LITERATI AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE “LOCAL”:

THE QUANZHOU COMMUNITY OF LEARNING IN LATE IMPERIAL CHINA

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ABSTRACT

This is a socio-cultural study of the locality of Quanzhou, Fujian, from the mid to late Ming period. Through the prism of its intellectual community of Cheng-Zhu Confucian scholars, this dissertation provides insights into the relationship between the literati elite and the locale which they helped to construct and they represented. It argues that the Quanzhou scholars had a dual-identity: as scholar-officials and as scholar-gentries. As the former, they attempted to associate the local and themselves with the imperial state through elevating the cultural status of Quanzhou. Accordingly, Zhu Xi’s intellectual legacy in the area and the later Cheng-Zhu Confucian scholars were transformed into cultural and symbolic capitals with which the Quanzhou scholars propelled their hometown into a center of learning of national repute. These intangible capitals found concrete manifestations in architectural monuments that became sites of collective memory, which in turn and eventually helped to forge a unique local identity shared by literati and commoners alike. In their capacity as local gentries, their intellectual allegiance to Cheng-Zhu orthodox learning did not prevent them from changing with the times. While their steadfast intellectual faith found expression in their antagonism against Buddhism and the religious syncretic trend popular in Fujian, in an effort to safeguard the welfare and livelihood, they went so far as to defy the imperial ban on maritime trade and actively endorsed the legitimacy and necessity of trade, embracing and promoting a mercantile ethos. In broad terms, this study of the Quanzhou Confucian scholars engages with the historiography of local history in late imperial China while reflecting on question of the scope and nature of the intellectual and social changes that might be construed as a sort of early modernity.
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INTRODUCTION

Quanzhou seemed to be a place of contradictions. The most well-known iconoclastic scholar of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602), best known for his anti-establishment thinking, especially his invectives against orthodox Confucian norms and values, was a native of Quanzhou. Yet, in very many ways, Quanzhou remained steadfastly the last bastion of the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy represented by the Cheng-Zhu school, even when the new teachings of Wang Yangming (1472-1529), known generally as the school of the mind-heart (xinxue), as opposed to the so-called school of principle (lixue) of Cheng-Zhu, swept through the Ming intellectual landscape by storm. The local gazetteers dated from the Ming to Qing (1644-1911) periods invariably dubbed Quanzhou as “Zuo and Lu on the coast” (haibin Zou Lu),¹ signifying its cultural achievements in perpetuating and transmitting the sagely tenets of Confucius and Mencius. The Quanzhou literati took tremendous pride in the cultural changes brought about by Zhu Xi’s (1130-1200) transformative scholarly activities in the area.² Yet, the term “Buddha land in the south” (Quannan foguo) was also frequently used by the same compilers of the gazetteers to describe the locality, pointing to the widespread popular practices of Buddhism and other folk religions. It must also be mentioned that Quanzhou was a major commercial hub in the global maritime trade network from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, and as a result, it was a city known for its multi-ethnic and multi-religious diversities. Nevertheless, out of this cosmopolitan context and history emerged a group of scholars who saw themselves as the stalwart guardians of the Confucian tradition and orthodox learning.

¹ Zuo and lu were the birthplaces of Confucius and Mencius respectively.
² Zhu Xi served as the sub-prefectural magistrate of Tongan county for three years, and he had toured part of the Qingyuan mountain located in the prefectural capital of Jinjiang twice during his life in 1156 and 1184. One of Zhu Xi’s prominent disciples, Zhen Dexiu (1178-1235), was twice the magistrate of Quanzhou.
This dissertation is a study of these Confucian scholars in the locale of Quanzhou from the mid to late Ming dynasty. It is guided by two principle questions. First is the relationship between the local and the state, and the role of the literati therein. Second is the permutations between tradition and change, and the actions of local scholars as exemplified by Quanzhou Confucian scholars. Accordingly, the dissertation is divided into two parts that seek to address these two questions respectively. Chapters one, two, and three deal with the question of state-society relation. A good deal of the analysis and argument here are inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital and Pierre Nora’s idea of site of memory. I argue that intellectual genealogy, local monuments, and the creation of local identity in local writings were various forms of capitals with which the Quanzhou Confucian scholars used to associate the local with the central. As Quanzhou was consciously and deliberately being distinguished from other locales on the national level, Quanzhou scholars sought to create a distinct identity that separated them from their intellectual peers in other areas. I expand the analytical framework of Bourdieu’s theory of capital on individual class distinction and apply it to the study of local history, with the locale as the unit of analysis. A locale, in a similar way as the individual, possessess economic, cultural, and symbolic capitals which they use to leverage for power and status. Quanzhou scholars created and cultivated their intellectual capital, which was orthodox Cheng-Zhu learning. Such capital was then invested in the erection of architectural monuments for prominent local scholars, and still further institutionalized by the state, in the forms of posthumous titles and enshrinement into the Confucius Temple. While these monuments and national recognitions became cultural and symbolic capitals of Quanzhou, they were also at the
same time, in the words of Pierre Nora, “sites of memory”\(^3\) where the supposed high points of Quanzhou history were crystalized and remembered by the local community. A site of memory is the place where “memory crystalizes and secretes itself”\(^4\) and it can assume both material and nonmaterial forms, such as museums and archives, commemorations and rituals. When the Quanzhou Confucian scholars were amassing and cultivating the cultural and symbolic capitals of their hometown, they were also selecting from their collective past, things, events, and persons they deemed as worthy of remembering, and these entities and personages became sites of memory for their fellow townspeople. In other words, the very identity locale and its remembered history were the making of the local literati who, in the process of constructing the identity of Quanzhou, also announced and promoted the stature of the place at the national level.

Chapters four and five turn away from the local literati’s association with the state, and focus on the scholars as the local elite and gentry. Through examining the local activism of the Quanzhou scholars in their roles as local leaders, I argue that living in the rapidly changing society of the late Ming era when time-honored Confucian traditions and values were constantly being challenged, the Quanzhou scholars mediated between their Confucian heritage and the demands for change. The adjustments they made reflected their agility and the mercantile ethos that was very much a part of the culture and outlook of their native hometown. Their negotiations between tradition and change shows that they were guardians of the past as well as heralds of a new era. They were, on the one hand, scholars adhering to the Cheng-Zhu tradition of learning, so much so that they vehemently rejected Buddhism and other popular religions.

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while firmly embracing the cult of chastity. On the other hand, as literati and scholars, they
nevertheless spoke highly of the merchant class, going so far as to defy the imperial ban on
maritime trade. They acknowledged the merchants’ business acumen and praised their
entrepreneur spirit that led them to venture out to sea in order to establish overseas markets; all
of which, according to the Quanzhou scholars, were comparable to the much-vaunted skills in
statecraft and statesmanship. In their writings, going against the conventional social hierarchy of
placing the merchants at the bottom of the social ladder, merchants were often elevated to a sort
of nobility status. Thus, the Quanzhou scholars helped to foster a mercantile ethics and ethos,
which they saw as an alternative legitimate dao (Way) of values. In fact, some of them
participated in trading and became scholar-merchants. Such developments show that the Cheng-
Zhu scholars of Quanzhou were not simply conservative and unyielding spokespersons of the
imperial ideology. They changed with the times and responded to the socio-economic conditions
in such a way that they became champions of the merchants and the mercantile spirit.

Quanzhou and the Cheng-Zhu Scholars

Quanzhou is a prefecture in Fujian province. It was first established during the Tianbao
reign (天宝 742-756) of the Tang dynasty, and was initially called Qingyuan prefecture 清源郡,
named after the mountain ranges in the outskirts of the city. It had seven counties under its
administration: Jinjiang (the prefecture capital), Nanan, Huian, Dehua, Anxi, Tongan, and
Yongchun. The name Qingyuan prefecture was changed to Quanzhou 泉州 during the Yuan
dynasty (1271-1368) and has remained so today.\(^5\) It also has the alias of Wenling 溫陵 (literally,
warm hill), apparently on account of the balmy climate. The prefecture’s name and its alias owed their origin to the Qingyuan mountain, which was renowned for its famously pure and luscious spring water.\(^6\)

Quanzhou was located at the mouth of the Quanzhou Bay intersected by the Jin river and Lou river. Given this strategic location, it functioned as the eastern entrepôt on the maritime silk road from the eleventh to fourteenth century. Merchants from the Mediterranean world, Middle East, and South Asia converged in Quanzhou, creating a cosmopolitan commercial hub. It even found its way into Marco Polo’s *Travels*, which described it as a “noble and handsome city.”\(^7\) Marco Polo marveled, “It is indeed impossible to convey an idea of the number of merchants and the accumulation of goods in this place, which is held to be one of the largest ports in the world.”\(^8\) The Quanzhou of the Song and Yuan dynasties has been the focal point in many of the studies on the maritime global network connecting China, Asia, and Europe. There has been much scholarship on Quanzhou as an international entrepôt, detailing its multifaceted prosperity and global significance. Angela Schottenhammer’s edited volume is by far the most thorough study on Quanzhou during the period from the eleventh to fourteenth century.\(^9\) There have also been many archeological studies on the commercial junk that was shipwrecked off the shore of

\(^6\) Wu Shiyu and Shen Zongjing, eds., *Yuding Pianzi Leibian* (Imperial Compilation of Parallel Words) (*Siku quanshu*, Wenyuange edition, electronic version), juan 56; and *Ming yitong zhi* (*Siku quanshu*), juan 75.


\(^8\) Ibid., p.251.

Quanzhou bay in 1277 and excavated in 1973,\textsuperscript{10} coupled with urban studies on the city’s morphology.\textsuperscript{11} In the main, studies on Quanzhou have focused on its role as a nodal point in the region, which stretched out into a close-knit maritime trade network, which some scholars label as the “eastern Mediterranean”.\textsuperscript{12} With the exodus of nearly all foreign nationals in the aftermath of the Islamic Ispah Rebellion (1357-1366) toward the end of the Yuan dynasty, and with the Ming dynasty’s implementation of the ban on maritime trade, the global significance of Quanzhou declined and the city would never restore its past glory as a trading center. Though illicit commercial activities never came to a halt in Quanzhou, as we shall see, the weight of maritime trade shifted more to Zhangzhou and Ningbo.

Against this economic and social background emerged a community of orthodox Confucian scholars during the mid to late Ming period. There are two meanings when orthodoxy is used in this study. First is the intellectual identification with the Cheng-Zhu school of learning that became the state-sponsored ideology in the year 1313 during the Yuan dynasty. This meant that Zhu Xi’s and Cheng brothers’ interpretations of the ancient Confucian classics became the standard curriculum for the imperial civil service examination. Quanzhou Confucian scholars adhered to the state orthodoxy of Cheng-Zhu learning even when the opposing Lu-Wang school,


the so-called school of the mind-heart, became immensely popular. They were prolific writers and commentators who proudly declared their allegiance to Cheng-Zhu learning in their exegetical works. The second meaning of orthodoxy is the social conventions and customs derived from and based on the Cheng-Zhu ideology, supported and sponsored by the imperial state. The cult of chastity is one such example that is pertinent to this study. When the Southern Song master Cheng Yi 程颢 (1032-1085) said that with regard to women, losing one’s life is a small matter when compared to the loss of one’s integrity, the figure of the chaste wife and widow who remained faithful to one man till death was transformed from an ideal that had existed only in the ancient classics and lore to a practical expectation for women from elite families. From the Ming period onward, with active state sponsorship, the cult of chastity became a prevalent social phenomenon practiced by even illiterate peasant families. The Quanzhou Confucian scholars were spokespersons of the state ideology on women. They endorsed female martyrdom, and firmly believed in the Neo-Confucian venerated female virtues as the bedrock of a stable society and state. From these two perspectives, the Quanzhou scholars may indeed be seen as orthodox Confucians.

The Historigraphic Contexts

As mentioned, Quanzhou as an international commercial hub during the Yuan and Song dynasties has been extensively studied. But in recent years, there has also been significant Chinese scholarship that examines its critical importance in the intellectual landscape of the Ming dynasty. When the intuitive teachings of Wang Yangming (1472-1529) took the world by storm, such that they became a vogue among the literati, Quanzhou stubbornly remained a stronghold of the Cheng-Zhu tradition of learning. Scholars in Quanzhou safeguarded Zhu Xi’s
interpretations of the classical Confucian canon that constituted the standard curriculum of the imperial civil service examinations. Their steadfast allegiance is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that Wang Yangming’s learning even attracted the less educated population, to whom its doctrines of ready sagehood and instantaneous enlightenment had great appeal. Moreover, with the introduction of the eight-legged essays in 1487, which prescribed that examination essays conform to a highly stylized and regimented prose style, Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy was increasingly looked upon by many literati as nothing more than an instrumental tool for examination success and social advancement. With the earnest promotion and propagation by Wang’s disciples and followers through a variety of means, such as public lecturing and establishing private academies, Wang Yangming learning spread far and wide, but Fujian remained by and large immune to its spread.

The Chinese-language scholarship produced in recent years aims to examine this exceptional Fujian phenomenon. Indeed, for a long time, studies on the Ming intellectual history was predominantly preoccupied with the Wang Yangming school, so much so that its origins, development, decline, internal divisions, and relations with politics have all been dealt with extensively.13 But these works, being exhaustive study of Wang Yangming learning, seldom talk about the contemporary Cheng-Zhu tradition, giving the impression that it had effectively died

13 See for instance, Lu Miaofen, Yangming xue shiren shexun – lishi, sixiang yu shijian (The scholarly community of Wang Yangming school: history, thought, and practice) (Taipei: zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiu suo, 2003); Chen Shilong, Mingdai zhongwan qi jiangxue yundong (1522-1626) (The lecturing activities of the mid to late Ming dynasty), (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2005); Zhang Yixi, Jiangxue yu zhengzhi: Mingdai zhongwanqi jiangxue xingzhi de zhuanbian ji yi yi (Lecturing activities and politics: the shift in the lecturing activities of the mid to late Ming dynasty and its meaning) (Taipei: Huamulan wenhua chubanshe, 2012); Zhang Xiyi, Yangming xue de xiangli shijian: yi Ming zhongwan qi Jiangxi Jixue, Anfu liangxian weili (The local practice of Wang Yangming school: case studies of the Jisui and Anfu counties of Jiangxi province in the mid to late Ming dynasty) (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2013); Liu Yong, Zhongwen Ming shiren de jiangxue hongdong yu xuepai jiangou (The lecturing activities and the establishment of intellectual school of the mid to late Ming period) (Beijing: zhangwu yinshu guan, 2015).
out. Such recent scholarship on the Quanzhou scholars does seek to redress the imbalance. Monographs have been produced on certain key Quanzhou scholars, such as Cai Qing (1453-508) and Lin Xiyuan (1482-1567). These are in-depth studies of their thinking within the framework of Zhu Xi’s philosophy, placing them therefore squarely in the field of intellectual history. There are also some other studies on the broader intellectual developments of Fujian during the Ming dynasty. In the main, these works focus on two issues: the developmental stages and branches of Cheng-Zhu learning in Ming Fujian, and the formation of Cheng-Zhu learning through genealogical construction in later times.

This dissertation is not an intellectual history of the philosophy and thoughts of the Quanzhou scholars, but it does contribute to our understanding the intellectual development of Ming Neo-Confucianism. This is the first English-language study of the Cheng-Zhu scholars of the Ming period, filling a lacuna in the current literature on Ming intellectual history that tends to have predominant focus on the Wang Yangming school. It takes issue with the commonly used


15 See for instance Wang Qixiao, “Cong ‘fuyi shengjiao’ dao ‘gaizheng jingzhuan’: Lin Xiyuan sixiang yanju” (From ‘complimenting the teachings of the sages’ to ‘correcting the classical exegesis’: a study of Lin Xiyuan’s thought) *Shiyun*, 10 (Sept. 2004): 23-45.


17 Wang Yiqiao, “Cong ‘wumin youxue’ dao ‘wuxue zaimin’ – 15 zhi 18 shiji Fujian Zhuzixue sixiang xipu de xingcheng ji shijian” (From ‘Our Min has Learning’ to “My Learning is at Min”— the Formation and Practice of Intellectual Genealogy of Zhu Xi Learning in Fujian from 15th to 18th centuries) (MA diss., Taipei: Taiwan National Normal University, 2006); Liu Yong, *Zhongwen Ming shiren de jiangxue hongdong yu xuepai jiangou* (The lecturing activities and the establishment of intellectual school of the mid to late Ming period), (Beijing: zhangwu yinshu guan, 2015), chap. 6; and “Zhongwan Ming lixue xueshuo de hudong yu diyuxing lixue chuangtong de xipuhua Jincheng – yi ‘minxue’ wei zhongxin” (Interactions between Doctrines of Lixue and the Process of Genealogy Construction of a Regional Tradition of Lixue – the Case of Ming Learning) *New History*, 22. 2 (June 2010): 1-60.
label, the “Qingyuan school/sect” (Qingyuan xuepai 清源學派) in Chinese literature, which generically and uncritically refers to the Cheng-Zhu scholars of Quanzhou. It further debunks the notion that they constituted an intellectual school as such. It highlights the Quanzhou scholars’ agenda of creating intellectual capital by utilizing their self-touted cultural heritage in which Zhu Xi was a prominent figure. The hagiographic efforts of canonizing Quanzhou learning as the true heir of the Cheng-Zhu tradition gave rise to the later impression that there was a well-defined and self-aware Quanzhou intellectual school or sect where there was none. While there was admittedly a group of scholars from Quanzhou that shared similar and common intellectual orientations, in no way did they form a cohesive school of learning. I therefore argue on behalf of a more nuanced understanding of the Quanzhou scholars as a loosely connected community of like-minded scholars in the larger Ming intellectual landscape.

This dissertation is a socio-cultural study of the local history of Quanzhou which makes contributions to our understanding of gentry studies and the mercantile ethos of the Ming period. It examines the Quanzhou Confucian scholars in their capacity as the local elite leaders who performed two primary functions. First was their conscious an strategic association of their locale with the state through cultivating and elevating local cultural capitals that would acquire symbolic meanings at the national level. I contend that the idea and image of the locality of Quanzhou as a unique place and space were created by the consistent, albeit uncoordinated, efforts of generations of local elites, who not only defined and highlighted the special intellectual accomplishments of Quanzhou but also purposefully distinguished them from those of other localities, affirming the putative fact that Quanzhou, being the original nursery and subsequent stronghold of Cheng-Zhu learning, was significant in national terms. Second, in their capacity as the local gentry, the Quanzhou scholars had to negotiate between tradition and change, and come
to grips with the tension between their self-touted role as custodians of orthodox learning (that is, cultural representatives of the imperial state) and their inescapable status as local leaders (that is, spokespersons on behalf of their hometown). On the one hand, their intellectual beliefs seemed unwavering. This was shown not only in their intellectual and philosophical orientation, but also in its many social and cultural manifestations, such as the hostile attitude toward Buddhism and support of female martyrdom. However, they were also receptive to the mercantile activities of their locale, so that they even sought to justify the elevated social status of the merchants through reinterpreting the ancient classics. The ideas and actions of the Quanzhou scholars as local gentries represented trends that were common in the Ming period. The increased merging between the scholarly class and the merchant class was certainly a case in point, but the orthodox intellectual orientation of the Quanzhou literati made their endorsement of the mercantile ethos particularly poignant. Their repulsive attitude toward Buddhism and other local religions also distinguished them from gentries of other areas. Thus, this study supplements the current scholarship on the Ming gentry by bringing to light the local elite of Quanzhou who were at the same orthodox Cheng-Zhu scholars.

Structure and Materials

The research of this dissertation is primarily built upon two main types of materials: the collected works of the Quanzhou scholars and local writings including gazetteers, genealogies, and inscriptions. Since the writings of the key Quanzhou scholars have been extensively studied, I pay particular attention to evidence of their local activism and the correspondences between them. The commemorative writings they composed upon the passing of their intellectual peers are given special attention, for these writings constitute a genre onto itself, revealing the most intimate core circle of the Quanzhou community of learning. Their exegetical works are outside
the scope of this study. In any event, many Chinese scholars have done excellent work on their commentaries on the Confucian classics, especially the *Four Books* and the *Classic of Changes*, so as to reconstruct their philosophical contribution to the Confucian canon. My study instead depends and relies heavily on local writings. They were composed and compiled by local scholars and officials to record and document things that occurred locally, even though they were intended for both local and national audiences. The gazetteers examined in this study span from those at the county level to the prefectural and provincial levels, thus covering thus the microregion of the administrative counties under Quanzhou as well as the macroregion of Fujian province in which Quanzhou was a prefecture. These gazetteers were dated either during the Ming or compiled during the Qing. Intellectual genealogies that sough to construct lineages of orthodox learning are also a subject of indepth study. These writings include not only the genealogies composed by the local Quanzhou scholars, but also works authored by non-Quanzhou scholars, for the purpose of comparison and verification. Other local writings surveyed in this study include records of the local mountains, which were often represented and presented as sacred emblems of local cultural signification, and the inscriptions of the local historical architectures, which bear witness to the establishment of the sites of memory in the local community consciousness.

This dissertation is broadly separated into two parts. Chapters one, two, and three deal with the state-society relations in Quanzhou, and chapters four and five examine the local activism of Quanzhou scholars as the elite local gentry. Chapter one argues that the intellectual and cultural legacy of Zhu Xi in Fujian and the purposeful portrayal of Quanzhou as his intellectual heir were being cultivated as an intellectual capital by later generations of Quanzhou scholars, whose main aim was to establish Quanzhou, such that the specific place of Quanzhou
was associated intimately with the state in ideological terms. Besides borrowing Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital, this chapter also builds upon the works of Wang Yiqiao and Liu Yong, which demonstrate how the Cheng-Zhu scholars of Quanzhou emerged as a school through the later genealogical compilations. I not only substantiate and complement their findings but also revise them, to the extent that my work debunks the myth of the “Qingyuan school,” showing that such a “school” is very much a later historiographic construction that does not quite square with historical realities. I argue instead that it is far more accurate to say that while there was indeed a scholarly community in Quanzhou that shared in some very general ways an allegiance to Cheng-Zhu learning, their ideas were far too divergent and diverse to coalesce into a school. Moreover, one will be hard pressed to establish a lineage of master-disciple relations that was the life-line of a school.

Chapter two studies the “afterlife” of a key Quanzhou Confucian, Cai Qing, and argues that at the hands of some Quanzhou scholars, local prominent scholars were being transformed into cultural and symbolic capitals, so that Quanzhou could be presented at the national level as the ground of orthodox learning. The process of how Cai Qing gained national significance showed that the latter-day Quanzhou scholars were conscious and strategic in promoting their hometown, and the cultivation of cultural symbols was the stratagem they employed effectively. The local figures being magnified into paradigmatic cultural personages at the national level became the quintessential representatives and archetypes of the very locality of Quanzhou. Their supposedly immense influence was recorded and celebrated in official documents and perpetuated through the erection of commemorative architectures such as arches and shrines which became the “sites of memory” critical to the forging and continuation of local identity and consciousness.
Chapter three seeks to illustrate the intertwined relations between the creation of identity of the locale and the roles of the local elites. By examining commemorative writings, such as biography, epitaph, and eulogy, which the scholars wrote for one another, I construct the inner core circle of the Quanzhou community of learning. In a similar vein as chapter two, by studying the ways in which the Cheng-Zhu scholars were posthumously remembered and honored, I reveal how Cheng-Zhu learning was appropriated as the crucial material in the building of the local identity of Quanzhou. The treasured capitals of Quanzhou were reinforced and reinvested through the local literati’s endeavors of valorization, such as the numerous forms of commemorative writings and architectures that were devoted to glorifying and celebrating the personages responsible for establishing and transmitting a lineage of authentic Confucian learning.

Chapter four examines the Quanzhou Confucian scholars in their capacity as the local elite. It shows that while the Quanzhou scholars were similar to the gentry in other areas on account of their common concern with local welfare, such as local infrastructural building and the maintenance of Confucian values through genealogical compilations, they were also distinguished by their devotion to Cheng-Zhu Confucian orthodoxy. For instance, gentries of many other areas saw Buddhist monastic patronage as an important way of promoting and investing in their local elite status, the scholars of Quanzhou firmly rejected the lure of Buddhism, even though Fujian was a fertile ground of the syncretic religion of “Three Teachings as One” that emerged in the late Ming period. This chapter also studies Lin Xiyuan in detail, as he was in many ways an “iconoclast” of the Quanzhou community of Cheng-Zhu learning. Despite his orthodox intellectual orientation, he distinguished himself with his outspokenness and ambitious character. His participation in the then still illicit maritime trade is examined closely in
this chapter, and I seek to rehabilitate him as someone who acted out of his deep concern for the welfare of his fellow countrymen.

While Lin Xiyuan represents an extreme case of a Cheng-Zhu scholar endorsing commercial activities, the protagonist in chapter five, Li Guangjin, is a Quanzhou Confucian who embraced the mercantile ethos as a legitimate element of the Confucian Way of values and morality. Imbued by the mercantile spirit of Quanzhou, not only did Li Guangjin acknowledge the importance and necessity of illicit maritime trade, but he also rejected the traditional Confucian hierarchy that placed the merchant class at the bottom of the social ladder. When he found the historical justifications for the elevated status of the merchants wanting, he was not hesitate to revise them. This chapter entails close textual reading of Li Guangjin’s writings on the merchant class and those for the merchants and their family members. In a certain sense, he could be very much regarded as an advocate for the merchants, despite his orthodox Cheng-Zhu orientation. Taken together, the cases of Lin Xiyuan and Li Guangjin showed that although the Confucian scholars of Quanzhou might be conservative in their intellectual inclination, they were also agile and flexible in changing with their times. They were not simply guardians of the orthodox tradition but also agents of change.

In sum, this dissertation is a study of the multifaceted relations between the locale of Quanzhou and the local literati, and its complex interaction and identification with the state. It is a contribution to the field of local history by studying a special group of scholars in Quanzhou that occupied a unique place in the intellectual landscape of Ming China. It shows how Quanzhou came to be preented and represented as a place with a unique identity, thanks to the work and endeavor of the local scholarly class who constructed a local memory that responded to metropolitan ideology. It is also a contribution to the social history the rapidly changing world of
the late Ming. The ideas and actions of the Quanzhou scholars offer a glimpse of a society where the old and the new coexisted and comingled, thereby demanding timely responses. The strategies they adopted in promoting their hometown and associating it with the central state may not seem foreign to us living in the twenty-first century. In the fast changing globalized modern times, we are confronted with the perennial existential problem, as did the Quanzhou scholars of the sixteenth century, of how to accommodate and preserve tradition while making inevitable timely changes.
CHAPTER ONE

Quanzhou Scholarly Community: A Renaissance in Cheng-Zhu Learning

The Cheng-Zhu Confucian scholars of Quanzhou are often branded as the “Qingyuan school” 清源學派 in the local cultural imagination. The term appears frequently in the cultural narratives of Quanzhou, and it has slipped into many scholarly narratives. Its usage is invariably associated with four Ming scholars: Cai Qing 蔡清 (1453-1508), Chen Chen 陳琛 (1477-1545), Zhang Yue 張岳 (1492-1552), and Lin Xiyuan 林希元 (1482-1567), who were often presented as the pillars of the school. However, it is unclear when the term first came into existence, and what the scope of the school was beyond the four members. This chapter is an investigation of the formation process of the so-called “Qingyuan school”. Some Chinese scholarship has shown that an intellectual school centered around the Quanzhou Confucian scholars with an unbroken intellectual lineage with the Cheng-Zhu learning was constructed mainly in the authorial hands of Qing scholars, Li Guangdi 李光地 (1641-1718) and Li Qingfu 李清馥 (1703-?). Being latter-day Quanzhou scholars, the Lis had vested interest in promoting their locale and associating it with the state in a meaningful and positive way. By connecting the scholarly

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19 Wang Yiqiao, “Cong ‘wumin youxue’ dao ‘wuxue zaimin’ – 15 zhi 18 shiji Fujian Zhuzixue sixiang xipu de xingcheng ji shijian” (From ‘Our Min has Learning’ to “My Learning is at Min” – the Formation and Practice of Intellectual Genealogy of Zhu Xi Learning in Fujian from 15th to 18th century) (MA diss., Taipei: Taiwan National Normal University, 2006); Liu Yong, “Zhongwan Ming lixue xueshu de hudong yu diyuxing lixue chuangtong de xipuhua Jincheng – yi ‘minxue’ wei zhongxin” (Interactions between Doctrines of Lixue and the Process of Genealogy Construction of a Regional Tradition of Lixue – the Case of Ming Learning) in Xin shixue (New History), 22.2 (June 2010): 1-60; also see Zhongwan Ming shiren de jiangxue huodong yu xuepai jiangou – yi Li Cai (1529-1607) wei zhongxin de yanjiu, (Public lectures and the construction of intellectual schools by literati of the mid to late Ming dynasty – a study based on Li Cai (1529-1607) (Beijing: Beijing shangwu yinshu guan, 2015), chap. 4.
tradition of their hometown to the larger intellectual landscape of the empire, such that it occupied a distinguished position, they not only raised the status of their locale at the national level, but they also elevated the stature of the native scholars associated with the place.

This chapter supplements the current works done by Wang Yiqiao and Liu Yong by expanding the scope of study to include intellectual genealogies from both the Ming and Qing dynasties. By centering the analysis on the term “Qingyuan school” and through textual analysis, the process of how a scholarly tradition was turned into a “school” is revealed. Besides showing that a “school” is being created retroactively, I argue that the after-the-fact creation of an intellectual genealogy, and therefore a “school”, is essentially a strategy employed by local scholars to promote themselves and to associate the locale with the state. An orthodox lineage of learning embodied in an intellectual school was a capital,²⁰ so to speak, with which the local scholars sought to integrate themselves and their hometown into the larger intellectual domain of the empire. The possession of such a capital gives the place and its scholars meaning and identity, and distinguishes them from their intellectual counterparts in other locales. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate more clearly that the Ming Quanzhou scholars did not perceive themselves as a school, this chapter proposes a more appropriate description and designation of the Ming Cheng-Zhu scholars of Quanzhou, one that matches the historical realities. Through an examination of the various terminologies designated for intellectual schools, I argue that the Quanzhou scholars should most appropriately be called a “scholarly community” rather than a “school”, a “sect”, or even a “fellowship”.

²⁰ This is a concept borrowed from Pierre Bourdiue who uses it to explain class distinction. Chapter two offers an explication of this theory in its application to studies of local history.
This chapter first presents a picture of the renaissance of the Cheng-Zhu tradition of learning in Ming Quanzhou through a study of the publications of exegetical works of the Confucian classical canon, particular the *Four Books* and the *Classic of Changes*. It then seeks to situate the appellation of “Qingyuan school” in historical texts, locating its position in the larger discourse of Neo-Confucianism. The evolution process of how a loosely connected group of like-minded scholars was turned into a clearly defined “school” is revealed through the examination of the various intellectual genealogies from the Ming to the Qing times, showing that Li Qingfu and Li Guangdi played critical roles in creating an intellectual lineage that coalesced into a “school.” To the extent that the Cheng-Zhu scholars of Quanzhou did not constitute a “school” or “sect”, this chapter concludes with a search for the right nomenclature and proposes to refer to them as a community of scholars who shared similar intellectual orientation in a particular locale.

**A Renaissance of Cheng-Zhu Learning**

Quanzhou from the mid Ming onward experienced a remarkable boom in the number of successful examination candidates and in literary production in the form of classical commentaries and exegetical works. Table one shows the number of *jinshi* degree holders from Quanzhou during the entire Ming period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emperor</th>
<th>Reign Years/Total No. of reign years</th>
<th>No. of Imperial Examinations</th>
<th>No. of <em>Jinshi</em> from Quanzhou</th>
<th>No. of <em>Wu Jishi</em> from Quanzhou (Advanced martial scholar)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hongwu</td>
<td>1368–1398 (30)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jianwen</td>
<td>1398–1402 (4)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongle</td>
<td>1402–1424 (22)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongxi</td>
<td>1424–1425 (1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Xuande 1425–1435 (10) 3 - 
Zhengtong 21 1435–1449 (14) 5 3 
Jingtai 1449–1457 (8) 2 - 
Tianshun 1457–1464 (7) 3 3 
Chenghua 1464–1487 (23) 8 10 
Hongzhi 1487–1505 (18) 6 26 
Zhengde 1505–1521 (16) 5 22 
Jiajing 1521–1567 (46) 15 136 7 
Longqing 1567–1572 (5) 2 31 1 
Wanli 1572–1620 (48) 16 260 23 
Taichang 1620 (1) - - 
Tianqi 1620–1627 (7) 2 32 4 
Chongzhen 1627–1644 (16) 6 92 6 
Total 276 88 661 41 

Table 1: Number of jinshi from Quanzhou during the Ming dynasty 22

Clearly, from the Jiajing reign onwards, Quanzhou made big strides in producing examination candidates that advanced to the metropolitan level. Of the total number of jinshi degree holders, a great majority were from the prefectural capital of Jinjiang county.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Jinjiang</th>
<th>Nanan</th>
<th>Huian</th>
<th>Anxi</th>
<th>Tongan</th>
<th>Dehua</th>
<th>Yongchun</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of jinshi</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>661</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 Zhengtong and Tianshun were the reign titles of the same emperor Zhu Qizhen (1427-1464), who personally led a military campaign against the Mongols in 1449 and was captured as hostage. His brother, Jingtai emperor (1428-1457), assumed the throne and ruled for eight years. Zhengtong emperor was released and lived in seclusion. But he reclaimed the throne upon the death of his brother, and chose the reign title Tianshun. He continued to rule until his death in 1464.

22 Number based on Chen Dubin and Su Liming, Quanzhou gudai keju (Civil service examination in imperial Quanzhou) (Jinan: Qilu chuban she, 2004), pp.301-308.
Table 2: Geographical distribution of jinshi within Quanzhou prefecture during Ming dynasty

Unsurprisingly, with such an inventory of degree-holders, Quanzhou’s literary achievement was outstanding. They displayed a strong interest in the *Classic of Changes* and the *Four Books*, among other classics. Based on the extant titles from the Ming period, Quanzhou scholars authored altogether a hundred and eleven works on the *Classic of Changes*, and ninety-eight works on the *Four Books*. But based on the *Gazetteer of Jinjiang County* compiled during Daoguang reign (1782-1850), just the prefectural capital alone produced seventy-two works on the *Classic of Changes*, and fifty-eight on the *Four Books* category during the Ming. We may thus assume that the Quanzhou scholars authored a lot more titles on these two classics than we know today. Based on the extant titles, the following table shows the geographical distribution of the works produced by the Quanzhou scholars on the two categories of the classics. Unsurprisingly, Jinjiang, the hometown of most of the jinshi degree holders in Quanzhou, produced the most commentaries on these classics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Category of Books</th>
<th>Number of Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jinjiang</td>
<td><em>Classic of Changes</em></td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Four Books</em></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanan</td>
<td><em>Classic of Changes</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Four Books</em></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td><em>Classic of Changes</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Four Books</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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23 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classic of Changes</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huian</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four Books</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxi</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four Books</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongchun</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four Books</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehua</td>
<td>Classic of Changes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four Books</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Geographical distribution of the number of works on the *Classic of Changes* and *the Four Books* during the Ming dynasty

These works were exegetical studies of the classic, some of which were incorporated into the Imperial Collection of the Four Treasuries (*Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書). They included Cai Qing’s *Yijing Mengyin* 易經蒙引 (Explanatory guide to *Yijing*) and *Sishu Mengyin* 四書蒙引 (Explanatory guide to the *Four Books*), and Lin Xiyuan’s *Yijing Cunyi* 易經存疑 (Reserved questions on the *Classic of Changes*). Clearly, many of the titles catered to the examination candidates. They became popular examination primers in the book market of Ming society and some were even well received during the Qing dynasty.\(^{27}\)

The remarkable academic achievement of Quanzhou was particularly peculiar, given the intellectual situation of the time. From the Jiajing reign onward, as the Quanzhou scholars were excelling in the examination, Wang Yangming’s (1472-1529)’s teachings, conventionally and collectively known as the “school of the mind”, were also rapidly gaining popularity. With his disciples’ earnest propagation, and as a result of the inherent appeal of the teachings of innate

knowledge and the convenient way of achieving sagehood, Wang’s school quickly expanded beyond the provincial borders of Zhejiang and remained dominant till the end of the Ming. Quanzhou, however, persisted as a strong bastion of the Cheng-Zhu school during this period of intellectual change. They were faithful followers of their Song masters on whose teachings their commentaries were based. From the titles, they sought to propagate the orthodox teachings among the young examination candidates, and their exegetical works could be seen as precursors to the Qing dynasty evidential studies. It was exactly because of their salient position in this Ming intellectual landscape that it became convenient to view the Cheng-Zhu scholars of Quanzhou as engaging in sectarian rivalry with the opposing Wang Yangming school. They were usually referred to as the “Qingyuan xuepai” (Qingyuan school/sect 清源學派), named after the alias of Quanzhou. But, did they really constitute a school or an intellectual sect?

The Myth of the “Qingyuan School”

The portrayal of Quanzhou scholars as an intellectual school is associated with the legendary study group initiated by Cai Qing on the Classic of Changes at the local Kaiyuan Temple. It was said that it had twenty-eight members, including Cai Qing, Chen Chen, Zhang Yue, Lin Xiyuan, and some other latter-day Quanzhou scholars who were either prominent officials or masters of the Classic of Changes. Because of their devotion to this classic, the group was also dubbed “the “Qingyuan twenty-eight constellations in the mastership of the Classic of Changes” 清源治易二十八宿. However, there are at least two dubious points in this legend. First, of all the local materials I surveyed, no where are the names of all twenty-eight members
listed.\textsuperscript{28} Second, of the names that we know thus far, many of them did not belong to the same generation and were thus not contemporaries with one another. For instance, Zhang Yue and Lin Xiyuan, although they admired Cai Qing, did not have the chance to personally study with him. Li Tingji 李廷機 (1542-1616), another Quanzhou scholar and official often associated with the group, was almost two generations younger than Zhang Yue and Lin Xiyuan. Thus, while there could be a gathering organized under the leadership of Cai Qing devoted to classical studies at the Kaiyuan Temple, there was probably no fixed membership of the group, and there were no famous names among them during the time that would add to its reputation, except Cai Qing’s. When Quanzhou in later ages produced more prominent scholars, especially on the \textit{Classic of Changes}, their names were added to the gathering to testify to the vibrant intellectual culture in Quanzhou. Thus, the legend was most likely formed over the ages when new scholars, accomplished in his career or scholarship, were added to the gathering to strengthen the intellectual achievement of Quanzhou. The imagination of an intellectual circle created with this legend gave rise to a kind of group cohesion pivoted around a central figure, thereby contributing to the notion of the presence of a “school” or a “sect”.

\textit{“Qingyuan school” in Historical Texts}

Interestingly, the term “Qingyuan \textit{xuepai}” is elusive in historical texts. But its variants “Qingyuan \textit{yipai}” (Qingyuan sect 清源一派) and “Qingyuan \textit{biepai}” (Qingyuan subsect 清源别派) could be found in some texts. It first appeared in the epitaph that Cai Qing wrote for his

\textsuperscript{28} I have consulted Mr. Yang Qingjiang who is the local authority on the history of Quanzhou and Quanzhou’s historical materials, he could not recall any historical reference in which all members of the “Qingyuan twenty-eight constellations” was recorded. Mr. Yang is currently a member of Quanzhou Publishing Committee of Ancient Texts (Quanzhou wenku chuban weiyuan hui).
teacher, Lin Pin 林玭 (1434-1506), from whom he received instructions on the *Classic of Changes*.

The lofty Cloud Chamber (the style-name of Lin), resided in Mount Cloud. Being part of the Qingyuan sect, whose flow brimmed over. Where virtue-lover stayed, crowds gathered and stayed nearby. [He] extended and realized [his virtues] in statecraft, And his influence was widespread. Accomplished in both the literary and martial arts, his reputation was awe-inspiring.²⁹

其銘曰, 峨峨雲室, 雲山是宅, 清源一派, 流注洋溢, 欽德者所居成, 聚是惟居間之, 続施於有政, 彌其湍澤, 既文且武, 厥聲載赫.

Lin passed away in 1506, and so the epitaph must have been written soon after that. This was the earliest instance in which a term that pointed to a Qingyuan scholarly community appeared. The term for “Qingyuan sect” appeared in Qing dynasty texts, first found in the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Fujian* 宇軌通誌 completed in 1737. In the section for prominent figures in Fujian from the various dynasties, Qingyuan sect appeared in a brief description of a southern Song scholar, Zhang Xun 張巽 (dates unknown):

Zhang Xun, style-named Ziwen, was a native of Hui’an county. When his father was in charge of the army in Jiangxi, he had studied with Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133-1180, Zhu Xi’s friend). He sent his son, Xun, to study with him as well. At that time, Zhu Xi’s teaching was popular in Quanzhou, dubbed “Qingyuan sect”. There were scholars in Hui’an such as Liu Jing, who were known as Zhu’s prominent disciple. Xun studied with them too, but was unable to attain thorough understanding, as he felt that there was more to Zhu Xi’s teaching than what he had already learned. Therefore, he traveled to Wuyi to visit Zhu Xi.³⁰

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子文、惠安人、父寓知臨江軍、曾與張共栻學、遣子巽從之、是時朱熹之學盛行于泉、号 清源別派。惠安有劉鏡者稱為高第、巽從之游、未能釋然、曰恐晦穢庵之禍教不止是也、乃走武夷謁晦庵。

In another Qing dynasty compilation, Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao 閩中理學淵源考 (A study of the origin of Lixue in Min), completed sometime between 1769 and 1777, the term for “Qingyuan subsect” appeared several times when its author, Li Qingfu (1703-?), wrote on the scholars of Quanzhou. In his prologue to fascicle eighteen, entitled “Zhu Xi’s disciples and friends in Quanzhou,” he said:

The branches of Zhou [Zhou Dunyi] and Cheng [the Cheng brothers] teachings were mainly located in the upper stream. When Zhu Xi assumed his official position in Tong’an, the sages’ teachings were illuminated, and correct learnings were respectfully promoted. Scholars in Quanzhou eagerly followed such practices. Later, Chen Houzhi, Liu Shuwen, Yang Zhizhi, Xu Shunzhi personally received Zhu’s words; and Cai Baishi and Chen Beixi transmitted his teachings. As later scholars such as Lu Puxiang and Qiu Jipu emerged, what was then called the “Qingyuan subsect” appeared.

