

Christian Soffel / Hoyt Cleveland Tillman

Cultural Authority and Political Culture in China

Exploring Issues with the *Zhongyong* and the *Daotong* during the Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties



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Christian Soffel / Hoyt Cleveland Tillman
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Band 85

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Dedicated to

Chiung-Lin and Tina

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Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, June 2011,

Christian Soffel

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1 Zhang Xiqing 張希清 et al., eds., *10-13 shiji Zhongguo wenhua pengzhuang yu ronghe* 10-13 世紀中國文化碰撞與融合 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2005).

versity's College of History where I served as a visiting chair professor (中國人民大學講座教授) and by Hangzhou Normal University's International Song Research Center where I began serving as advisory director (杭州師範大學國際宋研究中心主任). I especially appreciate discussions with History Chairman Liu Houbin 劉後賓 and Professor Bao Weimin 包偉民, as well as the graduate students and faculty in my weekly discussion group at Renda. Graduate students (especially Christine Luk) and visiting scholars in my historiography class at Arizona State University also provided some helpful criticisms of the manuscript.

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My collaboration and discussions with Christian Soffel not only yielded the present book but also amicable and stimulating exchanges that enabled us to alter some of our views and enhance our knowledge of the sources and history of this era of China's history. For instance, his skepticism early in 2003 about Zhu Xi's reported "coining" of the term *daotong* led to his computerized searches to find prior cases of the term during the Tang and Song and ultimately resulted in one of our core themes in this present book. We hope our book's publication will expand the community or fellowship for such discussions and further advance our understanding of China.

Renmin University of China, Beijing, July 2011,

Hoyt Tillman

INTRODUCTION

How have political conflicts impacted philosophical concepts and the rise of particular intellectual lineages in China? This question is part of a contested issue—the relative strength or dominance of state power and cultural authority—upon which considerable discussion continues.² A definitive answer applicable to all situations and periods of Chinese history would not only be quite impossible but also certainly more ideologically, than empirically, grounded. Nevertheless, we think that our two case studies, especially taken together, shed new light on this question. In contrast to most existing studies, we will also provide a more nuanced fathoming of Confucian intellectual currents in Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) wake that will reveal that his ideas were not as rapidly or universally accepted in the thirteenth century as they have retrospectively been portrayed in most existing studies. By exploring views of the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (often, but problematically, labeled by Western scholars the *Doctrine of the Mean*) and the succession and transmission of the Dao 道 (Way) of the ancient sages (i.e., the *daotong* 道統) in the diverse political and cultural contexts of North and South China, we anticipate demonstrating some of the complexity of the relationship between cultural authority and political culture during the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries and beyond. The *Zhongyong* has long been regarded as a crucial text in the *daotong*; moreover, these two together are major symbolic concepts for cultural authority, and their precedence over state power (as we will see) has been asserted by some Confucian scholars.

We focus on an era when China was fragmented, and various states and cultures struggled for supremacy. Such contention is captured in our studies by including not only the Song (960–1279), which becomes the residual Southern Song (1127–1279) after the Jurchen conquest of the Northern Song (960–1127), but also the Jurchen Jin dynasty (1115–1234) and the Yuan dynasty (1260–1368) of the Mongols, who conquered the Jin and the Southern Song. Chinese scholars have almost always taken the native Han Chinese option of centering attention on the Song, largely ignoring the Jin and often somewhat begrudgingly paying some attention to the Yuan after the Mongol conquest of the Southern Song and until the Mongols withdrew in the face of Han Chinese resurgence under the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). We pause to explore how scholars under both Song regimes and the early Yuan wrestled with the political and ideological instabilities of their

2 The contemporary scholar whose publications have for many years served as significant catalysts to wide-ranging discussions on such issues is Yu Yingshi 余英時. See especially his *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie* 朱熹的歷史世界, 2 vols. (Beijing: Sanlian shuju, 2004). From a different perspective, see also Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University, Asia Center, 2008), especially pp. 115–152.

