生溫國司馬文正公延平李先生。從祀尚饗！

Latter day student, Zhu Xi, I dare to entreat the Former and Ultimate Sage, Monarch of the Promotion of Culture. Let us celebrate the *dao* legacy [extending] far back to Fu Xi and Huang Di! Its achievements were all assembled by the Original Sage [Kongzi], who transmitted the ancient [teachings] and gave instructions, setting the standards for 10,000 generations. His 3,000 disciples were transformed as if [his instructions] had been a timely rain. Only Yan Hui and Zeng Zi were able to obtain their lineage (*qizong* 其宗). It was not until Zisi and Yu that this legacy was made more lustrous and great. Since then, subsequent followers lost the true transmission in the process of teaching and receiving. The legacy remained in abeyance for more than 1,000 years. What Zhou [Dunyi] and the Cheng Brothers learned and taught was that the myriad patterns

(*wanli* 萬理) have a single origin (*yi yuan* 一原). As for Shao [Yong], Zhang Zai, Sima [Guang], while their studies bore through disparate paths they all arrived at the same conclusions about the way (*dao* 道). They guided us later generations, as if we were moving from a dark night to the dawning of a new day. When I was a child, I received instruction because of my deficiencies [while] in my youth I received instruction from average teachers. [But] in my later years I met those who had the *dao*. Sometimes boring down and at others looking above in reverential pose, and even though there is but silence, I believe that it is because of the miraculous efficacy of the sky (*tianzhiling* 天之靈) above, that we are fortunate that nothing [of this legacy] was lost. Now, I am old and retired and those of similar appreciations have gathered here with me to build this lodge. When we first established residence, [I] explored the headwaters and sought the roots of [the lineage] because I did not dare obscure it. Commencing to offer libation in order to report to you [Kongzi] on this [lodge] and prize its illustrious summoning of the ascending and descending spirits to this place [I hope they] will bless [us] generously with illumination. Faithfully and indefatigably [we] will transmit [this legacy], without interruption, to those following in the future. As it is an auspicious day, I will lead the assembled students in celebration, performing the rite of offering food (*shicai* 釋菜) [to the spirits of

the sages and teachers]: the First Teacher, Duke of Yan, the family of Yan [Hui] Lord of Cheng, the family of Zeng [zi], Lord of Jiangshui, Kong clan, Duke of Zou Kingdom, and the family of Meng [Ke] accompanied by Mr. Lianxi Zhou, Messers Mingdao Cheng, and Yichuan Cheng, Mr. Kangjie Shao, Mr. Hengqu Zhang, Wen Kingdom Sima Wen [and] Mr. Yanping Li. Please receive these food offerings!³⁵

The opening address of the report begins with the grandest of Kongzi's official titles, *Xiansheng zhi sheng wenxuan wang* 先聖至聖文宣王. In using this title Zhu was taking what had been officially conferred on the sage by the government, but he construed that relationship as private, being conducted through prayer and intercession of the sort that was a distinctive new trend of the educated elites of the Southern Song. The location of this prayer and sacrifice, at the site of his mother's tomb, reinforces the lineal connections Zhu channels here.³⁶

There is much more that can be explored in this text, which I have in the book and in a forthcoming essay in *Oriens Extremus*, but time is not sufficient. Let me point out though that what is being offered here to the sage, that is in addition to the vegetable dishes and rice and incense, is the sacrifice of words: first offered orally as tribute or encomium, then made flesh in the inscription. Furthermore, this sacrificial gift comprised the body of the last version of Zhu's Pref-

35 Zhu Xi, "Cangzhou jingshe gao xiansheng wen," *Zhuzi wenji*, 1548.1.

36 For the significance Zhu Xi attached to his mother's gravesite, see Tillman, "Zhu Xi's Prayers to the Spirit of Confucius," 496.

ace to the *Zhongyong* on which he worked so conscientiously.

Coda: Beyond Lifeworld

The interval of time that has passed between this ritualized life and the present day is sufficiently great to encumber our understanding of the *mentalité* of medieval Chinese. What all these figures commonly held was what we, as interpreters, lack: sensitivity to the sensuous, to the vitality of their natural environment. This is simply an ideological challenge that may be overcome.

It was this sensitivity—this awareness outside of cognition—that accounted for the early Jesuit's inversion of space-time, bringing what was far away close at hand through the tissue of text. This temperament and texture helps us to understand Zhu Xi's observation and participation in the efficacy of local magic: spirit possession, the summoning of the dead through personation, the power of ghosts to demand service of the living, and the credulity that he lent to "supernatural phenomena." We must remember that mind and nature are coextensive and to that extent their diremption is destructive to understanding

Ignoring the sensitivity to the natural rhythms of the complementary lives of the visible and the invisible, because it is difficult to square with the accepted mythology of Zhu's completion of Neo-Confucianism, has hobbled all scholarly efforts to understand and explain his novel conception of *daotong* or to account for its compelling power. Without this understanding of the definitive links between the popular religious conception of his day, and a subsequent philosophical effort to join latter-day followers to an extinguished tradition, *daotong* can be no more than an exclusivist play for legitimacy among an increasingly rivalrous coterie of reformist

moral readings of the classical canon—the “unfolding of neo-confucianism.”

A second challenge is one posed by the written record itself and here we are reminded that, “the reasons why a specific story matters to a specific population are themselves historical; the historical process has some autonomy vis-à-vis the narrative...[and] as ambiguous and contingent as it is, the boundary between what happened and that which is said to have happened is necessary.”³⁷ So how are we to understand what we are reading, particularly in the case of records of prayer and sacrifice, and of the spirit invocation. Language is rite and so its inscription bears evidence of aura. This is likely beyond our capacity to translate or, is it? In the case of records such as these we must be mindful that these are “texts” anchored to sacrifice, thus intended for those assembled, including the dead who draw nigh.

And, lastly I think, the space between what we read of documented experience ten centuries ago and ourselves should act to remind us too of the historicity of our production. Wrestling with the proper terms for description of these behaviors reveals our involvement in understanding and transmitting the story of medieval intellectual history. This is more than a report on findings; it is an epistemological overlap: our reconstruction a continuation of the story of that history, which in most instances reproduces its “slant” as well as our own. Thus it is that the meditations of the “modern” may flow into the stream of ancient story. The challenge is to pause under the arc of this overlap to consider the slant

³⁷ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 13.

against the broader context of the story's earlier generation.
In this way we may take stock of what has been lost and
learn what may be regained.
Thank you.