In another passage where Li Qingfu introduced the “schools of the various scholars in southern Quanzhou in the early Ming,” he said:

Quanzhou, having come under the influence of Zhu Xi, produced many talents. Scholars in the early Ming mostly embraced the Way and safeguarded rightness. They had no strong desire for career advances, but promoted the classics so as to regulate rites and customs. This was the legacy of the Qingyuan biapai…. Later, there appeared Cai Qing who singlehandedly propagated the master’s teachings. This was followed by the successive rise of Chen Chen, Zhang Yue, Lin Xiyuan, Su Jun and other scholars, who reconnected with the source and continued its flow. Their influence lasted several

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31 Zhang Xianhui, “Li Qingfu Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao yanjiu” (Research on Li Qingfu and his work titled ‘Investigation into the Origins of Neo-Confucianism in Fujian Province’) (MA diss, Jinan University, 2010), p.16.
32 Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, juan 18.
generations, establishing the dominance of Min learning among the literati of that era. Looking back to the times when Qingyuan subsect flourished, was it not more prosperous and illuminating [than we have thought]?33

泉自朱子過化之後，人才蔚起。明初諸賢大都抱道守義，恬於仕進，而崇尚經說，範圍禮俗，猶然清源別派遺風也……迨後蔡文莊先生獨倡宗風，而紫峰、淨峰、次崖、紫溪諸公相踵起，紹源浚流，漸摩數世，遂成閩學一代人文之治。回溯當時清源別派，不更昌大而益光乎。

We cannot tell for sure if Cai Qing’s usage of “Qingyuan sect” referred to the same group of scholars represented by the “Qingyuan subsect” recorded in Qing dynasty texts. But we may at least infer confidently that both terms referred to scholars in Quanzhou. In Cai Qing’s passage, the term seemed to have specific reference to the scholarly community formed under Lin Pin’s influence, in which Cai Qing was a member. But the passages from the Qing period pointed to a larger school that covered a wider temporal span. “Qingyuan subsect” referred to the scholars in Quanzhou who followed Zhu Xi’s teachings since the Southern Song times and were responsible for spreading his teachings in the area thereafter. “Subsect” suggests that it was a derivative from a larger school, a branch or an offshoot of the main stem of Zhu Xi’s learning. From the way the term was used in the texts, it seemed that “Qingyuan subsect” was already in circulation during the Southern Song times.

Thus, we may plausibly conclude from the textual evidence that the Qingyuan scholars was already one of the identifiable schools of Cheng-Zhu learning at least in the late Southern Song. The Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism was the overriding and overarching learning that dominated the intellectual universe during the Southern Song dynasty. It spread to many other parts of China, including the coastal prefecture of Quanzhou, where scholars

33 Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, juan 57.
philosophically in line with Zhu Xi’s thinking coalesced to forge their own distinct sub-community that declared academic and intellectual allegiance to Cheng-Zhu learning. Although Li Qingfu, as we have seen above, made connections between the “Qingyuan subsect” of the Southern Song times with the Quanzhou scholars of the Ming dynasty, the relationship remains to be examined. One question that needs answer and clarification is the relation between this so-called “Qingyuan subsect” and what has generally been categorized as Minxue 閩學, or Fujian learning, which was generically identified and inextricably associated with the teachings of Zhu Xi.

“Qingyuan school” and Minxue (Learning in Fujian)

Intellectual developments during the Song dynasty was commonly identified in terms of the four major traditions of lian 濂, luo 洛, guan 關, and min 閩, geographically determined in accordance with the native places of the four leading scholars who supposedly founded what came to be known as lixue (learning of Principle) or dao xue (learning of the Way), and later somewhat imprecisely and all-too-generally translated into English as Neo-Confucianism.34

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34 In this study, I follow the conventional use of “neo-Confucianism” that covers the Song-Ming combined developments into the School of Principle (lixue) championed by the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, and the School of Mind/Heart (xinxue) under Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1192) and Wang Yangming. Tillman objected to the use of neo-Confucianism as a catch-all term for intellectual development since the Song dynasty, as well as the influence it had on neighboring countries of Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. He proposed a more specific use of terminologies. Dispensing with the all-too-convenient rubric of “neo-Confucianism”, Tillman used “song learning” in its broad sense to denote the Confucian renaissance during the Song dynasty, while “Tao-hsueh” was used in its twelfth-century sense to refer to one particular wing of Song learning. See Hoy Tillman, Utilitarian Confucianism: Ch ’ en Liang’s Challenge to Chu Hsi (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard, University, 1982. And Confucian Discourse and Chu His’s Ascendancy (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992). In his works, Tillman approached Song intellectual history from the perspective of Tao-hsueh as a fellowship, whereas the use of “neo-Confucianism” or “neo-Confucian orthodoxy”, which he claimed to have been popularized by Wm. Theodore de Bary and members of the Neo-Confucian Studies Seminar at Columbia University privileged Zhu Xi’s discourse too much to the extent that the eventual triumph of Zhu’s views seemed inevitable and had been taken for granted. For debate between Tillman and de Bary, see Tillman, “A New Direction in Confucian Scholarship: Approaches to Examining the Differences between Neo-Confucianism and Tao-hsueh,” Philosophy East and West, 42.3 (Jul., 1992): 455-474. de Bary, “A Response to Professor Tillman,” Philosophy East and West, 43.3 (Jul.,
They were Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073) in Jiangxi, the Cheng brothers 程顥 (1032-1085) and 程頤 (1033-1107) in Henan, Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077) in Shannxi, and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) in Fujian.

Zhu Xi, commonly acknowledged as the grand synthesizer of Neo-Confucianism, fusing his own thoughts with the ideas of his Northern Song predecessors, altered and expanded the outlook and content of classical Confucianism so as to focus on inner moral cultivation, which was nevertheless anchored on some clearly espoused metaphysical foundation. He was born in Youxi 尤溪 county in Fujian province. After obtaining the jinshi degree at the young age of nineteen, his first appointment was to serve as the Sub-prefectural Registrar of Tongan County in Quanzhou 同安縣主簿, a position he occupied from 1153 to 1156. While in Fujian, he studied under Li Tong 李侗 (1093-1163), a third-generation disciple of the Cheng brothers. After his appointment in Tongan, he did not receive the next official assignment until 1179. Apart from his official duties, Zhu Xi cherished and savored the life of a scholar and teacher. The time he spent in his hometown was the most productive and formative in terms of the development and maturation of his thinking. The so-called Minxue was primarily established by him, loosely referring to the scholarly community in Fujian that was devoted to and inspired by his thinking during the Southern Song period. However, when his philosophy and teachings, especially his commentaries on the Confucian classics and his reorganization of them into the Four Books and Five Classics, were endorsed by the imperial court in the Yuan dynasty (1280-1341) and

subsequently became the mainstay of the contents of the imperial civil service examinations in 1313, the geographically defined Minxue was no longer an appropriate term since it became too parochial to be duly representative of what had become the official orthodoxy.

In later times, to the extent that the term Minxue was used, it was employed with a very specific geographical connotation, referring strictly to the study of Zhu Xi’s philosophy in the Fujian area. It pointed to the scholarly community at the provincial level that was devoted to Zhu Xi’s teachings, which might or might not be entirely in line with the imperial orthodoxy, depending on the individual scholar’s intellectual orientations and concerns. Especially with the gradual corruption and growing stultification of the examination system into a philistine instrumental means to the end of securing a government job with its social perks, students who studied Zhu Xi’s commentaries of the classics with the sole purpose of official advancement were essentially different from those who studied the master’s thought for intellectual fulfillment and moral realization. During the Ming times, most of the Fujian scholars were known for their staunch devotion to Zhu Xi’s teachings. Even when the newly arisen Wang Yangming’s intuitive philosophy held sway over almost the entire intellectual world of China, the majority of the Fujian scholars hardly wavered in their faith in Cheng-Zhu learning. Some of them did displayed a strong sense of mission that they were the custodians of the orthodox Way, and took on the self-appointed responsibility of protecting it from contamination by heterodox learning.

Within this broad provincial minxue community, one locality especially stood out for its dense concentration of Cheng-Zhu scholars – the Quanzhou prefecture. A pattern of intellectual development thus appeared as follows: The Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy championed and promoted by

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35 Gao Lingyin, “Minxue he minxue de fazhanjieduan ji paibie” (Minxue and its Development Stages and Sects), *Fujian luntan* (Fujian forum), (March, 1988): 44.
the imperial court originated in Fujian, by virtue of Zhu Xi’s dominant intellectual activities and presence there. But Minxue, literally meaning learning in the Fujian area, refers primarily to the pursuit of Zhu Xi’s learning within the said province. Accordingly, in turn, the Qingyuan scholars located in Quanzhou, was a derivative or branch of Minxue since the Southern Song times. It is a geographical sub-community philosophically in line with the Cheng-Zhu learning.

Qingyuan Scholars in Intellectual Genealogies

But the connection between “Qingyuan sect/subsect” and Cheng-Zhu learning did not go beyond the Song period. Quanzhou did not produce any distinguished Confucian scholars during the Yuan dynasty. While this might be attributed to the general decline in classical learning throughout China during the Mongol’s rule, Quanzhou’s intellectual development did not pick up momentum until after the Jianjing reign of the Ming dynasty. Li Qingfu, writing five centuries later, reconnected the scholars of Quanzhou with the “Qingyuan sect” of the Song times. Recent studies have shown the bias and self-centered agenda in his action. This section examines the intellectual genealogical anthologies before Li Qingfu’s work to show the gradual expansion of the scholarly circle in Quanzhou which culminated in the Qing dynasty in the formation of an intellectual school of considerable size that belonged to the orthodox “genealogy of the way”.

When Zhu Xi propagated the idea of the “transmission of the Way” daotong 道統 to identify a lineage of the genuine learning of the Way from Confucius to Mencius, resumed by the Northern Song masters of Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) the Cheng brothers, and finally passed on

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to Zhu Xi himself to the exclusion of his intellectual rivals of Chen Liang (1143-1194) and Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1193),\(^{37}\) the idea of genealogy and one’s affiliation with it became a critical and key determinant to one’s intellectual legitimacy and even political legitimacy.\(^{38}\) Zhu Xi’s classic genealogical compilation, the *Yi-luo yuanyuan lu* 伊洛淵源錄 (Origin of the Yin and Luo school of learning) completed in 1173, delineated the intellectual lineage of *lixue*, centered around his venerated northern Song predecessors, thereby erecting the sectarian divide between the “learning of Principle” ( *lixue*), with which Zhu himself identified, and the “learning of the mind-heart” ( *xinxue*).\(^{39}\) In subsequent ages, especially during the Ming and Qing, such genealogy compilations that aimed to clarify and extend intellectual lines of transmission were abundantly produced, so much so that they amounted to a genre.\(^{40}\) Zhu Xi’s thought was canonized as the official orthodoxy in 1313, and his conception of the lineage of Confucian sages and worthies was not challenged until the late Ming period with the rise of the Wang Yangming School.\(^{41}\) This section attempts to study how the Quanzhou scholars of the Ming were being portrayed in the intellectual genealogies.\(^{42}\) The following is a list of such anthologies that offer information on the Ming situation.

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\(^{38}\) The idea of *daotong* had its ramifications on the political sphere where rulers, especially the foreign of the Mongols, sought to dress themselves in the *daoxue* orthodoxy in an attempt to show its rightful heir to Chinese culture. See James T.C. Liu, *China Turning Inward: Intellectual-Political Changes in Early Twelfth Century* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989). The act of enshrining Confucian scholars to the Confucius temple was also meant to show the imperial court’s authority in defining the genealogy and tradition. See Thomas A. Wilson, *Genealogy of the Way: the Construction and Uses of the Confucian Tradition in Late Imperial China* (1995).

\(^{39}\) *Siku quanzhu*’s synopsis of *Yin-luo yuanyuan lu*.


\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 197.

\(^{42}\) For a complete list of such intellectual genealogical anthologies from the Song dynasty to the Republican period, see Xu Gongxi, “Lixue yuanliu zhuzuo lunshu” (Study on the texts of intellectual genealogy of *lixue*), *Jiangxi shehui kexue* (Jiangxi Social Science Journal), (Dec., 2009): 13-18.
Ming dynasty:

Zhu Heng 朱衡 (1512—1584), 道南源委錄 Daonan yuanwei lu
(A record on the origin and development of the Way South)

Yang Yingzhao 楊應招 (dates unknown), 閩南道學源流 Minnan Daoxue yuanliu
(Evolution of the learning of the Way in south Fujian)

Liu Tingkun 劉廷焜 (dates unknown), 閩學宗傳 Minxue zongchuan
(Transmission of Min learning)

Qing dynasty:

Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610 - 1695), 明儒學案 Mingru xue’an
(Case studies of Ming Confucians)

Wan Sitong 萬斯同 (1638 – 1702 ), 儒林宗派 Rulin zongpai
(Schools and sects in the forest of Confucians)

Zhang Boxing 張伯行 (1651—1725), 道南源委 Daonan yuanwei
(Orig in and development of the Way south)

Li Qingfu 李淸馥 (1703-?), 閩中理學淵源考 Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao
(A study on the origin of lixue in Fujain)

All of these works were devoted to the retrieval of the authentic Way (dao) by identifying its source and root, and patterns and lines of transmission. Some, such as Wan Sitong’s Schools of the forest of Confucians started the lineage with Confucius, while others like Liu Tingkun began with the Cheng brothers of the northern Song dynasty. However, there was a consensus

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43 Huang Zongxi’s Mingru xue’an is different from other intellectual genealogical anthologies in that he challenged the idea of a single exclusive genealogy of the Way. He did not aim to distinguish the sources and tributaries in order to differentiate between the orthodox from the heterodox, or to establish hierarchy between the various doctrines. He used the term xue’an (cases of individual scholars and schools) to present to his readers a dossier of Ming Confucians and their teachings so that they could make their own intelligent choices and reach their personal insights. This way, he allowed for doctrinal pluralism and diversity. See Chu Hung-lam, “Confucian ‘Case Learning’: The Genre of Xue’an Writing” in Charlotte Furth, Judith T. Zeitlin, and Ping-chen Hsiung ed., Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History (Honolulu: University of Hawai’s Press, 2007), pp. 244-273, and Wilson, Genealogy of the Way (1995), pp. 184-196.
among the authors in delineating the manner in which the Way traveled south—it all started with Yan Shi 楊時 (1044-1130), a direct disciple of the Cheng brothers. He was a native of the Jiangle county in Fujian. When he completed his studies and was about to leave for his hometown, Cheng Hao was recorded to have exclaimed, “My Way travels south!”

Back in Fujian, Yang Shi taught in the vicinity of Wuyi mountain, and was commonly recognized as the person who pioneered Fujian Learning (Minxue). Luo Congyan 羅從彥 (1072-1135) was one of his prominent disciples, and according to many of the intellectual genealogical texts, he then transmitted the teachings of the Way to Li Tong 李侗, the teacher of Zhu Xi. With Zhu, the Learning of Principle experienced full bloom. Most genealogy anthologies ended their discussion with Zhu’s disciples and friends in Fujian. Only three Ming works touched on the Ming situation.

Yang Yingzhao’s *Evolution of the learning of the Way in south Fujian* only listed two scholars from the Ming period, Chen Zhensheng 陳真晟 (1411-1474) and Cai Qing; Zhu Heng’s *Record on the origin and development of the Way south* added four Ming scholars to the lineage. They were Chen Zhencheng, Cai Qing, Zhou Ying 周瑛 (1430-1518), and Huang Zhongzhao 黃仲昭 (1435-1508). Liu Tingkun’s compilation was the most elaborate of them all. He listed fourteen Ming Cheng-Zhu scholars. Besides the above-mentioned names, there were

also Chen Chen, Zhang Yue and Lin Xiyuan 林希元, among others. Based on the Ming
anthologies, we know that Cai Qing, Chen Zhencheng, and Zhou Ying were the three important
Cheng-Zhu scholars in early Ming dynasty Fujian, but there was no recognizable intellectual
school developed among them or around them. They were simply individual scholars who
excelled in classical learning after the more than two-century hiatus from the Yuan dynasty.
Even though Liu Tingkun recorded the scholars who were later commonly associated with Cai
Qing’s intellectual circle, Quanzhou did stand out in Liu’s discourse of Fujian learning as there
were also an expanded number of scholars on record for other prefectures.

Works composed during the Qing dynasty were in general more elaborate in details about
the Ming developments. First, Huang Zongxi’s (1610-1695) magnum opus, *Case studies of Ming
Confucians*, was commonly regarded as the first genuine historical work of learning and
scholarship ever written by Chinese scholars.  

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

It remains arguably the most important primary
texts, from which we can derive a good deal of knowledge of Ming intellectual developments.
However, the prejudices and intellectual inclinations that he brought into his writing and
selection of materials have increasingly come under scholarly scrutiny in recent years,
particularly the issue of Huang’s own identification with the Wang Yangming school and the
way it might have exerted undue influences on his treatment of the Cheng-Zhu scholars.  

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46 See for instance Chu Hung-lam, *Mingru xuean dianjiao shiwu* (Lucidation on the Punctuation and Textual Errors
in the Modern Editions of the Sourcebook of Ming Thought and Intellectual History, Huang Zongxi’s *Mingru
xuean*) (Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1991), also see his “Mingru xuean Caoduan
xuean yandu” (A guided study of the chapter on Cao Duan in Huang Zongxi’s sourcebook of Ming Confucianism,
the *Mingru xuean* in *Hanxue yanjiu xuekan* (Journal of Sinological Studies), 3 (Jan. 2012):1-34. Peh ChienYin,
“Chutan Huangzongxi menhu guanhuai yu Mingruuxuean de bianzuan” (An Inquiry into Huang Zongxi’s (1610-
1695) Sectarian Concerns and His compilation of the *Mingru Xue’an*) (MA diss., National University of Singapore,
2014). Peh’s dissertation is a detailed study of the authorial hands of Huang Zongxi in editing Cai Qing’s original
writings to reflect Huang’s own intellectual prejudices.
sixty-two “cases” (學案 xuean), twenty-six were associated with the Wang school. Out of the two hundred and ten Ming scholars recorded, only seven were from Fujian. Five of them were listed under the “Cases of Miscellaneous Scholars” 諸儒學案 zhuru xuean, adumbrating their marginal statues. Not surprisingly, they were all decidedly Cheng-Zhu scholars, namely, Zhou Ying, Chen Zhencheng, Huang Daozhou 黃道周 (1585-1646), Cai Qing, and Zhang Yue.⁴⁷ Huang described Cai Qing as having no association with any lineage of an identifiable master, also claiming that he had neither taught nor produced any disciples.⁴⁸ Yet, Huang did list Chen Chen and Lin Xiyuan, as scholars who transmitted his learning. Zhang Yue, however, had his own separate section under the “cases for miscellaneous scholars.” Clearly, Huang Zongxi did not regard the Fujian or Quanzhou scholars as an intellectual force to be reckoned with.

Wan Sitong’s Schools of the forest of Confucians is a terse and concise diagrammatic text listing Confucian scholars all the way from the Zhou to the Ming. Wan used the term “school” (xuepai) and classified them in terms of their founding masters. He considered Cai Qing to be the progenitor of one of the eight schools in the Ming, and he listed fifteen first-generation disciples and three second-generation disciples under Cai Qing’s school. Sixteen of the eighteen disciples were from Fujian, and thirteen from Quanzhou.⁴⁹ Several points in Wan’s portrayal call for attention. First, his criterion of selection and inclusion was that a scholar must have studied directly with the master, and it was corroborated by other sources that most of the first-generation disciples he listed had indeed received personal instruction from Cai Qing. The two

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⁴⁷ The other two Fujian scholars were Yang Yingzhao from Jianan (Hedong xue’an), and Chen Maolie from Putian (Baisha xue’an).
⁴⁸ Huang Zongxi, Mingru Xue’an (Beijing: Beijing zhonghua shuju, 1985), p. 6.
⁴⁹ The other three were from Longxi, Longyan, and Xianyou counties.
scholars who were commonly associated with Cai Qing and Quanzhou’s Cheng-Zhu learning, Lin Xiyuan and Zhang Yue, did not have the chance to study directly with him. In other words, they were *sishu* 私淑 disciples whose intellectual orientations echoed that of Cai. They were thus not included by the author as belonging to Cai Qing’s school. Zhang Yue was listed at the end of the book as someone who did not belong to any school. Lin Xiyuan, on the other hand, was nowhere to be found this compilation. Second, compared with the other early Ming Cheng-Zhu scholars in Fujian, Cai Qing indeed stood out with his influence, and distinguished his hometown, Quanzhou, from other prefectures in Fujian as occupying a key position in Fujian Learning.

*Zhang Boxing’s *Origin and development of the Way south* was an expansion and elaboration of Zhu Heng’s text with the same title, compiled in the Ming. Zhang was clearly aware of this predecessor, but nonetheless wanted to replenish the lineage with later developments. He said in the general principles (*fanli*), “The senior scholar had authored such a book, but its edition has long been submerged. Now, [I] revised it, eliminated those who were involved in heterodoxy, and included those who were missing in the previous edition.”

先輩有其書矣、板久湮没、今為重訂、涉於異端者去之、昔所未備者補之.

He recorded eighty-four scholars from the Ming dynasty, a significant expansion of Zhu Heng’s compilation. Below is a table of the number of scholars in each prefecture and its percentage against the total number of Cheng-Zhu scholars in Zhang’s book.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefecture</th>
<th>Number of Scholars</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quanzhou</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhangzhou</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinghua</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuzhou</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanping</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jianning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaowu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tingzhou</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funing direct administrative district</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Number of Cheng-Zhu scholars in each prefecture of Fujian in Ming China in Zhang Boxing’s *Origin and development of the Way south*

Even though Quanzhou outshines other prefectures in having the largest number of Cheng-Zhu scholars, the difference from other key prefectures was not very drastic. Zhang was appointed the viceroy of Fujian in 1708. The book was completed in 1710. He was from Henan, and himself a Cheng-Zhu scholar who was enshrined into the Confucian temple in 1878. Though all the prominent Quanhou scholars of the Ming dynasty were included, the author did not use any terms that could refer to an intellectual school or lineage. Instead of doing any classification or rearrangement of the scholars under any rubric, Zhang simply listed the scholars in a chronological order, followed by a description of the person and his life, information he took from other sources. In other words, his work was simply an assembly of materials that narrated the Ming intellectual developments without harking back to the concept of “genealogy of the Way”. From the above study, we may conclude that until the early eighteenth century, the
Cheng-Zhu scholars of Quanzhou were not perceived as a recognizable intellectual force in the Ming, let alone a rival sect against the Wang Yangming school.

**Qingyuan scholars in Li Qingfu’s Genealogical Compilation**

The treatment of Quanzhou scholars took a sharp turn as it were in Li Qingfu’s *Study of the origin of Lixue in Min*. This compilation was by far the most informative historical text pertaining to Cheng-Zhu Learning in Fujian. Li Qingfu started writing the book in 1742, and most likely finished it between 1769 and 1777. The compilation of the *Imperial Collection of the Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu 四庫全書*) began in 1773, which means that soon after its completion, Li Qingfu’s work was included into the imperial collection. The compilation was originally titled *Minzhong Shiyou Yuanyuan Kao* 闽中師友淵源考 (*A study of the origin of mentorship and friendship in Fujian*). In the preface, the author told his readers that when he was home recuperating from illness, he found an old box of books that contained several intellectual genealogies. Based on these texts, he authored *Minzhong Shiyou Yuanyuan Kao*. The title could have been changed by the *Siku* editors.

Whatever the title, the compilation was a comprehensive study of the Cheng-Zhu scholars in Fujian, beginning with Yang Shi in the Song period and ending with the end of the Ming dynasty. Li Qingfu organized the scholars into schools, named after their founding fathers. But he seemed to have a rather loose definition of what constituted a school. Unlike Wan Sitong who only considered people who had received direct instruction from the master as members of a school, Li Qingfu included those whose intellectual orientations were in line with the master’s.

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51 Zhang Xianhui, “Li Qingfu Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao yanjiu”, p.16.
52 Ibid., p.12.
No direct, personal teacher-disciple relations was necessary. He stated in the “general principles” (fanli): “This [text] is titled A study of the origin of mentorship and friendship in Min, meaning that those under a school were scholars who had frequent discussions with one another and who were similar in their intellectual inclinations. Thus there is the category for friends, and a category for sishu (disciples who adhered to a scholar’s teaching without having personally study with him). They did not necessarily have to have personal instructions [from the master].”

Further explaining his concept of the formation of schools, he said:

I have often heard that one who studies the classics must adhere to the tradition of a school, and those who teach must return to practical actions. The distinction of scholarly sects must be based on the transmission from masters and learning from peers. This was how the ancients pursued broad learning while maintaining close connection with their teachers, and making friends by discussing. This origin and pattern [of learning] cannot be distorted.

Different from other genealogy compilers, Li Qingfu seemed to have a strong emphasis on the centrality of school and lineage in studying intellectual developments. What also set Li Qingfu apart from other authors was his categorization of “family schools” 家世學派. He recorded a total of sixty-nine “family schools” which occupied more than a quarter of the entire

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53 Li Qingfu, Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, fanli.
54 Li Qingfu, Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, juan 37.
work. He explained the importance of the transmission of learning within families in the “general principles”:

Many of the grand masters of the Song inherited learning from their families. I therefore included such examples within the various Confucian schools to demonstrate their magnificence. Since the Yuan and Ming, family learnings have been transmitted and developed, such as the Hu family in Wuyi, the Liu family in Chongan, and the Cai family in Masha. Now [I] select the families from the Ming dynasty that were comparable with those in earlier times and record them here.

宋代儒宗，世衍家學者不少，故於諸儒學派中特列其例，以徵其盛。元、明以來，一家之學递衍，其緒如武夷之胡、崇安之劉、麻沙之蔡者，亦謹見矣。今於明代緒儒世學，擇其媲美前修者，亦多錄焉。

Working under these principles, Li Qingfu distilled forty-one individual schools and twenty family schools just in the prefecture of Quanzhou alone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scholars</th>
<th>Family Schools</th>
<th>Individual Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Ming</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Chenghua reign</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Jia-Long reign</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Wanli reign</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>297</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Number of scholars and schools in Quanzhou during the Ming dynasty in *A Study of the Origin of Lixue in Min.*

A total of nearly three hundred Cheng-Zhu scholars in Quanzhou were recorded by Li Qingfu, a dramatic increase from the earlier genealogical compilations. Of the fifty-one fascicles on the Ming, twenty-one (fascicles fifty-seven to seventy-eight) were devoted to Quanzhou. The

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55 Zhang Xianhui, “Li Qingfu ‘Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao’ yanjiu”, p. 22.
56 Li Qingfu, *Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, fanli.*
following table shows the prefectural distribution of Cheng-Zhu scholars in Fujian in the Ming, as depicted by Li Qingfu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefecture</th>
<th>Number of Scholars</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quanzhou</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>44.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuzhou</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>18.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putian</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>11.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhangzhou</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jianning</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tingzhou</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanping</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaowu</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>663</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Number of Cheng-Zhu scholars in each prefecture of Fujian during Ming dynasty in *A study of the origin of Lixue in Min*

Compared with other earlier intellectual genealogical anthologies, Li Qingfu expanded the scholarly communities of Fujian significantly and drastically. Though many scholars recorded in earlier compilations were from Quanzhou, Quanzhou did not outperform other prefectures of Fujian by such a wide margin. The disproportionate emphasis on Quanzhou undermined the credibility of Li Qingfu’s account.

**Li Qingfu and his Grandfather Li Guangdi**

Li Qingfu was a native of Quanzhou. His family was from the Anxi county. He was the grandson of Li Guangdi, an important Cheng-Zhu scholar and powerful official in the court of
the Kangxi emperor (r.1661-1722).\textsuperscript{57} Li Qingfu’s father died young and he was raised by his grandfather, from whom he incurred his intellectual debt. In his own preface to the work, he said:

During the mid-Ming, scholars like Cai Qing, Chen Zhencheng, Zhou Ying by turns arose and taught, and thus classical studies flourished at the time. After the mid-Ming, the intellectual world was in disarray, and orthodox learning could not be seen by young people. My forefather [Li Guangdi] understood this in his heart, and had said that our Min learning sincerely followed the masters’ teachings and cautiously undertook the study of philology, not daring to diverge from the teachings of our masters in our whole lives because our understanding was that they were close to the bequeathed meanings of Han classical learning.”\textsuperscript{58}

Besides \textit{A study of the origin of Lixue in Min}, Li Qingfu also authored several other works on intellectual developments in Fujian. The extant titles included \textit{Mixue Zhilue} 閩學誌畧 (Schematic outline of Min learning), \textit{Qingyuan Shuzhi} 清源述誌 (A narrative record of Qingyuan), and \textit{Wenling Xuelue} 温嶺學畧 (A summary of learning in Wenling), and \textit{Daonan Jiangshou} 道南講授 (The teachings and instructions of the Way south). From these titles, we can get a sense of Li Qingfu’s strong interests in Quanzhou’s intellectual history and development. To him, Minxue was the genuine embodiment of Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy, and of the eight prefectures in Fujian, Quanzhou was its mainstay. He wanted to construct a noble story of

\textsuperscript{57} For a complete study of Li Guangdi’s life and thought, see On-cho Ng, \textit{Cheng-Zhu Confucianism in the Early Qing: Li Guangdi (1642-1718) and Qing Learning} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{58} Li Qingfu, \textit{Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao}, preface.
the intellectual inheritance of Fujian scholars in Ming period from their Song predecessors, and his intention to highlight Quanzhou as the center of learning was explicit and deliberate.

He purposefully excluded non-Cheng-Zhu scholars from his work. Li Zhi (1527-1602), a native of Jinjiang county who was normally associated with the Taizhou sect of the Wang Yangming school was a case in point. Li Qingfu clearly stated in the “general principles” that people who sullied the teachings of the Cheng-Zhu school would not be included.59 This served to strengthen a view initiated by his grandfather, namely that Fujian was a place not contaminated by heterodox learning, as he once definitively said “there was no single disciple of Wang Yangming who was from Fujian.”60 This was not historically true. Besides Li Zhi, there were several other Fujian natives who were a part of the Wang Yangming school.61

Construction of the “Qingyuan School”

Zhang Boxing stated in his compilation of the Origin and development of the Way south that he “eliminated those who were involved in heterodoxy, and included those who were missing in the previous edition [Zhu Heng’s work bearing the same title].”62 Authors always wrote with their own agenda, sometimes even at the expense of historical fact. Zhang Boxing was selective in his choice of scholars, but he refrained from attaching any categorization of any sort to the scholars, thus not participating in the Neo-Confucian genealogy narrative. Li Qingfu, on the other hand, put undue emphasis on “schools” and intellectual lineage. The agenda for Zhang Boxing was merely to produce a record of all Cheng-Zhu scholars in Fujian; Li Qingfu,

59 Li Qingfu, Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, fanli.
60 Li Qingfu, Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, juan 59.
61 They included Zheng Shanfu (1485-1523) from Fuzhou, Ma Mingheng (dates unknown) from Putian, and Tong Shijian (1466-1535) who had personal correspondence with Wang Yangming.
however, wanted to reconnect the Ming Cheng-Zhu scholars of Quanzhou with the orthodox lineage of learning was interrupted in the Southern Song dynasty, in which his own family in the Qing period would successfully partake.

The efforts by Li Qingfu and Li Guangdi to reconnect with the intellectual genealogy have been recently studied by scholars who saw them as the continuation of the orthodox tradition in Fujian, particularly in Quanzhou.\(^\text{63}\) Their authorial intention was to create a close-knit intimate scholarly circle among the Quanzhou scholars and presented it as a rival school against the intellectual behemoth of the Wang Yangming sect.\(^\text{64}\) This would give more credence to their existence, and an image of lone fighter guarding the orthodox Way. For the purpose of this study, it suffices to highlight the creation of an intimate scholarly circle in the authorial hands of Li Qingfu and Li Guangdi, which would pass as a “school/sect” with a long history of intellectual lineage.

Li Qingfu quoted his grandfather’s words several times in his work. In the prologue to Cai Qing’s school, Li Qingfu quoted a whole paragraph of Li Guangdi’s “Guide to the Remodeling of Cai Qing’s Shrine”

The former scholar Wang Shenzhong said, ‘Since the rise of Ming dynasty, Cai Qing was the only scholar who devoted whole heartedly to Zhu Xi’s teaching.’ Chen Chen, Lin Xiyuan, were latter scholars advanced through his gate, whether personally studied with him or not, classical learning in Quanzhou then flourished into a school/family of thought. During that time, Wang Yangming’s school was in vogue in the southeast, but Min scholars did not follow suit. There was no record of Wang Yangming’s disciple who was a native of Fujian. From this, we know that our Min scholars observed the master’s

\(^{63}\) Liu Yong, in particular, argues that when faced with the rise of Wang Yangming’s teachings, Fujian scholars rediscovered their connection with the Song masters, and capitalized such cultural resources in their fight against the Wang Yangming school. They engaged in composing the genealogy of the transmission of the Way to Fujian and stressed their own scholars’ connection to the lineage, thereby developing a weapon to combat the new teachings of Wang Yangming. See Liu Yong, “Zhongwan Ming lixue xueshu de hudong yu diyuxing lixue chuangtong de xipuhua Jincheng – yi ‘minxue’ wei zhongxin” in Xin shixue, 22. 2 (June 2010): 1-60.

\(^{64}\) For a detailed textual analysis of the account, see Wang Yiqiao, “Cong ‘wumin youxue’ dao ‘wuxue zaimin’– 15 zhi 18 shiji Fujian Zhuzixue sixiang xipu de xingcheng ji shijian” (MA diss., 2006), pp. 98-103.
practices and rules. They were not easily won over by shallow and flashy discourses. Without Cai Qing, who would have started the trend? ⁶⁵

故前輩遵嚴王氏（王慎中）謂：‘自明與之來，盡心于朱子之學者，虛齋先生一人而已。’自時厥後，紫峰陳先生、次崖林先生，皆以里閈後進，受業私淑，泉州經學遂蔚然成一家言。時則姚江之學大行於東南，而閩士莫之遵，其掛陽明第子之錄者，閩無一焉。此以知吾閩學者守師說踐規，而非虛聲浮焰之所能奪。然非虛齋先生，其孰開之哉。

Li Guangdi first quoted the famous literary scholar in Quanzhou, Wang Shenzhong 王慎中 (1509-1559), in order to stress the importance of Cai Qing in reestablishing the orthodox learning tradition in Quanzhou. He placed Chen Chen and Lin Xiyuan in Cai’s camp, and together, they constituted a distinct school of thought on its own terms. This school was then pitted against the popular Wang Yangming’s school that was characterized as heterodox learning.

Elsewhere, Chen Chen and Lin Xiyuan were always paired together by Li Guandi as a duet who carried on the legacy of Cai Qing. He wrote, “Cai Qing taught in temples and monasteries throughout his life. He would smile and gently decline when people urged him to give lectures. To the extraordinary students among the crowd, he would provide further instruction in the inner hall. For others, he would simply rate their papers according to their relative merit. People who advanced to the inner hall numbered no more than two or three

⁶⁵ Ibid.
people, like Lin Xiyuan and Chen Chen. Those who excelled in literary composition all attained the jinshi degree after Cai Qing’s death.66

From this passage, we may gather that Lin Xiyuan was an outstanding student of Cai Qing who received his personal instruction. But we know from other sources that not being able to personally hear the teachings of Cai Qing was the great regret of Lin Xiyuan. In his own words, he said, “My study lagged behind, and so I often lament that I could not reach Cai Qing’s gate like other worthies did, and personally listen to the voice of his teaching. I had often heard that the master’s works set intellectual trends, and so I painstakingly pursued them for years, after which I have probably attained one or two threads of his teachings.”67

Lin Xiyuan was indeed a prominent Cheng-Zhu scholar in Quanzhou. In fact, he was most vocal in voicing his disapproval of Wang Yangming’s teachings among his other peers and contemporaries who were either lukewarm or simply indifferent in their attitude toward the Wang school. The quote was taken from a detailed life biography Lin Xiyuan wrote after the death of Cai Qing, upon the request of his son. He could, at the most, be described as a sishu student of Cai Qing.

67 Lin Xiyuan, “Xuzai Cai xiansheng xinglue” (Life chronology of Cai Qing) in *Cai wenzhuanggong ji* (Collected works of Cai Qing) in (Siku Quanshu, Wenyuange edition, electronic version), juan 7.
Besides Lin Xiyuan, Zhang Yue was also mentioned by Li Guangdi as another prominent disciple of Cai Qing. However, as we have seen in other genealogical anthologies, Zhang Yue was never once listed as someone having direct association with Cai Qing, even though Zhang was a prominent Cheng-Zhu scholar and a high-ranking official from Quanzhou. In other historical texts, he was listed individually in the section reserved for various Confucians not associated with any school.68

Li Qingfu inherited the intellectual orientation from his grandfather. It his magnum opus, he was equally forceful in forging a united front by the Quanzhou scholars against the threat of Wang Yangming’s school. He said in the prologue to the “Various scholars and schools in post Jiajing-Longqing reigns in Quanzhou:”

When the Zhejiang Wang Yangming School became popular, many scholars, drawn by its simplicity and ease, followed his teachings and regarded Wang as master. But very few of Wang’s disciples have been recorded as being from Fujian. During the Longqing and Wanli reigns, the trend of learning gradually changed, such that it tended toward heterodoxy. However, virtuous and refined scholars, such as Su Xun, Huang Fengxiang, Li Tingji, Wang Yongji, He Qiaoyuan, Li Guangjin and others from our prefecture, respected our ancestors, authored books and established principles, recounting former regulations. Thus, we know that the intellectual trend of an era, espoused by Cai Qing and propagated by his disciples, did not die out even after several generations. The bequeathed teachings of the benevolent and virtuous are indeed far-reaching!69

68 This was the case in Huang Zongxi’s Mingru xue’an, and Wan Sitong’s Rulin zongpai.
69 Li Qingfu, Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, juan 69.
Unlike his grandfather who claimed that no disciple of Wang Yangming was ever from Fujian, Li Qingfu was more willing to admit to the infiltration of Wang’s influence into Fujian, especially after the Longqing reign (1567-1572). But it might be precisely because of this new development that Li Qingfu was more assertive in strengthening the image of an intimate scholarly circle centered around Cai Qing created by his grandfather, by adding latter-day Quanzhou scholars and officials to the community. Similarly, they were being portrayed as guardians of the orthodox Way against the background of the increasing popularity of the Wang Yangming. And all these could be attributed to Cai Qing who re-inaugurated the tradition of Cheng-Zhu learning in Quanzhou.

Li Qingfu completed his discourse on the Ming dynasty Cheng-Zhu learning in Quanzhou by enumerating sixteen of his ancestors of the Ming period. They were grouped under the school of the Li family in Anxi county, ending with his great grandfather Li Zhaoqing 李兆慶 (dates unknown). His intention was obvious. By inheriting the fabricated image of a close-knit scholarly circle centered around Cai Qing, through which his grandfather reconnected with the severed lineage of the orthodox Way from the Song times, Li Qingfu extended the intellectual lineage with Quanzhou scholars of later generations to expand the influence of Cai Qing. Moreover, he appended his own clan at the end. By extension, he and his grandfather would be rightfully placed within this orthodox genealogy of the Way that was continued in the Qing. The creation of an intellectual community which came to be recognized as a school pivoted around Cai Qing was instrumental for realizing Li Guangdi and Li Qingfu’s goal of establishing Quanzhou’s premier position in the intellectual genealogy of the orthodox Way.

70 Li Qingfu, Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, juan 78.
Search for the Right Nomenclature: the Quanzhou Scholarly Community

It is now clear that the so-called “Qingyuan school” associated with the Quanzhou Cheng-Zhu scholars of the Ming dynasty was largely a creation of the authorial hands of Li Guangdi and Li Qingfu. To be sure, they described features that could be seen as constituents of a “school” such as geographical proximity, close personal associations, and shared philosophical disposition, all of which make it tempting and convenient for us to regard it a coherent intellectual sect with a well-developed communal sense of identity. But as later chapters will show, the Quanzhou literati displayed more allegiance to the affairs of their hometown than to some credal doctrines that underpinned and defined an intellectual school. They would be more appropriately seen as local elites playing the role’s of local gentries than as partisans of a school of thought. This raised the question of how best to describe them if the myth of the “Qingyuan school” should be debunked? This section explores the various nomenclatures in both English and Chinese languages denoting academic circles, and proposes using the label of “scholarly community” to refer to the Cheng-Zhu scholars in Ming Quanzhou. It acknowledges the internal affinities and commonalities among the scholars but does not stretch the fact by granting them the stature of a “school”, “sect”, or even “fellowship”.

Nathan Sivin has defined a school as “the special theories or techniques of a master, passed down through generations of disciples by personal teaching.” This means a school must be defined by a distinct lineage of ideas professed by a group of people, which were preserved and transmitted to future generations of scholars who swore intellectual allegiance to them. What is missing in this otherwise useful definition is the connotation of family found in the Chinese

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terms denoting a school. The Chinese characters *jia* 家 (family, clan) or *jiaxue* 家學 (family learning), *men* 門 (gate), *pai* 派 (sect), and *xuepai* 學派 (scholarly sect) are used interchangeably to denote a scholarly circle. Their use points to two facts about a school in the Chinese historical context. First, the germination and transmission of ideas often took place within a family. And later, “family” is used as a metaphor to refer to a school. Li Qingfu clearly inherited this line of thinking when he singled out families with distinct transmission of learning as “family schools”.

The reason behind this Chinese nomenclature was that learning in ancient China was monopolized by aristocratic families who usually held official positions in court. Their occupation was also hereditary. For instance Sima Qian (B.C.E. 145/135 – B.C.E. 86) inherited the job as the Grand Historian from his father. In fact, initially, the expression, “*yijia zhiyan* 一家之言,” (literally, the words of a family, but metaphorically, the tenets of a school), was used by Sima Qian in his highly emotionally charged letter to his bosom friend Ren An 任安 (dates unknown). He said his intention in composing the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*shiji* 史記) was to “investigate the boundaries between Heaven and man, and to understand the changes from past to present. Thus establishing his own school of historiography (究天人之際，通古今之變，立一家之言).”