times and thus sought to enhance their own particular dynastic state's claim to historic legitimacy as China's orthodox standard (i.e., the *zhengtong* 正統). We also study major Confucian thinkers from contending "schools of thought" in the Northern Song, the Southern Song, and the early Yuan (with a little contextual discussion of the Jin). Chinese and Western scholars have highlighted the continuity and ever increasing dominance of the Zhu-Xi-centered school of thought from the Northern Song to the Southern Song into the Yuan; moreover, they have emphasized the broad recognition given to the Four Books and the *daotong* as promoted by Zhu Xi. For instance, scholars have often accepted Zhu Xi's account of the *daotong* and the *Zhongyong* and thus have largely passed over the doubts and alternatives raised by other Song Confucians.

We will highlight that diversity of views and show how even some of Zhu Xi's most devoted disciples, particularly Wang Bo 王柏 (1197–1274), had serious questions about his views on the *Zhongyong*, a text which was so crucial to Zhu's claims about the *daotong*. Due in part to the unresolved status for the *Zhongyong* in the Song, the stance of Confucian scholars under the Yuan was of pivotal importance in the eventual orthodoxy of Zhu's interpretations in late Imperial China. Our case study for the Yuan centers on Hao Jing 郝經 (also known as Hao Bochang 字伯常, 1223–1275), a significant North China follower of Zhu Xi. Even though his overall intellectual evolution was in the direction of Zhu Xi, we will show that he retained considerable independence, especially regarding the northern cultural tradition, the *Zhongyong* and the *daotong*. Discussing Hao Jing's views of the *daotong* and *zhengtong* will also underscore similarities and differences with Song Confucians in ways that will help address the pervasive interconnections between dynastic political agendas and Confucian philosophical concepts. In short, whereas some major historical overviews of Chinese philosophy even skip over the centuries between the death of Zhu Xi in 1200 and the rise of Wang Shouren 王守仁 (better known as Wang Yangming 王陽明, 1472–1529), our book seeks to shed light on how Zhu Xi's legacy survived and evolved in the thirteenth century in both South and North China.

Scholars have often described intellectual history in terms of certain "traditions" or "schools" or various "-isms," waxing and waning and mutually influencing one another to various degrees. Both recent and older publications in the field of Chinese studies are flooded with terms like Confucianism, Daoism (also spelled Taoism) and Buddhism. Although this division into three major schools itself has a notable tradition and doubtlessly provides a useful means to convey some major trends in the history of thought, it is always necessary to keep in mind the difficulties that arise from such language. It is always debatable, whether or not a description of the matter at hand in terms of distinct boundaries between certain "traditions" is preferable to a more continuous or holistic view, emphasizing mutual connectivity of persons and ideas shared across conventionally postulated "borders" between these "traditions."

Enhanced alertness is necessary when using value laden terminology, such as keywords like "mainstream," "main tradition," and "orthodoxy," or Chinese terms like *zhuliu* 主流, *da chuantong* 大傳統 or *zhengtong* 正統, and thereby privileg-

ing a certain group of scholars. The application of these terms to history (both intellectual and political) from any contemporary point of view constitutes not only a conscious distinction from “non-mainstream” scholars, but also suggests that these “mainstream” schools and traditions excel in a certain way. While most historical personages embraced a certain consciousness of traditions either to which they associated or against which they fought, the label “mainstream” is very often retrospectively applied later when the importance of a certain “lineage” manifests itself. Furthermore, value judgments obviously depend largely on particular viewpoints; hence, it is not surprising that various social groups and intellectual circles focus on different “traditions” and specific lineages within these “traditions.”