Another reason was that, a school or a sect, regardless of the discipline, is often perceived by members both inside and outside of the group as a family. Sometimes *zongpai* 宗派 is also
used to refer to a school. *Zong* literally means a family or a clan, and the founding master of the school is often called the *zongshi* 宗師. He is perceived as a progenitor of the ideas that define the school, who also bequeathed the line of thinking to his offspring/disciples to ensure the continuance of the clan/school. The Chinese terms for master-disciple relationship also denote family connections. The word for master, *shifu* 師父, is the combined characters of teacher *shi* 師 and father *fu* 父; while the term for disciple is *dizi* 弟子, meaning younger brother and son.

Another English term that could be used to denote a school is “fellowship” as proposed by Hoyt Tillman. In his 1992 work, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy*, he used “fellowship” to refer to the Daoxue school (Learning of the Way) within Song Confucian learning, which ultimately defeated the school of the mind/heart and the utilitarianism championed by Chen Liang (1143—1194) to become the state orthodoxy. The Daoxue partisans distinguished themselves from other Confucians by claiming that they held possession of the true Confucian Way, which had been lost with the passing of Mencius. Tillman uses the notion of a “fellowship” to highlight Daoxue scholars’ devotion to a common course. As he explains, “by ‘fellowship’, I mean that Tao-hsueh Confucians had a network of social relations and a sense of community with a shared tradition that was distinct from other Confucians of their era. Personal, political, ritual, and intellectual ties bound members of the group together in such common undertakings as reforming Sung political culture, reviving ethical values, and rectifying Confucian learning.”72 It is thus similar to the notion “comradeship”, whose internal hierarchy is

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72 Tillman, “A New Direction in Confucian Scholarship: Approaches to Examining the Differences between Neo-Confucianism and Tao-hsueh” *Philosophy East and West*, 42.3 (July 1992): 459.
defined by the leader-member relationship, but it lacks both the connotations of a family and master-disciple relationship.

Benjamin Elman argues in his study of the organizational principles of the Qing dynasty evidential schools of learning (kaozheng xue) that the factors that influenced and determined the formation and identity of a school were often more varied and complex.\(^{73}\) Criteria and conditions such as geographical proximity, personal association, textual tradition, philosophical position, or stylistic coherence commingled and came into play, such that there was not one single deciding factor. Moreover, there were unifying features that not infrequently transcended individual and disparate schools of learning.\(^{74}\) Elman contends that the local schools of scholarship actually represented distinct sub-communities within specific urban areas. The larger academic community accepted and embraced the identities of these distinct sub-communities of scholars, which came to be categorized as schools.\(^{75}\) In other words, the kaozheng scholars in the Lower Yangtze area formed the larger academic community that held intellectual sway, whose learning then spread to other areas that forged scholarly sub-communities (labeled and known as schools) based on geographical location.

In light of these working definitions, the Quanzhou scholars of the mid to late Ming period shared two features that gave them group coherence: geographical proximity and philosophical disposition. But the image of close master-disciple relations was, as already been shown, created by Li Guangdi and further stretched anf forged by Li Qingfu. Subsequent chapters will show that even though the Quanzhou scholars were Cheng-Zhu scholars, they did not assume a united front against the rival school of Wang Yangming. Not only was there no

\(^{73}\) Elman, “Ch’ing Dynasty ‘Schools of Scholarship’”, p. 4.
\(^{74}\) Ibid., p. 38.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., p. 39.
concerted effort against the spread of Wang’s teachings, but some had even established genuine friendship with key Wang Yangming followers despite their intellectual differences. Thus, the bond between the Quanzhou scholars of the Ming period should not be understood in terms of a “school”, “sect”, or “fellowship”.

Yet, many of them established cordial personal relations with one another. They wrote prefaces for one another’s anthologies, and expressed their grief in losing a cherished friend in commemorative writings such as eulogy or epitaph. Most latter-day Quanzhou scholars did not see Cai Qing as their master, but they did acknowledge the positive transformative influence he had in Quanzhou. They read Cai Qing’s works since they were young, and so Cai was perceived more as a respected local worthy than a master-teacher to whom the younger generation scholars declared allegiance. Thus, there was a literati circle in Quanzhou from the mid to late Ming who undoubtedly had personal relations with one another, but they did not constitute a school/sect as such. Thus, for my purposes, I propose to use the label “Quanzhou (Qingyuan) scholarly community”, to refer to the Cheng-Zhu scholars of Quanzhou in the fifteen and sixteen centuries.

This usage is certainly not an innovation, as earlier scholars have used “community” to study groups of scholars who did not constitute a “school” or “sect” but nonetheless displayed group coherence. Joseph McDermott used the label, “a community of learning”, to refer to the coteries of literati bibliophiles who shared their holdings with one another, met regularly, and discussed their rare manuscripts and imprints.76 This community revolved around kin, friends, and other natives of the same locale, who got together as a result of the inadequate government libraries and unwelcoming private libraries. A scholarly group in the northern Guizhou province

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active during the late Qing period was also presented by Guo Wu as an intellectual community rather than an intellectual school, even though all the scholars in question partook of the evidential studies popular during the time.\textsuperscript{77} This dissertation studies the Cheng-Zhu scholars of Ming Quanzhou as a community who exhibited certain common traits, but their association fell short of a school of thought.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter serves to debunk the myth of the “Qingyuan school” by tracing its textual origin and highlighting its after-the-fact creation in the authorial hands of Li Guangdi and Li Qingfu who wanted to reap the benefit of being connecting with the Cheng-Zhu tradition of learning. As their Ming forebears were being presented as the rightful heirs of Zhu Xi’s legacy in the area, Quanzhou’s stature would also receive a boost because of its connection with orthodox learning. Consequently, the place and its scholars would be distinguished at the national level, by virtue of their identification with a particular tradition of learning that was the supposed quintessence of orthodoxy. The chapter also reveals the discrepancy between history and historiography, and serves as a critique of historiographical and hagiographical sources, reminding us of the disjunction between history’s reality and history writing. All too often, we subscribe uncritically to the received wisdom about the existence and reality of a school or tradition of learning, taking for granted their veracity, unaware that historiographic interpretations, by virtue of their repetition and recitation, can stealthily pass themselves off as historical facts. However, to ascertain the mythic nature of the “Qingyuan school” is not to disregard the significance of the Quanzhou scholars, but to call for a careful use of terminology.

in addressing and discussing them. This chapter proposes that a “scholarly community” is a more appropriate term in addressing them that would not over stretch the fact and pays due respect to historical reality.
CHAPTER TWO

Creating Cultural and Symbolic Capital in Quanzhou: the Immortalization of Cai Qing

This chapter studies the key person in the Quanzhou scholarly community, Cai Qing. Rather than focusing on his life and thought, which scholarship has hitherto extensively studied, this chapter looks at the scholar after his death and studies the process by which Cai Qing was transformed from a local worthy of Quanzhou to a nationally renowned scholar by the end of the Ming dynasty. The analytical framework is inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of different forms of capital, which he uses to explain the dynamics that animate social class distinction and perpetuation. I suggest that his categorization of capital is useful to the study of local histories as well. The locale, as the unit of analysis, is similar to an individual belonging to a certain social class, possesses various forms of capital with which they could use to leverage for power and status. Local scholars such as Cai Qing were being seen as unique cultural capitals of the locale which the elites and officials were anxious to turn into concrete symbolic capitals that could represent Quanzhou at the national level vis-à-vis other locales. Their efforts included obtaining the official sanction of publishing and distributing the works of Cai Qing nationwide, erecting local shrines and arches for public memorialization, requesting posthumous titles and positions for Cai Qing so that his sacrificial ceremonies could be elevated accordingly, and petitioning for the highest accolade of “true Confucian” so that he could be placed with other sages in the sacred altar of the Confucius Temple. Similar to the intention behind the construction of intellectual genealogy, the cultivation of cultural and symbolic capitals was also a strategy employed by the local scholars to associate with the state by raising the status and highlighting the distinction of the locality. Cai Qing was taken as a unique product of Quanzhou in a similar way that Zhu Xi
was a prominent native of Fujian. That the two were connected in an intellectual lineage was a particular attribute of Quanzhou which its scholars saw benefit in the capitalizing. The cultural and symbolic capitals taken in the concrete forms of memorial arches and shrines also became “sites of memory”, to borrow Pierre Nora’s concept, where local people congregated and honored their past worthies. These were places where seasonal ceremonial rituals were being carried out, which worked toward the building of collective memory and identity shared by the Quanzhou community.

In the study of the “afterlife” of Cai Qing, the systematic efforts by latter-day Quanzhou elites to turn him into the unique cultural and symbolic capital of Quanzhou are being examined. The canonization process is juxtaposed with two other Ming dynasty scholars, Xue Xuan 薛瑄 (1389-1464) and Wang Yangming, who were enshrined in the Confucius Temple. It reveals the lack of rigor and concerted efforts on the part of Quanzhou scholars when compared to the partisans of Xue and Wang. They showed more pride in the cultural accomplishment of their hometown than in declaring allegiance to a master scholar. Their actions could more appropriately be understood as advancing the stature of Quanzhou, rather than speaking on behalf of a school of thought. Thus, this chapter argues that through elevating Cai Qing as a nationally renowned figure, the cultural and symbolic capitals of Quanzhou that were representative of the place were being created. These capitals, in both material and immaterial forms, became the building blocks of Quanzhou identity that entered into the memory and psyche of the local people. The process was a way by which scholars related their locality with the imperial state.

Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Capital and its Application to the Study of Local History
What Li Guandi and Li Qingfu did in giving genealogical and historical substance to a community of learning, overstretching historical facts to generate an image of an intellectual school, may not be uncommon in history. Many of the so-called “schools” in intellectual history were imagined constructs and concocted myths, some of which, unfortunately have become historiographical givens that interfered with our quest for more accurate understandings of what actually occurred. The question that should be asked is perhaps the reason behind such acts of historical manipulation and distortion. Here, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory about class and power may be usefully appropriated to shed some general light on the endeavor to claim intellectual legitimacy and distinction.

Bourdieu aptly extends the notion of “economic capital” beyond the nominal meaning of money or assets owned by a person or organization to include cultural and social forms of capitals that a person/organization can be put to productive use. He mainly uses the concepts to explain class dynamics and distinction. A combination of varying degrees of various forms of capital determines class friction. The economic resources and social network that a child inherits from his/her family, determine the social class. The aesthetic disposition, which is cultural capital, inculcated throughout the child’s upbringing sustains his/her social privileges, thus continuing and strengthening social status. Such cultural capital, according to Bourdieu, may also be understood as a powerful and evocative symbolic capital, that is, the reputational resources available to an individual on the basis of honor, prestige, and recognition.

While Bourdieu uses these concepts to explain power dynamics in class stratification and social mobility, I suggest that they could also be applied to the studies of local history in late imperial China, as the gentry and local literati may be in some ways regarded as a social class. The locality, as with an individual, has in its possession various forms of capital: economic capital in the form of arable lands, industries, and natural resources that generate revenues; social capital in form of relations and networks with other places; cultural capital in the form of the population’s literacy rate, aesthetic tastes, and literary accomplishments; and symbolic capital in the form of prestige, recognition, and honor earned by the locality and acknowledged by the court and elite from other areas. All these are resources at the locality’s disposal that can be used to leverage for more power and status.

The study of Chinese local history generally follows two broad approaches: examining state-society relations, and revealing the role of literati in these relations. Most prominent of such works include Robert Hymes’ study of the Fu Zhou elite in Jiangxi, Peter Bol’s study of Jinhua literati, Anne Gerritsen’s study of Ji’an Literati in Song-Yuan-Ming China, and most recently Ong Chang Woei’s study of Guangzhong literati from the Song dynasty to the end of Qing dynasty. In one way or another, in the process of unraveling and making sense of these fraught and intricate relations, these studies use clan lineages and genealogies as prisms through which.

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which the literati’s local activism is studied. This study of Quanzhou, by and large, follows the approaches and concerns of these existing admirable studies of local history. It does, however, offer a new interpretive perspective. Borrowing Bourdieu’s categorization of capitals and applying to the study of Quanzhou, I argue that one of the major pursuits of the local literati was to appropriate and render prominent historical local figures into the crucial elements and building blocks of the cultural capital of the locality. This project involved elevating the local personages into national ones, such that their image and reputation came to be institutionalized by the imperial state. These imperially endorsed and recognized figures then further functioned as symbolic capital, representing the locality as paragons of one sort or another on the national scene. These nationally known paradigmatic figures uplifted the status of one locality vis-à-vis other areas, as they were seen as cultural arbiters and personification of virtues and merits of sundry kinds, while reinforcing local identity and boosting local pride.

Cai Qing was a case in point. Not long after his death, there were already consistent local efforts to hail and honor him as a model Confucian scholar-official, not only at the local level but also at the national one. Local shrines and memorial arches were built with local funds to honor him. His work was decreed to be printed by the imperial publisher in Jianyang, Fujian, and disseminated nationwide. Posthumous title and position were granted to Cai Qing by the imperial court, and a special state-sponsored shrine was built for him where seasonal sacrifices were allowed to be performed. These celebratory and honorary measures happened because of the efforts of scholars from the Quanzhou areas, some of whom occupied important positions in the

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court. Therefore, seen in this light, what Li Guangdi and Li Qingfu did was not so out of place. The nature of their action was the same as their Ming dynasty local literati forebears who worked hard to raise the profile and reputation of local worthies, ensuring that they functioned as cultural symbols of Quanzhou.

Bourdieu further classifies cultural capital into three categories: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Taking the individual as the unit of analysis, a person embodies and inherits the cultural traits consciously learnt and subconsciously acquired from one’s family upbringing. One may possess works of art or other artifacts passed down as heirloom, whose aesthetic appreciation and consumption form part of the person’s tastes since young. These artifacts are the objectified cultural capital because they concretely represent the owners’ embodied cultural traits. Institutionalized cultural capital consists of the social and institutional recognition of the cultural capital held by a person. It may take the form of prestigious academic degrees, certificates recognizing one’s literary or artistic achievements, or simply immense fame and reputation.

This theory of cultural capital may also be applied to a locality, Quanzhou, in this case. The Cheng-Zhu learning tradition set in motion since the days of Zhu Xi’s residence in the area could be taken as the inherited cultural trait of Quanzhou. Ming scholars inherited this cultural trait, and saw its fruition in the life and work of Cai Qing and of other Cheng-Zhu scholars in later ages. They were regarded by the locals as the transmitter and personification of the inherited cultural capital. Consequently, Cai Qing’s works were being published. Memorial arches were erected for him, and he was honored and worshiped in local shrines built partially on

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state funds and personal donations. These were efforts to objectify the embodied cultural capital. At the national level, officials of Quanzhou origin rallied for the bestowal of posthumous title, position, and enshrinement into the Confucian Temple. These were efforts to institutionalize the local cultural capital, and such institutionalization was more forceful and secure in the form of state recognition. Thus, the local cultural capital was being transformed into a larger symbol of Quanzhou’s cultural prowess on the national scene. With this symbolic capital, Quanzhou became a sort of a metonym for proper culture, orthodox learning and literacy.

Cai Qing was thus immortalized as a paradigmatic Confucian scholar by latter-day Quanzhou literati as a way of building and accumulating cultural capital for themselves and for their hometown. In the subsequent sections, the actual life and scholarship of Cai Qing will first be presented, followed by a careful exploration of the later hagiographic embellishments and modifications added after his death. To throw the process into sharp relief and to provide some comparative perspective, I juxtapose the institutionalization of the stature and achievements of Cai Qing by the imperial court with that of two other well-known and better-studied Ming scholars, both of whom were canonized during the Ming dynasty as a “true Confucian”: Xue Xuan 薛瑄 (1389-1464) and Wang Yangming. This comparative inquiry reveals that while vigorous concerted efforts were launched for the purpose of securing the highest honors for Xue and Wang, which spoke to the strength of the emerging schools that claimed intellectual allegiance to them, the quest for Cai Qing’s enshrinement in the Confucian Temple was lacking in the same vigor. They were isolated and disparate actions on the part of officials of Quanzhou origin, who appealed more to the pride of their hometown in producing a great Confucian master than were united by strong personal admiration of the person and scholarship of Cai Qing. In other words, to be sure, the scholar-officials from Quanzhou were intent on constructing and
fostering the cultural capital of Quanzhou by seeking to elevate Cai Qing into an eminent figure of the national arena, but they worked in their own individual capacity and did not form a united front as the supporters of Xue and Wang had done.

**Cai Qing: the Person**

Cai Qing, courtesy name Jiefu 介夫 and pseudonym Xuzhai 虚齋, was a native of Jinjiang county in Quanzhou prefecture. He was not from a prominent scholar-official family, even though his ancestors did belong to the literate class and had obtained examination degrees. Cai Qing’s great grandfather, Cai Hui 蔡煥 (dates unknown), obtained the provincial degree in 1414, but his grandfather (courtesy name Maode 懋德, pseudonym Yipu jushi 一樸居士), did not seem to have obtained any official degree and he made a living through arboriculture. Nonetheless, his grandfather took the education of his offspring seriously. When he saw that the handwriting of Cai Qing was less than perfect, he reprimanded the young boy, “This is also part of learning, and so why do you show such a lack of respect?”87 Although not a scholar, Cai Maode had a profound respect for books and the literary culture that books embodied. He would not be concerned if things were broken, but he would take special care in preserving books. He once warned his offspring, “I may not fully understand what is said in the texts, but these were written by the ancient sages, so how can we not respect them? Moreover, since these are passed down by our ancestors, you kids must cautiously preserve them.”88 Cai Qing’s father, Cai Guanhui 蔡觀惠 (dates unknown), courtesy name Yunyuan 允元, was the eldest son.

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87 Li Dongyang [Ming dynasty], “Yipu jushi Cai gong muzhiming” (Epitaph of Cai Yipu), in *Huili tang ji* (Anthology of Huili Hall) (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1997), juan 47.
88 Ibid.
Presumably, he had obtained some official qualifications, which enabled him to once serve in the Bureau of Records within the Ministry of Personnel.

Cai Qing was born in 1453.\textsuperscript{89} Not much is known about his childhood except that he was said to be endowed with extraordinary intellect and was known for his predilection for learning—plaudits that are common self-fulfilling prophesies in the hagiographical descriptions of well-known scholars. It was recorded that during his youth, Cai Qing felt that the bustling city of Quanzhou, with its many distractions, was a hindrance to his studies, and so he took residence in the nearby Mount Daping (part of the Qingyuan mountain ranges), and stayed in Yungu Temple so as to be engaged wholeheartedly in quiet and focused study.\textsuperscript{90}

![Figure 1. Remains of Yungu Temple. Today, only a pile of huge rocks remains on top the mountain. One rock bears the inscriptions of the name of the Temple, probably inscribed by the monk, Wuji Yingshao 無際應邵. The inscription was dated the guihai 癸亥 year of the Zhengtong 正統 reign, which is 1443. This means that the rocks and the inscriptions already existed when Cai Qing took refuge in the temple.](image)

\textsuperscript{89} A detailed biographical sketch of Cai Qing is appended to the end of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{90} Cai Qing, “Ti Yungu shi” (Poem composed for his study room in Yungu Temple), in Cai Wenzhuang gongji, juan 1.
At around age seventeen, he studied with Zhou Xubai 周虚白 for about three years before he travelled to the Fuzhou prefecture to study with Lin Pin 林玭 (1434-1506). Lin was a jinshi who took a break from his official position in order to take care of his ailing parents in his hometown. He was best known for his works on the *Classic of Changes*. At the age of twenty-four, Cai Qing achieved first place in the provincial examination. According to local legend, his examination success was echoed by pleasing sounds resembling the chimes of jade instruments emanating from Mount Qingyuan for three days. The local people took this as an auspicious omen of Cai Qing’s achievement and his emergence as a great person of the Quanzhou area.

Three years later, Cai Qing attempted the metropolitan examination. During his stay in the capital, he became acquainted with the Educational Superintendent of the National Academy, Qiu Jun 邱濬 (1418-1495), who appreciated Cai’s talents and commissioned him with the job of editing *The Complete work of the Classic of Changes* (易經大全), a total of eight volumes. Due to an illness and a heavy snow storm, Cai Qing did not manage to participate in the actual metropolitan examination. He did, however, succeeded in his second try, obtaining the jinshi degree in 1484.

Throughout his life, Cai Qing displayed a discernible lack of any real interest in a career in the government. After he obtained the jinshi degree, even before he was assigned any official appointment, he asked for permission to return to his hometown so that he could pursue a life of

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91 Cai Qing had written the preface to the clan genealogy of Zhou Xubai, “Xingai Zhoushi chongxiu zupu xu” in *Cai Wenzhuang gongji*, juan 3.
92 See appendix for biography of Lin Pin and of other key figures in the Quanzhou intellectual community.
93 Cai Qing, “Yu Hangzhou Shangqiong shan Qiu jijiu xiansheng shu” (Letter to Education Directorate Sir Qiu of Hangzhou Mount Shangqiong) in *Cai Wenzhuang gongji*, juan 2.
teaching while serving his parents. Once back in Quanzhou, he began teaching at the Shuilu Chan Temple, a component of the Kaiyuan Temple complex in the center of Quanzhou city. Several local gazetteers stated that hundreds came to study with him, including scholars and monks from the greater Jiangnan region. While there could be some exaggeration in the retelling of the life of Cai Qing by later compilers, we may nevertheless assume that his lectures did attract an audience of considerable size. In time, the intellectual vibrancy of Quanzhou from the mid Ming onwards came to be associated with the popular influences of Cai Qing.

In terms of scholarship, Cai Qing regarded the *Classic of Changes* as the most fundamental and important of all Confucian classics. It was very likely that he attracted some scholars to study and discuss the *Classic of Changes* together at the Kaiyuan Temple with him, thus giving rise to the legend of the “Qingyuan twenty-eight constellations”. His commentaries on this classic were already well-known even during his own life time. Together with his commentaries on the *Four Books*, Cai Qing’s works became popular aid for the preparation for the imperial examinations.
Cai Qing stayed in Quanzhou for some three to four years. One day, while he was painting a portrait of his mother, she reportedly lamented, “There is a saying that mothers depend on their sons for elevation of status. Now that you’ve attained jinshi degree for years, but I am still the same old lady.” Cai Qing soon resumed an official position, serving in the Ministry of Rites. The incumbent Grand Councilor, Wang Shu 王恕 (1416-1508), appreciated Cai Qing’s learning and his upright character, transferred him to the Bureau of Records within the Ministry of Personnel where he was responsible for processing enfeoffments and handling merits.

His mother died in 1491. After observing the mourning period, Wang Shu was no longer the Grand Councilor of State, and Cai Qing was reposted as an official in the Ministry of Personnel in Nanjing. The two years between 1499 to 1500 were particularly difficult for him. His eldest son died in 1499 on his way back from the provincial examination at the tender age of
nineteen. Apparently, Cai was so stricken by the loss that he soon asked for retirement on the account of his ailing father. But three months after returning home, his father also passed away. He stayed in his hometown for the next several years and did not show any intention to return to officialdom. In 1506, however, Cai Qing was again recalled to office, appointed as the Vice-Education Intendant Censor of Jiangxi. This time, he brought his family along with him, and his favorite student Chen Chen as the tutor of his two young sons. Once he was in Jiangxi, he started the renovation project of the White Deer Grotto Academy 白鹿洞書院 where Zhu Xi had personally taught. He was dedicated to its revival as a center of learning. He published administrative rules and posted selections of essays by the Cheng brothers’ essays on the walls.94

However, it was also during this time in Jiangxi that antagonism between Cai Qing and Prince Ning, Zhu Chenhao 朱宸濠 (1478-1521), a direct descent of the founding emperor of Ming dynasty, developed.95 In one incident, the arrogant Prince demanded that on the first and the fifteenth day of the lunar month, all the provincial officials had to pay respect to him at his residence before heading to the Confucian Temple for their official tribute. Cai Qing openly defied Prince Ning, leading his subordinates to first pay homage to Confucius before heading to Prince Ning’s residence. On another occasion, Prince Ning invited provincial commissioners to his birthday celebration and demanded that they came dressed in court attires. Cai Qing again refused to obey. Pointing to the impropriety of the demand, he said, “Court attires are worn by

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94 Cai Qing, “Bailudong shuyuan gao Fuzi wen” (Proclamation to Confucius at White Deer Cave Academy), and “Bailudong shuyuan gao Zhou Zhu er xiansheng wen” (Proclamation to Zhou Dunyi and Zhu Xi at the White Deer Cave Academy) in Cai Wenzhuang gongji, juan 5.
95 In 1519, Prince Ning rebelled and tried to usurp the throne. The rebellion was quelled partly by Wang Yangming who was then the Provincial Governor of Jiangxi. Prince Ning was later executed. This was regarded as a great military achievement of Wang.
officials only when they have an audience with the emperor and not when they go see a prince.”

Prince Ning was infuriated. Cai Qing knew very well that his open defiance of Prince Ning would not bode well for his future. So once again, he asked for retirement. However, because of Cai Qing’s reputation, Prince Ning sensed that his departure would generate negative public opinion and further tarnish his image. He thus came up with the idea of marrying his daughter to one of Cai Qing’s sons as an attempt to avert the situation. Cai decisively rejected the proposal. Several months after he reached home, an imperial decree was issued for the appointment of Cai Qing as the Directorate of Education at the National Academy in Nanjing. This appointment was a strategy on the part of the infamous eunuch-official, Liu Jin (劉瑾, 1451-1510), to rally support for himself. He invited renowned scholars like Cai Qing to serve in the court so as to bolster his reputation. As if he could predict the difficult position he would be in when serving a court dominated by Liu Jin, Cai Qing died promptly before the decree had reached him in Quanzhou. He seemed to know that his days were numbered. Several days before his passing, he stopped all his medication, and assembled his students and friends to say his farewell. On the day of his death, after he had bathed and changed his clothes and cap, he sat upright on his bed and spoke his last words:

I am satisfied with my official rank reaching the National Academy. What regrets do I have? But throughout my life, I admired ancient worthies. People like Jia Yi 賈誼 (200 BC–168 BC), Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181 BC-234 BC), and the like, were all great achievers before they reached forty. Now that I have passed fifty, and I did not attain any real accomplishments. I have disappointed Heaven and Earth, disappointed the court, and disappointed my ancestors. This is what I am shameful of. You should recognize this and be encouraged [to better achieve].

96 Cai Qing had a detailed account of his open antagonism with Prince Ning and his reason for retirement in his letter to a friend, Sun Jiufeng, in Cai Wenzhuang gongji, juan 2.
97 Lin Xiyuan, “Wenzhuang xuzhai Cai xiansheng xinglue” (Life account of Cai Qing), in Cai wenzhuang gong ji, juan 7.
Based on extant materials, we gather that Cai Qing had two wives and four sons. His principal wife gave birth to his eldest son, Cai Cunwei 蔡存畏 (courtesy name 思危), who obtained the *juren* degree in 1499 but died on his way back from the provincial examination. Because of the poor health of his principal wife, Cai Qing married a concubine so that his wife would have assistance in managing the household.\footnote{According to the epitaph of madam Ding written by Li Tingji (1542-1616), she was eleven years younger than Cai Qing. They married in 1487 when she was twenty-four years old. Li Tingji, “Nanjing guozi jian jijiu shi wenzhuang Cai xiansheng fushi Ding shi furen muzhiming” in *Li Tingji wenji* (Collected works of Li Tingji) (Beijing: Beijing chuban she, 2000), juan 44.} The second wife gave Cai Qing three more sons. The eldest obtained the *juren* degree in 1529, and was appointed the magistrate of Dongguan county in Guangdong province. The second son obtained the *jinshi* degree in 1526, and reached highest official position as the chief of the Bureau of Carriages responsible for the imperial stable.

**Immortalization of Cai Qing: Efforts at the Local Level**

There were two stages and levels in the process of immortalizing Cai Qing into a cultural and symbolic capital of Quanzhou: the local and the state. Locally, it was the customary and expected obligation of every county and prefectural government to commemorate individuals of excellence, exalting them as models of emulation. These illustrious and celebrated figures could be chaste widows who chose suicide over remarriage to remain faithful to their husbands; they could also be scholar-officials who advanced the welfare of the locale. Stone steles and sometimes memorial arches were erected to bear witness to their moral excellence. The local magistrate also had a personal interest in such an enterprise as it embellished and enhanced their administrative records and became part of their tenure’s legacy. Such architectural structures
made visible and tangible the moral achievements of the individuals, laying the foundation and paving the way for future recognition and institutionalization by the state.

Pierre Nore refers to any place, object, or even a concept or colour that is vested with historical significance in the popular memory of a particular community as a “site of memory”.99 They are cultural landmarks and significations that stemmed from a collectively shared past. But they can also be invented traditions since the material embodiments of history often take the form of museums, monuments, and commemorative events that are invariably state initiatives. The objectified physical cultural capitals of Cai Qing could be regarded as such “sites of memory” under government auspices. Situated in central locations, these shrines and arches were significant cultural landmarks in the daily lives of the common people. They were constantly reminded of the past worthies in their area who were publicly venerated in the seasonal sacrificial events. Their lives were documented in local gazetteers, and their widely circulated works were part of the reading curriculum for the younger generation. Cai Qing was never absent in the everyday life of Quanzhou people. He was a cultural memory crystalized in monuments which functioned as nodal points in engaging the local public with its shared past, the common present, and the larger imperial empire.

During the years he spent in his hometown, Cai Qing acquired a renowned reputation in the region through his teaching and contributions to local welfare.100 Local efforts to objectify his scholarly achievements already started even when he was alive. It was recorded in the General Gazetteer of the Eight Prefectures of Fujian (Bamin Tongzhi 八閩通誌) that an arch was erected in the same year that Cai Qing obtained the first-place in the 1477 provincial

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100 For details on Cai Qing’s local activities, see chapter four.
examination to commemorate his achievement. This was the first of a series of commemorative architectural structures that sought to objectify Cai Qing’s scholarly and moral achievements. By then, building memorial arches for top achievers in the imperial examination system had apparently become a customary thing to do by the local governments.

At the time of his death, Cai Qing might have already become a household name in Quanzhou. He was honored in the hall of local worthies (鄉賢祠), and according to the Prefectural Gazetteer of Quanzhou of the Wanli reign (1573-1620). Three arches dedicated to Cai Qing were erected within a hundred years after his death. They were, namely, the “arch for famous local worthy for Directorate of Education” (名賢里坊為祭酒蔡清立), “arch for famous official of orthodox learning” (理學名臣坊為文莊蔡清立), and “arch of ancillary to classics and inspirational for latter-day scholars” (羽翼聖經啟迪後學坊為贈侍郎蔡清簽事林希元立), which was erected for both Cai Qing and Lin Xiyuan. The specific years in which they were constructed were not known, but the “arch for local worthy” must have been built shortly after his death, since it bore the last official title of Cai Qing’s appointment as the Educational Directorate of the National Academy in Nanjing (南京國子監祭酒). The other two were probably

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102 There were at least four other memorial arches for scholars achieved first place in the provincial examination in Quanzhou during the Ming dynasty, but they were less known historical figures in Quanzhou history. See http://www.nanchens.com/xqxx/xqxx27/xqxx27029.htm for details. The tradition had found its way into contemporary Chinese culture when obtaining top scores in the national college entry examination in today’s China will make someone an overnight celebrity. The student’s name will appear in the local newspaper as he has helped his hometown to attain national spotlight. The high school that nurtured him will receive a boost in reputation, and his picture will be hung in the hall of famous alumni. If the person is from a rural area in the south where ancestral shrines are still an integral part of the village life, his name will be inscribed on the walls of the local shrines because he has made his clan proud.
erected soon after he was granted the posthumous title of Wenzhuang 文莊 in 1588 and posthumous post of Minister on the Left for Ministry of Rites 禮部左侍郎 in 1604, as the titles appear on the arches respectively. It was recorded that Chen Chen proposed the establishment of an academy in Quanzhou to be named after Cai Qing, but the idea never materialized.\textsuperscript{103}

It was not uncommon at all to erect arches to recognize prominent figures who were accepted to be cultural paragons, to the extent that they exerted positive transformative influences over the local population in late imperial Chinese times. There is a section in almost all local gazetteers that recorded all the memorial arches in the locality throughout history, and the number could be staggering. Building shrines, on the other hand, was less common, as it was more expensive. But Cai Qing alone had two shrines dedicated to him in Quanzhou, and both were constructed during the Ming. In 1559, the private family altar of Cai Qing was converted into a local shrine so that public honoring of him could be performed. This was an initiative by the local official, Xiong Ruda 熊汝達 (dates unknown), who was appointed as Quanzhou’s magistrate in 1556. It may be surmised that Xiong’s action might have been motivated by his desire to build his own administrative legacy. But it should be noted that turning the residential compound of a deceased famous person into a public monument was not commonly done in late imperial times, even though it might be a common practice today.\textsuperscript{104} In late imperial China, the moral education of the local populace was the main concern behind the erection of such commemorative structures.

\textsuperscript{103} Chen Dunlu and Chen Dunyu, \textit{Chen Zifeng xiansheng nianpu} (Life chronology of Chen Chen) (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1999), vol. 44, p.392.

\textsuperscript{104} Nowadays, the main consideration was the financial benefits that could be accrued from owning a tourist attraction, which outweigh the goal of honoring the dead.
A public shrine was maintained by government funds, where seasonal sacrifices were to be performed. It was genuinely a site where the virtuous and meritocratic dead were being honored. In every spring and autumn, local officials would lead the instructors and students of the local schools to perform ritual sacrifices to honor the dead. Cai Qing’s shrine was built in the center of what is now the old town of Quanzhou and it still stands. At one time, it was re-occupied by descendants of Cai Qing as their residence. The shrine, as it stands today, displays the architectural styles of late Qing style, as its last renovation occurred in the years between 1850 to 1857. Some descendants of Cai Qing still live in the compound. There is a wooden statue of Cai Qing in the center alter which is believed to have been passed down from the Qing dynasty.

Figure 3. The former local shrine of Cai Qing. It is now the residence of Cai Yunlong and his family.

From these architectural establishments that bear witness to Cai Qing’s moral excellence and achievements, we may surmise that in the decades after his death, he had already become a
local symbol of the cultural attainments and geographical advantages of Quanzhou, a place with superior cultural capital. According to the promoters of Cai Qing, the blessed natural beauty of Mount Qingquan and the unique cultural heritage bequeathed by Zhu Xi made the emergence of great scholars like Cai Qing possible. Stories about him circulated widely among the locals, which over time, attained the aura of legendary tales. These included the legend of the “twenty-eight constellations” in the study of the *Classic of Changes*, and the chiming sounds from Mount Qingyuan after Cai Qing’s success in the imperial examination which was interpreted by the locals as signs from nature/heaven signaling the advent of a great scholar. Cai Qing’s open defiance against Prince Ning’s commands was taken as an exemplary tale of his courage and his upright character. Especially when Prince Ning attempted usurpation of the throne, Cai Qing’s attitude and his refusal to associate with the corrupt court dominated by eunuchs were cases in point that illustrated his foresight and ability to safeguard his honor and purity in the turbid political world of the late Ming. All this could be attribute to his origins in his hometown of Quanzhou, whose very place and its culture nurtured Cai Qing, given the scenic endowments of Mount Qingyuan and cultural and scholarly legacy of Zhu Xi. Cai Qing in turn personified the wondrous qualities of his hometown. Cai Qing thus inherited and embodied the cultural capitals of Quanzhou. The architectural monuments served to objectify such cultural capitals which Cai Qing personified, and by virtue of their physical existence, inspired and informed the local people, thus imitating positive transformative influences and perpetuating the cultural capitals of Quanzhou.

**Immatelization of Cai Qing: Efforts at the State Level**

State recognition came in various forms. They could be in the form of plaques with posthumous titles granted by the court, which were to be placed in their sacrificial altars. They
could also come as imperial approval for the construction of special shrines where state-sanctioned seasonal sacrificial rituals would be performed. The highest accolade for a Confucian scholar in late imperial China was undoubtedly the award of the title of “true Confucian” (zhenru), whose tablet would be placed in the Confucian Temple, alongside other inducted Confucians from past ages.\textsuperscript{105} The enshrinement process was a tortuous one, often fraught with political issues. Even though scholar-officials from Quanzhou did all the things that supporters of Xue Xuan and Wang Yangming had done, Cai Qing was not enshrined until the Qing times, 221 years after his death. One main reason for their failure was that petitioners of Cai Qing’s cause did not quite take on the roles of partisan zealots, by and large refraining from sectarian ideological debates that sought to undermine the merits of contenders. In fact, they even spoke of Wang Yangming’s canonization approvingly, unlike some others who harped on his moral shortcomings and intellectual heterodoxy. In contrast, advocates of Xue and Wang displayed considerable sectarian zeal, as they already seemed to have developed clear notions of themselves as members of an academic school or intellectual lineage, and therefore, they forged ahead with their project with the utmost enthusiasm, intent on securing the highest honors for their founder-teachers. Scholar-officials from Quanzhou, however, did not seem to have the same clear sense of partisan allegiance. Their promotion of Cai Qing was primarily prompted by their desire to propel Quanzhou onto a higher intellectual plane at the national level. Canonized as a “true Confucian” was the ultimate institutionalization of a local cultural capital that would

\textsuperscript{105} For discussion on this topic, see Huang Jinxing, \textit{Youru shengyu: quanli, Xinyang yu zhengdangxing} (Entering the sacred realm: power, faith and legitimacy) (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1994); and Chu Hung-lam, “Ruzhe congshi Kongmiao de xueshu yu zhengzhili wenti” (The questions of scholarship and politics in the enshrinement process to the Confucian Temple) in Chu Hung-lam, \textit{Kongmiao congshi yu xiangyue} (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2015), pp. 1-23.
be then transformed into a concrete symbolic capital with which the local would be represented at the national level.

Quanzhou’s literati earnestly sought to secure state honors for Cai Qing. In the Ming dynasty, only four Confucian scholars were enshrined to the Confucius Temple. The first was Xue Xuan, in 1572, 203 years after the founding of the dynasty, and 107 years after his death.\textsuperscript{106} Twelve years later in 1584, three more scholars were enshrined, namely, Hu Juren 胡居仁 (1434-1484), Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428-1500), and Wang Yangming. The enshrinements of both Xue and Wang have been extensively studied,\textsuperscript{107} and they followed a similar pattern. First, there was a considerable lapse of time between the candidate’s death and the proposal for his enshrinement, during which time posthumous title and official position were granted, and a state-sponsored local shrine was allowed to be built in his hometown. Second, the candidate authored a significant corpus of works, ideally exegetical in nature, which would be widely read by the scholarly class. Third, there needed to be a consensus regarding the candidate’s contribution to and transmission of the Confucian learning, as exemplified by his work and his life. Fourth, in addition to moral integrity and rectitude, actual official achievements/merits (功) were added as a new criterion for consideration. This was a Ming innovation. And finally, the lobbying of the inner court officials on behalf of the candidate was crucial, as it would be their opinions that


primarily influenced the emperor, who made the ultimate decisions to expand the sacrificial roll of the Confucian Temple. As Khee Heong Koh and Chu Hung-lam have demonstrated, the process of enshrinement of Xue and Wang fitted this pattern. The supporters and followers of these two Confucian masters rallied around the same goal. Significantly, during the protracted process of seeking the highest honor for their respective teachers, the two schools also went through the process of maturation and consolidation. No doubt, the process brought about a sharper sense of identity, unity, and cohesion to the new intellectual school.

Cai Qing’s journey to the Confucian Temple was much less dramatic. He clearly lacked the highly celebrated military victories that decorated Wang Yangming’s life. None of his most prominent and closest fellow Quanzhou scholars played any pivotal role in the effort to claim for him the highest honor. The staunchest latter-day followers of his teachings, such as Zhang Yue and Lin Xiyuan, albeit being important court officials, did not speak on his behalf. Officials of Quanzhou origin who petitioned for Cai Qing’s recognition did so out of their loyalty and affection to the locality in which Cai Qing was already objectified as a cultural symbol. They saw their effort not as the advancement Cai Qing’s teachings against that of other Confucian masters, but as adornment and magnification of the prestige and reputation of Quanzhou as a cultural and literary stronghold. To glorify Cai Qing was to heap official accolades on their hometown as a major player in the national theater of culture and learning.

State Endorsement of Cai Qing’s Work

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108 Zhang Yue and Lin Xiyuan were believed to be most faithful latter-day followers of Cai Qing’s teachings. They were also prominent officials at court. But they were absent from Cai Qing’s bid for a place in the Confucian Temple.
Xue Xuan and Wang Yangming’s road to the Confucian Temple revealed that widespread circulation of their works was a crucial criterion for their legitimacy. One objection to Xue’s candidacy was that he had not written enough and his works were not widely read by the scholar-officials.\textsuperscript{109} To justify and reinforce this criticism against Xue, Wang Yangming’s various works were hastily compiled and published by his supporters. This was an attempt to forestall similar attack on Wang’s candidacy.\textsuperscript{110} Not only did Wang’s supporters publish two editions of the same \textit{Completed Works of Wang Yangming} within a short period of two years, but one of his disciples went even as far as altering the contents of Wang’s \textit{Life Chronicle} (年譜) in order to portray a figure befitting the label of a “true Confucian.”\textsuperscript{111} Cai Qing’s main exegetical works were his commentary guides for young scholars on the \textit{Four Books} and the \textit{Classic of Changes}. From the prefaces, it was clear that they were already in wide circulation among the scholarly class at least within the Quanzhou area. Compared to Xue Xuan, whose main works were the \textit{Reading Notes} (讀書錄) and his collection of poems (河汾集), none of which was exegetical in nature, Cai Qing’s contributions to classical Confucian learning clearly made him a better candidate. However, his publications, intended for broader circulation of his learning after his death, were not consciously done with the deliberate intention of paving the way for his future enshrinement. About thirteen years after Cai Qing’s death, an anthology of his writings was compiled and published. In the preface that his bosom friend, Lin Jun 林俊 (1452-1527) wrote in 1521, the compilation was part of the commemorative efforts that Cai Qing’s friends

\textsuperscript{109} Khee Heong Koh, “Enshrining the First Ming Confucian” (2007), pp.331-336.
organized. Several names were mentioned in connection with this publication, but none of them belonged to Cai Qing disciples or later followers. Thus, the assembling of Cai Qing’s writings appeared purely as an act of remembering a respected friend, and not as a calculated strategy for getting eventual state recognition.

In 1529, Cai Qing’s third son, Cai Cunyuan, presented his father’s *Commentary Guide for Youth on the Classic of Changes* to the court for official recognition. Although being honored in the Confucian Temple was the most coveted achievement that any Confucian scholar in late imperial China could dream of, it was unclear if Cai Cunyuan harbored that thought when he presented his father’s work to the court. Cai Qing had died only twenty years before, and so the thought of canonization might be a farfetched idea to his son. In his memorial, Cai Cunyuan laid out the four-fold reasons that his father’s work deserved official recognition. First, the *Classic of Changes* was the most important and fundamental of all other Confucian classics; second, the book was the result of his father’s lifelong exhaustive study of the text, which did a great service to enriching the classical exegetical tradition; third, Cai Qing used the text to teach many who later attained success in the imperial examination; and fourth, since the guide was already influential in the Fujian region, obtaining state’s endorsement would enable more people beyond the province to benefit from it. His request was approved. Cai Qing’s *Commentary Guide for Youth on the Classic of Changes*, upon the issuance of an official decree, was to be published at the imperial publisher in Jianyang, Fujian. The published text would be distributed nationwide as an officially endorsed guide for the imperial examinations. Thereafter, Cai Qing’s commentaries became even popular among examination candidates whose influence spread to beyond Fujian

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112 Cai Qing, *Cai Wenzhuang gong ji*, preface.
113 Cai Xunyuan, “Jincheng Yi Jing Mengyin biao” (Memorial to present *Commentary Guide for Youth on the Classic of Changes*) in Cai Qing, *Cai Wenzhuang gong ji*, juan 8.
province. However, as Wang Yangming was soon to be canonized, especially with the rallying of court officials, Wang’s teachings, though not aligned with Cheng-Zhu’s orthodoxy, was nonetheless being accepted in the imperial examination. As such, the influence of Cai Qing’s works was soon eclipsed by Wang Yangming’s enshrinement, whose works then became dominant in the book market.114

State-Sponsored Local Shrine

Both Xue Xuan and Wang Yangming secured state-sponsored local shrines in their hometowns before their canonization, and so did Cai Qing. This was, however, unusual since there was already a local shrine dedicated to him. The petitioner was a scholar-official from Quanzhou, Li Xi 李熙 (dates unknown; obtained jinshi degree in 1568). From his memorial, we know that Cai Qing had been brought up together with other Ming Confucians in earlier proposals for enshrinement, but they were accepted. Clearly, Li Xi harbored some regret over the failed attempts. He therefore asked for a special shrine to be built on imperial orders in Quanzhou, which he justified as a compensation to the court’s refusal. The memorial was submitted in 1569, three years before Xue Xuan was canonized as the first “true Confucian” in the Ming dynasty. It was unclear who first suggested Cai Qing as a potential candidate for enshrinement. But he was clearly a contender from the very beginning when Xue Xuan’s qualifications were first considered and debated.

Judging from the contents and language of his memorial, Li Xi was familiar with the court debate over the criteria for canonization. He linked Cai Qing’s intellectual lineage to Zhu Xi and the Cheng brothers, emphasizing that his exegetical works on the Four Books and the

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Classic of Changes served as “wings” to classical learning (羽翼之功), whose popularity prevented many from deviating from the right path.\(^{115}\) This could be seen as a response to the objections against Xue Xuan’s lack of clear connection with an intellectual lineage and the paucity of his work. As Khee Heong Koh argues, in order to contend with the apparent limitations of Xue Xuan’s works and life, changes were made in the 1540 court discussions. The direction of debate was diverted by Xue Xuan’s petitioners from intellectual lineage and scholarly output to be re-centered on “practice” as a new criterion for evaluating Confucian masters.\(^{116}\) The discussions changed the meaning of “establishing merit to the Confucian tradition,” from the production of exegetical work to personal comportment that manifested the values of Confucian learning. Xue Xuan no doubt excelled in the latter. Unlike the criticism directed at Wang Yangming’s licentiousness in the court debates of 1584, no one had any disagreement on Xue’s morality and comportment. The image conveyed in his Reading Notes was indeed that of a morally impeccable person.

Li Xi also spoke to the moral comportment of Cai Qing and how this had been a consensus in Quanzhou. According to him, earlier proposals of Cai Qing’s enshrinement was turned down because the Ministry of Rites took this matter very seriously and would not make any decision lightly\(^{117}\) – the same reason that Xue Xuan’s proposal was initially turned down. Expressing his perplexity, he said:

[In the past], there had been two ways in which former Confucians were being ritually honored: in special shrines, and in Confucian Temple. The special shrine was dedicated to those reputable scholars in a village or a country while the Confucian Temple was reserved for those remarkable scholars who could rival the ancient sages. Therefore, they

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\(^{115}\) Li Xi, “Xuzhai Li xiansheng qing tesi zhoushu” (Li Xi’s memorial requesting for special shrine [for Cai Qing]), in Cai Qing, Cai Wenzhuang gong ji, juan 7.


\(^{117}\) “Libu fuben” (Ministry of Rites reply to Li Xi’s memorial) in Cai Qing, Cai Wenzhuang gong ji, juan 7.
were revered in the Confucian Temple whose ritual sacrifices were grand and solemn. However, those who discuss the matter today reject [proposals to] enshrinement with overly stringent standards. I am confused.\textsuperscript{118}

儒先之列於祀典有二，日專祀，曰從祀。專祀者謂表其一鄉一國之善士雲耳。至於從祀則直以其為天下之善士而又能進諸古人。故舉而配食於孔廟典誠隆矣。然而今之論者則又拒從祀為太嚴，臣竊惑焉.

Cai Qing, he opined, was not merely a “reputable scholar” at the village level. His scholarship and moral character qualified him for enshrinement in the Confucian Temple. He went on to say that Cai Qing, together with scholars like Wu Yubi 吳與弼 (1391-1469), Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428-1500), Hu Juren 胡居仁 (1434-1484), Chen Zhencheng 陳眞晟 (1411-1474), Zhang Mao 章懋 (1434-1522),\textsuperscript{119} and even Wang Yangming, who was the latest addition to the list of candidates, were equally qualified. Though they might not be perfect in all of the achievements of virtues 德行, words 言語, governance 政事, and learning 文學 – the four categories that Li Xi claimed were the yardsticks of accomplishments during Confucius’ time – they were nonetheless of the same caliber as Confucius’ prominent disciples such as Zi Xia 子夏 and Zi You 子由.\textsuperscript{120} Therefore, Li Xi seemed to be railing against the unreasonably perfectionist attitude of the Ministry of Rites on the enshrinement issue. He urged the emperor to order the Ministry of Rites to review the accomplishments of the prominent Confucian scholars of the Ming dynasty to date and enshrine the most creditable ones. Like other officials, Li Xi also

\textsuperscript{118} Li Xi, “Xu Zhai Li xiansheng qing tesi zoushu” in Cai Wenzhuang gong ji, juan 7.
\textsuperscript{119} These were Confucian scholars of early Ming period who had been considered for enshrinement.
\textsuperscript{120} Li Xi, “Xu Zhai Li xiansheng qing tesi zoushu”.
seemed to be perturbed by the fact that not a single Confucian master was canonized after more than two hundred years of the establishment of the dynasty. But he did not embrace any partisanship, since he similarly endorsed scholars who were the supposed founding figures of what came to be known as the School of the Mind – Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming. Li Xi’s proposal on behalf of Cai Qing was out of his deep concern for his hometown which he saw in relation with the state as whole. A special state-sanctioned shrine would not only consolidate the local cultural capital of Quanzhou, but more importantly it would connect the peripheral prefecture with the central government in capital in the same enterprise of cultural transformation of the common people. He said:

Although [Cai Qing] had been worshiped with others in the Quanzhou Altar for Worthies, and recently local officials also performed sacrifices at his home shrine during spring and autumn, amply showing the enduring public consensus on [Cai Qing]. But the shrine and altar were not bestowed with special honor, and the sacrificial rituals were mixed with regular ceremony. This seemed inadequate for honoring past worthies and transforming the future. [I] beg the Emperor to order the Ministry of Rites to investigate [what I proposed]. If what I said is not wrong, please issue a plaque with his funeral oration to be placed in his shrine. This way, the youths in my hometown, upon seeing the Emperor’s act of grace, would all be encouraged and celebrate. They will know that the Emperor takes the learning of principle seriously, respects and honors the scholars and officials. Even if they came from a peripheral and secluded coastal region, they would not be left out; even if time has lapsed and their influence waned, they will not be neglected………… Although the shrine is bestowed on a single person, the effect will be felt by the entire locality. From the locality, it will be extended to all under Heaven.121

雖然同祀於泉州鄉賢祠，暹者守臣亦以春秋往奠於家廟。固足以見公論之不冺。然祠宇之錫未蒙大特恩，而俎豆之榮祗混於常典。似於褒表往哲，風化將來猶有未備者。伏望皇上勅下禮部查議。如果臣言不謬，將先臣廟額祭文頒祀咸如故事。俾臣鄕里後生一旦覩天恩之寵被，莫不懽忻鼓舞動色相慶。謂聖天子之注意理學，崇重儒臣，不以海濱遙僻而有遺，不以沒世幽潛而或忽也。……。蓋所祀雖在一人，而風勸則在一鄉。由一鄉而推天下。121

121 Ibid.
Li Xi’s request was granted, and a shrine dedicated specifically to Cai Qing was constructed the following year in 1570, located right beside Quanzhou’s Confucius Temple. Annual sacrificial rituals were allowed to be performed on imperial decree, and the court issued an honorary plaque to be placed within the shrine. This state endorsement successfully turned Cai Qing into an institutionally recognized figure. The shrine still stands today. It now functions as the office for Quanzhou Publishing Committee and a meeting place for Quanzhou’s calligraphers. It remained an important landmark in Quanzhou ever since its establishment, having undergone three renovations during the Qing dynasty. The first one was initiated by Li Guangdi, who wrote the preface in which he propagated the image of an intimate scholarly circle centered around Cai Qing.

Figure 4. State-sponsored special shrine for Cai Qing constructed in 1570. It is now the location of Quanzhou Publishing Committee for Historical Documents and Council of Quanzhou Caligraphers.
Becoming a National Symbol for Quanzhou

Two years after Cai Qing’s state-sponsored shrine was established, Xue Xuan was canonized in 1572, becoming the first Ming scholar inducted into the Confucian Temple. Partisans of the Wang Yangming school worked consistently for his enshrinement, and petitions on his behalf only stopped after the retirement of Xu Jie 徐階 (1503-1583) from the Principal Grand Secretariat of the inner court. Xu Jie was a great supporter of Wang Yangming, and the leading force in propagating his teachings at the central court. He was replaced by Gao Gong 高拱 (1513-1578), who was an arch rival of Xu Jie and abhorred Wang’s teachings and the lecturing activities of his followers. Thus, rallying for Wang’s canonization came to a halt for a decade or so. The debate was reignited after the death of Gao Gong. In the process to place Wang Yangming on the highest altar, Cai Qing was never out of the picture. He was always present on the list of contenders. Official records show that Cai Qing was proposed by at least four different officials as a candidate for enshrinement. But none of them was a Quanzhou native or had any obvious connection with its scholarly community. Thus, there was no strong rallying force for Cai Qing’s cause, and he was most likely brought up together with others as Confucian scholars of high reputation but they could not rival Wang Yangming in either his support base or his fame.

Wang Yangming’s supporters achieved the final victory when he was officially enshrined in 1584. This outcome might have agitated officials of Quanzhou origin at court, who even

122 They were Assistant Commissioner Du Qijiao, Supervisory Secretary Wang Sanyu and Wang Jingmin, recorded in Tan Qian, Guo Que 國榷, Wanli 12th year, juan 72; and Censor-in-chief of Yunnan province, Huang Shiyan recorded in the Veritable Records of Shen Zong (Wanli Emperor), juan 151.
though they did not see themselves as disciples of Cai Qing, nonetheless worked for state recognition of this cultural capital of their hometown. Cai Qing thus far only possessed a state-sponsored local shrine, something that both Xue Xuan and Wang Yangming also owned. In addition, they were also given posthumous titles and hereditary posts along the way to their ultimate canonization. No one was really fighting for those honorary designations on Cai Qing’s behalf. Two officials from the Quanzhou area decided to take action. In 1587, the Left Censor-in-chief of the Censorate, Zhan Yangbi 詹仰庇 (1534-1604), submitted a memorial asking for the granting of a posthumous title to Cai Qing. He said, “Xue Xuan, Hu Juren, Chen Xianzhang, and Wang Yangming were enshrined to the Confucius Temple, and others like Luo Lun 羅倫 (1431-1478) and Luo Hongxian 羅洪先 (1504-1564) were endowed with posthumous titles…… Apart from them, I know a scholar whose virtue suffices for enshrinement, and whose worthiness qualifies for posthumous title. He was from my hometown – he was Cai Qing, the Nanjing Directorate of Education.”

Clearly, Zhan Yangbi highlighted his hometown in his petition. Though he was born a generation after Cai Qing, he took pains to state that Cai Qing was still alive in the public life in Quanzhou. Cai Qing’s life stories were widely told in Quanzhou, which was why Zhan was familiar with this past worthy since he was young. Cai Qing’s works also constituted his education material, and his impression of him was later corroborated by accounts in official and private publications as well as comments by scholar-officials across the nation. Zhan did not

123 Zhan Yangbi, “Duchayuan zuojianduyushi Chiting Zhan xiansheng shugao” (Memorial submitted by Left Censor-in-chief Zhan Yangbi) in Cai Qing, Cai wenzhuang gong ji, juan 7.
124 Ibid.
assume an intellectual sectarian attitude, as he endorsed the enshrinement of Wang and Xue while arguing that Cai Qing was equally qualified. His petition was framed in the usual discourse for enshrinement: contribution to Confucian learning. In particular, he framed Cai Qing’s contribution within Zhu Xi’s genealogy. He said, “Zhu Xi contributed to the work of the sages, and Cai Qing contributed to the work of Zhu Xi (朱熹有功于聖人，而清則有功于朱氏).”125

To prove that the influence of Cai Qing’s works extended beyond provincial borders, Zhan stated that even officials at the imperial lectures for the Emperor (經筵) often quoted Cai’s words. As if he sensed that enshrinement was not likely, especially when a new canonization had just taken place, Zhan compromised by asking for a posthumous title for Cai Qing if discussions for enshrinement could not be resumed any time soon.

As with Li Xi, Zhan Yangbi was dissatisfied with the court’s excessive caution and overly stringent standards for enshrinement. He claimed that in the former dynasties, many Confucian masters readily received their well-deserved canonization, but in the case of the Ming, even though the dynasty had been established for more than two hundred years, there had only been four enshrinements thus far. The result was that qualified scholars like Cai Qing were deprived of the timely sacrifices (俎豆) that they deserved, and they would meet the same fate as scholars like Yang Shi 楊時 (1053-1135) and Hu Huan 胡瓘 (993-1059), who received enshrinement more than five hundred years after they passed away.126 Zhan’s request was

125 Ibid.
126 They were important Song dynasty Confucian scholars. Yang Shi was enshrined in 1495, while Hu Huan in 1530.
approved. In the following year, Cai Qing was granted the posthumous title of Wenzhuang 文莊 (cultured and dignified). But he was also right in predicting Cai Qing’s fate, who was not canonized until in 1724 in the subsequent Qing dynasty.

Sixteen years later, in 1604, another official from Quanzhou made the last effort during the Ming dynasty to obtaining imperial endorsement for Cai Qing. Li Tingji 李廷機 (1542-1616), Minister-on-the-Left for the Ministry of Rites, submitted a memorial asking that Cai Qing be given a posthumous official post, but he refrained from petitioning for his canonization. Li Tingji’s memorial is short, appealing to what was by then the well-developed reputation of Cai Qing, which testified to the symbolic value of him in areas beyond his hometown, and even at the national level. He said, “His virtue is known all across the country, his books are studied by all who devoted to the classics, and his name is recorded in the book for famous officials of our dynasty. In the early years, when he was discussed for enshrinement to the Confucian Temple, many in court expressed their approval.”127 He did not see the need for enumerating the various achievements and qualifications of Cai Qing, for, as far as he was concerned, they were already well-known facts among the literati all over the country. This shows that a century after Cai Qing’s death, he had already been successfully transformed from a local cultural figure to a cultural symbol from Quanzhou at the national level.

Li Tingji then directed his narrative back to the local. One major reason for Li Tingji’s request was that although Cai Qing was offered the position of the Directorate of Education in Nanjing, he did not actually receive it because of his untimely death. Thus, the benefits that came

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127 Li Tingji, Jiuwo Li xiansheng qing zhengguan zoushu” (Memorial asking for granting posthumous post [for Cai Qing] by Li Tingji), Cai Qing, Cai Wenzhuang gong ji, juan 7.
with the official appointment were not received by Cai’s family and his descendants. But more importantly for Li Tingji’s concern was that a lower official rank affected the level of ritual sacrifices to be practiced in honoring Cai Qing at the local shrines. Thus, he asked for the higher official rank which Cai Qing rightfully deserved, so that ceremonies back home could be carried out at a higher state-sanctioned level. He also argued on behalf of Cai Qing’s own family, which reflected his familiarity with the local affairs of his hometown. He stated that for three generations, Cai Qing’s lineage had declined. No one in the family was in a position to plead for benefaction from the court on Cai Qing’s behalf, which was why Li Tingji stood up to spoke for him.

Li’s petition was granted. Cai Qing was given the posthumous position of the Left Minister of the Ministry of Rites. It is noteworthy that the imperial order highlighted his orthodox learning and his pivotal role in the formation of the intellectual tradition of not only his hometown, but the whole of Fujian. It declared:

Cai Qing was the former Directorate of Education of the Imperial Academy in Nanjing, whose learning came from a good source, and actions adhered to principles. He exhausted his years authoring books that explicate the subtle words of Confucius and Mencius. He single-mindedly cultivated himself so as to illuminate the orthodox lineage of Zhu Xi and the Cheng brothers. He was not attached to the official career path, and was carefree in his entry into and departure from officialdom. His open defiance of Prince Ning exhibited his stern integrity and his pure bearing. He distanced himself from the flattering and the slick so as not to be polluted by them. He savored poverty and his plain life as if they were maltose. He was the progenitor of the intellectual tradition of the eight prefectures of Min, and carried the hopes of a generation of the former literati. Even today, latter scholars still hold his former signature accomplishments in awe.128

128 Ibid.
Both Zhan Yangbi and Li Tingji were officials of Quanzhou origin. They took individual actions to work for enhancing the posthumous position of Cai Qing. Although they highlighted his scholarship and moral achievements, which was customary in petitions of this kind, they invariably harked back to their hometown in pushing for their request. Unlike the advocates for Xue Xuan and Wang Yangming’s canonization who displayed well-coordinated and concerted efforts to systematically put their masters on the highest Confucian altar, Cai Qing’s supporters clearly viewed him as an accomplishment of Quanzhou worthy of state recognition. Their actions were to be interpreted as rallying for an enhanced position of Quanzhou at the national level, rather than declaring an intellectual allegiance to a local scholar. In their memorials, they demonstrated more concern for the locality of Quanzhou than galvanizing any intellectual partisan zeal. Cai Qing was seen more as a cultural capital of Quanzhou with which the locale’s status and reputation could be enhanced vis-à-vis other places at the national level.

The resultant endowments of posthumous accolades showed that Cai Qing was successfully transformed from a local worthy to a scholarly paragon of national eminence. Though he was not enshrined until the subsequent Qing dynasty, the efforts by the Quanzhou officials in the late Ming nonetheless institutionalized this transition from a local cultural capital to a symbolic capital owned by their beloved hometown, Quanzhou.

Conclusion

Cai Qing was again brought up for enshrinement in 1638 during the reign of the last Ming emperor. The petition was submitted by the Chief Administer of Shanxi province, Guo Zhengzhong 郭正中 (dates unknown), who recommended that Cai Qing, along with several other
Ming Confucian scholars, be enshrined.\textsuperscript{129} Nothing came of it. In 1724, more than two hundred years after Cai Qing passed away, he was finally canonized as a “true Confucian”. The petition was not a Quanzhou official initiative, and Cai Qing was enshrined with nineteen other Confucians of various past dynasties, including Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181-234) of the Three Kingdoms Period. The canonization seemed to be a part of the regular procession of court affairs, having no special significance in either intellectual partisanship or locality-associated favoritism.

There was no record that Li Guangdi, while serving the Kangxi emperor (r.1661-1722), maneuvered for Cai Qing’s further advancement. But his manipulation of historical facts, inherited by his grandson Li Qingfu, to forge Quanzhou’s scholarly community into a reputable intellectual lineage could be understood in light of his endeavor of cultivating and strengthening the cultural capital of Quanzhou. Such intangible capital was objectified in the architectural establishments of memorial arches and shrines as sites of worship. Their physical presence in the town’s center was a constant reminder to the local people of their cultural heritage and uniqueness. Obtaining state recognition institutionalized the locale’s cultural capital, and cemented its significance at the national level. Cai Qing and the Cheng-Zhu learning tradition of Quanzhou became the symbolic capital of Quanzhou that distinguished it from other locales. In the later times, it remained an important local imperative for the local gentry class to renovate and restore the shrines and arches dedicated to their symbolic figures. These structures, together their objects of celebration and recognition, constituted the material manifestations of Quanzhou’s cultural and symbolic capital.

\textsuperscript{129} Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty, Chongzhen reign 11\textsuperscript{th} year, 16\textsuperscript{th} of the second month.
Cai Qing’s Biography and His Road to Enshrinement

Cai Qing: 蔡清

Other names: 介夫, 虛齋

Years of birth and death: 1453-1508

Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county

Status at birth: military

Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1484, age 31

Highest official position: Vice Education Intendant Censor of Jiangxi

Master-disciple relations: studied with Lin Pin

Posthumous title and position: Grand Academician Wenzhuang (文莊), Vice Minister of Rites

Publications: Sishu mengyin (Commentary Guide for Youth on the Four Books),
Yijing mengyin (Commentary Guide for Youth on Book of Change),
Taiji tushuo (Diagrammatic explication of the grand ultimate),
He-luo sijian (Personal views on the Yellow River diagram and the Luo River book)

1453: Born
1470: studied with Zhou Xubai 周虛白 (dates unknown)
1473: studied with Lin Pin
1477: Obtained first place in provincial examination

Memorial arch erected to commemorate his achievement 解元坊
1481: failed in metropolitan examination
1484: obtained jinshi degree
1488: served in Bureau of Receptions, Ministry of Rites

Transferred to Bureau of Records, Ministry of Personnel
1491: mother died

Served in Ministry of Personnel in Nanjing.
1499: eldest son Cai Xunwei died
1500: father died
1506: appointed the Educational Superintendent of Jiangxi
1508: died
1529: Cai Cunyuan presented Cai Qing’s *Commentary Guide for Youth on the Classic of Changes* to the court for official decree to published nationwide

1559: Family shrine of Cai Qing converted into a local shrine honoring Cai Qing by Quanzhou Magistrate Xiong Ruda 熊汝達

1569: Li Xi submitted memorial requesting for special local shrine honoring Cai Qing

1570: Shrine honoring Cai Qing established by Quanzhou magistrate Zhu Bingru 朱炳如

Located to the southwest side of Quanzhou Confucius Temple

(1572: Xue Xuan enshrined to Confucius Temple)

(1584: Wang Yangming, Chen Xianzhang, and Hu Juren enshrined to Confucius Temple)

1587: Zhan Yangbi submitted memorial asking for posthumous title given to Cai Qing

1588: Cai Qing given posthumous title Wenzhuang

1604: Li Tingji submitted memorial asking for posthumous post given to Cai Qing

1604: Cai Qing given the posthumous post: Minister on the right of Bureau of Rite 禮部右侍郎

1724: Enshrined into Confucius Temple
CHAPTER THREE

The Quanzhou Community of Learning:
Creating Local Identity through Commemorative Writing

As I have shown in the previous chapter, Cai Qing, a scholar of primarily regional
influence, was elevated as a scholar of national prominence, whose scholarship and intellectual
achievements came to be seen as an important cultural and symbolic capital of Quanzhou. This
apotheosis, so to speak, was achieved through the unstinting and purposeful efforts of the
individual Quanzhou scholars who served in the court, in conjunction with the endeavors of the
officials appointed to Quanzhou. In this chapter, I attempt to map the scope and structure of the
Quanzhou scholarly community from the mid to late Ming period based on the commemorative
writings they wrote for one another. Given the nature of commemorative writings that reflect the
intimate relations between the author and the deceased, the picture of the Quanzhou scholarly
community revealed therein is a more accurate portrayal than those in the intellectual
genealogies. The community depicted is by no means exhaustive, as the commemorative
writings would not include all social relations a person cultivated during his lifetime. But it does
nonetheless show the most intimate social relations that formed the inner core of the community.

My study of these writings also reveals that a local identity was gradually generated
through the repeated references to the scholars and their stories, which revolved around the
locality. Pride in their locality’s specialness was reflected in their writings which celebrated the
distinct scholarly culture of their hometown. The community’s strong leanings towards Cheng-
Zhu learning were hailed by the local literati as a special cultural capital of Quanzhou, which set
it apart from other localities. This special trait was repeatedly mentioned in local writings, which
eventually became an integral part of the locale’s memory. Over time, a collective local
Quanzhou identity was forged, one that was supposedly marked and distinguished by its unique 
embrace, preservation, and transmission of Cheng-Zhu learning. And this was how Quanzhou 
was remembered.

**The Commemorative Genre and Local Identity**

Commemorative writings were pieces the literati wrote on behalf of others to 
memorialize their exemplary lives and achievements, touting their stellar official careers and 
inspiring moral actions. They included biography (*xingzhuang/xinglue* 行狀/畧), epitaph (*muzhi* 
*míng* 墓誌銘), tombstone inscription (*shendao bei* 神道碑), eulogy (*jiwen* 祭文), life chronology 
(*nianpu* 年譜), portrait commentary (*xiangzhan* 像贊), and preface and postscript of anthologies. 

These writings, which I consider to be an identifiable and specific genre, flourished in the late 
imperial period. In the anthologies of the works (*wenji*) of many scholars of the Ming and Qing, 
we find many such essays written not only for their fellow-scholars and their kin and associates, 
but also for people outside their social group. For instance, it was commonplace for literati to pen 
biographies and eulogies for chaste women and virtuous wives. (Later in chapter five, I will also 
show that traditional Confucian scholars were not hesitant in commemorating merchants, 
regardless of whether they were successful or not.) Here, besides the correspondences among the 
Quanzhou scholars, I use the commemorative writings to reconstruct the social network of the 
intellectual community. Given the laudatory nature of the genre, the writings were either 
composed out of great admiration of the person, or because of the authors’ close relations with 
the dead and/or his family. The number of commemorative writings one received after death is
also indicative of one’s social stature while one was alive, reflecting the level of success as a member in the literati world.

Here, I seek to reconstruct the Quanzhou scholarly community during its heyday by studying the scholars’ own writings, particularly the commemorative genre. This avoids the pitfall in hagiographic intellectual genealogies that may stretch and distort the actual reality. It will be shown that the scope and influence of the Qingyuan intellectual community was much limited than what some genealogies portrayed, particularly that of Li Qingfu. And the Qingyuan scholars were not as sectarian and exclusive as it has been assumed. Instead some of them had even cultivated genuine friendships with key members of the Wang Yangming school.

My work here, while dispelling the notion that there was actually a tight-knit and well-defined intellectual school, does reveal that there was the emergence of a strong sense of a local identity. The commemorative writings the Qingyuan scholars wrote for one another yielded an image of a local community and fellowship, which the later genealogists adopted, manipulated, and built upon in an effort to construct a school of their own for the purpose of battling with Wang Yangming’s teachings. These intellectual endeavors provide evidence of the “localist turn” of the literati class from the Southern Song dynasty, as observed and argued by much recent scholarship in the past three decades.\(^{130}\) The “turn” was not only about realizing the Confucian political ideal at the national level redirected at the local level. It was also about how the locale was perceived and remembered. Peter Bol shows that there was a demonstrable

increase in a variety of writings that remembered what was conceived as the “local” in Wuzhou, Guangxi province, from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. The literati became increasingly devoted to documentation, recording, and commemorating things local, which Bol classifies into the categories of gazetteer, cultural geography, and biographical and literary record.

The commemorative genre was indisputably writings of the local, by the local, and about the local. The intellectual activities and achievements of Quanzhou were crystalized in local writings into a defining, crowning feature of Quanzhou, a cultural capital, so to speak, and this feature was repeatedly reinforced in the commemorative writings for the local worthies and in works about the locale. Their authorial intention was not to create a school/sect, as the Quanzhou scholars in general, with the exception of one or two, were not vehement sectarians against the Wang Yangming school. They wrote first and foremost because of their role as the local elite class. Their purpose was to commemorate the local worthies and scholars, and valorize their remarkable intellectual achievements and moral behaviors which distinguished and credentialed them as leaders of the locality. Commemorating the local worthies whom they admired and with whom they had a close personal relationship also helped to promote themselves and secure their status in the scholarly community as local eminences. The repeated emphases on bureaucratic and moral achievements in the commemorative writings, together with the erection of physical monuments such as shrines and altars in town centers, collectively served to enhance the legitimacy of the gentry as social leaders who helped to maintain the local order.

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132 Wang Qixiao, “Cong ‘fuyi shengjiao’ dao ‘gaizheng jingzhuan’: Lin Xiyuan sixiang yanjiu” (From ‘complimenting the teachings of the sages’ to ‘correcting the classical exegesis’: a study of Lin Xiyuan’s thought), *Shiyun*, 10 (Sept. 2004): 35.
I aim to reconstruct the social network of the Qingyuan community of learning, based upon the commemorative writings of four key Cheng-Zhu scholars: Cai Qing, Chen Chen, Zhang Yue, and Lin Xiyuan. The latter three were life-long bosom friends. I will examine their actions directed at the Wang Yangming School in both their private and official capacities. One important observation to bear in mind is that despite their shared intellectual orientation and admiration of Cai Qing, they did not assume a united front or craft any collaborative strategy to combat the rising popularity of Wang’s teachings. Zhang Yue, in fact, cultivated genuine friendships with several key followers of Wang Yangming who wrote eulogies and epitaph in his honor after his death. No other Quanzhou scholar exhibited a more confrontational attitude toward the Wang School than Lin Xiyuan. But his sectarian outlook was more a reflection of his idiosyncratic personality than a general trait of the Qingyuan community.

This examination of the membership and filiation of the community shows that it was made up of contemporaries of the core members of the group who were mostly first-generation disciples of Cai Qing, and latter-day Quanzhou scholars whose commemorative writings of their scholarly elders served to highlight and consolidate their cultural and intellectual legacies. Reinforced by commemorative shrines and altars, a local identity of Quanzhou as a stronghold of Cheng-Zhu learning during the Ming was generated and perpetuated.

**Advocates of Cheng-Zhu Learning: the Core of Quanzhou Community of Learning**

The four key persons intimately associated with the Quanzhou community of Cheng-Zhu learning were Cai Qing, Chen Chen, Zhang Yue, and Lin Xiyuan. Much of the Chinese scholarship has conveyed the impression that they were the four pillars of Cheng-Zhu learning in Fujian during the mid to late Ming period. However, of the four, only Chen Chen had direct master-disciple relations with Cai Qing. Zhang and Lin, like many other Confucian scholars in
Quanzhou, read Cai Qing’s works since they were young, raised in the Cheng-Zhu intellectual tradition of the city. They were singled out not only because they were once high-ranking officials but also on account of their actions against Wang Yangming’s teachings. Their common stance in this regard helped give rise to the impression that they forged a fellowship of sorts, and in time, they came to be viewed by later scholars such as Li Qingfu as a sectarian school engaged in rivalry with the contending Wang learning.

Even though Zhang Yue and Lin Xiyuan did not personally study with Cai Qing, they were bosom friends with Chen Chen who did. However, did the trio form a united front against the Wang School? What were the extent and scope of the Quanzhou community of learning beyond these four key members? Was Li Qingfu right to include almost every literary person in Quanzhou prefecture as members of the community? A reconstruction of the social network based on the key members’ commemorative writings provides more accurate information on the extent and nature of this intellectual community. Diagram one shows the social network that is based on the commemorative writings centered around Cai Qing. The direction of the arrow indicates the person written about. Sketches of the biographical data of all the personages mentioned in the Qingyuan community can be found in the appendix.
Diagram 1: social network based on commemorative writings centered on Cai Qing.

From the diagram, we can tell that Lin Xiyuan was the only person in the trio to have written commemorative essays for Cai Qing. He penned a detailed biography of Cai Qing which became the authoritative reference for Cai’s life. He was also active in the publication and dissemination of Cai Qing’s monumental works – Sishu mengyin and Yijing mengyin (Commentary guide for youth on the Four Books and Classic of Changes) – for both of which he wrote prefaces. Lin was the most vigorously sectarian scholar of the Quanzhou scholars. Even though he had not personally studied with Cai Qing, he could indeed be considered as someone who inherited Cai’s teachings through his works – a sishu 私淑 disciple in traditional Chinese parlance. More than once did Lin Xiyuan express his regret for not being fortunate enough to have personally encountered Cai Qing’s teachings.133

Lin Xiyuan, Chen Chen, and Zhang Yue did not know one another when they were in Quanzhou as they were from different counties. They met each other in the capital when they were taking the metropolitan examination in 1517. Miraculously all three of them obtained the jinshi degree in that year. The fortuitous event became a legend in Quanzhou’s lore. Needless to say, their simultaneous success at the highest level of the civil service examination brought tremendous pride to their hometown and earned them immense reputation back home. During the three years in capital, they stayed in the Qingshou Buddhist Temple where they lived, ate and studied together. Many reportedly saw them in the marketplace, talking and laughing among themselves, oblivious of others’ presence. These anecdotes found its way into several editions of the local gazetteers on Quanzhou prefecture and Jinjiang county, hailed as remarkable achievement of the locale and as evidence of the intellectual tradition in which the trio was nurtured. However, according to some sources, Zhang Yue and Chen Chen seemed to have forged a closer bond as the two often studied the Classic of Changes together until late at night. Lin Xiyuan, on the other hand, addressed Zhang Yue as his confidant (zhiji 知己) in his letters.

134 Lin Xiyuan, “Song Zhang Weiqiao xingren zheguan Nanyong xu” (Seeing Zhang Yue off to Nanyong) in Zhang Yue, Xiaoshan leigao (Collected works of Zhang Yue) (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2011), appendix, p.357.
135 These anecdotes were usually found under the section of “local custom” (fengsu) as evidence of Quanzhou’s immersion in orthodox learning. See for instance Prefecture Gazetteer of Quanzhou of the Wanli reign (1572-1620) (Quanzhou: Quanzhou zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui bangongshi, 1985) and County Gazetteer of Jinjiang of the Daoguang reign (1820-1850) (Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, 2000).
137 Lin Xiyuan, “Song Zhang Jingfeng junshou tixue Zhejiang xu” (Sending Zhang Yue to assume the post of Education Intendent of Zhejiang) in Zhang Yue, Xiaoshan leigao (2011), appendix, p. 361.
Diagram two: social network based on the commemorative writings centered on Lin Xiyuan.

Lin Xiyuan was a person of extraordinary character, ambitious and hot-tempered.\(^\text{138}\)

Comparing his commemorative writings network with that of Chen Chen (diagram three) and Zhang Yue (diagram four), we can see that few were willing to commemorate his life and work. This might be due to his controversial character and the conflicts he was involved in over the Annam issue and the problem of illicit maritime trade in the Jiajing reign (1521-1567).\(^\text{139}\) Only a latter-day Quanzhou scholar, Cai Xianchen 蔡獻臣 (dates unknown) from his native county (Tong’an), was willing to write his biography and also a preface to his collected works. Cai Xianchen was neither a famous Quanzhou gentry nor a prominent official. The biography he wrote on behalf of Lin was a short one, and the preface was dated 1612, forty-five years after the


death of Lin. It is therefore reasonable to surmise that Lin Xiyuan had a dubious reputation in his
days and might not have established an admirable stature in the eyes of his contemporaries.

Diagram three: social network based on commemorative writings centered on Chen Chen.
Diagram four: social network based on commemorative writings centered on Zhang Yue.

In contrast, from diagram three, we can tell that Chen Chen was a well-respected and well-liked scholar in the community. Not only were his contemporaries (Zhang Yue, Lin Xiyuan, Yi Shizhong 易時中) willing to write for him, but many latter-day scholars also made a point to commemorate his life and work. All the historical sources point to the fact that Chen Chen was the closest disciple of Cai Qing. It was said that “although people who reached the gate of Cai Qing could amount to hundreds…, after the death of Cai Qing, there was no one but Chen Chen who could be said to have not disappointed his master.”¹⁴⁰ Chen Chen became Cai Qing’s disciple at age twenty-five, by which time he was already an accomplished young scholar. Their encounter was marked by mutual admiration. At the residence of Li Cong 李聰 (dates unknown), but a friend of Cai Qing, Cai came upon the writings of Chen Chen who was studying with Li

¹⁴⁰ Zhang Yu, “Jiangxi tixue jianzhi Zifeng Chen xiansheng muzhiming” (Epitaph for Chen Zifeng) in Xiaoshan leigao, juan 16, pp. 233-236.
Cong. Cai Qing was impressed by Chen Chen’s talents and the high caliber of his writings, prompting him to say, “What I attained through much hardship, and what other people would not understand when I communicated my findings with them, Chen Chen has found by himself, unbeknownst to me. I would teach him without any reservation from now on.”¹⁴¹ Chen Chen then performed the formal ritual of establishing master-disciple relationship with Cai, inaugurating a life-long relationship of work and study.

Their close relationship can be seen from the fact that Cai Qing brought Chen Chen along, together with his family, when he was appointed as the education intendent of Jiangxi province. Chen Chen took charge of the responsibility of tutoring Cai Qing’s two sons. He served briefly in court but, like his teacher, did not seem to have liked official life. When he was thirty-two, he quit officialdom, went back to Quanzhou and started teaching at the local school. It was recorded that people came from many different places to study with him, and his students amounted to hundreds.¹⁴² Though there could be some degree of exaggeration in such records, they nonetheless pointed to Chen Chen’s contribution to Quanzhou’s learning atmosphere. When lecturing, he would first use the local dialect, followed by official and literate Mandarin. Soon after Chen Chen returned home, Cai Qing also resigned from his position in Jiangxi and spent the last remaining years of his life in his hometown. The two of them took great delight in their involvement in the intellectual enterprise of their locality. They discussed daily the questions they encountered from the audience. Chen Chen’s notes of the lectures and discussions formed the foundations of the two major works he was to be known for: the *Sishu Qianshuo* (四書淺説

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¹⁴¹ Li Qingfu, *Minzhong Lixue Yuanyuankao*, juan 60.
¹⁴² Chen Dunlu and Chen Dunyu, *Chen Zifeng xiansheng nianpu*, p. 360.
Commentary on the *Four Books* and *Yijing Qianshuo* (*易經淺說* Commentary on the *Classic of Changes*).

Chen Chen was undoubtedly the best and most intimate disciple of Cai Qing. His central position in the community could be deemed from the many commemorative writings of him from both his contemporaries and latter-day scholars. While his inheritance of Cai Qing’s teachings was highlighted in the writings, many of the authors also expressed their personal bond with Chen Chen, whose passing was considered to be a major loss to them as well as to Quanzhou. Lin Xiyuan, in his eulogy, juxtaposed his active official career with the withdrawn life of Chen Chen. Only after he experienced the ebb and flow of the official life in the turbid world of Ming politics did Lin Xiyuan come to realize the cleverness in Chen Chen’s choice of life which he compared to living among the celestial immortals (*高如神仙中人*).143 Whenever he took a break from his official post and went back to Quanzhou, he would spend days with Chen Chen talking about life and scholarship. Those were the good old days that dissappeared with the passing of Chen Chen, which Lin Xiyuan missed dearly. He said:

Coming back from Haibei, [we will] each sat at one end of the bed talking for days. This was among the most enjoyable moments in life. However, such days are forever gone. [We are now] separated in two different worlds. When would be the next time we meet, having a cup of wine and accompanied by fragrant incense while expressing our thoughts?144

海北歸來，每擬與先生連牀對榻，談論數日，以盡平生之歡，而今乃不可得矣，幽冥兩隔相見何期，斗酒瓣香聊見予意。

143 Lin Xiyuan, “ji Chen Zifeng xiansheng wen” (eulogy to Chen Chen) in *Tongan Lin Ciya xiansheng wenji* (Collected works of Lin Xiyuan) (Tainan: Zhuangyan wenhua shiye youxian gongsi, 1997), juan 16, p.724.
144 Ibid.
Zhang Yue, while also expressing the grief of losing a bosom friend, associated the passing of Chen Chen with the place that nurtured him. The following was part of the epitaph inscription he wrote for Chen Chen:

“The Gai river and Zimao mountain, runs deep and stands tall. The birth and decline of heroes and outstanding person, Emerging today from [the nurturing ingredients] of thousands of years. [Therein] lays the physical body and the soul/spirit, The mountain is named Xiulin.”145

涵江紫帽，流峙高深。英爽飛沉，千古來今。體魄所藏，山曰秀林。

The river and the mountain were located in Jinjiang county, the hometown of Chen Chen and Cai Qing. Zhang Yue apparently linked the emergence of great scholars like Chen and Cai with such natural endowments of their birthplace which he saw as indispensable in their upbringing. The spiritual energy generated over thousands of years and embodied in such scenic places was seen as having an impact in nurturing the human realm, making possible the emergence of prominent local figures who would be taken as manifestations of the spiritual essence of their hometown. Xiulin was the name of the mountain where Chen Chen was buried. His body and soul were given back to the place that nurtured him, achieving a unity with the natural endowments of his hometown, which would continue to nurture future generations. Peter Bol has argued that producing records on the geography of a locale constituted a key component of the local writings produced by local literati. He calls texts of this nature “cultural

145 Zhang Yue, “Jiangxi tixue jianzhi Zifeng Chen xiansheng muzhiming” (epitaph of Chen Chen) in Xiaoshan geigao, juan 16, p.236.
Records of mountain ranges were especially many, and all local gazetteers have a section on mountains. It became customary in linking prominent figures with the mountains which made them sacred in the eyes of the locals. Accordingly, accounts of Cai Qing’s youthful refuge in the Daping mountain and the Qingyuan mountain’s spiritual correspondence to Cai Qing’s successful in the examination, both appeared under the records for these mountains.