For the Song, some academics consider Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073), Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1086), Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) Zhang Zai 張載 (1022–1077), Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077), Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1192) as the main tradition in this dynasty, and sometimes Western scholars bestow on these men the embellishing label “Neo-Confucians.” Marxist orientated minds, as well as some Sinologists in the West, have favored Song scholar-officials like Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), Chen Liang 陳亮 (1143–1194) and Ye Shi 葉適 (1050–1223) who focused on practical political issues; thus, an alternative “mainstream” of this time period emerges. Other Western scholars have enlarged the “Neo-Confucian” label to also encompass this opposition lineage, as well as any and all Confucians from the middle of the eighth century to the early twentieth century. In this latter case, all contending Confucian lineages (however mutually opposed their ideas and programs) are lumped together under the same banner of Neo-Confucianism. East Asians often use the term “lixue” 理學 (Learning or School of Principle) in comparably confusing ways—ranging from a narrow focus on the purists within Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy to an inclusive umbrella or “big tent” term for any and all varieties of Confucians from the Song through the Ming, and sometimes even to the twentieth century. Most often, however, Chinese use the term “lixue” in a medium range way to refer to all of those associated with the new philosophical trends during the Song and Ming dynasties. With such shared, but vague labels, scholars often think they are communicating effectively; however, with often polar opposite conceptions of what the labels actually refer to, we sense that scholars are often talking past one another without realizing it. Regardless of their diverse methodological or ideological presuppositions, modern authors tend to blur the border between the ideas which were important for the people of a certain historical period, on the one hand, and the ideas of that period which were cherished during later centuries, on the other hand.³

3 The difficulty of defining “Chinese tradition(s)” is part of a larger issue and reflects re-evaluations currently in progress—as reflected in recent research literature and linked to recent archaeological findings (like Guodian and Mawangdui texts) from the Warring States Period and the Han dynasty, which can be used to show the impact of the Han dynasty on subsequent views of early Chinese intellectual trends. What had for centuries seemed to be a rather clear picture of the origins different traditions (in particular the statements by Sima Tan 司馬談 [died 110 B.C.] on the “Six schools” [*liu jia* 六家] in *juan* 130 of the *Shiji* 史記) is

In our study, our broader rubric for the period will be Song Confucians and Yuan Confucians. Even though “*ru*-ist” or “classicists” would be more appropriate for 儒 during earlier dynastic periods, Song and Yuan scholars and officials used the term “*ru*” in the more ideological or sectarian way that is conveyed in the English term “Confucian.” Furthermore, the general label “Confucian” appears useful for Western audiences as long as it is further specified by era or by group. Much of our focus will be on Daoxue 道學 (Learning of the Way) Confucians. As historians, we utilize this rubric because it was the most pervasive label used by Song and Yuan intellectuals to identify a fellowship or faction which included a considerable number of major figures in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This rubric is not without difficulty or complexity. First, the term was initially utilized in the early Northern Song to identify Daoist learning, and this usage continued well into the Yuan period. Although it is amazing that a lineage of Confucian intellectuals would adopt this Daoist marker as their own, we think that we should follow their own self-identifying label.

Second, even within this particular lineage or subgroup of Song and Yuan Confucians, the scope or inclusiveness of the label changed significantly from the late Northern Song, through the Southern Song and into the Yuan. During most of the twelfth century, those identifying with, and identified as, Daoxue had relatively diverse philosophical ideas, but cooperated together for political reforms. Indeed, as Professor Yu Yingshi 余英時 observes, political ideas and issues were far more important to them (even to Zhu Xi) than abstract philosophical concepts. For instance, even Zhou Dunyi’s “Supreme Ultimate and yet the Non-Ultimate” (*wuji er taiji* 無極而太極) was initially part of a political debate and an alternative to centralization of the emperor’s power (or the August Royal Ultimate, *huangji* 皇極), rather than an abstract metaphysical issue.⁴ In Zhu Xi’s 1181 eulogy to his two closest friends with whom he had shared the leadership of Daoxue, he proclaimed that no one remained who could continue their leadership, so he would assume the leading role. In contrast to his relatively equal exchanges with Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133–1180) and Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) in the previous two decades, Zhu Xi was rarely receptive to corrections and alternative views set forth by other intellectuals during his last two decades. Having set himself up as the authoritative reader of the Classics and Confucian traditions, he worked to enhance philosophical uniformity within his group of “pure Confucians” (*chun ru* 醇儒).⁵ Some other modern scholars date the beginning of Daoxue only with Zhu Xi’s assumption of leadership in the 1180s; however, such a narrow view ignores the evolution of the group earlier in the century and also takes for granted much of Zhu Xi’s own perceptions and claims. Although Zhu Xi com-

now suspected to be largely a product of the imaginative constructions by Han dynasty literati. See *SJ* 10:130.3288–3292.