Nature and the human realm were organically connected. When Lin Xiyuan and Zhang Yue enumerated their intimate associations with Chen Chen, they were at the same time writing themselves into the literati’s circle and connecting themselves with the spiritual endowments of the locality.

While Chen Chen did not have a thriving official career but in fact, like his teacher Cai Qing, enjoyed a reclusive life of learning, Zhang Yue was, by contrast, an active and reputable scholar-official. One may even say that he was a figure comparable to Wang Yangming in military accomplishments as well as literary cultivation. But he was much less known in history because of the predominance of the Wang Yangming school while he was alive. Wang was credited with the quelling of the attempted usurpation of Prince Ning whom Cai Qing, as we have seen, unapologetically defied. Zhang Yue successfully pacified the repeated rebellions of the non-Han communities in the southwest and southeast provinces. Wang Shenzhong 王慎中 (1509-1559), a famous literary scholar of the late Ming period and also a native of Quanzhou, wrote in the preface for Zhang Yue’s collected works, “[In general], it is difficult for [someone] who is distinguished in military affairs and righteous with virtues to be accomplished in scholarship and literature as well. This was why Zhang Yue was superior to today’s people. His

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146 Bol, “The Rise of Local History: History, Geography, and Culture in Southern Song and Yuan Wuzhou”, p. 54-64.
learning was in accordance with the Way, and so his military achievements and righteous virtue came from therein. This was why the man was superior.147

夫功烈、德義，難以兼有文章，此公之獨盛於今人也！文之合乎道，而功烈、德義由是以出，尤公之所以為盛也。

Unlike Lin Xiyuan, whose regret for not having the opportunity to study with Cai Qing was expressed through his heartfelt words, Zhang Yue was more restrained in his feelings. Nonetheless, Cai Qing’s works deeply influenced and moved him. For instance, he wrote excerpts from Cai Qing’s *Secret Precepts* (密箴 mijian) onto the dividing screen in his inner hall so that he could be reminded of those very words every time he walked pass them.148 While Zhang Yue and Lin Xiyuan did not personally know Cai Qing, they were often mentioned together with Chen Chen as the most reputable Cheng-Zhu scholars of Quanzhou who followed Cai Qing’s lead. This was not only due to the similar intellectual orientation they shared, but also because of the life-long friendship they cultivated as shown in the commemorative writings they wrote for one another and perpetuated in the writings of later scholars.

**Actions against the Wang Yangming School**

The friendship between Chen Chen, Zhang Yue, and Lin Xiyuan gave the impression of their being a fellowship, especially when they displayed disapproval of Wang Yangming’s teachings. However, they did not take any concerted efforts even though they were living at a time when the Wang Yangming school was rapidly gaining popularity. They each took disparate actions in their own capacity. Despite Lin Xiyuan’s call for more intense efforts, Chen Chen and

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147 Wang Shenzhong, “Zhang Jingfeng gong wenji xu” (Preface to the Zhang Yue’s anthology) in *Xiaoshan leigao*, appendix, p.310.
148 Zhang Yue, “Minzhen yin” (Preface to [Cai Qing’s] Secret Precepts) in *Xiaoshan leigao, juan* 17, p.249.
Zhang Yue did not respond to Lin’s plea. Zhang Yue, in particular, even became friends with several key Wang Yangming followers. Thus, there was no strong sectarian rivalry between the core of Quanzhou community of learning and the Wang Yangming school. Thus to consider the trio of Chen Chen, Zhang Yue, and Lin Xiyuan as a fellowship would be a stretch of what actually took place.

Chen Chen, being the closest disciple of Cai Qing, can be seen as the direct intellectual heir of the master’s teachings. Although he was not an active official and spent most of his time in his hometown, he used his pen to voice his opinion on the rise of the Wang Yangming school. He wrote an essay entitled Zhengxue pian (Essay on Orthodox Learning 正學篇) as an effort to rectify the learning of his day which he thought had gone astray. He said, “If orthodox learning was being learned, the Way would not go astray. When learning goes stray, correctness is lost. I feel for today’s [situation], so I use the ancient Way to rectify learning and use the learning of the past to pursue the Way, desiring that they be returned to what is right.”

其學正學道弗岐也，學而岐焉失其正也，予之有感於今也，故將以古道而正其學，以古學而求其道，欲其歸諸正而巳矣。

However, apart from declaring his adherence to the orthodox Way through proper learning, Chen Chen, leading a quiet and withdrawn life of scholarship, did not take any further action to actually combat the rise of Wang Yangming’s teachings. Zhang Yue and Lin Xiyuan, on the other hand, led active official lives and took more concrete and forceful actions against the rising school. Zhang Yue pinpointed what he considered to be the major shortcomings and dangers of Wang’s teachings, namely that their erroneous thoughts and ideas about the mind-

149 Chen Chen, “Zhengzue pian” (Orthodox learning) in Chen Zifeng xianfeng wenji (Collected works of Chen Chen) (Jinnan: Qilu shushe, 1997), p. 640.
heart would engender wrong perspectives and wrongful actions that led to social problems. He said:

As for today’s scholars, where they erred is precisely their identifying objects as principle, taking the human mind-heart as the mind-heart of the Way and recognizing material endowments as Heaven-endowed nature. [They] stir the mind-heart into fabricated actions, acting recklessly without restrain and embellishing it with the two words of “liang zhi” (innate knowledge of the good). This is the reason for the overflowing of human desires, the disaster of which was no less than a deluge or a beast!  

今之學者，差處正是認物為理，以人心為道心，以氣質為天性，生心發事，縱橫作用，而以“良知”二字飾之。此所以人欲橫流，其禍不減於洪水猛獸者此也！

Here, Zhang Yue might have foretold the later pervasive narratives on the degenerative effects on society when the teachings of Wang Yangming developed to the extreme and overwhelmed the late Ming society. A year after Zhang Yue attained the jinshi degree in 1518, he traveled to Yuyao in Zhejiang province to engage in face-to-face debates with Wang Yangming. These debates focused on the philosophical concepts from the Great Learning, but they both failed to convince and convert each other. Nonetheless, Wang Yangming showed his appreciation for and admiration of Zhang Yue, describing him as “an outstanding person of Fujian.”  

No one got the upper hand in the debates. Upon returning home, Zhang Yue composed the essay, “Principles of learning in my humble hut,” (草堂學則 caotang xuez), declaring his allegiance to Cheng-Zhu orthodox learning.  

Zhang Yue also tried to promote Cheng-Zhu learning during his official tenure. Luo Risheng 駱日昇 (1573-1623), a native of Hui’an county, Quanzhou, noted that when he went by a place called Liuzhou in Guangxi province, where Zhang Yue had served as the provincial governor, he saw a stone stele.

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150 Zhang Yue, “Da Huang Taiquan taishi” (Reply to historian Huang Taiquan) in Xiaoshan leigao, juan 6, p86.
151 Liu Yong, Zhongwan Ming shiren de jiangxue hongdong yu xuepai jiangou (Beijing, 2015), p. 220.
152 Zhang Yue, Xiaoshan leigao, p. 261.
commemorating Zhang’s achievement there. The inscriptions described how Zhang Yue had promoted the “learning of illuminating utmost sincerity” (明誠之學 mingcheng zhixye), a core of Cheng-Zhu learning in the area.\textsuperscript{153}

Lin Xiyuan undoubtedly was the most confrontational of the trio. He repeatedly urged Zhang Yue and Chen Chen to combat the rise of Wang Yangming school, but from them, he received mixed reactions. In a letter he wrote to Zhang Yue, he expressed his disappointment with Chen Chen: “The teachings of Wang Yangming had become increasingly popular in the areas west of Yangtze River, especially in Ji’an. This could only be corrected by the Educational Superintendent. I had suggested this to Chen Chen, but they were [to him] empty words.”\textsuperscript{154} Lin Xiyuan compared the popularity of Wang Yangming’s teachings to a “serious disease” (劇疾 ju ji) whose treatment required some vigorous large-scale action.\textsuperscript{155} But when Chen Chen was appointed the surveillance commissioner of Jiangxi, a hotbed of Wang Yangming school, Chen Chen refused to take up the appointment. Lin Xiyuan saw this as an opportunity too good to be missed, as far as curbing the growth of Wang Yangming’s teachings was concerned. Lin Xiyuan also made similar suggestion to Zhang Yue when he was appointed the education superintendent of Zhejiang, urging him to actively take the advantage of his position to curb the further rise of the Wang Yangming school.\textsuperscript{156}

Thus, of the core of the scholarly community, and even of all Confucian scholars in Quanzhou, Lin Xiyuan was the most vigorous advocate for Cheng-Zhu teachings. He was

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{153}] Luo Risheng, “Zhang Yanghui gong citing beiji” (Inscription in the ancestral hall of Zhang Yue) in Xiaoshan leigao, appendix, p.374.
\item[\textsuperscript{154}] Lin Xiyuan, “Yu Zhang Jingfeng tixue shu yi” (Letter to Zhang Yue) in Xiaoshan leigao, appendix, p.358.
\item[\textsuperscript{155}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{156}] Lin Xiyuan, “Song Zhang Jingfeng junshou tixue Zhejiang xu” (Letter to Zhang Yue upon his appointment as Educational Superintendent of Zhejiang) in Xiaoshan leigao, appendix, p.361.
\end{itemize}
confrontational, at times even provocative. He published Cai Qing’s works and his own Sishu Cunyi (四書存疑 Reserved questions on the Four Books) while serving as the Surveillance Commissioner of Guangdong to disseminate orthodox teachings.\textsuperscript{157} The most provocative action Lin Xiyuan took against the Wang Yangming school was his composition of a highly polemical piece, “Final edition of the commentaries and exegeses of the Great Learning” (大學經傳定本 Daxue jingzhuan dingben). This text incurred the wrath of the court and resulted in his demotion to commoner status. In 1550, when Lin Xiyuan was sixty-nine years old, he was still an unrelenting anti-Wang Yangming sectarian. After reviewing and critiquing the exegeses of various scholars on the Great Learning, Lin Xiyuan arrived at his own interpretations which he assembled and turned into the aforementioned essay. He saw it as the final authoritative interpretation of this ancient classic, one that would bring all subsequent debates, including that of his own times, to an end. Full of confidence, he submitted this work to the court, hoping that it could gain imperial recognition as the ultimate, standard interpretation, and to be published nationwide.\textsuperscript{158} Quite contrary to his high hopes, the court deemed his work to be an arrogantly willful act of denouncing the classics of the sages and punished him by taking away his hereditary official benefits. Although unsuccessful in his efforts, Lin Xiyuan was convinced that the intellectual contention and resolution between the Cheng-Zhu School and the Lu-Wang School ultimately had to be adjudicated on exegetical ground, harking back to textual explications and interpretations of the ancient classics.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{157} Lin Xiyuan, “Zengding Sishu cunyi xu” (Preface to the expanded edition of Sishu cunyi) in Tongan Lin Ciya xiansheng wenji, juan 7, p. 562; also see “Congke Cai Xuzhai xiansheng pidian Sishu Chengwen xu” (Preface to the republication of Cai Qing’s edited version of the Four Books and Cheng brothers’ essays) in Tongan Lin Ciya xiansheng wenji, juan 7, p. 563-4.
\textsuperscript{158} Lin Xiyuan, “Gaizheng jingzhuan yi chuishi xunshu” (Memorial suggesting the correction of the classical exegeses to be passed as instruction for posterity) in Tongan Lin Ciya xiansheng wenji, juan 18.
\textsuperscript{159} Wang Yiqiao, “Cong ‘fuyi shengjiao’ dao ‘gaizheng jingzhuan’: Lin Xiyuan sixiang yanjiu”, p.37. The return to exegetical studies of the classical texts could be taken as the germination of and transition to the increasing
It is noteworthy that Lin Xiyuan and Zhang Yue forged closed relations with Cheng-Zhu scholars outside Fujian. Luo Qinshun (1465-1547) was one such scholar. His major work, *Kunzhi ji* (Record on challenges of learning), was highly praised by both Zhang and Lin as veneration of the orthodox learning. Zhang Yue commented that the work “was good enough in complementing the sagely classics, resisting and tearing down heterodox teachings, and becoming the guiding master for later studies.”

林希元不仅为罗钦顺撰写前言，还撰写了一篇悼词，高度评价罗钦顺的学问为孔孟之正学，他敬仰他为泰山。在他在广东任职期间，林印刷并出版了《困知记》，在管辖范围之内。

From the above analysis, we can tell that the core of the Quanzhou community of learning was indeed scholars following Cheng-Zhu’s tradition. But, facing an intellectual valorization of evidential studies that began to gain importance and currency in the early Qing, reaching its zenith in the middle part of the dynasty.

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161 Zhang Yue, “Qing cunwen shangshu Luo Qingshun shu” (Memorial asking for ‘cunwen’ benefits for Luo Qingshun) in *Xiaoshan leigao*, juan 2, p.17.
164 Zhang Yue, “Qing cunwen shangshu Luo Qingshun shu” (Memorial asking for ‘cunwen’ benefits for Luo Qingshun) in *Xiaoshan leigao*, juan 2, p.17-18.
opponent that was rapidly spreading across the country, their actions did not go beyond the traditional means of publishing and writing down their thoughts. Comparing to the synergy generated by staging public lecturing and establishing private academies by the Wang Yangming school on a national scale, the actions taken by Chen Chen, Zhang Yue, and Lin Xiyuan seemed piecemeal and insignificant. It was true that they did not have the resources, both in terms of men and capital, to allow them to undertake more forceful actions. But the non-confrontational attitude on the part of the Cheng-Zhu scholars from Quanzhou, with the exception of Lin Xiyuan, explained the absence of a united front against their rival. Thus, despite their intellectual orientations, they did not formulate a close-knit fellowship to combat Wang Yangming school. Their individual polemical efforts, however, were repeatedly mentioned in the local writings, as well as their life biographies, as part of their scholarly achievement. As building blocks of local identity, collectively and over time, the image of Quanzhou as a stronghold of Cheng-Zhu learning was established, even though its scholars were not as sectarian and confrontational as their intellectual identity may suggest.

**Zhang Yue’ Interaction with the Wang Yangming School**

The trio, despite their friendship, did not craft any collaborative strategy to deal with the rise of Wang Yangming school. In fact, because of their distinct and different personalities, they did not always agree on many issues. For instance, Chen Chen did not answer to Lin Xiyuan’s call for active official action in Zhejiang province where he was given an important post of the educational superintendent. Lin Xiyuan and Zhang Yue also took diametrically opposite positions toward the Annam crisis. Lin saw the usurpation of Mac Thai To as a perfect opportunity to reconquer Vietnam whose official relations with the Ming court had broken down
for many years. But this warmongering attitude was directly opposite to the pacifying policy favored by Zhang Yue and the court.

Not only did they disagree on issues with important state implications, Zhang Yue, in particular, had cultivated deep-seated friendships with some of the key Wang Yangming scholars. In the social network constructed out of the commemorative writings centered on Zhang Yue, we can see that the scholars who wrote for him after his death were famous Wang Yangming followers: Xu Jie 徐阶 (1503-1583), Nie Bao 聂豹 (1487-1563), and Geng Dingli 耿定力 (1541-?). Xu Jie was the Grand Secretariat of the Inner Court and was credited with the flourishing of Wang Yangming’s teachings as a result of his active promotion at court. He and Zhang Yue should have met in court. In the epitaph he wrote for Zhang Yue, Xu regarded him as “a friend of the Way and righteousness” (道義交 daoyi jiao). Putting their intellectual differences aside, Xu Jie admired the character of Zhang Yue who managed to survive the treacherous political waters of the late Ming officialdom and emerged pure and respectable. He commented on Zhang Yue’s character, “Putting other things about Zhang Yue aside, since he entered the Chu area, he did not have one single communication with the capital. Even though he encountered slander and anger, he remained as before. His integrity of adhering to his self was not something that scholar-officials nowadays could achieve, who are all concerned with keeping safe.”

165 See Kathlene Baldanza, Ming China and Vietnam (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), chap. 4.
166 Xu Jie, “Ming gu zizheng dafu, zongdu Huguang Chuangui junwu, duchayuan youdu yushi, zeng taizi shaobao shi Ranghui Jingfeng Zhanggong muzhiming” (Epitaph of Zhang Yue) in Xiaoshan leigao, appendix, pp. 320.
167 Xu Jie, “Yu Hu xunan Zongxian shu” (Letter to Hu Zongxian) in Xiaoshan leigao, appendix, 337.
Nie Bao was an important first-generation disciple of Wang Yangming. He met Zhang Yue when he was the inspector of Fujian, during which time Zhang was observing the mourning ritual for his parents in his hometown. Nie Bao actively promoted the teachings of Wang Yangming during his tenure in Fujian, establishing academies, printing and publishing the works of Wang Yangming. Zhang Yue was naturally not happy with Nie Bao’s activities. Nie Bao visited Zhang visits, but they could not agree with each other intellectually. Nie Bao said, “[Zhang Yue] took the Song Confucians, the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, as his masters. He respectfully revered their exegesis, taking their teachings as measures of his actions in everyday life. As to all that talk about nature and life, he regarded them as vague and superficial, which he adamantly rejected. Even smart and worthy people of the day could not convince him.”

As with Xu Jie, Nie Bao admired Zhang Yue’s personality and character, but expressed reservations for his learning, saying, “You are indeed an outstanding person, but why are you enmeshed in old words?” To which Zhang Yue replied, “I honor what I heard, that is enough.” Even though they could not agree intellectually, they still continued their discussions via letters. Nie Bao acknowledged Zhang Yue’s accomplishment in thoroughly grasping the teachings of orthodox Cheng-Zhu learning. In fact, after reading Zhang Yue’s *Xue Ze* (Learning...
Nie Bao exclaimed, “This is what learning is all about! This is the sectarian tradition that had been transmitted since the Way traveled south; this is what Confucius and Mencius used to teach tens of thousands of generations. If [we] want to say that he does nothing apart from adhering to the commentaries and following Cheng-Zhu as the original teachers, it is up to people to think that that is so. But [they] have not penetrated to the core being of the honored man.”

Their mutual admiration is shown in how they addressed each other. Zhang Yue called Nie Bao “elder brother” 年兄 in his letters, while Nie Bao saw Zhang Yue as a close friend too painful to lose. He concluded his tombstone inscription for Zhang Yue with the following words:

Since Jingfeng [Zhang Yue] has passed away, who is going to be my companion? As for the tradition of the Way in the south, he had completely control of its ingredients. [His] literary talents were [comparable to] those of Dong Zhongshu and Jia Yi, and [he] rivalled the virtues of Cheng-Zhu. He was different from his contemporaries, but accorded with the royal seal. My commemoration is not adequate [for the expression of my feelings], and my tears shed like rain.

净峰已矣，吾誰與侶？道南一脈，公噬其胾。董賈文章，程朱德義。所異者時，若合符璽。銘之不足，有淚如雨。

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172 Zhang Yue, “Yu Guo Qianzhai xianfu” (Letter with Guo Qianzhai) in Xiaoshan leigao, juan 6, p.80.
173 Both the epitaph and tombstone were lost when Zhang Yue’s tomb was destroyed during the cultural revolution. However, the writings survived in Xu Jie and Nie Bao’s anthology. See Zheng Huanzhang, “Records on the Tomb of Zhang Yue” in Quanzhou wenbo (Journal of the City Museum of Quanzhou), No. 1, (2010), pp. 1-5.
174 Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BCE) and Jia Yi (200-169 BCE) were great Confucian scholars and officials of the Han Dynasty.
175 Nie Bao, “Zeng taizi shaobao shi Yanghui Zhang gong shendao bei” (tombstone inscription of Zhang Yue) in Xiaoshan leigao, appendix, p.325.
Geng Dingli was another scholar of the Wang Yangming school who wrote commemorative writings for Zhang Yue. It was unclear how the two came to know each other. Geng was the younger brother of his more famous brothers Geng Dingxiang (耿定向 1524-1597) and Geng Dingli (耿定理 1534-1577). The youngest Geng once served as the governor of Fujian. It might be during this time that Zhang Yue came in contact with the Geng brothers. Geng Dingli apparently knew Zhang Yue well enough to write a sacrificial record for him, in which he commented, “Zhang came onto the scene slightly after Wang Yangming, but he was able to discuss and debate with Wang in a wide-ranging manner. Even though their ways differed, as far as the substantiality of the tenets and the efficacy of the practice are concerned, [we] cannot discuss which is more superior.”176

From these commemorative articles, we can see that despite their differences in intellectual orientation, Zhang Yue cultivated genuine friendships with scholars of the Wang Yangming camp who in turn praised highly his character and scholarship. The intellectual rivalry was not as severe and vehement as it was generally portrayed in later histories and studies. Lin Xiyuan’s much more pronounced sectarian bent appeared to be a function of his own personality and idiosyncrasies, but it was not representative of the larger scholarly community of Quanzhou. Beyond these key members, no other Qingquan scholars exhibited a strong sectarian attitude even though they were admittedly orthodox Confucians in the Cheng-Zhu camp.

Scope of the Quanzhou Community of Learning

The social networks constructed from the commemorative writings of the key members of the scholarly community in Quanzhou give us some clear glimpses of the scope and personnel intimate to the intellectual circle. Even though the constructed networks are by no means exhaustive, they reveal the early members close to the core of the circle as well as the latter-day members who played critical roles in the propagation of the community’s scholarship and the promotion of its reputation and prestige. It was in the accumulated veneration heaped upon the core members of community in later ages, as well as in the repetition of their life stories and interactions among them in the local writings, that the orthodox learning tradition became an integral part of the memory and identity of Quanzhou which came to be known for its supposed custodianship of Cheng-Zhu learning. The process was the workings of uncoordinated, yet spontaneous, actions undertaken by the literati, the result of which was the creation of a local Quanzhou identity in which orthodox learning and its followers were an integral and indispensable component.

Early Members

In diagram one, two scholars were contemporaries with Cai Qing, namely, Lin Pin 林玭 (1434-1506) and Lin Jun 林俊 (1452-1527). The former was Cai Qing’s teacher. Presumably Lin Pin had established a reputation in Fujian for his mastery of the Classic of Changes. In his youth, Cai Qing traveled to Houguan (present day Fuzhou) to study the classic under his guidance for more than three years. Lin Pin must have been an influential figure to Cai Qing since Cai Qing wrote a eulogy for his teacher’s wife,\textsuperscript{177} suggesting that he maintained close contact with Lin’s

\textsuperscript{177} Cai Qing, “Ji Linyun shi shimu wen” (Eulogy to wife of Lin Pin) in \textit{Cai Wenzhuang gong ji, juan 5}.
family throughout his life. Lin Jun, on the other hand, was a good friend of Cai Qing’s, and was just one year older. It was unclear how the two became good friends, but since both served in court as high-ranking officials at the same time and both were from Fujian, it was not surprising that they struck up a friendship.

In diagram two, Lin Xiyuan wrote a eulogy and a preface to the collected works for Wang Xuan 王宣 (dates unknown). Not much is known about Wang, except that he was also a first-generation disciple of Cai Qing. This could be corroborated by the fact that Wang Xuan’s sister was later married to Chen Chen, which indicated the close relations among direct disciples of Cai Qing. Of the educational work Nie Bao had done in Fujian, establishing the Yifeng Academy in Jinjiang county was one of the most remembered. It was built to commemorate the cultural and scholarly influence that Luo Lun 羅倫 (1431-1478) had exerted on Quanzhou.\(^{178}\)

Wang Xuan was appointed as the first dean (shan zhang 山長) of the academy. Zhang Yue, while observing mourning at home, was invited to be one of the instructors at the academy.\(^ {179}\)

Chen Chen, as we have shown, was the closest disciple of Cai Qing. From his contacts, we are able to identify some of the other key members among the first-generation disciples of Cai Qing. Wang Xuan was certainly one of them, and Fu Jun 傅浚 (dates unknown) was another. He was the other person for whom Chen Chen had written a eulogy, which revealed that when Chen was twenty-eight years old, Fu Jun invited him to be the tutor of his son, Fu Kai 傅

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\(^{178}\) Luo Lun, pseudonym Yifeng 一峰, was demoted to be in charge of the Maritime Office in Quanzhou. During his sojourn in Quanzhou, he conducted lectures and taught many.

\(^{179}\) Zhang Yue had written a record of the Yifeng Academy, see “Yifeng Luo xiansheng shuyuan ji” (A record of the Yifeng Academy) in Xiaoshan leigao, juan 6, p.199.
Yi Shizhong 易時中 (dates unknown) and Wang Shenzhong 王慎中 (1509-1559) were two other contemporary scholars who wrote life biographies for Chen Chen. In Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao, Yi Shizhong was recorded as a direct disciple of Cai Qing, while Wang Shenzhong was said to have studied with Yi, making him a second-generation disciple of Cai Qing. Although not much was known about Yi Shizhong, Wang Shenzhong was a famous figure of the Jiajing reign (1521-1567), especially in the literary circle. In his youth, Wang supposedly studied with Chen Chen’s brother and also with Yi Shizhong in Jinjiang, but in his adulthood, he forged close connections with many Wang Yangming followers, including Wang Ji 王畿 (1498-1583), Zou Shouyi 鄒守益 (1491-1562), Luo Nianan 羅念庵 (1504-1564), and Nie Bao. Since Wang’s intellectual orientation was unclear, it is unconvincing and problematic to regard him as a Cheng-Zhu scholar as such. Nonetheless, he paid his respect to the intellectual community that he benefited from. In the biography he wrote for Chen Chen, he harked back to the remarkable achievement of Chen Chen, Lin Xiyuan, Zhang Yue, and Shi Yuguang 史于光 (1479-1526), all of whom were Quanzhou natives, in obtaining the jinshi degree in the same year. This had apparently become a well-circulated legend in which the literati of Quanzhou took tremendous pride. Wang Shenzhong did not know Chen Chen personally, but in the biography, he expressed immense admiration of him, as his works had been influential to him. Thus, his passing prompted him to write a commemorative article to express his grief and respect for a local worthy. It was for similar reasons that he wrote on behalf of Zhang Yue. In the preface to

Zhang’s collected works, Wang Shenzhong addressed himself as a “person from the same county” 郡人, drawing attention to the importance of the sense of common origin and communal ties with the same native place, together with a sense of responsibility to shine the spotlight on the achievements of fellow-county-men. When the news of the passing of Zhang Yue reached him, Wang Zhenzhong cried for days.\(^{181}\) Though Wang Zhenzhong might not be as orthodox a Cheng-Zhu scholar as his fellow scholars of Quanzhou, as an equally accomplished figure possessing even higher fame, he expressed similar emotions for his hometown and the local worthies to whom he looked up.

**Latter-day Quanzhou Scholars**

The diagrams include several latter-day Qingyuan scholars who contributed to the commemoration of key local worthies. Su Jun 蘇濬 (1542-1599) and He Qiaoyuan 何喬遠 (1555-1632) produced more than one type of commemorative writings for Cai Qing and Chen Chen. They were born more than two generations later.\(^{182}\) Reared in the intellectual milieu of Cheng-Zhu learning, both of them grew into reputable scholars in their own right. Su Jun was probably the most accomplished Cheng-Zhu scholar from Quanzhou after Cai Qing. He was a prolific writer, producing altogether four commentaries on the *Four Books* and the *Classic of Changes*, two on each. He was especially known for his exegeses on the *Classic of Changes* which were quite influential. Although he was a high-ranking official who served once as the educational intendent of Zhejiang, there was no record of him taking any strong or even tangible action in promoting Cheng-Zhu learning in an effort to combat the rise of the Wang school,

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\(^{181}\) Wang Zhenzhong, “ji Chen Jianwu xiansheng wen” (eulogy for Chen Jianwu) in *Zunyan ji, juan* 19.

\(^{182}\) A generation in traditional Chinese context is thirty years.
whether in official capacities or in private life. He did, however, write prefaces to Cai Qing’s *Mizhen* (密箴 Secret admonitions) and *Xingli Yaojie* (性理要解 Important explanations on the principle of nature) which showed his familiarity with Cai’s works, and spoke to the enduring influences of Cai Qing’s scholarship and ideas on Quanzhou’s culture of learning.

In his prefaces, Su Jun wrote with immense pride about his hometown that produced an intellectual luminary like Cai Qing who transmitted and preserved the true teachings of Cheng-Zhu. He wrote that he selected verses from the *Secret Admonitions* and hung them in his studio, from which he constantly drew inspirations and insights. Both Cai Qing and Chen Chen had individual shrines constructed for them in Quanzhou, where seasonal sacrifices orchestrated under official auspices were performed. It was quite possible and in fact probable that the shrines also housed their portraits as an object or icon of worship. Portraits were also included in the later editions of their collected works. It was customary to have a renowned local scholar write a commentary for the portrait, and Su Jun did write such a captioning commentary for Chen Chen, as well as a biography of him. Again, the birth of a great scholar was associated with the natural landscape of his birthplace. In the commentary inscription for the portrait of Chen Chen, Su Jun wrote: “Tall and upright on top Mount Zimao, crystal clear and pure in the middle of River Gai, was born master Chen Chen like dragon and like shining light.”

183 Su Jun, “Chen Zifeng xiansheng zan” (Portrait inscription of Chen Chen) in Chen Dunfu and Chen Dunyu, *Chen Zifeng xiansheng nianpu*, p. 330.

He Qiaoyuan was another figure prominent to have written commemorative texts about past local worthies. In fact, he contributed significantly to the local writinga about Quanzhou,
documenting and chronicling nearly all aspects of the locale. His name would be a familiar one to those who study Fujian or Ming history. He is known less as a Cheng-Zhu scholar than as a historian or a chronicler. His magnum opus was the *Min Shu* (Book of Fujian), a hundred and fifty-four volume encyclopedia on Fujian. This work could also be categorized under the genre of “cultural geography” in the sense that he was a local scholar producing and organizing knowledge about his native place as a way to incorporate the local into the literary construction of the literati population. Such a massive effort of examining the cultural geography of Fujian bespoke He Qiaoyuan’s attachment to his home province. His compilation included the histories and cultures of the all prefectures and counties of Fujian, as well as the biographies of notable figures, both men and women. All the Quanzhou scholars discussed thus far could be found in He Qiaoyuan’s work. Since the legends and the notable stories associated with these scholars were found in many texts that constituted as research materials for He Qiaoyuan, unsurprisingly, they were repeated again in He’s work. For instance, the spiritual correspondence of Mount Qingyuan with Cai Qing’s emergence as a great scholar were found in both the sections for the mountain and for Cai Qing. The mountain where Cai Qing was buried was also given special attention, giving the place a degree of sacredness. He Qiaoyuan had also written portrait inscriptions for Cai Qing and Zhang Yue, in which he praised their orthodox learning and their contribution to Quanzhou in setting in motion the intellectual tradition from which he and other latter-day scholars greatly benefited. And these were only the tip of the iceberg of the

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184 His other monumental works included *Mingshan Cang* (Book Hidden in Famous Mountain) and *Huangming Wenzheng* (Exemplary Writings of Worthy Men of the Ming Dynasty), were both valuable historical sources for the study of Ming dynasty.
185 Peter Bol, “The Rise of Local History: History, Geography, and Culture in Southern Song and Yuan Wuzhou”, pp. 54-64.
186 He Qiaoyuan, *Min Shu* (Book on Fujian) (Xiamen: Fujian renmin chuban she, 1994), see juan 7 for Qingyuan mountain, and juan 84 for Cai Qing.
188 The portraits can be found in the respective collected works of Cai Qing and Zhang Yue.
numerous commemorative essays he composed for his fellow natives of Fujian. His name frequently appeared in other local writings, such as gazetteers and prefaces to family lineages, evidence of his active local involvement.

Li Guangjin 李光縉 (1549-1623), the main protagonist in chapter five, was another latter-day Quanzhou scholar who featured prominently in local affairs. He wrote the preface to Chen Chen’s Life Chronology in which he told of his admiration of Chen’s character and his scholarship ever since he was young. He was a student of Su Jun, but unlike his teacher or He Qiaoyuan who became high-ranking officials, Li Guangjin was not a successful metropolitan examination candidate. He spent most of his life in his hometown in Jinjiang county. His active local involvement will be the subject of chapter five. It suffices to state here that because of the high official status of Su Jun and He Qiaoyuan, they were invited more frequently to compose commemorative writings for prominent local figures such as Cai Qing, Chen Chen, and Zhang Yue. They also served more often as distinguished guests on august occasions such as the ritualistic hanging of portraits of the worthies in their local shrines. Li Guangjin, without the halo of an official title, nonetheless earned himself the high reputation as a respected local gentry. He wrote more often for minor figures such as chaste wives and virtuous merchants, and less for official occasions. But he nonetheless paid his due respect for the senior scholars of his locale, and from whose work he benefited a great deal. In the preface he wrote for Chen Chen’s Life Chronology, he expressed his regret for being born too late after Chen Chen, so that he could only try to get glimpses of the great man through his writings. Through contemplating the life events of Chen, Li Guangjin came to learn the true nature of the human world. He highly praised Chen Chen’s wisdom of remaining pure and unperturbed in his age. And he quoted his teacher
Su Jun in describing Chen Chen as someone who was “deeply profound and absolutely pure” (深潛純粹).\textsuperscript{189}

From the above, we can see that latter-day scholars of Quanzhou inherited the cultural legacy from their senior scholars. They learned about the intellectual circle of the core Cheng-Zhu scholars whose stories they read in the local writings and whose works they read since they were young. As members of the local elite, they contributed to the cultural construct of the Quanzhou locale by continuing to commemorate the past scholars. By virtue of the commemorative act itself, the latter-day scholars connected themselves to the cultural and intellectual legacy of the locality, and inserted themselves into the community of learning which came to define Quanzhou. Invoking his teacher Su Jun who was an accomplished scholar on the Classic of Changes in his commemoration of Chen Chen, Li Guangjin purposefully linked himself to the intellectual tradition of Quanzhou, of which he was now a member.

Conclusion

This chapter, through mapping out the scope and extent of the intellectual community of Quanzhou, based on the correspondences and commemorative writings that the core members wrote for one another, argues that it was through the repeated mentioning of the scholars and their life stories in these local writings that the image of Quanzhou as a stronghold of Cheng-Zhu learning was created and perpetuated. The intimate friendship and close association between Chen Chen, Zhang Yue, and Lin Xiyuan might have given the impression of a close-knit fellowship, but there was no concerted effort on their part as a united front to stem the increasing popular tide of Wang Yangming learning. In fact, Zhang Yue cultivated genuine friendships with

\textsuperscript{189} Li Guanjin, preface to Chen Zifeng xiansheng nianpu.
several Wang Yangming followers who had high regard for his character and scholarship. The latter-day Quanzhou scholars grew up under the influence of the orthodox Cheng-Zhu learning initiated by Cai Qing, and they no doubt looked up to him and his favorite disciple, Chen Chen, as local worthies of historic significance. In time, they came to be embraced and hailed as cultural and symbolic symbols of Quanzhou.

The intellectual tradition set in motion by Cai Qing and Chen Chen were reinforced and magnified in the commemorative writings by the local literati to celebrate the scholarly accomplishments of their intellectual forebears and peers. The writings transformed the learning of Cai Qing and his disciples into the major cultural legacy and testament of Quanzhou, which also found physical manifestations in the form of shrines and altars where seasonal sacrifices were performed. The accumulated endeavors of generations of Quanzhou scholars created the image and memory of Quanzhou as the center of Cheng-Zhu learning with which the locals identified and in which they took pride. It became the identity of the locality which, in some important and unique ways, set Quanzhou apart from other l
CHAPTER FOUR
Quanzhou Scholars as Gentry: Guardians of Tradition and Agents of Change

The previous chapter has shown how generations of Quanzhou scholars consciously created a place-based identity through their writings that highlighted the socio-cultural distinctions and accomplishments of Quanzhou. This chapter studies the scholars in terms of their assumed identity and role as the local gentry. It has three parts. The first is a historiographic review of gentry studies. It shows that the Quanzhou scholars, in their roles as the local elite class, were fulfilling many of the same functions in the local society as did the gentry in other parts of China. However, they stood out as far as their antagonistic attitude toward Buddhism was concerned. While many of the literati, especially those in the lower Yangzi area, openly embraced Buddhism and saw philanthropy to and support of monasteries as a special kind of investment that both affirmed and strengthened their elite status,190 the Quanzhou scholars adamantly and disdainfully disapproved of the religion and its practices. In an age of notable intellectual syncretism, especially toward the end of the Ming period, such that the boundaries between the three teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism became increasingly blurred, the Quanzhou scholars’ firm stance against Buddhism appeared to be glaringly anomalous. In a prominent and undisguised way, it bespoke their allegiance to Cheng-Zhu orthodox learning.

The second section is devoted to examining the contents of and rationale behind their hostile attitude toward Buddhism, and their devotion to the legitimate lineage and tradition of Cheng-Zhu learning. The third section shows that the Quanzhou scholars, despite their

190 Timothy Brook, Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China (MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1994).
intellectual orientation, were not stubborn and morally rigid Confucian scholars who obstinately adhered to established practices and values. The last section of the chapter is a close study of the commercial activities of Lin Xiyuan who participated in the then still illegal maritime trade. Though Lin Xiyuan seemed to be an iconoclast within the Quanzhou community of learning due to his idiosyncratic character, he was undoubtedly a dedicated Cheng-Zhu scholar. How do we reconcile his intellectual orthodoxy with his illicit commercial activities? I suggest that they were two issues belonging to two separate realms in which a scholar-gentry operated differently with distinct agendas and intentions. Safeguarding and promoting Cheng-Zhu orthodox learning was an issue through which the Quanzhou scholars associated with the state and their intellectual counterparts in other areas. This was the reason that Lin Xiyuan, even in his retirement, requested court recognition of his exegetical compilation, so that it would be distributed nationwide as the final standardized interpretation of the classic of *Great Learning*. While in his capacity as the local elite, he was apparently more concerned with the welfare of the local population, which explained his support of foreign trade in defiance against the imperial decree. Thus, this chapter argues that the Quanzhou Confucians self-consciously proclaimed themselves as Cheng-Zhu scholars was a means by which they related themselves with the state, while within their locality, they acted out of the welfare of their hometown and the livelihood of their fellow countrymen. Lin Xiyuan’s case shows that he was on the one hand, guardian of the Cheng-Zhu intellectual tradition, and on the other a flexible and nimble individual who was open and adaptive to the new changes and demands of the his times. Together with chapter five, which closely examines Li Guangjin’s reevaluation of the traditional perceptions of the merchant class, I wish to hammer home the argument that the Quanzhou Confucians were both guardians of the Cheng-Zhu intellectual tradition, as well as agents and heralds of a new era.
A Historiography of the Late Imperial Chinese Gentry

The gentry class occupied a most important position and played a critical role in the continuum of state-society relations. The gentry basically functioned as an intermediary group that operated in between the imperial state and local society. The gentry were usually landlords, but not all landlords could be recognized as gentry. The Chinese terms, *shi shen* 仕绅, *xiang shen* 乡绅, or *xiang guan* 乡官, usually refer to the two privileged groups of *shi* (scholar-gentry) and *shen* (official-gentry). The former was someone who held examination degrees and resided in the locality waiting for official appointments. He could also be someone who was satisfied with his advancement in the examination system and chose to give up the official career path. The latter group consisted of degree-holders as well as active and retired officials. In both cases, certain level of success in the imperial civil service examination was the ticket for entry to the gentry class.

The gentry were situated at the apex of the local societies, serving as leaders and the elite class, but below the state, fulfilling extra-bureaucratic services. They were the intermediary brokers between the society and the state. The term, “*xiangshen*” (gentry), appeared for the first time in the *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty* in 1588, but the idea and acknowledgment of an informal local elite was in evidence much earlier. In the 1980s, the late Robert Hartwell and Robert Hymes published some pioneer studies which demonstrate that between the Northern Song period (960-1126) and the Southern Song period (1127-1279), due to the failure on the part of the court and central government to establish full control of the entire political realm, many of

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the literati diverted their attention to the local as the space in which to realize their Confucian ideals. Many of the elite families had also made the shift away from the center and the national sphere, developing a distinctly localist orientation, so to speak, as they sought better and more effective ways to defend the privileged positions of their families. Their studies inspired many other scholars, who together forged the rise of local history. They study the blossoming of local writings in the form of gazetteers, biographical and literary records of local figures, monuments, and the natural landscape from the Song dynasty onward, clearly and convincingly showing the literati’s increasing concern with and attachment to the local vis-à-vis the state. The literati also took leadership roles in promoting and enhancing local welfare. When the state’s budget could not adequately meet infrastructural needs, the gentry were expected to invest in public goods and fund social services of one sort or another. They composed works for public monuments and festive occasions, such as celebratory and commemorative inscriptions for government buildings, bridges, and schools; they organized the community compacts (鄉約), and orchestrated the revival of charitable estate. Peter Bol thus suggests that “the rise of local history ought to be seen as a sign that Song literati had begun to reconceptualize the nation as something less imperial, less derivative of court culture, and less centralized,” such that they envisioned a more decentralized society in which they were the leaders.

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194 The more notable ones are Peter Bol, “The ‘Localist Turn’ and ‘Local Identity’ in Later Imperial China” Late Imperial China, 24.2 (Dec. 3002); Anne Gerritsen, Ji’an Literati and the Local in Song-Yuan-Ming China (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007); Beverly Bossler, Powerful relations: Kinship, Status, and the State in Sung China (960-1279) (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1998).


On the other hand, the state did seem to cede more power to the localities. The village tithing (里甲) and tax captaincy (糧長) systems in the Ming, for instance, did make much use of the local leaders, rather than the clerical bureaucracy, in the organization and supervision of tax collection and delivery. They can be regarded as evidence that the state embraced some of the Neo-Confucian socio-political arguments that emphasized the importance of having local literati take foremost responsibility in the running and management of local community government.\textsuperscript{197} The village elder system also gave respected elders in the local jurisdictions power to resolve minor disputes.

Needless to say, the gentry class was not always a benign force that worked for the benefit of the common people. Many of the studies on the gentry in late imperial China explore the multifaceted ways in which the local elite maintained their hegemony over local society and exploited the common people. These works reveal the antagonism between the gentry and the rest of the society. They also show that on balance and as a whole, the gentry still leaned more toward and identified with the state. For instance, in terms of the nature of the social and political power of the gentry, Shigeta Astushi refers to what he calls “gentry rule,” which consisted of three dimensions: political rule (administering justice, mediating quarrels, maintaining public order, administering relief, etc.), cultural rule (education, culture, guidance of public opinion, etc.), and economic rule (control of the market and resources, etc.).\textsuperscript{198} As Shigeta argues, the gentry established dominion over the locality on behalf of the state, dominating the whole of

\textsuperscript{197} For detailed study of the 里甲 system and how it was tied with rural control, see Tsuromi Naohiro, “Rural Control in the Ming Dynasty” in Linda Grove & Christian Daniels ed., \textit{State and Society in China: Japanese Perspectives on Ming-Qing Social and Economic History} (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1984), pp.245-277.

non-bureaucratic society that included landlords, tenants, and owner-cultivators.\textsuperscript{199} His study mainly focuses on the economic basis of gentry power, which was landownership, and as the antagonism between the landlords and tenants intensified during the late imperial period, leading very often to rent resistance by tenants, the gentry class would be driven more toward the state.\textsuperscript{200} Timothy Brook tends to share Shigeta’s interpretation and analysis of the late imperial social situation. In his study of the gentry’s patronage of Buddhist monasteries, he sees the gentry class as principally a social category defined in relation to the state, to the extent that they mediated the state-society relationship on the state’s behalf.\textsuperscript{201} Consequently, in some important ways, the close gentry-state relation can be seen as something that hindered modernization. Brook remarks, “gentry studies fitted nicely with modernization theory. The class came to be identified as a major component of domestic social and political conservatism, an impediment to modernization.”\textsuperscript{202} Timothy Brook’s view of the gentry to some extent resonates with Craig Clunas’ conception of the gentry as a social elite that sustained dominance through the mobilization of cultural, social, political, and economic resources in the local contexts. Clunas examines the material culture and conspicuous consumption in the late Ming in order to explore the tension and competition between the elite gentry and the vulgar throng.\textsuperscript{203} The former was anxious to safeguard their status, and they sought to do so by distinguishing themselves from the uncouth masses through setting new standards of the consumption of art and culture, after which the aspirants chased. Timothy Brook’s study of Ningbo gentry also highlighted the cultural

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., p. 379.
\textsuperscript{202}Ibid., p.5.
hegemony at work. He shows that not only the examination degrees but also the cultural repertoires and associational networks of elite families were tools with which they used to perpetuate their elevated status over many generations.\(^\text{204}\)

The relatively negative and self-serving image of the gentry in these studies should not be surprising, since there is no lack of historical records of late imperial China that documented their vices. To cite an example, Zhao Yi (趙翼 1727-1814), in his historical work *Ershier shi daji* (Notes on the twenty-two histories 廿十二史答記), included one fascicle entitled “The evils of the maltreatment of the people by gentry officials in the Ming (明鄉官虐民之害),” in which he provided instances of how the gentry possessed immense movable and immovable assets, used great numbers of bondservants, and spent lavishly on luxuries and hobbies. They stood aloof from the interests of the masses, exploiting the populace while selfishly wielding their social, political, cultural, and economic power.\(^\text{205}\) While the aforementioned sources presented a gentry class in antagonism against the common people, the Quanzhou Confucians seemed to adhere to the ideals of the Song masters in their capacity as elite leaders of the local. This chapter on Cheng-zhu scholars as local gentries may supplement the current literature on gentry studies by providing an alternative view from the maligned image of the gentry class.

**Quanzhou Scholars as Gentries**

All of the Quanzhou scholars were degree-holders, and therefore, by definition, also gentry members of society. Many advanced to the highest level of the examination system and obtained the prestigious ultimate *jinshi* degree, while some stopped at the provincial level and


\(^{205}\) Zhao Yi, *Ershier shi daji* (Notes on the twenty-two histories) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), juan 34.
spent their entire life in their hometown. We know from their biographical accounts that some of their families owned landed properties, while others were from literati families whose tradition of learning could be traced back to generations before. For instance, we know that Cai Qing inherited landed property from his ancestor which he later gave to the local school for its expansion project.\textsuperscript{206} Zhang Yue was from a traditional scholar-official family whose father once served as a magistrate in Guangdong. Chen Chen was from a well-to-do family whose prosperity owed much to ancestral inheritance. In 1546, his clan decided to build a shrine honoring one of the wealthy ancestors. From Chen Chen’s writings that documented the event, we know that this well-off and generous ancestor had allocated a piece of “sacrificial land” (jitian 祭田) for communal purpose by the locality.\textsuperscript{207} Such a donation was common practice in many lineages. The annual revenue generated from this piece of land could reach 40 piculs (dan/shi 石 which roughly equal 5,320 pounds).\textsuperscript{208} The revenue would then be used as communal funds for the lineage, which might support the construction of an ancestor shrine, for example. Chen Chen remarked that his family and other lineages should credit their current livelihood to the ancestor who distributed the rest of his land among his four sons. Chen Chen, being a seventh-generation descendant, expressed great appreciation for the beneficence of his ancestor.

In short, the Quanzhou scholars were undoubtedly gentry members of their local society, and in their role as the local elites and leaders, they faithfully adhered to the Neo-Confucian doctrines and teachings of the Song masters, endeavoring to advance local welfare through

\textsuperscript{206} Cai Qing, “Song yuandi ru xianxue dong” (Giving of land to the east of county school) in Cai wenzhuang gong ji, \textit{juan} 2.

\textsuperscript{207} Chen Chen, “Bixi Chen gong citing ji” (Record of the shrine of ancestor Chen in Bixi) in Chen Zifeng xiansheng wenji, \textit{juan} 8, pp. 3-4.

\textsuperscript{208} Measurement of weights in historical China. One picul of grain equals 133 pounds.
community work. In their local involvements, the Quanzhou scholars were particularly notable for their contributions to local governance and the compilation of family genealogies.

The Quanzhou Scholar-gentry and Local Governance

The most common way in which the Quanzhou scholars became politically involved and influential was their composition of the essays that evaluated the tenure of officials appointed to the area. Both Cai Qing and Zhang Yue penned several such essays.\(^{209}\) They were usually written upon the invitation from other local gentry in neighboring localities. They commented on the officials’ achievements during their tenure while expressed appreciation to them on behalf of the local residents. Such essays would usually become part of the performance dossier to be assessed by the court. From these writings, we know that Quanzhou Confucians like Cai Qing and Zhang Yue were prominent figures within the local gentry class not only in their native counties of Jinjiang and Hui’an but also in the Quanzhou prefecture as a whole, since they had written the evaluative letters for other counties such as Nan’an and Yongchun. Sometimes, they personally knew the governing officials, and invariably, they demonstrated familiarity with local affairs. For instance, Cai Qing highly commended the work done by an itinerant official to Hui’an county on the local schools. His improvement of the school facilities and enforcement of new rules and regulations resulted in high morale among the students and instructors, such that it produced three successful candidates in the following year’s prefecture level examination.\(^{210}\) Zhang Yue, expressed his gratitude and appreciation on behalf of the Jinjiang people when their


\(^{210}\) Cai Qing, “Song Qiu jiaoyu renman qixing xu” (Sending official Qiu off upon completion of his tenure), *Cai Wenzhuang gong ji*, juan 3.
magistrate petitioned to the court when the county was suffering from a drought, so that taxes for the year were exempted. These are some of the issues that concerned the Quanzhou scholars.

The scholars’ reputation among the local population can also be seen from the many invitations they received to compose commemorative essays for the completion of local infrastructure such as bridges, schools, roads, and so on. In fact, Cai Qing argued very strongly that maintaining, improving, and expanding local infrastructure was the top priority of “the way of imperial governance” (wangzheng 王政). His deep concern for the wellbeing of his hometown was matched by his intimate knowledge of its topography. For instance, in his letter calling for the attention of the government and the local gentry class to the safety of the local residents, he showed how the natural environment of Fujian could be a menace to the people. Fujian, as he pointed out, had a mountainous terrain with “many perilous cliffs, bottomless pits, and gushing falls. But only duckboards less than a meter wide and planks that are rotten are being used for travelers to walk on.” On top of that, its forests were extremely dense and full of wild animals, and so Cai Qing claimed that traveling through them was like “walking into a tiger’s den.” He referred to one incident where some civilians from An Xi county, in order to escape from the bandits from the neighboring Zhangzhou prefecture, had to travel the waterway in small boats. But they capsized in the gushing streams, thus costing the lives of many innocent people. Cai Qing was extremely upset by such incidents. He urged the local wealthy families to divert their resources for constructing heterodox shrines to improving the infrastructure, such as building bridges to replace the rotting planks, and clearing and widening paths in the forests by cutting

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211 Zhang Yue, “Zeng Jinjiang Han hou rujian xu” (Letter for Han magistrate of Jinjiang to report to the court), Xiaoshan leigao, juan 13.
212 Cai Qing, “minqing sitiao da danglu” (Four essays concerning the welfare of the people) in Cai wenzhuang gong ji, juan 4.
213 Ibid.
and burning trees and shrubs so as to keep beasts and boars away from the travelers. To Cai Qing, it was also the government’s responsibility to subsidize such projects.\textsuperscript{214} There was evidence that the local community did answer Cai’s call. For example, it supported one major infrastructural construction in a coastal village in Hui’an county, that is, a system of coastal embankments and bridges as remedy for the muddy lands and falling rocks from cliffs. The construction was funded by the personal donation from the incumbent magistrate of Hui’an, as well as contributions from local well-to-do families. Cai Qing composed the celebratory inscription upon its completion.\textsuperscript{215}

Chen Chen also made similar pleas for infrastructural amelioration to the local government. He wrote to the governor of Jinjiang county, urging him to improve the transportation in the area so as to make people’s lives easier. The area in the coastal periphery of Jinjiang was muddy and swampy, and there was the constant danger of falling rocks from the nearby cliffs. Boats could not sail through the treacherous waters; nor could horses traverse the area. This caused a lot of hazards and inconveniences, making the transportation of goods difficult. Chen thus wrote to the local magistrate to petition for governmental effort to construct proper roads in order to overcome the problems caused by the natural topography.\textsuperscript{216}

Quanzhou scholars’ deep concern with their hometown was no doubt in part a result of their personal and familial experiences with misfortunes. Not infrequently, the area suffered from raids by the bandits and pirates. Both Zhang Yue and Lin Xiyuan’s families were affected, for example. Zhang Yue’s family compound in Hui’an county was once raided by pirates, sustaining

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{215} Cai Qing, “Gangchuan qiao ji” (Record of the Gangchuan bridge) in \textit{Cai wenzhuang gong ji, juan 4}.
\textsuperscript{216} Chen Chen, “Xinxiu Jinjiang nanlu ji” (Record on the newly constructed roads to the south of Jinjiang) in \textit{Chen Zifeng xiansheng wenji, juan 8}. 

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disastrous damages as a result. In the vicinity of his hometown in Hui’an, the death toll reached almost a hundred. Apparently, such casualties were something unheard of in a century.\textsuperscript{217} Lin Xiyuan’s father, in order to escape from further attacks from the pirates, decided to move his family inland. Both Lin Xiyuan and Zhang Yue had written on how to deal with the problem of banditry and piracy. As Lin’s case was more complicated, I will be examined it in greater detail in the last section. As for Zhang’s plan and proposal regarding defense and safety, suffice it here to state that he wrote to the provincial governor, specifically suggesting bringing combat ships from the nearby Zhangzhou prefecture and recruiting young men in the region as the coastal guards. These young men knew the waters well and hated the raiders, and therefore they could make an excellent combat force. But the problem was that they did not have the necessary weapons and ships large enough to combat those of the pirates. Zhang Yue therefore urged the government to provide them with the needed wherewithal so that they might readily become an effective defense corp.\textsuperscript{218} From such accounts, it seemed that the Quanzhou scholars did not use their power and prestige in the area to exploit the people, but instead, they used their reputation and influence to bring about positive change to the lives and livelihoods of the local people.

**Construction of the Local: Gazetteers and Genealogies**

Not only did the Quanzhou elites concern themselves with local government and welfare, but they were also intent on forging a strong cultural identity for their native region, as a way of giving it distinction, if not uniqueness. One way of constructing such a local identity was the compilation of the genealogies of the prominent families in the area, whose supposed manifold accomplishments lent their native place shine and glory. Nearly all of the Quanzhou scholars

\textsuperscript{217} Zhang Yue, “Yu Fujian anyuan He Gulin” (Letter to Fujian governor He Gulin) in *Xiaoshan leigao, juan 7*.  
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
studied in this dissertation had at one time or another been invited to write prefaces for family
genealogies. Many of them also participated in the compilation of local gazetteers. Such
compilation efforts are a main focus in many of the studies of local history, which generally
agree that these literary and historical productions were deliberate efforts by the local elites to
relate the local to the state, while at the same time asserting their authority and positions as the
leading members of the locality. It is therefore not surprising that the compilation of local
gazetteers burgeoned and blossomed in the sixteenth century. Peter Bol’s study of the history of
Wuzhou (in Zhejiang province) through its prefectural gazetteers from the Southern Song period
onward shows that it was in fact a history of the increasing importance of the literati as the active
local elite that exerted tremendous influences over local affairs.219 Since the composition of the
gazetteers became a matter of local decision rather than a central mandate from the state, the
local leaders took a good deal of interests in documenting local events, personages, economics,
geography, and so forth. In the process, a sense of the locale and locality was created, whose
identity and attributes the local literati helped to construct and mold, outside the ambit of the
direct imperial gaze.

Maurice Freeman to a large extent may be seen as the one who inaugurated the study of
lineages in the 1950s with his studies on the societies of Guangdong and Fujian.220 More
recently, the study of lineages and their genealogies have become a booming field of study.
Notably, David Faure shows the intertwined relations between lineage institutions and the

219 Peter Bol, “The Rise of Local History: History, Geography, and Culture in Southern Song and Yuan Wuzhou”
Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 61.1 (June 2001): 51; see also Joseph Dennis, Writing, Publishing, and Reading
Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100-1700, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015).
permeation of state ideology in village societies.\textsuperscript{221} He points out that ancestor worship was introduced as a means of relating the village to the state. As more economic opportunities became available from the sixteen century onward, the prosperous clans in south China used the compilation of genealogies and elaborate family rituals to control their family properties and keep their clans together.\textsuperscript{222} As Faure equates the private gains of the lineages to the public benefits accrued by the state and the society,\textsuperscript{223} he argues that the clans and lineages were social and institutional frameworks in which communal interests could be expressed in a language that was acceptable to the state.\textsuperscript{224} Such a general view is echoed by Michael Szonyi’s study of kinship organizations in the Fuzhou region in Fujian province. Szonyi argues that organized patrilineal kinship is best understood as the outcome of individual and collective strategizing in response to state policies regarding the registration of land and population.\textsuperscript{225} Zheng Zhenman’s detailed study of lineage organizations in Fujian, on the other hand, showed that they offered an overall model for all other organizations in late imperial Chinese society. Political factions, secret societies, native-place associations and guilds, as well as local militias and joint-stock investment corporations, were all conceived and constructed in accordance with the principles and outlines of a lineage organization.\textsuperscript{226}

\textsuperscript{221} His two major works on this topic are \textit{Structures of Chinese Rural Society: Lineage and Village in the Eastern New Territories, Hong Kong} (UK: Oxford University Press, 1986); and \textit{Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China} (California: Stanford University Press, 2007).

\textsuperscript{222} David Faure, “Citang yu jiamiao – cong Songmu dao Ming zhongye zongzu liyi de yanbian” (Altars and Family Shrines – evolutions of clan rituals from the end of Song dynasty to mid-Ming), \textit{Lishi renleixue xuekan} (Journal of history and anthropology), \textit{juan} 1.2 (Oct. 2003):1.

\textsuperscript{223} David Faure, \textit{Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China} (2007), introduction.

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{226} Zheng Zhenman, Michael Szonyi tr., \textit{Family Lineage Organization and Social Change in Ming and Qing Fujian} (Honolulu, University of Hawai’I Press, 1992), p.11.
The situation in Quanzhou in general lends credence to what these works have shown. Its scholars wrote prefaces for local gazetteers and some of them personally participated in their compilation. For instance, Lin Xiyuan contributed to the county gazetteer of Yongchun.\textsuperscript{227} Chen Chen turned down an invitation to edit the Quanzhou prefecture gazetteer, but the job was taken up by Zhang Yue and Shi Yuguang. Zhang Yue also assumed a major role in the compilation of his native Hui’an county gazetteer.\textsuperscript{228} Their involvements in the realms of public welfare and public history in their locality were in line with those activities recorded and reported in many of the recent local histories of other areas. While the studies on lineage organizations and the role of genealogies have focused almost exclusively on the actions of the clans and families involved, here I focus on the Quanzhou scholars’ discourses on the merit and importance of genealogical compilations as a critical means to enhance local image and strengthen local identity. As the local elite, the Confucian scholars provided the historico-cultural justifications for such compilation projects.

All of the key Quanzhou scholars had written prefaces to family genealogies. They were invited to do so because involvement and endorsement by the reputed local elite would lend prestige and credibility to the works. For instance, in the genealogy of the Xue family in Hui’an county, there was a record of the sacrificial land passed down from an ancestor. It kept clear track of the size and revenue generated over the years for community expenses. The family patriarch came to Zhang Yue for an endorsement of the genealogy, hoping that Zhang’s

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\textsuperscript{227} Lin Xiyuan, “Yongchun xianzhi xu” (Preface to the county gazetteer of Yongchun) in \textit{Lin Xiyuan Wenji, juan 7}. \\
\textsuperscript{228} Zhang Yue, \textit{Xiaoshan leigao, juan 19}.}

imprimatur will give the compilation an authoritative stamp of approval, such that it might serve as a clear guide that would forestall future internal disputes within the family.  

As local leaders, the Quanzhou scholars did not merely use their reputation to endorse the practice of genealogy compilation, but they also sought to justify the practice from the standpoint of state ideology and Confucian orthodoxy. Cai Qing viewed the compilation of genealogy as an integral part of governance (zheng 政). He said, “The editing of genealogy investigates [the whereabouts] of ancestor tombs, restores the land for worship and sacrifice, [leads to] the writing of family biographies, and upholds family rules. With [its compilation, we] pay respect to the ancestors, harmonize the clan, give inheritance to posterity, and transform the customs. Thus, it is said to be [a part of] governance.”

如是譜之脩,以至祖塋之究,祭田之復,家傳之著,宗法之舉,可以尊祖焉,可以睦族焉,可以貽後焉,可以敦俗焉,固所謂是亦為政者也。

One of the stock statements repeated time and again in the prefaces to the gazetteers referred to the presumed fact that these texts were to the locality what the histories were to the state. Similarly, to Cai Qing, a family’s genealogy was analogous to a country’s history. He said, “A country that possesses history could use it to provide warnings and lessons, thereby

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229 Zhang Yue, “Qiongshan Xue shi jitian ji” (Record on the sacrificial land of Xue family of Qiongshan) in Xiaoshan leigao, juan 14.
230 Cai Qing, “Xingai Zhou shi chongxiu zupu xu” (Preface to the reedition of the genealogy of Zhou family in Xingai) in Cai wenzhuang gong ji, juan 3.
maintaining the way of the world; a family having genealogy could set the right order of
seniority, therefore sustain humanity. They differ in extent, but the principle is the same.”

國有史則可以昭監戒維世道，家有譜則可以序昭穆厚人倫，小大雖殊，理則一也。

Zhang Yue, besides composing prefaces for genealogies of the local clans, wrote treatises
specifically to justify their necessity and legitimacy. He first justified the genealogy from a
historical point of view, contending that the compilation of genealogies was in fact an extension
of the ancient patrilineal system of inheritance (zong fa 宗法). In part one of his essay “On the
Origin of Genealogy,” (yuan pu 原譜) he traced its origin to the practice of enfeoffment in the
Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BC) during which time the patrilineal heredity laws governed the
relationship between the Zhou royal family and the feudal lords, thereby maintaining social and
political stability. With the fall of the Zhou dynasty, the zongfa system disintegrated, and literati
families (shi da fu 士大夫) of later ages started to compose genealogies of their own families,
and by the Song times, the practice gained currency and purchase. Zhang Yue opined that in
terms of ordering the lineage and determining familial seniority, the principles of governing and
inspiring the production of genealogies were indeed no different from those that informed and
invigorated the patrilineal laws of the feudal age. By virtue of the books and the laws, everyone
in the family clearly knew one’s position in the clan, and thus one’s entitlements to
inheritance.234

In the second part of the essay, Zhang Yue expressed his approval of genealogies in
building a sense of community. Genealogical compositions were built on the ethico-moral

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233 Ibid.
234 Zhang Yue, “Yuan pu yi” (On the origin of genealogy, part one) in Xiaoshan leigao, juan 17, p. 254.
foundation of Confucian values, especially the virtues of filial piety (xiao 孝) and humaneness (ren 仁). These family histories helped to forge a stable local society which in turn contributed to the ordering of the country. He posited, “The genealogy is compiled in order to honor filial piety, expand love and respect, connect human hearts, and positively transform customs. In mark the origins of the clan, recording its branches near and far, ordering its separation and reunion, and detailing the records of the birth, death, burial, and marriages, it enables the later readers to reflect on it and know where one came from and where one stands.”

Chen Chen supported and substantiated Zhang Yue’s position by referring to his own personal experience. In a letter he wrote to his uncle regarding the affairs of his clan, he mentioned that his clan had resided in Jinjiang county for more than two hundred years, and the lineages still continued to support one another, managing to sustain the Confucian tradition of study and cultivation. To Chen, this was made possible by the clan’s conscientious maintenance of the genealogy and also the land set aside specifically for generating revenues to support rituals and sacrifices. As a result, the order of seniority among the family lines was constantly being updated, and the clan could come to the assistance of any particular branch whenever it was in need of financial help.

The purpose of genealogy was not limited to ordering seniority among family members so as to facilitate the distribution of property; it was also used as a guide to the discharging of

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235 Zhang Yue, “Yuan pu yi” (On the origin of genealogy, part two) in Xiaoshan leigao, juan 17, p. 255.
individual responsibilities with regard to the performance of family rituals. Elaborate family rituals, which functioned as a rhetorical chain of memory, constituted a mechanism that held the clan together, especially for prosperous ones with extended lineages. Honoring the ancestors was a key component in such family rituals. However, before the Song dynasty, only the imperial family, the aristocrats, and the official bureaucrats were allowed to construct shrines for ancestor worship. The common practice for the popular mass was to worship the clay statues or portraits of their ancestors placed in local Buddhist or Daoist temples. The Neo-Confucian scholars of Southern Song dynasty wanted to reform this. Zhu Xi composed the *Family Rituals* (*Zhu Zi jiali* 朱子家禮), based on an earlier manual by Sima Guang (1019-1086) and the ideas of Cheng Yi (1033-1107). His intention was to offer a precise manual and guide for the practice of family rituals that marked and commemorated important moments in life, such as capping, wedding, funeral, and special sacrifices in accordance with what he regarded as orthodox traditional Confucian values, so that people would no longer be wrongly led by heterodox beliefs and practices.237 His manual on rituals was not meant for use by the imperial families or nobles, but targeted at the scholarly class and the common people,238 and in the Ming times, it became the orthodox guide to rituals. The founding emperor of the Ming dynasty decreed that all marriages in society should conform to the prescriptions in the *Family Rituals*, a rule that was stipulated in the *Great Ming Commandment* (大明會典).239 Nevertheless, Buddhist practices and other

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popular forms were still popular, especially in southern China, where the tendency toward religious syncretism was particularly strong.

The Quanzhou scholars, as Cheng-Zhu Confucians, argued for adherence to Zhu Xi’s *Family Rituals*. It was recorded that when Chen Chen’s father passed away, the funeral was conducted strictly in accordance with Zhu Xi’s manual.\(^{240}\) Whenever the local families adopted and practiced the orthodox rituals, the Quanzhou scholars would lavish praise and approval on their appropriate actions. For instance, when the local Xue family adopted Zhu Xi’s *Family Rituals* as the guide for the education of their young by hanging a pictographic explanation of the manual in the family school, Zhang Yue applauded such action and composed an essay that aimed to propagate Zhu’s version of the correct rites and rituals in the area.\(^{241}\)

**Guardians of Cheng-Zhu Learning: Opposition to Buddhism**

The Quanzhou scholars lived at a time when intellectual and religious syncretism seemed to be all the rage, especially in Southern China. There was the rise of Wang Yangming’s teachings, which amounted to a major intellectual movement that apparently accommodated and incorporated elements of Chan Buddhism. Not a few of Wang’s disciples and devotees aimed at sudden enlightenment of the mind-heart, and for that purpose, many of them practiced meditation as well as ruminated on the meanings of the Confucian tenets. Confucian patronage of monasteries and the Confucian community’s close relationship with the sangha was also commonplace, as Timothy Brook’s work has shown. Through close case studies of such relationships in the counties in Shandong, Zhejiang, and Hubei provinces, Brook reveals that

\(^{240}\) Chen Dunlu and Chen Dunyu, *Chen Zifeng xiansheng nianpu*, p. 353.

\(^{241}\) Zhang Yue, “Ti Xue shi ‘silitu’ hou” (Postscript to Xue family’s ‘Four Rites diagram’) in *Xiaoshan leigao, juan* 17.
monastic patronage was a peculiar object of investment by the gentry; for it had a unique cultural signification that was attached to the idealization of “withdrawal” which cast the undertakings in high cultural terms. Apart from the commingling with Buddhism, there were many other forms of religious syncretism. There was, for instance, the rise of numerous local religions which amalgamated and merged features of the three major teachings of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism with the beliefs of the local cults with their multifarious gods and deities. Most prominent of these was the Three Teachings in One religion founded by Lin Zhao’en (1517 – 1598), who reformulated the popular beliefs of Buddhism and Daoism and incorporated them into the Confucian tradition of cultivating the mind-heart. This syncretic religion grew with the wokou raids of the coastal Fujian villages during the Jiajing reign, and is still a popular religion in Taiwan and diasporic Chinese communities today.

The Quanzhou scholars, as self-proclaimed proud Cheng-Zhu Confucians, were naturally hostile toward Buddhism and the other syncretic trends. In a significant way, they viewed themselves as custodians of authentic Confucian teachings and resisted the spread of the Buddhist-tinged Wang Yangming learning with gusto. Their criticism of Buddhism was manifold. Cai Qing’s concern was with the unjustified massive landownership by the Buddhist monasteries, which he saw as an extreme case of social inequality. He complained, “All under heaven, lands belonging to the Buddhist temples are many, and Fujian may top the country [in that regard]. Within Fujian, Quanzhou is the foremost [in terms of Buddhist landownership]. The top figure amounts to thousand acres, while the lesser ones have no less than a few hundred acres. Even though these people have no sense of who are the rulers and fathers, they enjoy full

242 Timothy Brook, Praying for Power, p. 316.
meals and warm clothes. Is there anything they do not have? On the other hand, our good people
work their bodies day and night, but still may not gain a foothold so that they can produce
[enough]…… Comparing the rich Buddhists monks and poor civilians of today, it can be said to
be the extreme [case] of inequality.”

一天下僧田之多，福建為最，舉福建又以泉州為最，多者數千畝，少者不下數百，
以無君無父之人，兼飽食煖衣之奉，何所不至，而吾良民旦夕疲筋骨，曾無卓錐之
産者。……若以今富僧與貧民較之可謂不均之甚矣。

Cai Qing thus suggested that the court should reduce the landholding of the Buddhist
temples and redistribute the lands to the poor civilians. Buddhism was popularly practiced in
Fujian, so were many other folk religions and Daoism, especially in the south part of Quanzhou,
which was described in many of the local gazetteers as the “southern Quanzhou kingdom of
Buddhism” (Quan nan fo guo 泉南佛國). Shrines and altars honoring various local deities and
spirits were a common sight, and they were very much a part of the physical and material
environment of Quanzhou. Chen Chen and Lin Xiyuan applauded when such heterodox religious
structures were demolished and replaced by orthodox establishments. Lin Xiyuan expressed his
delight with such a development in Yongchun county in a treatise on temples. He said,
“Buddhism, being so prosperous in Quanzhou, showed how the Way had declined. Today, only
sixteen temples and shrines in Yongchun county are left. Their land was returned to the people.
As to the Daoist shrines and folk religious altars, they were gradually demolished by village
seniors and local literati. Some were turned into academies, and some became community
schools. The rise and fall of the orthodox and the heretical could be seen therein.”

244 Cai Qing, “mingqing sitiao da danglu”, Cai Wenzhuang gong ji, juan 4.
245 Lin Xiyuan, “Lun sengsi” (Discourse on temples) in Tongan Lin Ciya xiansheng wenji, juan 11.
When the Yifeng Academy was established to commemorate Luo Lun’s positive influence in Quanzhou, Chen Chen composed a poem, from which we know that the land on which the academy was built had been previously used for heterodox worship.

Poem for Luo Yifeng Academy

The primordial force moves without a fixed location
Things change and constellations move since the ancient times
The south of Quanzhou was called the Buddhist land in the past
Today people call it Zuo and Lu [the birth places of Confucius and Mencius]
The righteous spirit of Yifeng came to my Quanzhou
Quanzhou people saw this as nurturing our land
Demolishing the heretical and establishing the correct renews the temple
Such was Master Qianzhai’s (Guo Chiping) earnest intention.

Even though the academy was an initiative by Nie Bao and Guo Chiping (dates unknown), the Education Superintendent of Fujian, Chen Chen did not hesitate to lavish praise on such a well-intentioned project. He regarded the practices of Buddhism and Daoism as “the

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246 Chen Chen, “Ti Luo Yifeng shuyuan” (Poem for Luo Yifeng Academy) in *Chen Zifeng xianfeng nianpu*, p. 524.
Way of thieves” (zei dao zhe 賊道者), which he saw as even more detrimental than rote learning that typified the prevailing philistine practice of learning that aimed narrowly at achieving success in the examination system. He lamented about the intellectual atmosphere of his time: “Even though people nowadays knew that rote learning of the classics could help them obtain fame and wealth, making such learning vulgar, people were not aware that the empty quietist study of Chan Buddhism, which specifically attacked Zhu Xi’s commentaries, was even more detrimental to learning.”

Chen Chen was adamantly against what he considered to be Chan-inspired meditation, which threatened to become an integral part of the program of moral cultivation for many Confucian scholars. There were several poems that he composed while he was suffering from insomnia, but despite the debilitating sleepless nights, he refused to resort to mediation as he regarded it as a heretical practice. He declared, “We Confucians have our own method to put our hearts to rest. [We] do not turn to Chan Buddhism for direction.”

Lin Guangjin was even more vociferous in his attack on Buddhism. Interestingly, he was open and receptive to another foreign religion, Islam, but he rejected outright the many undesirable practices of Buddhism which he saw as conduct that could corrode and destroy the Chinese social fabric. Leveraging on his reputation and influence as a local gentry, he wrote an essay advocating donations for the remodeling of the Great Mosque in Quanzhou. Comparing

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247 Chen Chen, “Zheng xue pian” (Orthodox Learning) in Chen Zifeng xianfeng nianpu, p.641.
248 Chen Chen, “Qingzi Xiaoxue Jinsi lu ruqiyi juhe” (essay on Xiaoxue and Jinsi lu) in Chen Zifeng xianfeng nianpu, p. 639.
249 Chen Chen, “Bu mei” (insomnia) in Chen Zifeng xianfeng nianpu, p. 544.
Buddhism and Islam, Li approved the latter for not forcing the converts and adherents to abandon their secular lives. They could still support themselves and their families with their secular professions of being scholars, peasants, artisans, and merchants. In other words, religious life and secular life did not conflict with one another in Islam. This echoed the criticism by Cai Qing, who also could not abide by the Buddhist monastic practice of severing human relations. The worshiping of relics in Buddhism was another subject of derision for Li Guangjin. Li approved the Muslim prohibition of the worshiping of idols. Not even portraits of Allah or his prophet Mohammad could be found in either the mosque or the residence of Islamic practitioners. By contrast, in Buddhism, icons were a prominent and central component of the religion. To Li Guangjin, way too much money and many other material resources were expended on the statues and ceremonies, the ultimate of which was the reception of the “bones of the Buddha,” which Li Guangjin satirized. This reminded us of the anti-Buddhist sentiment voiced by Han Yu (768 – 824), the supposed precursor of Neo-Confucianism in the Tang dynasty. Lastly, Li Guangjin pointed to the great abundance of pseudo-sutras and apocryphal texts in Chinese Buddhism, and they tended to confuse peoples’ mind and obfuscate learning in general. On the other hand, because the Muslim sacred texts were hard to translate into Chinese, there had been far fewer pseudo-texts in Islam, if they existed at all.

Li Guangjin’s open-mindedness toward Islam was a result and reflection of the historically multi-cultural environment of Quanzhou. The Muslim community had been a significant component of Quanzhou population and of the merchant class since the Yuan dynasty. Some scholars took this receptiveness on the part of the Quanzhou literati toward the Muslim religion and commercial activities as evidence of their simultaneous local and global

orientations. This seems to be a plausible argument. Although trade and the merchant class were not, generally speaking, highly regarded in the traditional Confucian thinking and cultural valuation, the Quanzhou scholars held a different view, as they were ready and willing to make necessary adjustments in their worldview that would better accommodate the needs of the times.

Involvement in Trade: the Case of Lin Xiyuan

Lin Xiyuan’s uncompromising attitude and acerbic personality did not serve him well in his political career. Although he reached as a high position as the chief judge in the Grand Court of Revision in Nanjing, because of his outspokenness and undisguised criticism of the central government’s policy, he was soon demoted, becoming a sub-prefectural magistrate of Qinzhou, located at the southwest periphery of the empire bordering Annam (present-day Vietnam). This was the time when the court was divided with regard to the actions that should be pursued against the Mac Thai To’s regime. Lin Xiyuan saw it as his personal duty to help the Ming government to reclaim the Sidong 四峒 area that had been occupied by Annam for some time. Driven by his mission and enthusiasm, he organized troops and battle ships in the Zhangzhou and Quanzhou areas even without clear approval from the central court. Having a personal connection with Yu Dayou (俞大猷 1503 – 1580) who was then the military commissioner

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251 Guotong Li, “Local Histories in Global Perspective: A Local Elite Fellowship in the Port City of Quanzhou in Seventeenth-Century China” Frontier History of China, 11.3 (2016): 376-399. However, using case studies of Li Guangjin, He Qiaoyuan, and Li Zhi, the author also argues that they constituted a fellowship on the basis of their openness to trade and the merchant class, as well as their embrace of the confluence of the Three Teaching. I agree to the first part of the argument, and beg to defer to the second part. I have proved in this chapter that Quanzhou Cheng-Zhu scholars did not approve religious syncretism, and they were against the practices of Buddhism and other popular religions. Li Zhi was born a Muslim, and a critic of Neo-Confucianism. He was later converted to Buddhism and received the tonsure ceremony. Li Guangjin and He Qiaoyuan were Cheng-Zhu scholars. The former, in particular, expressed strong disapproval of Buddhism. And as the author himself pointed out, the three of them did not have any contacts or correspondence whatsoever. Therefore, I would not regard them as fellowship.

252 Yu Daoyou was the military general next to Qi Jiguang (1528-1588) in his fame in combating against the piracy problem in late Ming period. He studied with Wang Xuan, a first-generation disciple of Cai Qing, during his youth. He received instructions on the Classic of Changes which he later incorporated into his mastership of sword and military strategies. He could be considered as a second-generation Quanzhou scholar.
based on Jinmen Island, Lin Xiyuan was confident in his ability to retake Sidong, given the military collaboration between his troops and Yu’s expertise. Little did he know that the court sidestepped him and arrived at a deal with Mac Thai To, who caved in and returned the Sidong area to China without resorting to military action. However, the court did not let Lin Xiyuan off the hook easily. He was found guilty of going beyond his prescribed realm of jurisdiction and was sent home for good.

He spent the rest of his life at his hometown in Quanzhou. Unlike other Confucian scholars who spent their retirement years teaching and writing, leading an idyllic life, Lin Xiyuan was restless, spurred on by his entrepreneur spirit. He became intimately involved in the then still illegal maritime trade in Quanzhou. Because of the great profit he made, and the power he wielded in the area, his family came to be depicted as one with a less than positive reputation in later historiography, conforming to the image of local magnate who inflicted suffering on the local people. However, we need to look closely at his participation in the private overseas trade in order to evaluate whether the negative reputation was justified. In fact, as we shall see, Lin Xiyuan’s conduct and action seemed to be very much in line with those prompted by the commercial spirit of Quanzhou, which was shared by the literati class and the common populace alike. Unlike his peers in the scholarly circle who simply endorsed and praised the entrepreneur spirit of their hometown, Lin Xiyuan went a step further by actually taking part in business ventures. To ensure the safe operation of the overseas ventures that were crucial to the livelihood of his fellow countrymen, he used his power and influence as a prominent local gentry to

253 Lin Xiyuan, “Song Xujiang Yu jun zhuo Guangdong dukun xu” (Preface for Yu Dayou being promoted to military position in Guangdong) in Ciya xiansheng wenji, juan 7.
strengthen coastal defense and made sure that the interests and welfare of those under his family’s tutelage were protected.

State Monopoly of Foreign Trade and the Rise of Illegal Trade in Quanzhou

The Ming Dynasty, out of concerns for national security, imposed an imperial ban on all private maritime trade, primarily because piracy had been a perennial problem along the Chinese coasts. The newly established Ming regime was preoccupied with the threat from the “northern caitiffs” (*bei lu* 北濁) and so much energy and many massive resources were diverted to the construction of the Great Wall to deter their incursion. The “southern dwarfs”254 (*nan wo* 南倭) from the sea were seen to be relatively a lesser security threat, in response to which the Ming court imposed an across-the-board prohibition of private ventures to the sea. The policy was based on the naive belief that piracy would eventually cease to be a problem if no private maritime activities were allowed. Under this policy, only tribute ships from the vassal states were allowed into China. However, there were heavy regulations on the frequency of the tribute missions, as well as the number of ships and personnel on board. There were also fixed locations for the ships to anchor. For instance, tribute missions from the Ryukyu Kingdom was to dock at Quanzhou in Fujian; those from Japan were to anchor in Ningbo in Zhejiang; and those from Southeast Asia kingdoms were allowed entry in Guangdong. A Maritime Trade Supervision Office (*Shibo si* 市舶司), a subordinate agency under the Board of Revenue, was established in Quanzhou. Its job was to receive the incoming tribute ships and to handle the subsequent distribution of goods. Every time a tribute mission arrived, a certain amount of the tributary

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254 These two terms were by official documents to refer to the national security threats faced by the Ming government from the north and the south repetitively.
goods would be presented to the imperial family, and the rest would be sold on the domestic market which was under strict official supervision. The officials at the Maritime Trade Office would usually sell the goods themselves, or they might give licenses to certain brokers (yahang 牙行) to conduct the transactions. Such licenses could only be issued by the provincial government under fixed quotas.\(^\text{255}\) This meant that only a handful merchants who had connections with the official bureaucrats could participate in this state-monopolized foreign trade.

The state-imposed restrictions and constraints of maritime trade created serious economic problems for people living in the coastal provinces. The Southeast coastal regions of Fujian and Guangdong are hilly, so much so that ninety percent of the area are covered by mountains and hills. The valleys are narrow and v-shaped, such that they cannot accommodate large-scale cultivation.\(^\text{256}\) In late imperial times, arable land constituted only about one-tenths of the provincial area.\(^\text{257}\) Various attempts were made by the Fujianese to create more cultivable land, including land-reclamation to create coastal paddies and clearing forests to carve out rice terraces on the hill slopes. However, such endeavors were incredibly capital and labor intensive, and ultimately, they did not suffice as the mainstay of the economy of the region. Therefore, fishing and overseas trade were always indispensable parts of the livelihood of the coastal populations.

On the other hand, the sort of highly regulated foreign trade conducted within the framework of the tribute missions could not quite satisfy the demands for Chinese goods from the foreigners. The Japanese and the Portuguese in particular desired to trade directly with the


\(^{257}\) Ibid, p.88.
Chinese traders, free from official restrictions and high taxes. Thus, both on the Chinese and foreigners sides, there was immense incentive and motivation to expand the commercial arena. In face of the imperial ban on maritime trade and the prohibitory tribute system, the ready answer was smuggling and illicit trade that bypassed and subverted the official confines. Consequently, several ports emerged along the southeast coast, which served as the nuclei of the massive illicit trade that had become an open secret from the mid-Ming onward. Anhai located to the south of Quanzhou was one such place. Its deep waters and hidden coves provided the perfect shelter for smuggling. Entry into the harbor had multiple twists and turns which allowed the small and nimble private boats to evade official invigilation.\(^{258}\) When the foreign merchant ships arrived, they would usually anchor in the waters offshore, and the local traders would sneak out into the open seas with local produce and other Chinese commodities, thereby engaging in a thriving illegal trade. The foreign exotics they brought back would then be exchanged on the local black markets and distributed across China.

Lin Xiyuan and Illicit Maritime Trade

Lin Xiyuan’s role in this illegal overseas trade was brought to light by Zhu Wan 朱紈 (1494–1549), who was appointed in 1547 as the governor of Zhejiang with jurisdiction over the coastal regions of Fujian.\(^{259}\) His appointment was a response by the central government to the rampant illicit trade along the coastal regions and the increasing number of raids by pirates. His inspection of the region yielded two conclusions. First, the costal defense had reached a nadir, both in terms of the military infrastructure and equipment, as well as the morale of the troops.