4 Yu Yingshi, *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie*, pp. 809–845.

5 For instance, Zhu Xi 朱熹: *Hui’an xiansheng Zhu Wengong wenji* 晦庵先生朱文公文集, *ZZQS* 20:36.1501. In addition to Hoyt Tillman’s earlier expositions, see the recent one in Tian Hao 田浩 (Hoyt Tillman), *Panguan Zhuizi xue* 旁觀朱子學 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2011), pp. 223–244.

manded the loyalty of a significant number of followers, other intellectuals became increasingly alienated from the Daoxue fellowship in which they had earlier participated. This trend toward exclusiveness became even more pronounced among Zhu's followers, and his narrow view of Daoxue was enshrined in the *Daoxue Biographies* of the official *Song History* (*Songshi daoxue zhuan* 宋史道學傳),⁶ which was completed under Mongol rule in 1345. Thereafter, Daoxue has meant a narrow intellectual lineage leading directly to and from Zhu Xi and determined by loyalty to his philosophical doctrines. Even major twelfth century leaders of the group were retrospectively excluded from the group because they no longer appeared sufficiently "pure Confucian." In short, Daoxue evolved from a loose reform oriented political fellowship to a school of thought that became increasingly narrow and exclusively orthodox. Such major changes during Daoxue's evolution make it inconvenient for philosophers to use Daoxue as a rubric; however, we believe such evolution is helpful to our understanding of the history of thought during the Song and Yuan periods.

To recount intellectual developments during the Song era, there are two principal reasons for examining Song views of an earlier Classical text, the *Zhongyong*. Firstly, the importance of the *Zhongyong* to Song intellectuals varied widely. Many saw it just as a chapter of the canonical *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) with no special importance on its own, while others studied it intensively, most prominently of course Zhu Xi, who included this text into his famous collection of the Four Books (*Sishu* 四書). One might feel tempted to describe this change in significance as a more or less natural development; however, any such evolution is evident only retrospectively. Song literati themselves would have been largely unaware of such a natural evolution; moreover, most of them did not actively take part in such a trend. Secondly, the *Zhongyong* is of particular interest because it is a controversial text. We will show that its metaphysical contents were subject to a wide range of interpretations, and its origin and authorship had always been a matter of dispute.

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Zhu Xi tended to ignore most of the difficulties in the *Zhongyong* text. In fact, Zhu Xi's writings often show traces of deliberate attempts to create an illusion of a very streamlined *Zhongyong* tradition. For example, at the beginning of the *Zhongyong zhangju* 中庸章句, one of the basic compulsory textbooks for school students in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties and one which is still quite influential today, Zhu Xi quoted Master Cheng as having said:

Being not inclined [to anything] is what is meant by *zhong* 中, and not changing is what is meant by *yong* 庸. *Zhong* is the correct, proper Dao of All Under the Heavens (*tianxia* 天下 or the Chinese World);⁷ *yong* is the set principle of All Under the Heavens. This text is the method of mind (*xin fa* 心法), transmitted by the Confucian house. Zisi 子思 was afraid that

6 *SS juan* 427–430.

7 For an interesting recent article on this concept, see Chang Chishen (Zhang Qixian) 張其賢: "The formation of two key concepts: 'Zhongguo' and 'Tianxia'" 「中國」與「天下」概念探源, *Soochow Journal of Political Science* 東吳政治學報 27.3 (2009):169–256.

it would deteriorate over time; therefore, he formed it into a book and transmitted it to Mencius. This book begins talking about a single principle, expands later onto the myriad things, and in the end is unified again to a single principle. If you open it freely, it will fill all six dimensions, if you roll it up it can be hidden in the most secret places. Its flavor has no limits; everything in it is solid learning. A proficient reader can obtain something by reflecting on it; however, using it throughout one's whole life, one still cannot exhaust it.

不偏之謂中，不易之謂庸。中者，天下之正道；庸者，天下之定理。此篇乃孔門傳授心法，子思恐其久而差也，故筆之於書，以授孟子。其書始言一理，中散為萬事，未復合為一理，放之則彌六合，卷之則退藏於密，其味無窮，皆實學也。善讀者玩索而有得焉，則終身用之，有不能盡者矣。⁸

Firstly, we observe Zhu's clear-cut attribution of the *Zhongyong* to Zisi; thus, he ignored the doubts voiced by Song contemporaries. Secondly, the source of "Master Cheng's" statement itself is easily misunderstood. At first glance, it seems to be a single quotation from one of the Cheng brothers, probably Cheng Yi, since he is reported to have been especially interested in the *Zhongyong*. But by tracing the above quotation back to its roots, we will show that it is impossible to determine which brother spoke these sentences. These statements are actually a compilation of several quotations from the *Er Cheng yishu* 二程遺書, obviously conflated intentionally during Zhu Xi's editing, but even he admitted elsewhere that he was unable to assess the true originator of these particular sayings.⁹ This example shows Zhu Xi's streamlining of a canonical text, which made it easier to comprehend for students—all at the expense of scholarly carefulness.

The *Zhongyong* had a very colorful, but changing, history within the Confucian tradition. It is surely one of the most well-known texts in the history of Chinese philosophy, and no Confucian scholar since the Song era could turn a blind eye to it. As Andrew Plaks states, it "exerted an influence on the hearts and minds of men so profound and far-reaching as to bear comparison with none but the greatest monuments of the world's major scriptural traditions."¹⁰ In spite of this prominence, it was already during the Song period the object of substantial doubts expressed in the context of significant philosophical debates. Modern research quite unanimously dates the formation of the *Zhongyong* text several hundred years after the death of its alleged author, Zisi, but several Song scholars already considered the *Zhongyong* to be a much more questionable canonical text than, for example, the *Lunyu* (the *Analects* of Confucius) or the *Mengzi*. This current study will show that Zhu Xi's clean image of the *Zhongyong* as the authoritative model for the Song Confucian mainstream is only an illusion, or at best, Zhu Xi's own projected reality.

As one of the Four Books, which constitute the standard canon for Confucian education in late Imperial China, the *Zhongyong* has drawn wide attention. But we

8 Zhu Xi, *Zhongyong zhangju* 中庸章句, ZZQS 6:1.32.

9 For details see below, pp. 57–59.

10 Andrew Plaks, *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung—The Highest Order of Cultivation and On the Practice of the Mean* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. xxvi–xxvii. See also Bruce Rusk, "Not Written in Stone: Ming Readers of the Great Learning and the Impact of Forgery," *HJAS* 66.1 (2006):189–231, especially p. 192.

should be careful about the appealing assumption that all Confucian scholars had become passionately concerned with the Four Books (including the *Zhongyong*) by the time of Zhu Xi's death. Hoyt Tillman has outlined the basic sequence by which Zhu Xi's commentaries and the Four Books were progressively adopted by the Southern Song government from 1212 to 1241.¹¹ Furthermore, Hilde de Weerdts has shown in detail how Zhu Xi's followers integrated Daoxue learning successfully into the official Southern Song civil service curriculum during the early and mid-thirteenth century, as can be clearly seen from some encyclopedias.¹²