Second, many well-to-do families took the lead in the illicit business, and Zhu Wan was not afraid to expose them. In a memorial to the court reporting his findings, Zhu said:

Based on my observations of Lin Xiyuan, he was full of himself and reckless. And he liked to stir up trouble. Every time officials came for inspection, he would send in his writings slandering former officials to be read. He personally thought those were his uniquely well-articulated discourses, but those were in fact hijacking [the duties of the officials]. The local officials were afraid and abhorred him, but they could do nothing with him. To establish awe and fear, a plaque with the two characters of “Lin’s Residence” was hung on the gate. Unauthorized, he nevertheless accepted legal petitions from the people, conducted interrogation and torture, and issued public notices that usurped official authority. He specialized in the construction of large ferryboats that were against regulations. Under the pretext of ferrying people across waters. His boats were used specifically for transporting stolen properties as well as contraband goods.260

This accusatory and unsavory portrayal of Lin Xiyuan put him squarely in the category of the notorious gentry who exploited their wealth and resources at the expense of the common people. His power and influence even overrode the jurisdiction of the local government, and he was able to even exercise judicial authority in the locality. Flouting the laws against engagement in overseas trade, he became an unauthorized shipbuilder and owner. He built ferryboats under the pretext of transporting people across waters, but they were in fact used for carrying contraband commodities from overseas. Since the coastal residents who were engaged in overseas trade mostly owned small boats that could not travel far and could only carry limited amounts of goods, they would jointly rent junks with larger capacity from local gentry like Lin

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260 Zhu Wan, “Yueshi haifang shi, ge duchuan yan baojia” (Memorial on inspection of coastal defense, eliminate ferryboats, and strengthen the baojia system) in Wayu zaji (Collected works of Zhu Wan) (Tainan: Zhuangyan wenhua shiye, 1995), juan 2, p.23.
Xiyuan. As a result, they could travel to destinations as far as Southeast Asia, carrying more commodities and thus making more profits each trip. Another benefit of traveling on these large ships owned by prominent local figures was that they could get off more easily if they were caught by coastal patrol, since the coastal guards would prefer to avoid any unnecessary entanglement with the powerful local families. Moreover, many of the guards would subsidize their income by taking possession of a portion of the goods onboard, or they would accept other forms of bribery and release the violators of the imperial ban without any penalty. In fact, given their low morale and lack of discipline, it was highly likely that many of them also had a direct hand in the illegal business.

In other words, Lin Xiyuan did not embark on the dangerous enterprise of personally venturing out to the sea. His role in the illegal trade was to provide the sea-going vessels as well as the protection needed for the smuggling business. Every time the cargo ships came back to Quanzhou, the merchants would return the ships to the owners, and paid the interests incurred on the capitals they borrowed. The profits made on the imported goods were also to be shared among the lenders and the borrowers. Lin Xiyuan eventually owned a large fleet of ships and ran a very lucrative business. As a result, he made a great fortune for himself and his family, even though he had been reduced to commoner status and deprived of all hereditary benefits.

Zhu Wan’s appointment came as a blow to the thriving illicit business. He was a man of integrity, but the court had chosen the right person for the wrong job. His uncompromising implementation of the imperial ban, threatening violators with the penalty of death, adversely affected the vested interests of the local magnates who benefited directly from the smuggling business. He antagonized the gentry and alienated himself from the local power structure. Lin Xiyuan was one of the prominent local figures that Zhu Wan fearlessly brought to light as a
person who impeded his job of rooting out smuggling. However, none of the named and accused in Zhu Wan’s investigation were investigated. But when Zhu indiscriminately executed ninety-six smugglers, whom he caught in a surprise attack on Shuangyu harbor in Ningbo, he was immediately impeached for breaching and overreaching his sanctioned authority. While in prison, before receiving a verdict on his offence, Zhu committed suicide. Before taking his own life, he penned his own epitaph, in which he said, “Even if the Son of Heaven does not want me dead, people in Fujian and Zhejiang are bent on taking my life. I will die, but I will do it myself, without troubling others.”\(^{261}\) This was taken in later historiography as hard evidence that the local magnates were the culprit in the impeachment and the subsequent death of Zhu Wan. Lin Xiyuan, being one of the few names mentioned by Zhu, came to be associated with his death.\(^{262}\)

Rehabilitating Lin Xiyuan

In the eyes of Zhu Wan, Lin Xiyuan’s involvement in the illegal overseas trade amounted to high treason, according to the imperial promulgation. It might be true that Lin Xiyuan’s vested interested in the smuggling trade was undermined by the arrival of Zhu Wan who was trying to do his job, albeit in a way that was utterly and ultimately unsound, given the deep and vast involvement of the local gentry and people. But there was no evidence of Lin’s wielding his power and influence in order to bring Zhu Wan down. It is pure conjecture, based primarily on their diametrically opposite stances on the issue of foreign trade, that Lin Xiyuan had something directly to do with Zhu Wan’s death. The fact of the matter was that Quanzhou had been an important entrepot in the global network of trade since the Song dynasty, and its significance and


\(^{262}\) For a detailed study of the antagonism between Zhu Wan and Lin Xiyuan, see Yueli Lin, “Minnan shi shen yu Jiajing nianjian de haishang zousi maoyi” (Gentries of south Fujian and the smuggling business during the Jiajing reign) *Shida lishi xuebao* (History journal of Taiwan Normal University), 8 (1980): 91-111.
prosperity peaked during the subsequent Yuan dynasty. A highly open and accommodating attitude toward trade and commerce was part of the cultural DNA of the place, as it were, and this attitude was shared by the literati and commoners alike. Li Guangjin and He Xiaoyuan were two prominent Quanzhou scholars who openly endorsed the adventurous sea-going spirit of their fellow native sons of Fujian. Lin Xiyuan was no exception, and his approval of foreign trade was based on his deep concern for the improvement of people’s lives and livelihoods. In his eyes, the arrival of the Portuguese was mutually beneficial for the visitors and the locals alike. He said:

The Portuguese came and traded their produce like pepper, ivory, sappan wood, incense, sandal wood, and other spices with the coastal people. The prices were particularly low when compared to the daily necessities and foodstuffs supplied to them, such as our people's rice, noodle, pork, and chicken, the prices of which were several times higher than the normal ones. Therefore, the coastal residents were happy to trade with them.263

佛郎機之來，皆以其地胡椒，蘇木，象牙，沉，檀，乳，諸香與邊民交易，其價尤平其日用飲食之資，於吾民者如米，面，豬，雞之數，其價皆倍於常，故邊民樂與為市。

To Lin Xiyuan, since the coastal residents could sell the local produces to the foreigners at a price much higher than in the domestic markets. Therefore, they were all eager to trade with them. To the Portuguese, the locals wanted to trade as well. They brought in spices from Southeast Asia, and exotic goods from as far as Africa. And on top of that, they had the silver from the Americas and from Nagasaki, their base in Japan, which was the circulating currency in China and was in great demand. Since their paramount interest was to make profit, the piracy problem along China’s coast was equally a concern for the Portuguese, as much as it was for the local officials and coastal residents. They had even assisted the Chinese in combating the pirates. Lin said:

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When they [the Portuguese] first arrived, knowing that we suffered from the rampant plunders by various groups of bandits, [they] helped us expel them, and as a result, they became fearful and did not ravage us. The powerful bandit Lin Jian dominated the seas. The government could not control him. The Portuguese helped us eliminate him, overnight bringing an end to twenty years of piracy. Judging from these [events], the Portuguese were never bandits. Instead they helped us fight against the bandits. Not only did they never harm our people but they were beneficial to our people.264

The incident Lin Xiyuan referred to took place in 1547 (the 26th year of the Jiajing reign) when the Portuguese did collaborate with the local government to combat the sea bandits pillaging the coastal villages. He distinguished the Portuguese from the sea and mountain bandits who wreaked havoc in the coastal provinces. He pointed out that the Portuguese never committed those atrocities. Even though there were rumors that they participated in human trafficking, particularly the women and children who were supposedly sold as slaves, such offenses did not warrant the sort of large-scale military action directed against the bandits. Moreover, it was also neither wise nor economical to launch a military campaign that might cost the lives of more than a thousand Chinese soldiers in order to annihilate several hundred Portuguese.265 Zhu Wan, on the other, regarded everyone who violated the maritime prohibition, Chinese or foreigners, as worthy of elimination. Lin Xiyuan’s position undoubtedly would be perceived by Zhu Wan as willful disregard, if not illegal contravening, of the imperial decree and a hindrance to his task at hand.266

264 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
266 Peter Purdue describes the constrasting views between Zhu Wan and Lin Xiyuan as one of dogmatism versus realism, or the logic of theory versus the logic of practice. See “1557: a year of some significance” in Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen Siu, & Peter Purdue ed., Asia Inside Out: Changing Times (Mass.: Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp.90-98.
Piracy had been a perennial problem along China’s coast, but it was exacerbated by the maritime prohibition. When coastal Chinese risked their lives to do business on the sea, they had to give a portion of the profit to the local gentry who provided them with the junk boats and protection. But some gentries took advantage of the imperial ban and turned against their merchant collaborators. Upon the return of their cargo ships, they chose to inform the local government so that the authorities could capture these seagoing merchants for violating the imperial ban, and they would then simply appropriate the merchants’ goods and profits. As a result, some of the merchants were forced to become pirates, and some collaborated with the Japanese outlaws, stationing themselves on offshore islands in order to raid the ships that passed by. They would also frequently pillage the nearby villages, took revenge on those gentry families that betrayed them, and caused disastrous damage. This partly explained the severity of the piracy problem during the Jiajing reign. But there was no evidence that Lin Xiyuan performed such treacherous acts against his underprivileged collaborators. Given the fact that his scholarly works were posthumously published and circulated even though they were banned by the court, and that he was honored in the local Confucius temple and an arch was erected to commemorate him, Lin Xiyuan must have been a well-respected local elite. If he had been, as the accusation of Zhu Wan suggested, so exploitative against the local people, he would not have been able to build such a celebrated reputation after his death.

As with his contemporary fellow-scholars who were devoted to promoting the welfare of their native place, Lin Xiyuan, as a local elite and leader in Quanzhou’s maritime trade, showed the utmost concern for the safety of the waters, which supported the livelihood of the people of his locality. He wrote several petitions to the local government and military commissioner urging the authorities to launch more intense attacks on the bandits, and offering his advice on
Among the several persons whom he recommended for the offensive was the famous general, Yu Dayou, whom he referred to as his disciple (men sheng 在他的 letters.) He also made detailed plans on the strategic allocation of combat ships and soldiers, and the utilization of civilian militia. In particular, he argued that in order to have a higher chance of defeating the sea bandits, cutting off their escape routes was the critical move. Their retreat routes were none other than the eastern route from the Quanzhou to Zhangzhou area, and the western route that led to the Qiongzhou area in Guangdong. Military campaign against the pirates required troops that would stalk the retreating bandits. At the same time, there must be enhancement of the combat power of government troops by providing them with equipment and firearms there were superior to those of the bandits, as well as supplementing the troop with local young men. He objected to offering amnesty as a measure to quell the piracy problem, for they had become too powerful, causing too much damage and too many lives, for which they should paid for. In addition to offering combat strategies, Lin Xiyuan also suggested the arrest of the family members of the sea bandits and the confiscation of their family land and property penalty.

Many of the coastal towns did not have protective walls, making them susceptible to raids by the pirates. Residents in these communities began to realize the urgency of constructing city walls for protection. Lin Xiyuan highly approved of such moves. He compiled records on the construction of city walls in such towns as Anhai and Nanan, in which he praised the efforts

267 See Lin Xiyuan, *Lin Xiya wenji*, juan 6, pp. 545-547
268 Lin Xiyuan, “Shangxunan ersi fangwo jietie” (Petition to the two ministries of inspecting officials on defending against the pirates) in *Lin Xiya wenji*, juan 6, p.555.
270 Lin Xiyuan, “Haihou yi” (Discourse on sea bandits) in *Lin Xiya wenji*, juan 11, p. 660.
271 Ibid, p.661.
of the local governors and the self-defense measures adopted by the local residents.\textsuperscript{272} His writing about the Anhai town was also inscribed on a stone stele to commemorate the civilian heroic acts against pirate attacks.\textsuperscript{273} It seems clear that in terms of containing the banditry problem, Lin Xiyuan and Zhu Wan were on the same page. They of course differed in their strategies and perspectives. Zhu wanted to root out maritime trade entirely by upholding the imperial ban, thereby depriving the pirates of their targets, while Lin aimed at combating the pirates with military actions. In the eyes of Zhu Wan, Lin Xiyuan was interfering with the work of the government as someone who no longer belonged to the official class, while Lin Xiyuan no doubt saw Zhu Wan as one who was utterly lacking in intimate knowledge of the local area.

The rampant raids caused severe famines as well. Due to its lack of arable land and the growing importance of trade, Fujian since the Yuan dynasty gradually stopped producing rice, and concentrated instead on the cultivation of cash crops. Its economy and agriculture became very much oriented toward maritime trade, producing silk and ceramics, and cash crops such as sugar cane, lychee, and logan. Rice was imported from the adjacent provinces of Guangdong and Zhejiang. However, because of the destructive raids and the consequent interruption of the waterborne routes along which rice was transported, coastal Fujianese could no longer engage in proper production and the supply of staple food was also cut off. Lin Xiyuan petitioned for governmental relief, and his family took the lead in feeding the dislocated people who would gather at his gate.\textsuperscript{274} Just as he thought that offering sound military strategies for combating the pirates in his hometown was his responsibility, so he saw the relief of famine as his unavoidable

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{272} Lin Xiyuan, “Anping cheng ji” (Record of the town of Anping), and “Nanan cheng ji” (Record of the town of Nanan) in \textit{Lin Xiya wenji, juan} 10, pp.638-639.
\textsuperscript{274} Lin Xiyuan “Yu Yu taishou qing zhenzai shi yi” (Letter to Yu magistrate asking for relief effort, part one) in \textit{Lin Xiya wenji, juan} 6, p. 547.
\end{footnotes}
communal duty. He demanded that the official granaries be open and urged the local wealthy families to follow his lead and come to the aid of the starving people. He even put forth a detailed plan for grain and money distribution based on the estimated number of refugees, suggesting specific amount of donations from each well-to-do family in the area. His proposal shows his intimate knowledge of his hometown and his unswerving sense of responsibility for the mitigation and resolution of local problems.

Lin Xiyuan was clearly aware of his influence in the area, and indirectly, he did at times acknowledge the unsavory fact that some gentry abused their power at the expense of the common people. He sternly warned his family members against such transgressions. In his admonitions to his clan, he talked about the interdependency between the survival of the landed class and the landless class, declaring, “[Our] tenants cultivate the land for us. Their lives depended on us, and our lives depended on them. We should treat them with kindness and affection.” His instruction was that during years of poor harvest, rents should be reduced or even canceled, and land should not be recalled without serious offence on the part of the tenants. He warned his offspring against improper use of power and influence, and urged them to be law-abiding residents: “[You] should not rely on the reputation of our family to cheat or harm our fellow villagers. Nor should you conduct crooked things to cause trouble to the government. These are against principles, and will enmesh yourself in unnecessarily troubles.”

不許倚吾聲勢欺害鄉里汝輩, 亦不得曲庇為伊官府方便, 不但於理有違, 實則為他纏累。"

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276 Lin Xiyuan, “Jia xun” (Family admonitions) in Lin Xiya wenji, juan 12, p.671.
277 Ibid, p.672.
Apparently, Lin Xiyuan shared the same deep concern for the welfare of his hometown and of his fellow countrymen as the other Quanzhou scholars did. His notorious reputation in later historiography was a result of his firm stance on the imperial trade policy, which put him in direct opposition to Zhu Wan. Zhu’s suicide became the perfect emblem of victimization under the encroaching power and influence of local gentry class of which Lin Xiyuan was a representative. In later historical narratives, Zhu was portrayed as the upright protagonist, while Lin was the antagonist, bent on impeding the job of Zhu became of his self-vested interests. Zhu’s memorial and his self-penned epitaph were quoted time and again as evidence of the difficulty of his job and the severity of the situation at hand, but seldom was Lin Xiyuan’s words included in the narrative. This chapter supplements the current narrative by providing the alternative voice from Lin Xiyuan himself, and explicates the rationale behind his open defiance against state policy. He acted out of his deep understanding of the locality and concern for the livelihood of its people. In balancing between enforcing the imperial decree and safeguarding the welfare of his countrymen, he leaned toward the latter. The relief efforts in times of disaster and actions toward local defense showed that he was a responsible leader of the local as well as a Confucian scholar quick and nimble to adapt to the changes of the times.

Conclusion

This chapter studies the Quanzhou Cheng-Zhu scholars in their capacity as the local elite. They exhibited both similarities and differences from gentries in other parts of late imperial China. They took a keen interest in the local affairs, the management of which afforded them reputation and influence as local leaders. But they did not exploit their power to advance their

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278 For the predominance of Zhu Wan’s role in the Ming historical narratives, see Yuting Liu, “Zhu Wan zhi si’ yu Minnan shi shen Lin Xiyuan – jian lun Jiajing nianjian Minnan xuyu zhuxu zhi bianqian” (‘The death of Zhu Wan’ and south Fujian gentry Lin Xiyuan – a study of the development of regional order in south Fujian during the Jiajing reign) Mingdai yanjiu (Ming studies), 20 (June 2013): 36-43.
own self-interests. Rather, they acted as the heirs of the Song Confucian masters, convinced that the locality was the stage where the venerated Confucian ideals of benign governance could be practiced and realized. Their local activism was best exemplified in their advocacy for infrastructure building and their engagement in genealogical compilations. They also showed their intellectual faith in firmly rejecting the lure of Buddhism and the syncretic religious tendency popular in the area. Lastly, Lin Xiyuan’s involvement in maritime trade should not be simply understood as a case of a disappointed and dismissed official who turned to mercantile activities for profit. Both Lin and Zhu Wan were characters of strong personality. The tragedy was that both of them assuming diametrically opposing views on the issue of trade prohibition. Lin Xiyuan was in the end a Cheng-Zhu scholar who firmly believed in its orthodoxy, and was adamant about strengthening its position at the national level even in his waning years. However, in his role as a local gentry, he was not afraid of going against the imperial decree in pursuit of interests for his own family and for the locality. Lin’s case shows that intellectual orientations and local imperatives functioned differently in the life of a scholar-gentry with dual-identity, at once an official servant of the state on the one hand, and a local leader beholden to the interests of his fellow townsmen on the other.
CHAPTER FIVE
The “Untitled Nobility”:
Merchants, the Way of Merchants, and Cheng-Zhu Scholar in Late Ming Society

This chapter uses the writings on merchants and commerce by Li Guangjin 李光緖 (1549-1623), a staunch Cheng-Zhu scholar in Quanzhou, as a window to the larger changing world in which the mercantile ethos began to figure prominently. It argues that Cheng-Zhu Confucianism, contrary to its conventional portrayal as fusty and conservative, like the Wang Yangming School, nimbly adapted to the socio-intellectual changes of the times. While Li’s patriarchal views and his support of the cult of chastity that endorsed female martyrdom might mark him as an orthodox Confucian scholar, Li, responding to the rapid commercialization of the sixteenth century, forcefully approved of the merchants and their economic activities.

Conceptually, arguments in this chapter are continuations and extensions of the works of Yu Ying-shih and others on the social and economic histories of the Ming and Qing periods. Generally speaking, Li Guangjin’s writings corroborate many of the existing findings concerning commercial growth and the attendant changes of traditional social hierarchy in the late Ming.

But what is particularly noteworthy about Li Guangjin’s writings is his justification of the lives of the merchants and their moral worth by critiquing Sima Qian’s “Biographies of Money-Makers” (huozhi leizhuan 貨殖列傳) in Shiji. In a significant way, Li questioned and revised the

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279 Yu Yingshi, Zhongguo jinshi zongjiao lunli yu shangren jingshen (Religious ethics and the spirit of merchants in early modern China) (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiyi gongsi, 1987), and “Zhongguo jinshi zongjiao lunli yu shangren jingshen” (Religious ethics and the spirit of merchants in early modern China) in Yu Yingshi, Shi yu Zhongguo wenhua (Shi and Chinese Culture) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2003). Other works include Fu Yiling, Ming-Qing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben (Merchants and Commercial Capital during Ming and Qing Dynasties) (Beijing, Renmin chubanshe, 1956), Ramon Meyers, “The sprouts of capitalism in agricultural development during the Mid-Ch’ing Period” Ch’ing shih wen t’i, 3.6 (Dec 1976): 84-89; Etienne Balazs, “The Birth of Capitalism in China” Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 3.2 (Aug., 1960): 196-216, and Richard Lufrano, Honorable Merchants: Commerce and Self-Cultivation in Late Imperial China (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997).
canonical view in an effort to highlight the importance of the merchant way of life. Li expanded Sima’s concept of the “untitled nobility” 素封, adorning it with the attributes typical of a Confucian literatus: moral cultivation and literary excellence. Moreover, while the left-wing followers of the Wang School argued vociferously on behalf of egalitarian access to the Confucian Way, Li Guangjin spoke approvingly of the struggling petty merchants and even female participants in trade. This is especially noteworthy when compared with the more often studied works, Wang Daokun’s 汪道崑 (1525-1593) Taihan Ji 太函集 and Li Weizhen’s 李維楨 (1547-1626) Dami shanfang ji 大泌山房, which dealt primarily with the major merchants (dajia 大賈), especially those in the salt business. What is also important to bear in mind is Li’s close association with the Anhai merchants in Quanzhou which featured prominently in the illicit maritime trade. Similar to Lin Xiyuan, he approved of the overseas commercial activities of his hometown, and exhibited sympathetic understanding of the hardship of the lives of sea-going merchants. This study of Li Guangjin thus complements the current scholarship that tends to focus almost exclusively on the inland merchants from Huizhou and Shanxi by shining the spotlight on the coastal merchants that participated in maritime trade. It also sheds light on the attitude of a special group of scholars who were Cheng-Zhu Confucians as well as local gentry.

History and Historiography of Late Ming Socio-economic Changes

As is well known, the division of society into the four classes of scholar-officials (shi), peasants (nong), artisans (gong), and merchants (shang) characterized the traditional Chinese conception of the social order. First appeared in Ban Gu’s Huohan Shu 後漢書, this functional classification might have reflected the early ideal agrarian society, but it is obviously too
sweeping and general to adequately account for the social diversities of the later ages. The so-called four classes were never socially homogeneous. Rich landowners and tenant farmers both belonged to the peasant category; street peddlers and wealthy traders were all categorized as merchants; and the social elite consisted of officials as well as unemployed literati. There were, in addition, the miscellaneous under-classes of singers, entertainers, prostitutes, and beggars.\textsuperscript{280} Still, the four-tier division became a trope that served as the dominant ideal and worldview of how society was configured and functioned.

The sixteenth-century economic expansion, however, greatly complicated the processes of social stratification and individuation, threatening to rend asunder the imagined social order. Commercialization of farming, development of indigenous textile industry, booming domestic and international trade, and increased urbanization brought profound changes, yielded a new and fungible world. Much scholarship, both old and new, has pointed to these developments and phenomena. In the 1950s, mainland Chinese scholars and Japanese sinologists, impressed by these changes, produced sizable quantity of scholarship that searched for the “sprouts of capitalism” in late imperial China.\textsuperscript{281} Marxist historians argued that incipient elements of capitalism did exist, and they would have naturally developed into an indigenous capitalist economy had there not been the intrusion of western imperialism from the eighteenth century onward. Western sinologists joined the debate, pondering the question of why capitalism did not

\textsuperscript{280} On the complexity of social stratification in late imperial China, see Ho Ping-ti, \textit{The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 17-41. 

\textsuperscript{281} Zhongguo lishi jiaoyanshi, \textit{Zhongguo Zibenzhuyi mengya wenti taolunji} (Essays on the debate on the sprouts of capitalism in China) (Beijing: People's University of China, 1957); Zhongguo lishi jiaoyanshi, \textit{Zhongguo Zibenzhuyi mengya wenti taolunji xubian} (Essays on the debate on the sprouts of capitalism in China, continued), (Beijing: People's University of China, 1960); Fu Yiling, \textit{Ming-Qing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben} (Merchants and Commercial Capital during Ming and Qing Dynasties) (Beijing, Renmin chubanshe, 1956); For a competent review of the debate, see Arif Dirlik, “Chinese Historians and the Marxist Concept of Capitalism: A Critical Examination,” \textit{Modern China}, 8.1 (Jan., 1982): 105-132.
happen in China. More recently, responding to the spectacular economic miracle growth in the so-called “four little dragons of Asia,” scholars began to take a new interest in the possible relationship between Confucianism and economic success, inspired primarily by Max Weber’s theory on the interrelations between Protestant ethics and the rise of capitalism in Western countries. Tu Wei-ming, for instance, was an early key figure in advancing this debate. Weber characterized Protestant ethics as a form of “inner-worldly asceticism,” and of its various denominations, Calvinism epitomized such theological ethics most thoroughly. He contended that such ethics, which was something unique in the West, facilitated the rise of capitalism. Weber made a point to study other major religions and cultures, including Hinduism, Judaism, and Confucianism, in an attempt to show that they either had no influence whatsoever on economic activities, or that they in fact obstructed economic growth and development. He concluded that Confucianism belonged to the latter category.

Yu Ying-shih takes Weber to task. Yu does not intend to participate in the now-hackneyed debate on the “sprouts of capitalism,” as he believes that it asks the wrong question, which, to begin with, is grounded on the empirically unfounded assumptions of Max who lacked

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283 “Four little dragons of Asia” is an epithet referring to the economic powerhouses of Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in the 1990s.
even rudimentary knowledge of Chinese history. Nor does Yu set out to prove the existence of a Chinese equivalent of Protestant ethics in Confucianism. His central question is whether the ethical conceptions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism resonated with the development of commerce during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Exploring the subjective world of the merchants, Yu suggests that some Chinese religious orientations may well be characterized in terms of “inner-worldly asceticism,” but he refrains from concluding that such an ethical worldview would eventually have led to the development of capitalism. Thus he offers no antithesis to Weber’s argument as such, to the extent that he regards the whole issue of the sprouts of capitalism to be ahistorically teleological. In any event, Yu’s discussion begins with the developments of Buddhism and Daoism, in which he sees the “this-worldly” turn, as evidenced by the emergence of the indigenous Chinese Chan Buddhism during the Tang dynasty and Neo-Daoism during the Song dynasty. Neo-Confucianism from the Song on was also marked by the reorientation from a statist stance to the localist one, as the locality came to be viewed as the site where Confucian activist goals and purposes might be fulfilled. The seminal works of Peter Bol and Robert Hymes, in particular, highlight this growing “localism.” In their case studies, they show how the literati assumed a local leadership role by undertaking many of the local initiatives such as compiling gazetteers, instituting Neo-Confucian teachings at the local level through

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advocating the use of community compacts and family rituals – a historical process that Bol describes as the “localist turn” of Neo-Confucianism since the Song times.290

As far as Yu Ying-shih is concerned, he argues that Wang Yangming’s teachings completed the process of “socialization”291 (社會化) in Neo-Confucianism, referring to Wang’s central claim that it was philosophically possible and legitimate for everyone to access the Confucian Way, which was no longer a prerogative and possession of the scholar-officials. Similar to what Hui Neng 惠能 (638-713), the Six Patriarch of Chan Buddhism, posited—namely that Buddha nature exists within every human being—Wang Yangming taught that everyone could become a sage, and that achieving enlightenment did not necessarily require scholastic comprehension of the canon. Hui Neng himself was illiterate. For Wang, becoming a Confucian sage was within the reach of anyone as long as one exhaustively cultivates one’s innate knowledge of the good (至良知), which simultaneously engenders action. This radically egalitarian vision provided a philosophical justification for the reshuffling of social classes in a time of intense economic expansion and fluid social mobility in the sixteen century. Yu Ying-shih focuses on what he calls the phenomenon of the “merchantization” of scholars and the “scholarization” of merchants,292 pointing to the blurring of the boundary between the two classes. Amid the reshuffling of the social hierarchy was the emergence of the gentry – the local

elite who functioned in the intermediary space between the state and local society, mediating the interests and demands of both sides.

As we have seen, Timothy Brook tells how the gentry vied for power through philanthropy, especially in the case of monastic patronage. In another work, he approaches the issue from the cultural perspective by looking at the disintegration of traditional social and moral fabric through the eyes of Zhang Tao (who wrote around 1600), a minor official and moralist who longed for the simple self-sustained agrarian society of the early Ming dynasty. Craig Clunas examines the same phenomenon of social fluidity, but he does so by looking at the material aspects. In *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, he uses the literature of connoisseurship of the Ming dynasty as his central source material to reveal the highly commoditized patterns of consumption, and the tension and constant struggle between the literati and merchant classes in terms of the cultivation of taste. His later book, *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China, 1368-1644*, treats the same issue, plying his trade as an art historian by undertaking pictorial analyses of Ming paintings and their motifs. Clunas suggests that connoisseurship, expressed as tastes in cultural consumption and trend-setting in fashion, was the cultural arbiter in distinguishing the true bearers of high culture from the vulgar throng who, empowered by their material wealth, were eager to squeeze into the elite class. Yu Ying-shih would agree with such observations, but he also broadens them. His discussions on the self-sufficient and dignified inner-world of merchants challenge and revise the one dimensional view of the merchants seeking to catch up

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and merge with the scholarly class. He suggests looking at late Ming social development from a reversed angle, that of the scholar class becoming more merchant like.\textsuperscript{295}

My work here interacts with the scholarship and historiography on Ming social and cultural histories in one way or another. Many of the merchants in Li Guangjin’s records share the familiar story of being forced out of the traditional career path of a scholar-official and opting for the alternative career of trade, either due to repeated failures in the examinations or because of poverty. The conscious and purposeful way in which they conducted their business and how they chose to live their lives in retirement were very much in accord with their conception of what constituted good and moral Confucian action. Their biographies and views do seem to corroborate Yu Ying-shih’s thesis of the rise and growth of the mercantile ethics, especially from the late Ming on. Moreover, the records of their contributions to local welfare and activism substantiate the current scholarship on gentry, although the class antagonism and tension discussed by Brooks and Clunas is elusive in Li Guangjin’s writing. It may be true that, like many other Ming literati, he wrote the birthday memorials and epitaphs for the merchants in return for monetary rewards. But it is also clear from his writings that friendship with the merchants or their offspring played a significant role in Li Guangjin’s composition. Moreover, he wrote not only for the rich and successful. There are several biographies of struggling traders and even potters in his anthology. Li’s life story and writings strongly suggest that there was indeed much commingling of the scholarly and merchant classes. The confidence and self-affirmation of the salt merchants in Huizhou were famously expressed by Wang Daokun: “How is a worthy merchant less desirable than a great Confucian official?” (良賈何負閎儒).”

himself participated in the salt trade in Huizhou. Given the fact that his grandfather was the head of the chamber of salt merchants, it was natural for him to assume the role of spokesperson for Huizhou merchants. Li Guangjin, on the other hand, was not involved in any kind of mercantile activities, although his cousin was one of the pioneers in the overseas Luzon trade. While Li was a Confucian scholar faithful to the Cheng-Zhu tradition, his egalitarian attitude toward social classes and his high valuation of the merchants remind one of Wang Yanming’s teachings, placing him in stark contrast with his contemporary, Zhang Tao, the protagonist of Timothy Brook’s study, who was nostalgic for the stratified agrarian social order.

Li’s appraisal of the merchant class was built upon Sima Qian’s “Biographies of Money-makers” in *Shiji*, but he was not satisfied with the Grand Historian’s conception of the “untitled nobility” and his treatment of the female personages. Li Guangjin did not hold Taozhu Gong, the historical figure revered by later merchants as the patron god, in high regard because of his sons’ moral failures, and it was on this account that Li considered the merchants for whom he wrote as more accomplished than Taozhu Gong. In his writings, we can discern the adaptations that Cheng-Zhu Confucianism made in the rapidly changing late Ming world.

**Li Guangjin: a Cheng-Zhu Scholar and Proponent of Traditional Values**

Li Guangjin, with the style name of Zongqian and courtesy name of Zhongyi, was a native of Jinjiang county in Quanzhou. His father, Li Ren (dated unknown), was a

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296 Taozhu Gong was the historical figure Fan Li (B.C.E 536 – B.C.E 448) who assisted the King of Yue to defeat the state of Wu. After the victory, he resigned from his post and first traveled to the state of Qi and renamed himself Zhiyi Pizi. Refusing the title bestowed on him by the king of Qi, he moved again and took residence in a place call Tao in modern day Shangdong. He renamed himself Taozhu Gong and accumulated an immense fortune through trade. He was later deified by merchants as the pioneer of the business and a patron god.
juren during the Jiajing reign (1507-1567), serving at one time in the Board of Revenue (户部).

At the age of nineteen, he became a student at the local public school (zhusheng 諸生), and studied with Su Xun 蘇浚 (1542-1599), who was a famous member in the local scholarly community, best known for his scholarship on the Classic of Changes. In 1585 when Li Guangjin was thirty-six, he ranked first in the provincial examination (鄉試), but failed the capital examination the following year, whereupon he decided to quit the pursuit of a scholar-official career and devoted himself to the study of the classics as a private scholar. He spent his life almost entirely in his hometown and never entered officialdom. There is no clear biographical record of his life, but from his collected writings, we gather that he lived the life of a local elite who participated actively in local affairs. This is evident from his numerous writings on sundry community events such as the compilation of clan genealogies, and betrothal letters. He also recorded the establishment of shrines, infrastructure, academies, and charity activities in the locality. His source of living most likely came from teaching, publications, and his various commitments as an elite gentry in the local community.

Li Qingfu, in his Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao (Study on the Origin of lixue in Fujian), indicated that Li Guangjin formed his own school of learning with four disciples under his name. In the preface, Li Qingfu said, “During that time, the teaching of [the idea of] innate knowledge of the good was popular [i.e., Wang’s teaching], and the master [i.e., Li Guangjin] repeatedly discoursed on the origins and roots of [the learning of] Cai Qing, Zhang Yue, and Su Xun, so as

297 Among his publications were Zhouyi mingming pian (The Profundity of the Classic of Changes 周易冥冥篇), Yijing ershuo (A Children’s Guide to the Classic of Changes 易經兒說), Yijing xinshuo (On the Spirit of the Classic of Changes 易經心說), and Sishuo ershuo (A Children’s Guide to the Four Books 四書兒說).
to expound the tenets of the masters, preventing it from decline. He was an exemplary teacher of his time!”

Clearly, he was regarded to be an integral part of the Quanzhou scholarly tradition. Many of his students later achieved success in the imperial examination. He was a prolific writer whose works included *Sishu yaozhi* (Main principles of the Four Books 四書要旨), *Sishu zhinan* (Guide to the Four Books 四書指南), *Sishu yishu* (Conjectures about the Four Books 四書臆說), *Sishu qianbainian yan* (Thousand-year-old Insights of the Four Books 四書千百年眼), *Yijing qianjie* (A Rudimentary Explanation of the Classic of Change 易經淺解), and *Dushi oujian* (My Humble Views in Studying History 讀史偶見). His collected works, entitled the *Jingbi ji* 景壁集 (Collections of Views from the Cliff), comprise nineteen fascicles, or *juan*, containing epitaphs, eulogies, memorials, biographies, treatises, and so on. There are altogether eighteen essays written specifically on behalf of merchants or their wives. There are additional sporadic and periodic statements about trade and commerce interspersed in his miscellaneous writings. Many of the merchant families that he wrote about were from Anhai, a township in Jinjiang county and a port located within the Quanzhou Bay. Perhaps the most convincing

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298 Li Qingfu, *Mingzhong lixue yuanyuan kao*, juan 70.
299 Li Guangjin, *Jingbi ji* (Collected works of Li Guangji) (Jiangsu: Jiangsu Guangling guji keyinshe, 1996), prefaces.
evidence that Li was a Confucian scholar who upheld traditional and conventional values was his sponsorship of the cult of chastity.

Though the cult of female chastity became a prevalent social phenomenon from the Ming through Qing times such that it was endorsed by most scholars regardless of intellectual orientations, its ethical rationale was first initiated and popularized by the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism during the Song times. Cheng Yi said with regard to women that to starve to death was a small matter when compared to loosing one’s integrity; Zhu Xi and his disciple Huang Gan 黃幹 (1152-1221), who was also his son-in-law also emphasized the female virtue of remaining faithful to one man.300 Since then female chastity and even female martyrdom were transformed from a classical ideal existed only in the ancient classics and legends to a practical expectation of the female members of elite families. Beginning in the Ming, the imperial state publicly recognized the moral achievements of chaste widows and heroic female martyrs.301 Thus the cult of chastity was an imperial policy founded upon the Cheng-Zhu school of orthodox learning.

In Li Guangjin’s collected works, there are many writings justifying and endorsing the female virtue of loyalty and chastity. He wrote prefaces for biographies of virtuous women and female martyrs that were published for a popular readership. He also wrote treatises on women virtues based on the female paragons from his area. Given his prominent role and status in his locality, the influence of such writings on local culture and custom would be immense. As examples, let us look at two biographies that Li Guangjin wrote for women from merchant families, in which he celebrated their heroic acts.

301 Ibid., p. 54.
In 1603, on the fourth day of the ninth month of the lunar calendar, the Spaniards killed thirty thousand Chinese in Luzon, most of whom were from either Anhai or the neighboring Zhangzhou prefecture. Huang Sunniang 黃孫娘 was the daughter-in-law of the Huang family, who was engaged in the maritime trade. Her father-in-law worked in Luzon and achieved initial success. However, his business suffered gradual decline, and he could not afford to return home for many years. Huang Sunniang’s husband followed his father’s footsteps and left for Luzon. Sunniang stayed home with her husband’s younger sister, Chen Yingniang 陳英娘 and sustained the family. When the news of the Luzon massacre reached home, Sunniang was only twenty-three years old and did not have any children yet. Her sister-in-law was seventeen years old and was engaged to another family whose son also died in the calamity. When Sunniang became aware of Yingniang’s intention to die with her, she asked, “I am a widow and should stay faithful to the husband. Why would you, being so young, sacrifice your life for others?” To which Yingniang replied determinedly: “Rightness is one and the same; are there two? Once engaged to someone, there is no remarrying for the rest of the life. I am determined to die.”

Li Guangjin commented with the voice of a Confucian moralist: “The deaths of these chaste women were right and proper. They followed the principle of being faithful to one man till death. They regretted that they could not avenge the deaths of their men in the islands overseas. Do the meanings of marriage and remaining faithful go beyond this? Yingniang had not yet enjoyed the happiness of marriage, but could understand the great principle of rightness. To be able to see the

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302 Li Guangjin, “Er lie zhuan” (Biographies of two chaste women), Jing Biji, p. 2401.
great rightness, such that she showed her faithfulness by dying, just as her sister-in-law did, was truly not easy!"303

李光縉曰烈婦之死正矣！彼所謂從一而終也。恨無從報夫讐于絕島外耳。援刀引鏡断臂截髮之義，悉以逾此？陳女未嘗有結褵之歡，合卺之雅，而能睹大義與其嫂相然信以死，終始不易。

Madam Ke also lost her husband in the massacre. But she refused to believe that her husband did not survive. A year later, when the tragic news was confirmed by the people who sailed back, she committed suicide on the anniversary of her husband’s death. She was only twenty-two years old. In writing her biography, Li Guangjin elevated the heroic acts of these women to national significance: “Their deaths were able to elicit the grievances of their men’s deaths, and arouse the teachings of the rites and propriety in China”304 (斯亦足發舒其丈夫男子之冤，而振乎中國禮儀之教。故足奇也). Li Guangjin thought that what they did was in accord with the rites and customs, especially Zhu Xi’s teachings concerning womanly values and virtues. From the point of view of the moral cultivation, their deaths helped to affirm and propagate the venerated female virtues that were a part of the value system that was meant to keep the empire and society stable.305 Zhu Xi’s teachings were deep-rooted in the area, and Li Guangjin was in many ways a faithful Cheng-Zhu Confucian scholar.

Li Guangjin: Advocate for the Merchants and Mercantile Ethos

304 Ibid, p. 2399.
305 The cult of chastity was most forcefully enforced in the Qing dynasty, though moralizing the conduct of women began from the Song Dynasty, especially with Zhu Xi’s propounding the virtues of purity and chastity. See Janet Theiss, Disgraceful Matter: the Politics of Chastity in Eighteen Century China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Matthew Sommer, Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China (California: Stanford University Press, 2000); Fangqin Du and Susan Mann, “Competing Claims on Womanly Virtues in Late Imperial China” in Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Haboush, and Joan Piggott eds., Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan (California: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 217-247.
Traditionally, the main Confucian objection to the occupation of merchants was based on the literati’s conception of the contending interests between righteousness *yi* 義 and profit *li* 利, as famously argued by Mencius. They believed that engagement in profit-making would obstruct the pursuit of the moral Way, the *dao* 道, since the imperatives of the virtue of rightness and the act of profit-making were mutually exclusive. This tension-laden dichotomy of the cultivation of virtue and the quest for wealth began to soften from the mid Ming onwards, as reflected in Wang Yangming’s revision of the traditional conception of merchant living. Wang was asked by a student: if a scholar should take management of livelihood (*zhisheng* 治生) as his primary job, then should he not be engaged in business since he was living in abject poverty? This question may reflect the plight of many Ming scholars, whose chances of getting official positions through success in the examination system were increasingly slim. Wang Yangming replied:

> If taking the management of livelihood as his primary task leads the scholar to earnestly pursue profit, then it should absolutely not be done. Of the primary tasks under Heaven, which would be more urgent than teaching and learning? Even though the managing of livelihood is part of teaching, it should not be regarded as the primary task to the extent that it initiates the idea of pursuing profit. If, however, one could cultivate the mind-heart and body such that they have no attachments, then even though one conducts business all day, it would not harm one’s effort to become a sage and worthy. How does it hinder one’s study? Why would study be secondary to making a living?

直問：「許魯齋言學者以治生為首務，先生以為誤人，何也？豈士之貧，可坐守不經營耶？」先生曰：「但言學者治生上，僅有工夫則可。若以治生為首務，使學者汲汲營利，斷不可也。且天下首務，孰有急于講學耶？雖治生亦是講學中事。但不可以之為首務，徒啟營利之心。果能於此處調停得心體無累，雖終日做買賣，不害其為聖為賢。何妨於學？學何貳於治生？」

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In the commercialized society of the mid Ming, Wang Yangming affirmed the importance of making a living for a scholar, while still regarding moral self-cultivation as the foremost task. Engaging in profit-making business would be perfectly acceptable, as long as it does not obstruct the nurturing of virtues as the ultimate purpose of life. In the epitaph Wang Yangming wrote for a merchant, Fang Lin 方麟, in 1525, he acknowledged the social functions of the profession, and injected an element of egalitarianism into the traditional conception of social stratification. He opined:

In ancient times, the four professions conducted different trades but shared the same Way. In terms of their devotion, they were one. Scholar-officials cultivated statecraft, peasants provided nourishments, artisans produced efficient implements, and merchants facilitated in the transaction of goods. In accordance with what their natural abilities were most suited for, they exerted their efforts in order to fulfill [what] their hearts [desire]. With regard to the foremost pursuit of benefitting the way of life, they were the same. Just as scholar-officials and peasants were devoted to statecraft and nurturing of life, so they were to creating implements and transacting commodities. Just as artisans and merchants were dedicated to the production and transaction of goods, so they were to the cultivation of statecraft and nurturing of life.