Nevertheless, several difficult puzzle pieces remain. An example is Chen Chun 陳淳 (1159–1223), one of the major early apologists of Zhu Xi's legacy. When expounding on essay composition, he was more concerned about writing treatises in accordance with “principle and righteousness,” than about competing in the civil service examinations.¹³ Hence, we may question Hilde de Weerdts's argument, that Chen's book, *Beixi ziyi* 北溪字義, which chiefly propagates the use of the Four Books, was basically an attempt “to oppose the enemy” in the examinations.¹⁴

Secondly, Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298) stated that after 1244 the Four Books and other works of Daoxue scholars dominated governmental examinations,¹⁵ while in the very next sentence, he complained that during the last years of the Southern Song, the significance of the Four Books was surpassed by the Daoist writings *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and *Liezi* 列子.

Thirdly, the uneven impact of Zhu Xi's core curriculum during the thirteenth century is also displayed in the works of the late Song polymath Wang Yinglin 王

11 Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), pp. 231–234.

12 Hilde de Weerdts, *Competition Over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127–1279)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), especially pp. 271–273.

13 In a letter to his study companion, he wrote: “Principle and righteousness are not conflicting with essay composition. The fact that contemporary scholars mutually attack the weaknesses and faults of one another's theories should neither be reason to confuse us, nor should we overly criticize this behavior. You have already developed your own style of composing. The foundation of your words is sufficiently stringent; the cutting edge of them is sufficiently sharp; they are more than enough to face the opponent. When composing examination essays, it suffices to face the opponent; success and failure are just a matter of fate. If someone thinks that striving for still more ingenuity is a secure method to win [in the exams], he is a fool. Principle and righteousness, however, may not be neglected in our bodies and minds for even a single day.”

理義於文章果不相為悖，而世儒交攻卑陋之說無足惑，亦無足責也。吾子於文已成一機軸，詞源之正駛，詞鋒之正銳，其於對敵有餘也。科舉之文足以對敵則已，其得失有命焉。若於其上求之益工為必得之計，則惑矣。理義在吾身心不可一日闕者。Chen Chun 陳淳: *Beixi daquan ji* 北溪大全集 (*SKQS*), 34.7a. This translation differs from de Weerdts's (p. 252f.).

14 Hilde de Weerdts, p. 258.

15 Hilde de Weerdts, p. 332, quoting Zhou Mi 周密: *Guixin zazhi* 癸辛雜識 (*SKQS*), *houji* 後集, p. 10b.

應麟 (1223–1296), who was heavily involved in examination issues¹⁶ and quite respectful toward Zhu Xi,¹⁷ but did not give any special attention to the Four Books. In fact, the Chinese term *Sishu* does not even appear a single time in Wang Yinglin's abundant writings. Moreover, the collection's original name, *Si zi* 四子 ("Four Masters"), is mentioned only briefly in his list of numbered items, the *Xiaoxue ganzhu* 小學紺珠; but since this work was meant to be encyclopedic, it does not mean that these "Four Masters" were of any special importance to him. The indifference of such a well-educated scholar toward the Four Books suggests that they did not yet play the dominant role that they did in later centuries, when they virtually eclipsed the Five Classics and other canonical works.

Obviously the Four Books required a considerable length of time to exert their influence within the broader Confucian community. The period of Zhu Xi orthodoxy in the Yuan, which lasted around 1313–1345, certainly had a strong impact, but it was short-lived, too. Only around the mid-fifteenth century, when mass book printing gained even greater popularity than during the Song and Yuan, were the Four Books uncontested among general educational institutions throughout the empire, not just in the elite circles aiming directly for the civil service examinations.¹⁸

Still, scholars in modern times are prone to look back at China's intellectual history through the lens of the Four Books. This is not just true for the study of Song intellectual history, which most often focuses on the "Neo-Confucians" in the most narrow usage of that label—a group of scholars that is more or less circumscribed by the *Daoxue zhuan* in the *Songshi* (juan 427–430); it also affects the studies of previous dynasties, where scholars often try to locate forerunners of later developments.¹⁹ Our perspective does not devalue the importance of these

16 Christian Soffel, *Ein Universalgelehrter verarbeitet das Ende seiner Dynastie—Eine Exegese des Kunxue Jiwen von Wang Yinglin* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), pp. 6–10.

17 Sufei Xiang 蘇費翔 (Christian Soffel), "Lun Wang Yinglin xuetong wenti" 論王應麟學統問題, in Shi Xiaofeng 施孝峰 and Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮, eds., *Wang Yinglin xueshu taolunji* 王應麟學術討論集 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue, 2009), pp. 181–201.

18 See Benjamin Elman's review of Hoyt Cleveland Tillman's *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy*, *HJAS* 54.2 (1994.12):575–586, p. 585. This rising status of the Four Books coincides with an evolution of the honorary titles granted to Confucius by the emperors. In previous dynasties since the Han, Confucius had mostly been referred to in the Confucian Temple as "Father" (*fu* 父), "Duke" (*gong* 公) or "King" (*wang* 王); moreover, only under Tang Gaozong 唐高宗 (r. 650–684) from 666–689 was Confucius called "Premier Teacher" (*taishi* 太師), which reflected more of his political role. In a remarkable shift beginning in 1530, all titles from the emperor honored Confucius as "First Teacher" (*xianshi* 先師) and thus endorsed his role in popular education.

19 A good example would be Charles Hartman, who writes: "Concentration on those texts later to be known as the Four Books ... is already well advanced in Han Yu's writings." See Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 178; see more detail on pp. 176–179. On the one hand, it is clear that the *Zhongyong* was important for Han Yu. See also Xia Changpu 夏長樸: "Lun *Zhongyong* xingqi yu Songdai ruxue fazhan de guanxi" 論《中庸》興起與宋代儒學發展的關係, *Zhongguo Jingxue* 中國經學 2 (2007.7):131–187, p. 137. On the other hand, placing the *Zhongyong* in the context of what would become the Four Books was of course only done

studies, for they definitely show great depth of scholarship; moreover, we have no doubt that Zhu Xi's successful attempt to put the Four Books together as a whole had a prior history that is important for their understanding. Nor are we making the claim that the *Zhongyong* does not represent genuine Confucian thought.²⁰ The question is not, whether the *Zhongyong* is a Confucian text, but rather the prominence it deserves or was given within the Confucian tradition prior to and immediately after Zhu Xi.

In other words, one goal of the present study is to understand the role of the *Zhongyong* during the Song dynasty, widely seen as the formative stage of the canon of the Four Books, and then to use these results to gain additional perspective on the issue of cultural authority and the formation of "Confucian traditions." Examining the expressed goals and the employed techniques of those supporting and opposing the canonization of the *Zhongyong*, the focus will be on scholars both inside and outside of the so-called "Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy." To demonstrate some general trends, we will examine three major issues: first, the interpretation of the title characters *zhong* 中 and *yong* 庸 before and during the Song; second, how the question of authorship was viewed during this period; and third, the ways in which the *Zhongyong* was connected to Confucian lineages, particularly the *daotong*, "the succession and transmission of the Way."

Difficulty understanding the ambiguous core characters *zhong* and *yong* is neither limited to Western sinologists nor merely a modern phenomenon. Chinese intellectuals past and present have not been confronted with the challenge of translating the title into a foreign language, which would have augmented their attention to the ontology of the "Mean." Nevertheless, they engaged in vivid discussions based on late Han and contemporary Song understandings of the characters in the title, which we analyze in the first chapter of Part One. Though not directly related to the issue of "traditions" and "schools," this investigation will provide insight into some of the argumentation employed by a variety of Song scholars.

As for the question of authorship and authenticity, the origins of the *Zhongyong* itself have always been obscure. Many traditional Chinese sources have attributed it to Confucius' grandson and second-generation disciple Kong Ji 孔伋,

from a later perspective. Another example would be David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 97, who writes: "Quan Deyu even foreshadowed the later Neo-Confucian grouping of the Four Books, when he asked about the attitude to self-cultivation of the *Daxue* and the *Zhongyong*." Here and elsewhere in quotations used in the text, we have changed Wade-Giles to *pinyin* spelling for the readers' convenience.

20 The Confucian imprint is readily apparent from the frequent usage of phrases starting with "the master says" (*zi yue* 子曰), or "Zhongni (i.e., Confucius) says" (*Zhongni yue* 仲尼曰), thus suggesting that a large part of the text is attributed to Confucius by its authors. This imprint is also seen in the use of Confucian key terms from the *Lunyu* (like "Superior Man" vs. "Little Man," i.e., *junzi* 君子 vs. *xiaoren* 小人), as well as inter-textual similarities with the *Lunyu* and the *Mencius* (*Mengzi*). See Chen Zhaorong 陳兆榮: *Zhongyong tanwei* 中庸探微 (Taipei: Zhengzhong, 1975), p. 117.

also known as Zisi or Master Zisi (Zisi zi 子思子). However, there is no contemporary account from that era about the people involved in its compilation; we only have a brief statement centuries later in the *Shiji* 史記 that Zisi was the author.²¹ As already mentioned, modern critical research has revealed that the *Zhongyong* was most likely compiled during the early Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). Although scholars at that time had only corrupted Confucian texts which were difficult for them to understand, some strove to transform Confucius' own teachings into a general philosophical system. Seeking to strengthen the status of Confucianism at court and in the empire, their goal was to ready Confucianism to become an official system of teachings. A principal means to attain this goal was writing a corpus of ritual and other canonical texts (specifically the *Liji* in this case) attributed to Confucius (or people in his tradition); these texts provided guidelines on how people should live, act, think and perfect themselves.

However, doubts about the *Zhongyong*'s origin were common among Song dynasty scholars, especially Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), Ye Shi and Wang Bo. There is, however, a notable difference in the approaches of these intellectuals: some focused their critique on the question of the *Zhongyong*'s authenticity, while others mainly criticized its structure, rather than its contents. For example, Ouyang Xiu doubted its authenticity because it contradicts the *Lunyu*. Su Shi asserted that an original *Zhongyong* written by Confucius was distorted drastically by Zisi, and Ye Shi thought that the *Zhongyong* was possibly a forgery from the last years of the Warring States Period (403–221 B.C.). However, Wang Bo—a rather devoted follower of Zhu Xi—did not bring up the question of authenticity, but rather questioned the arrangement of its chapters.

Scholars like Ye Shi and Wang Bo, who wrote their major works after Zhu Xi had propagated his *daotong* orthodoxy in the late twelfth century, were well aware of the challenge that their skepticism about the *Zhongyong* posed for Zhu Xi and other Daoxue philosophers. Ye Shi had a very complicated relationship with Zhu Xi, one that worsened over time. In his youth, he regarded himself as a member of the Daoxue fellowship and also tried to appease Zhu, who was one generation senior. Nonetheless, Ye firmly stuck to his own ideas, which were often quite different from Zhu's. Later on, frustrated by Zhu Xi's intolerance of others' views and unwillingness to change his own, Ye Shi became an opponent of Zhu Xi.²² Ye's harsh criticism of the *Zhongyong* is best understood in that context.

Wang Bo's approach was very different. He was one of the most prominent thirteenth century figures in the Zhu Xi tradition, and his writings were always respectful toward the master. When he found himself in disagreement, Wang Bo frequently employed humble language, expressing a sense of guilt about his own

21 There is no further commentary by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 B.C.) to this ascription of the work to Zisi; it is merely an item of additional information to the account of the line of descendants of Confucius, which includes Zisi. See the biography of Confucius, *Kongzi shijia* 孔子世家, *SJ* 6:47.1946.

22 See Niu Pu, "Confucian Statecraft in Song China: Ye Shi and the Yongjia School" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1998; Ann Arbor: UMI Microform, 1998), pp. 100–103.