古者四民異業而同道，其盡心焉，一也;士以修治，農以具養，工以利器，商以通貨，各就其資之所近，力者所及者而業焉，以求盡其心。其歸要在于有益于生人之道，則一而已。士農以其盡心于修治具養者，而利器通貨猶其士與農也。工商以其盡心于利器通貨者，而修治具養猶其工與商也。

Here, Wang Yangming posited that the four classes of people, by virtue of fulfilling their natural abilities, were equal as far as the pursuit and fulfillment of the Way were concerned. It is noteworthy that during this period, ideas and discourses recognizing the value of the “private” si

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307 I use the word “egalitarianism” as a term of art rather than of philosophical import. I do not mean to suggest that the late Ming scholars embraced a view of society that implied equality as the bedrock of a democratic system. It simply refers to the notion that everyone has access to the moral Way, regardless of occupations.

According to Takehiko Okada, Wang Yangming’s school developed into three main branches after his death, the left wing (existentialist school), the right wing (quietist school), and the orthodox wing (cultivation school). The left wing, culminating in the Taizhou School, epitomized the populist orientations and radical reconceptions in Wang’s teachings. Perhaps it is not surprising that many of its key members were from humble backgrounds, such as the founder, Wang Gen 王艮 (1483-1541), who was a minor salt merchant. Other leaders such as Han Zhen 韓貞 (1509-1585) was a potter and Zhu Shu 朱恕 (dates unknown) was a woodcutter. They inherited and expanded the inherent egalitarianism in Wang Yangming’s ideas, and believed that the Way does not discriminate against class or profession. Believing that the edifice of Confucian learning and cultivation rested ultimately on the quotidian life of the common people, their lectures were open to the public, often drawing huge crowds. The Taizhou school developed a large following comprising people from all walks of life. Shimada Kenji rightly argued that the rise and popularity of this left-wing sect was closely related to increasing commercialization and the changing social milieu of the late Ming period. Yangzhou, the prefecture where Taizhou was located, was a major commercial hub in the lower Yangzi region. As the school operated in a leading center of the salt industry, it was not uncommon to find salt merchants among the Taizhou followers. The fact that Wang Gen, the

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son of a poor salt merchant without a proper education, could establish of a school of considerable influence might be unprecedented in the history of Confucianism. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that although the growth of the Taizhou School was an indication of the dissolving class barriers of the late Ming period, it should not be taken as evidence of the rise of the merchant class or a movement of the commoners, since scholar-officials and the bureaucratic gentry still constituted the bulk of the Taizhou membership. As Takehiko Okada contends, the reason for the success of the Taizhou school lay much in the fact that while the right wing and the cultivation school of latter-day Wang Yangming learning failed to adapt themselves to the romantic, emotional, and sensual mood of the late Ming, the left wing accorded perfectly with the temper of the times. Needless to say, the somewhat melodramatically terms that Okada uses requires further empirical substantiation, but the point that the Taizhou teachings captured the imaginations of many, literati and commoners alike, seems beyond dispute.

Born in the coastal prefecture of Quanzhou in the peripheral maritime province of Fujian, Li Guangjin was certainly not unfamiliar with trade and commerce. In fact, he had close relations with the Anhai merchants who played major roles in the maritime trade, especially during the imperial prohibition of overseas commerce. He was conversant with the ways of the merchants and expressed much sympathetic appreciation for the hardship that merchants had to endure in their profession. Li Guangjin, in his capacity as a local elite, spoke approvingly of the prosperous trade taking place in his hometown, even if those activities were against state sanction. His own family had been involved in mercantile activities out of necessity, despite that fact that the family prided itself as one devoted to learning. Li Guangjin’s father died when he was only four, and his family probably had no choice but to be engaged in small businesses in order to make ends meet,

312 De Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism” in Self and Society in Ming Thought, p.173.
albeit with certain reservations. Li told us, “My family had been devoted to book learning for generations, and disliked being merchants. Even when we did [engage in mercantile activities], we conducted trade only in market places and did not like to do traveling business.”

余家世治書，不喜賈，有之但坐窺市井耳，不喜行賈。

Here, he informs us of the breakdown of class barriers and the intermingling of social classes, especially between the scholars and the merchants. Li’s own family might have also been supported by the family lineage. He had close connections with his cousin’s family, on account of the fact that their grandfathers were siblings. His cousin, Li Yuxi 李寓西 (dates unknown) was one of the few people who pioneered trade with Luzon and made a great fortune from it. In his old age, he led an idyllic life and resided less than twenty 里 from Li Guangjin’s house. Through his cousin, Li Guangjin first became familiar with the lives and struggles of the Anhai merchants, and eventually, he personally got to know many of them. We know from his writings that he enjoyed his friendship with the sons of some of the local merchants, and at their request, he wrote epitaphs and birthday memorials for them and their parents.

As a Confucian scholar, he was not ashamed of his clan’s mercantile involvements and his connections with merchants. When writing the preface to his family’s genealogy, he stated these facts with an affirming and positive tone:

Other genealogies refrain from talking about poverty, but I do not refrain from talking about poverty. They are also ashamed of talking about merchants and doing business, but I am not one of them. [People] think that scholars are not bothered by poverty, and so those who seek landed property and ask for houses are not the way of the profound person (junzi). The building of family fortunes takes several generations. Below the

315 Ibid, 518.
pursuit of learning, no one is as earnest as merchants in working his way up from poverty to wealth, while still attaching to humaneness and rightness. Histories listed money-makers and did not exclude their sons. In what way [would it be inappropriate] to discuss my clan members and relatives [who were merchants]?316

他人譜諱言貧，余不諱言貧，亦恥言賈，余不耻言贾，以為儒不厭貧，而廣求田問舍者，非君子之道，人世起家，自讀書下，用貧求富而仁義附，莫誠如賈，史列貨殖不滅賈子，又何論宗人族属也。

Interesting, Li Guangjin was fully aware of the illegal trade taking place in his home town, saying, “Anhai was remote and far from prefectural governance. Once one sailed out of the gate, one reached the outer ocean. This was most advantageous to private trade on the sea. The Anhai merchants were good traders. They chased after those foreign trading ships hiding in the distance in the harbor and cove so as to obtain great profits.”317 Further describing the customs of the place, he remarked:

In Wenling [in the Quanzhou prefecture], every household either played string instruments or read. People favored Confucian learning and had reservations for trade. But Anping alone favored trade and commerce whose people were after profit. However, they did not rely on retail. The husbands, after their sons were born and completed the capping ceremony, would usually conduct business and become traveling merchants, whose footprints reached many countries. They travelled north to Yan (modern day Hebei province), south to Wu (Jiangsu/Zhejiang province), east to Yue (Guangdong), and west to Bashu (Sichun). Some of them braved the winds and waves in pursuit of profits in the markets on the foreign islands. A short travel would mean returning home after a year; longer ones would mean coming back home after several years. They passed their hometowns but would not enter, taking foreign lands as their homes. Women took up domestic chores all by themselves. This was the main sketch of the customs here.318

吾温陵里中，家弦户诵，人喜儒不矜贾，安平市独矜贾，逐什一趋利然，亦不倚市门，丈夫子生及已弁，往往废着鬻财贾行遍郡国，北贾燕，南贾吴，东贾粤，西贾巴蜀，或衝风突浪争利于海岛绝夷之墟，近者岁一歸，遠伯數歲始歸，过邑不入門以異域為家，壺以内之政，婦人棅之，此其俗之大都也。

316 Li Guangjin, ‘Genealogy of the Rulin Li clan, preface’ in Jingbi ji, p. 891-892.
317 Li Guangjin, Jingbi ji
318 Li Guangjin, “Shimu Shenruren shouxu” (Birthday memorial for Madam Shen, the mother of Shi family) in Jingbi ji, p.726
Evidently, as a local elite, Li Guangjin wrote and spoke approvingly of trade, commerce, and the merchants, including even the contraband ones in Quanzhou. Given the social and economic conditions of his locality, his endorsement of the merchant class and appreciation of their social functions in fact appeared much stronger and forceful than that of Wang Yangming and his left-wing followers. He maintained:

The Grand Historian [Sima Qian] authored biographies. He began with Bo Yi who starved to death at the Shouyang Mountain, and deemed him as purer than Cao and Xu [i.e., Cao Fu and Xu You, legendary recluses]. He concluded with the biographies for money-makers. Why? [Was it] to begin with the supreme purity, and conclude with utmost turbidity? The thousand [pieces of] gold made by food peddlers, the extravagance of knife sharpeners, the chariots of the warriors, the tens of thousands possessed by wine traders, how could they be compared with a glance at Bo Yi? But the Grand Historian fervently disagreed. His intention was not, as Master Wu [i.e., the son of Wu Xuanrui who asked Li to write a eulogy for his merchant father] said, to sympathize with Bo Yi, but to express his shame about poverty and baseness. Some gentlemen do not agree and laugh at my incorrectness. However, if there were no pure literati under Heaven, customs and culture would deteriorate. If there were no merchants, enterprises would decline. They both exist amid Heaven and Earth, just like the sun having the moon, and wind having the rain. [They] may galvanize the people into action, or manage their livelihood. None of which could be absent. Now, if all the people in the world were bustling with the pursuit of profit, becoming wretched in appearance and despicable, so as not to be worth mentioning, they would not enter the trail of the worthies and continue the song of Mount Souyang. [And if] the worthies and gentlemen awaited death with empty stomachs, and their beddings and clothes were not adequate, what good would it serve to this world? Thus, it would be enough that there must be scholars who are strict with their own moral conduct and exhibit extraordinary behavior like Cao [Fu], Xu [You], and [Bo] Yi. Being in poverty for long and still talking about humanity and rightness is something to be ashamed of. This is the Grand Historian’s display of his comprehension of worldly affairs. [He] stood by what Confucians regarded as undesirable, but understood what could not be discarded by a shi.319

太史公敘列傳，首伯夷，謂其餓首陽山而清勝于巢許耳，而終于貨殖傳，何也，始乎至清，卒乎至溷，販脂之千金，酒削之鼎食，胄膈之連騎，賣浆之千萬，何足以當西山歌薇者之一盼而，太史公津稱之不啻詳矣，得無與悲伯夷之意，異與吳生

319 Li Guangjin, ‘Chuzhi Xuanrui Wuchanggong ji Xshi muzhiming’ (Epitaph of the nonofficial Sir Wu Ruixuan and his wife Madam X) in Jingbi ji, pp. 2943-2944.
In this lavish praise of the merchants, Li compared scholars and merchants to the sun and moon, and the wind and rain, none of which could be absent if the world was to survive, and all of which were essential to nourishing life and nurturing society.

Li Guangjin’s favorable views of the merchants were indeed much more forcefully expressed, than in the case of Wang Yangming. To Wang, making a living and becoming a sage could only coexist when one had cultivated one’s mind-heart and body to the point of having no worldly attachments; and the four professions, insofar as each of them required the full realization of one’s natural abilities, were ultimately the same, as far as the Way was concerned. Wang’s measurement of the significance of the merchants was based on a very broad philosophical claim, appealing to the natural equality inherent in being human. Li, however, evaluated the worth and value of the merchants in social terms, directly elevating the functional importance of merchants to the same level as the scholars. Wang Yangming granted equality in the sense of fulfilling one’s heaven-endowed qualities as a member of a profession. Li Guangjin, however, directly and explicitly focused on the Way of the merchants, which according to him, was a part of the Confucian Way of moral cultivation and of becoming a sage. In the funerary oration dedicated to his friend, Zeng Youquan, Li wrote:

How do you know there are no worthy people among the merchants? The Grand Historian penned biographies of individuals of the past and present, from the emperors, princes, and marquises at the top, to the lords, generals, and minor officials below; from remarkable persons like assassins and strategists, to commoners and despicable sycophants. Even regarding people like the diviners, Sima Qian was detailed in his recordings so as to demonstrate the appearance of personages, and distinguish the debates
between worthiness and treachery. But why would he want to conclude the section with money-makers? They used their properties to achieve wealth so as to avoid poverty and abjectness. With regard to their way of being merchants, their nimble flexibility can accommodate contingencies, their movement can measure the terrain of the country, and their decisiveness can mediate the laws. Their remarkable success is no less significant than commanding an army. When put to great use, [the way of the merchants] can empower a country; when put to small use, it can enrich a family. This is the capability of commanding thousands of laborers and tens of thousands of servants. That is why the Grand Historian called [the merchants] the worthies within the thousand 里 of the current world! 320

若且未知行賈間之有賢人乎, 太史公敘列今古, 上而天子王侯下而公卿將吏, 奇而劍客謀臣鄙而滑稽佞幸, 以至日者龜策之儔, 無不備載, 亦已窮人物之態, 而晰賢姦之辨, 必終之以賈人何也？寧直以其用財致富可恣意好免貧賤而已, 賈之為道其斗捷可莢權變, 其周游可度地形, 其決斷通乎行法, 其奇勝合於用兵, 大用之富其？, 小用之饒其家, 此千役萬僕之能, 太史公所以稱為當世千里中之賢也。

Speaking through the words of Sima Qian, Li Guangjin thought that a successful merchant like his friend, Zeng Youquan, deserved to be called a noble and a worthy, on a par with the learned. In fact, not only did he think that the merchant class had a share of the Confucian Way, but artisan class too had access to it. Li Guangjin wrote a biography of a Confucian scholar, Zeng Xiaotao 曾肖陶, who turned to farming and finally settled on the career of a potter. Zeng devoted himself to Confucian studies in his early age, but he could hardly support his family especially during economically turbulent times. He therefore had to give up his scholarly career and became a farmer. However, a year’s worth of harvest was only barely enough to feed the family, but they were still short on clothes and beddings. He finally chose the profession of a potter, and his reasoning, instead of being regretful, was expressed with great self-confidence:

I heard that the Grand Historian had said that to pursue wealth out of poverty, farmers are no better than artisans, and artisans no better than merchants. No one is better than potters in trading what they make. Zhuangzi said, “Potters are good with clay. They use compass for circle, and ruler for square. Potters thus have their own Way.” An occupation that is beyond farming, being neither artisan nor merchant, but could also be both at the same time, is none other than being a potter. I heard Tao Zhugong was rich and virtuous in his conduct. He chose the place Tao that was located in the center of all-under-Heaven as residence. He emptied his property in order to make wealth. Now, I will use pottery to fulfill the needs of the tens of thousands of houses in our country, and substantiate my property so as to become noble. Moreover, I live in the middle of the northern valleys, where every inch of soil is good clay material for pottery. I can use the wood resource from the mountain, water resource from the river, soil from the land, fire from wood, and use compass and square for measurement to make whetstone and molds to supply all four quarters. There would be no exhaustion. Posterity would regard me as skillful in multiplying goods. Is this not an opportunistic path worth treading?

Zeng Xiaotao obviously believed that there was a moral way in the pottery trade. It involved more than simply mastering techniques and tools. It included serving the needs of the people and the state, not to mention attaining an immortality of sorts by bequeathing his name and reputation to posterity. This calls to mind Yu Ying-shih’s astute observation of the transcendent motivation that animated the merchants’ ethics. According to Yu, with regard to the three deeds of immortality traditionally hallowed by the literati—establishing meritorious services, virtues, and words—the merchants sought to make contributions to the first two.  

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321 Li Guangjin, “Zhuang Zeng gong Xiaotao xiansheng zhuan” (Biography of Zeng Xiaotao) in Jingbiji, pp.2231-2232.
322 Yu Ying-shi, Zhongguo jinshi zongjiao lunli yu shengren jingshen, p.493.
Zeng Xiaotao’s case corroborates Yu’s observation, revealing a general self-consciousness among the common folk in late Ming times about the worth and merit of their life-pursuits, and they demanded the same spiritual fulfillment that had formerly been the prerogative of the literati. Li Guangjin authored Zeng’s biography precisely to show the many ways in which ethical conduct could be realized, duly recognizing the inroads that merchants made into the Confucian Way. He broadened the domain of nobility by making morality the sole determinant, thus demolishing class barriers and the conventional material and vocational moorage.

“Untitled Nobility”: Wealthy Merchants and Li Guangjin’s Critique of Sima Qian

It is by now clear that the so-called “merchant way” (shangdao 商道, jiaodao 賈道, shidao 市道) had become part and parcel of the Confucian Way in late imperial China, thanks to the work of Yu Ying-shih, which brings to light the self-confidence, self-awareness, and ethos of the merchant class in the period.\(^{323}\) What is important about Li Guangjin’s writings is that they not only lend credence to Yu’s findings in a general way, but they also offer specific evidence regarding other occupations and less successful merchants. Furthermore, Li’s words complement Richard Lufrano’s study of the merchant guidebooks and manuals of the Ming and the Qing periods, which suggests that a mercantile culture existed even among the mid-level traders.\(^{324}\) The “merchant way” bears and connotes at least two principal meanings. The first refers to the most efficient ways of making profit; the second to the ethics involved in such efforts. According to Li Guangjin, a merchant who excelled in these two aspects of the merchant way was worthy

\(^{323}\) Ibid, pp. 483-495

\(^{324}\) Richard Lufrano, *Honorable Merchants: Commerce and Self-Cultivation in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997); Kai-wing Chow, using similar materials, shows the merging of social classes from the perspective of the publication of travel guides, which intended to serve both the scholar-official class and the merchant class alike. Kai-wing Chow, “The Merging of Shi and Shang in Travel: Production of Knowledge in Late Ming Books” *Frontiers of History in China*, 6.2 (June 2011): 163-182.
enough to be called a noble even without imperial endorsement. The term “untitled nobility” first appeared in Sima Qian’s “Biographies of the Money-makers,” referring to those who were able to enjoy the same luxurious life and respect of the hereditary noble on account of their wealth. Sima said, “Now there are men who receive no ranks or emoluments from the government and who have no revenue from titles or fiefs, and yet they enjoy just as much ease as those who have all these; they may be called the ‘untitled nobility’. ” He also used the term to conclude his chapter: “A family with a thousand catties of gold may stand side by side with the lord of a city; the man with a hundred million cash may enjoy the pleasures of a king. Rich men such as these deserve to be called the ‘untitled nobility,’ do they not?” Clearly, when Sima Qian coined the term, he placed sole emphasis on the material aspects of the Way of merchants. They attained status and respect purely as a result of their skills in doing business and accumulating wealth. Li Guangjin’s view was that material success alone was not enough to claim the acclaimed title of “untitled nobility.” On top of business acumen and wealth, one must also be cultured and pursue the cultivation of the Confucian way. This was the reason that he did not hold high regard for Tao Zhugong, popularly received as the patron god of merchants and traders in later ages. Li felt that the personages limned by his brush were superior to those recorded in Sima’s work precisely because they accomplished not only mere wealth but also moral worth in their business dealings. As an illustration, let us first look at the biography of Li Guangjin’s aforementioned cousin, Li Yuxi 李寓西, whom he regarded as a truly extraordinary person.

Like Li Guangjin, even though Li Yuxi was from a literati family, his father parted ways with scholarly studies and moved to Anhai to pursue a life of trade and business. When he was as

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young as twelve years old, he already joined some merchants and traveled with them to Guangdong. He borrowed small loans and started to accumulate capital and made small profits, thus becoming, as Li Guangjin described it, a “minor merchant” (xiajia 下賈). He later traded with foreigners, probably Portuguese mostly, in southern Guangdong. Since he was apparently able to speak the needed foreign languages, he succeeded in making far greater profits than others, thus becoming a “middling merchant” (zhong jia 中賈). When the Luzon Bay was opened for trade, merchants were urged and encouraged to conduct business there, but very few people responded. Li Yuxi was among the first few to brave the oceans to chase after profits. Within a year, he became a “superior merchant” (shang jia 上賈). Thereafter, many Anhai people followed his example and flocked to the market in Luzon. Li Guangjin praised the adventurousness and foresight of his cousin, who surpassed those illustrated merchants described by Sima Qian: “The Grand Historian said that Mr. Zhuo, Wan Kong, and Cheng Zheng moved to Jiameng, to Linqiong, and to Nanyang. Though they did not seek some nearby places to conduct metal minting business, no one ventured out to the sea to trade with foreigners in the southeast. This is why I say that my cousin is extraordinary?”

When his cousin was refuted by an imaginary interlocutor that if that was the case, then there would be no ordinary people in Anhai, since every household would have a member or two involved in overseas trade. Li Guangjin replied:

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327 Li Guangjin, ‘Yuxi xiongbo shouxu’ (Birthday memorial for brother Yuxi) in Jing Biji, p.513.
During the time that our countrymen first started to interact with foreigners, their languages were not communicable, their likings were dissimilar, and the translator often got in the way of the transaction. My cousin stayed in foreign land and studied their language. When he met with the king, the king regarded him an extraordinary person. He conducted trade without the mediation of translator and gained their trust. He did not make conscious effort but was able to mingle with the officials. He braved the waves, he traveled in small ships, his scope of view encompassed the east, he recognized the changes in marine life, he was eloquent, he comprehended both Chinese and foreign customs, and he practiced trustworthiness among the barbarians. This is truly an extraordinary man! Why be devoted to book learning when my elder cousin is far from ordinary?\textsuperscript{328}

Here, Li Guangjin even proclaimed that book learning paled in comparison to his cousin’s abilities to acquire foreign languages and gained the trust of foreign business partners.

From this, we may gather that the mentality of valuing mercantile activities over scholarly pursuits, which was prevalent in Huizhou, was also evident in Quanzhou.\textsuperscript{329} When the imaginary interlocutor was still not convinced and insisted again that there were many such merchants like Li Yuxi, Li Guangjin further responded:

No. Bai Gui taught people to conduct trade, as though it was unleashing the force of beast and hawk.\textsuperscript{330} But it is not the unleased energy that mattered, but the ability to know when to stop. Anping merchants were good at the former, but my brother was also capable of the latter. He could therefore escape calamity. In the beginning, my brother went to Luzon alone. When taxes started to be implemented by the intermediary officials on board who sailed out to sea, my brother predicted that the situation did not bode well, and he never went to Luzon again. After some years, there was gossip about the abundance of

\textsuperscript{328} Ibid, pp. 513-514.
\textsuperscript{329} The custom of Huizhou in prioritizing trade over the pursuit of examination success was brought repeated times by Wang Daokun in his \textit{Taihan ji}.
\textsuperscript{330} Bai Gui 白圭, a native of the state of Zhou, was one of the three legendary merchants recorded in “Biographies of the money-makers” in \textit{Shiji}.
gold in the foreign land, and an [imperial] envoy was sent to investigate. The foreigners were suspicious that there would be other conspiracies, and decided to slaughter tens of thousands of Chinese merchants.331 My brother alone escaped. The foolish were still in the dark, while the wise was able to foresee what was going to happen. A merchant has such wits that he can triumph over circumstances. This is why I think my cousin is no ordinary man.332

日又不然，白圭教人為賈若猛獸鬪鳥之發，非謂其能發也，能收也。安平人任發，兄伯取收，故居然可免於患其初。兄伯之呂宋皆身自往，自榷使出海上之稅，歸之中官。兄伯策其必收，遂不復往。不數年，好事者言夷地多金，遣使偵之。夷人疑有它謀，遂屠戮中國賈人以數十萬。令兄伯俱去能獨免乎？愚闇已然，智者識將然。鬥智爭先一市人。此余所以不凡吾兄伯也。

The interlocutor continued his questioning, “All extraordinary men under heaven gather at the capital. If your cousin is as remarkable as you described, why did he not travel to the capital?” Li Guangjin laughingly replied:

People processing exotic goods could enter the capital and meet the Son of Heaven. Only merchants could not meet the Son of Heaven. Sanghong and Yangkong were merely sons of merchants. Once they entered, they were calculative and spoke of profits. This resulted in the competition of commodities between merchants and officials, and created disturbances within the sea. Therefore, this was not something feasible. In the past, many merchants rushed to the capital, and presented all the jades and pearls obtained from the sea to the court. This transferred money from the state coffer to the market, causing the minister in charge of the Revenue Department to be in a difficult position. My cousin opined that initiating the greediness of officials, and seeking inappropriate profit from the country were not something merchants should do. Therefore, though the capital was magnificent, he did not even go there once. This was why I regarded my cousin as extraordinary.333

余笑曰：否。人抱一奇策俱可人京師見天子。獨賈人不可見天子。桑弘羊孔僅賈人子也，一人而以心計言利，遂令縣官與商賈爭貨。海內為之騷然，故不可也，往歲諸賈人輒相率至京師，所有翠翡玉石珠玑，外得之海上，內輸之宮中。至空左藏之

331 This was the same incident that claimed the lives of the husbands of Huang Sunniang, Madem Ke, and the fiancé of Chen Yingniang.
332 Li Guangjin, ‘Yuxi xiongbo shouxu’ in Jingbiji, pp. 514-515.
金與之市。大司農厭苦矣。兄伯以力開縣官鬻貨之心而牟國家無名之輩，非賈人事，而不為也。故長安雖麗，未嘗一至而問焉。此余所以不凡兄伯也。

Finally, the interlocutor was convinced that Li Yuxi not merely a selfish merchant after profit but also someone who had the greater benefit of the country at heart. As Li Guangjin told us, in his old age, Li Yuxi retired to a life of farming, building a hut in the field and tilling the land. He wore a bamboo hat when it rained and a straw coat to shield him from the wind. He got drunk from rice wine and was satisfied with eating plain meals. With these simple pleasures, he slowly aged. Summarizing the life of his cousin, Li Guangjin said, “He was smart in pioneering [overseas trade], wise in foreseeing disaster, decisive in retiring early, remarkable in knowing foreign language, righteous in refraining from making money from the government, filial in being respectable to ancestors and taking care of the lineage.”334

賈先敏也，知禍智也，蚤息斷也，曉譯奇也，不貪縣官，利義也，敬祖重宗孝也。

From Li Guangjin’s description, Li Yuxi was an admirable person who had great talents in doing business, but he also possessed a broad vision concerning the clan and the state. The way he chose to spend his retirement exemplified what Wang Yangming regarded as the non-attachment that should be the underpinning of the business of profit-making. Li Yuxi’s case offers an illustration of what Craig Clunas called the “fishermen’s pleasures,” which was a common motif in Ming painting. As Clunas describes it, literati yearned for the freedom that fishermen enjoyed socially and spatially, appreciating the non-material basis of the pleasures. This rose out of the literati’s desire to elevate the non-material nature of their taste in an effort to distinguish it from the emulative consumption of the uncouth masses that was propelled by their

334 Ibid, p. 517.
desire for elite status. When material consumption became available to an inappropriately wide range of consumers, then the mechanism of distinction could only be shifted to the manner of enjoyment that stressed non-materiality.\(^{335}\) Such connoisseurship could only come with several generations’ of cultivation. But for great merchants like Li Yuxi, they had already been imbued with such an education in aesthetic taste and spiritual desire since their youth. If given the chance to enter officialdom, he would in all probability be an accomplished official, considering his capabilities. In any case, as far as Li Guangjin was concerned, there was a good deal of interchangeability between statecraft and business. As Li reminded us, the legendary Tao Zhugong used five out of the seven strategies that Ji Ran prescribed for statecraft to re-empower the state of Yue so as to conduct trade and achieve great success. This linkage between statecraft and business was a part of Li Guangjin’s definition and conceptualization of the “untitled nobility”. He said,

> There was no one, in the past or present, who was better than Tao Zhugong in making money. He inherited the military and political wisdoms operative in defeating the state of Wu and applied them to trade. He shifted places of residence, chose the best timing and the most appropriate people, and did not put the blame on others. This must be the way of the market! People like Cao Bing, Diao Jian, Niaoshi Guo\(^{336}\) were merely merchants in the Qi and Lu states, but they could be judged together with the heroic acts of Fan Li and regarded as remarkable. In later ages, people with extraordinary skills but could not find the opportunity to put them to use often entrusted themselves to such a path. By virtue of the way of the merchants, their lending and borrowing in a country can enable it to become a celebrated place; their timely strivings with wits can make profits; their generation of wealth can topple towns and villages. Based on [the sense of what is] the root and [what are] branches, [the merchants’] literary and martial skills, wisdom, bravery, humaneness, and strength can manifest the wonders in their hearts and minds. Therefore, scholars and gentlemen who did not serve in the court must be engaged in the trading professions. This was not because they were ashamed of poverty and abjectness and disliked morality; they just wanted to realize their capabilities.\(^{337}\)

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336 They were minor merchant figures recorded in Sima Qian’s “Biographies of the Money-makers”.
337 Li Guangjin, ‘Ji Zeng Youquan wen’ (In memory of my friend Zeng Youquan) in *Jingbi ji*, p.3164.
Doing business requires certain talents in spotting the right times and acting with the speed of a hawk’s sudden take-off, a natural gift that Li Guangjin compared to the “commanding of the army by Sun Wu, and the implementation of laws by Shang Yang.” They were skills that could not be mastered even with learning and practice. Sun Wu and Shang Yang were remembered by posterity for their statecraft skills, and so why should merchants with similar talents who achieved extraordinary success be excluded from the nobility? Sima Qian certainly saw this as a legitimate claim. But Li Guangjin, on top of that, opined that there should be more to Sima’s material-based criterion of “untitled nobility.” Culture and cultivation were as important, if not more important, in Li’s rendition of the concept. Even when not accompanied by great business success, the moral fiber of the merchants deserved to be celebrated. This was the reason that he judged many of the merchants he wrote for and about to be superior to the traditionally acclaimed Tao Zhugong.

“Untitled Nobility”: Cultured Scholar and Honorable Gentry

It is now a well-known fact that many families in late imperial China tended to assign their sons the different career-paths of a scholar-official and a merchant. Such practice was indeed recorded in many of Li Guangjin’s writings. Because of the desire to fulfill vicariously their unfulfilled dream of becoming a titled scholar, or as a means of climbing up the social

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338 Li Guangjin, Meifeng Zheng ji gong xiansheng zhuan” (Biography of Zheng Meifeng who was the fourth son in the family), Jingbiji, p.2225.
ladder by translating their economic power into social respect, the merchants in Li Guangjin’s records were dedicated to the education of their offspring, so much so that several of them produced sons who obtained the *jinshi* degree, an extremely difficult achievement in light of the increasingly crowded path to examination success in late imperial China. What Li wanted to drive home was the point that those sons who carried on the family businesses and were distinguished in their demeanor and moral conduct deserved to be members of the “untitled nobility.” Li discounted his regard for Tao Zhugong because Tao did not seem to have been able to ensure his offering’s flourishing. Of his three sons, the youngest son was charged with murder and jailed in the state of Chu. The eldest son brought sacks of gold to the state Chu, intending to buy his brother’s freedom. Before his departure, Taozhu Gong advised him to pass the gold to Zhuang Sheng, his former friend and an influential figure in the state affairs of Chu, and follow his instructions. But shocked by the humble residence of Zhuang Seng, the son cast doubt on his ability to save his brother. Several days later, his brother was released with other prisoners with the Chu king’s amnesty. Feeling that Zhuang Sheng did not deserve the money, he went back to him and took the money back. Little did he know that the amnesty was issued after the king had been persuaded by Zhuang Sheng’s interpretation of some astrological phenomenon, but in any case, Zhuang Sheng had never intended to take the gold and was about to return it to Taozhu Gong. Enraged by the behavior of the son, Zhuang Sheng went back to the king and singled out the crime committed by the youngest son of Taozhu Gong, revealing also the bribes that his family gave for his rescue. The king was infuriated and ordered the execution of the youngest son and the eldest son returned home with his corpse.\(^339\) In Taozhu Gong’s own analysis, the family situation into which the sons were born played a determinant role in the formation of their

\(^{339}\) For details of the story, see “Biography of the family of king Yue Goujian” (Yue Wang Guojian shijia) in *Shiji*.\(^{339}\)
characters. The eldest son was born when he was still laboring for economic success and was thus less generous with money. The youngest son was born when Taozhu Gong was already a well-established merchant and he was thus more unruly in his character. Li Guangjin, however, thought that the root of the problem laid with their father:

The Grand Historian narrated the stories of money-makers, but did not enumerated scholars without official titles. This was because the latter were poor, whereas merchants were mostly rich. Although merchant families gave up literary studies to pursue profits, the whole family from the father to the grandson would be transformed and become cultured. Untitled scholars traveled as merchants, but still having humaneness and rightness as their acting principles. His descendants would very much be inclined toward literary culture. People called them the untitled scholars.340

Here, Li Guangjin pointed out Sima Qian’s oversight, claiming that fathers’ behavior had a direct bearing on their descendants. Even in merchant families, the early Confucian education of their fathers could result in the proper upbringing of their children. Unlike Taozhu Gong’s sons, the sons of the merchants that Li Guangjin wrote for either possessed literary skills or attained official titles through the examination system. They may not be as successful as Tao Zhugong in doing business, but their sons were certainly better people than Tao’s sons who were personifications of moral failure. Their unformed nature could ultimately be traced back to their father. Therefore, the merchants in Li’s writings were better than the Tao family.

In the celebratory memorial honoring the seventieth birthday of the merchant Cheng Xiufeng 程秀峰, Li Guangjin recalled his encounters with his son, Cheng Ruizhi 程瑞之:

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340 Li Guangjin, “Chushi Chen Douyan gong zhuan” (Biography of untitled scholar – Chen Douyan) in Jing Biji, p.2260.
When I first met Cheng [Ruizhi], he received me with the way of a merchant. He talked about the values of commodities and their richness and scarcity. I considered him a merchant. On my next encounter with Cheng, he received me with elegance and refinement. He showed me his collection of poetry and calligraphy that he gathered from literati from all four quarters. He even presented me his own depiction of the Bodhisattva and asked for my inscription. Then I knew Cheng is one among the cultured. On my third encounter with Cheng, he showed me his fondness for traveling. He invited me to sit in the house of high officials, drank the water from three springs, and hiked to the mountain peak of Tianchi. We rode with the wind and walked with the moon, left in the morning and back when it was dark. We got intensely drunk but stopped at the appropriate time. Then I knew that Cheng is someone who is fond of nature. There is the saying that if you do not know the father, observe the son. I have never met Master Xiufeng, but I know he must be different from other fathers who are also merchants.\(^{341}\)

From this account, we may safely surmise that Li Guangjin was friend with a merchant named Cheng Ruizhi, whose father was also a merchant. It was most likely that Li was asked by his friend to write a commemorative essay for his father’s birthday. Clearly, Cheng Ruizhi was a highly cultured person with good taste in art and poetry, despite his merchant background. Thus, Li Guangjin regarded the Chengs as better than Tao Zhugong and his family:

Judging from the offspring of Cheng Xiufeng and Tao Zhugong, the Chengs were apparently better. Zhu’s elder son failed to rescue his younger son not because he was stingy with money, but because he was not fond of Confucianism during his life (平生不好儒之失), whereas the elder Cheng was able to establish his career and passed it onto his offspring; and my friend Cheng was able to make friends with the renowned literati in the area, and he himself was cultured. Judging from this, I am certain that there will certainly be outstanding posterity in the Cheng family.\(^{342}\)

\(^{341}\) Li Guangjin, Gusu Cheng Xiufeng qishi xu” (Memorial for the seventieth birthday of Cheng Xiufeng from Gusu), in Jingbiji, pp. 446-447.

\(^{342}\) Ibid, p. 449.
While Cheng Ruizhi may appear to be a merchant trying to demonstrate his cultivation to a reputable literati, making him a perfect illustration of Brooks and Clunas’ argument about the nouveau riche merchants striving for respectability, another merchant, Zheng Meifeng 郑梅峰, about whom Li Guangjin wrote, was a truly cultured scholar and merchant. Zheng’s father was the prefectural governour of Chao Zhou 潮州 in the Guangdong province. He was the youngest of four sons, receiving good education since his youth, particularly noted for his prodigious comprehension of the *Classic of Changes*. The family fortune declined with the passing of his father, and he decided to give up scholarly studies for trade. Some challenged his decision, saying, “The markets are not places where the gentleman belongs. Five out of seven of Ji Ran’s strategies are applied to statecraft, and two are used in household management. You have not yet even made manifest the efficacy of Confucian learning, how can you become a merchant?” Zheng responded with his justifications, “It is my fate that I did not get the opportunity to fulfill my Confucian purpose. I intended to continue school, to act in accordance with the *Minshu* (Book on Min). But my father died. I wanted to enter the imperial academy, and acted in accordance with *Qishu* (Book of Qi), but my mother died. I heard that Yuanxian 原憲 (Zi Si 子思, Confucius’ grandson) resided in a humble empty cottage, while Zi Gan 子赣 (Zi Gong 子貢, the wealthiest disciple of Confucius) conducted trade and traveled with four-horse carriage.
There are scholars who lack remarkable behavior, but still talk about morality despite prolonged poverty. This is what the Grand Historian was ashamed of.”

Zheng later achieved great success and became a successful merchant. He was also refined in demeanor and noble in character, being filial, humble, and trustworthy. Like Li Yuxi, he did not flaunt his wealth and took pleasure in simple meals and plain clothes. During times of disturbances when people were starving to death, he made donations of grains. When people who had borrowed money could not repay him, or if they had died prematurely and passed the debt to the offspring, Zheng would forgive the loan by burning the contracts. His son fulfilled his unfulfilled dream by gaining admission into the imperial academy. In retirement, Zheng lived up to his literati upbringing. He located a piece of land where he planted rows of bamboo, mixed with other plants and flowers. There was a pavilion within where paintings were hung on the left and calligraphy on the right. Outside the pavilion was half an acre of pond where fishes like carp and sea bass were kept. In this idyll created by Zheng, he invited literati guests for gatherings where they ate and drank, laughed, and lamented problems of the world. This was the ideal life style of a scholar and literati that was made possible by the wealth created by Zheng’s mercantile activities. Li Guangjin offered this summation of Zheng’s life:

Master Zheng was someone between a Confucian scholar and a merchant. Fan Li moved to Qi and changed his name to Chi Yi Zi Pi before moving again to Tao. He made his

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343 Li Guangjin, “Meifeng Zheng ji gong xiansheng zhuan” (Biography of Zheng Meifeng who was the fourth son in the family), Jingbiji, p.2225.
344 Ibid, p. 2226.
345 Ibid, p. 2227.
fortune thrice, generating huge sums of money and passed the business to his sons. [However], he retired by still being a merchant. How was it better than retiring as a Confucian scholar? [Zheng] used the branch occupation to achieve wealth, and used the [Confucian] roots to safeguard it. Book learning was Zheng’s original profession. His ambition was to enter the imperial academy. He did not achieve that, but his son did. This is what he can rest upon. Even if he does not distinguish himself by wealth, he is extraordinary nonetheless. This outstanding gentleman lives in this world elegantly. Why would we need to ask if he is an untitled nobility?346

李光緖曰公所謂隐儒賈間者也。鸱夷之齊適陶，三致千金，听子孫修業而息之，遂至巨萬。此夫以賈息者也。以賈息何如以儒息？以末致財，用本守之。詩書其本業乎。公誌太學，不于其身而于其子。後所修息將在兹矣。誠不以富亦衹以異，長君翩翩為世聞人，何必問素封也？

Li Guangjin not only wrote about successful merchants like Cheng Ruizhi, Zheng Meifeng, and his own cousin, but he also celebrated and regaled the moral fiber and cultivation of the less successful ones. For instance, he had equal admiration for Pan Siyu, an itinerant merchant. During one of his trips, Pan stayed in the same room with another merchant from Anhui province who left a sack of gold that was worth two hundred taels in the inn. Guarding the money, Pan waited for him in the inn for forty days until he came back. The amount of gold was a matter of life and death for a mid-level merchant. He wanted to give Pan some land as a way of showing his gratitude, but Pan refused to accept.347 Li Guangjin also recorded two other stories of sons of merchants, who were so filial that they cut their own flesh to feed their sick parents as medicine.348 These morality tales, probably apocryphal, mirrored those exact tales that touted the virtues and sacrifices of the filial scholars who went to extreme

347 Li Guangjin, “Liangweng shide zhuan” (Biography of father Pan and his son), in Jing Biji, p. 2139.
348 These stories were found in “Liangweng shide zhuan” (Biography of Wang Shide), p.2140; and “Qian xiaozi zhuan” (Biography of the filial son, Qian Yingzeng) in Jing Biji, pp. 2271-2276. The way of feeding sick parents with one’s own flesh seemed to be not an uncommon way of showing one’s filial piety in ancient China.
measures in order to take care of their parents. Thus, it is clear that in Li Guangjin’s mental world, the merchants and their sons were as noble and worthy as their counterparts in the world of the official gentry.

“Untitled Nobility”: Women of the Merchant Families

Apart from his offspring, a noble merchant must also be able to nurture the character of the women in his household and made them virtuous. As a Confucian scholar, Li Guangjin valued moral character and cultivation more than anything else. He endorsed female virtue of chastity to the extent of justifying female martyrdom. It was also out of his admiration of the moral conduct of the female members of merchant families that Li Guangjin wrote biographies for them. Moral attainment was the basis for his critique of Sima Qian’s notion of the “untitled nobility.” It was also the ground on which he built his critique of Sima’s myopic portrayal of female participants in trade. There are two female characters in Sima Qian’s “Biographies of the money-makers” – widow Qing from the Bashu area and Madam Zhuo originally from the state of Zhou. Both were recorded for their business acumen and courage. But Li Guangjin was not satisfied with Sima Qian’s treatment, pointing out that he failed to highlight the virtues of Widow Qing and Madam Zhuo:

I have always blamed the Grand Historian for not writing biographies of chaste women. But attaching Bashu widow under the biography for merchants? How despicable and inappropriate! It was said that the customs of the Qin state were shallow and base. It could not reach the standard of ritual propriety. A poor lady could use her property to achieve wealth, and her name reached the Son of Heaven. She beat tens of thousands of chariots and manifested herself under Heaven. The Grand Historian’s real intention was to satirize Qin customs, and not to highlight Widow Qing’s ability.349

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吾居平嘗怪太史公不列貞婦傳，而但附巴蜀寡婦清于貨殖傳中。何臕窈不倫也！說者謂秦俗卑陋，尊禮不逮。貧一婦人能用財致富，遂有以名聞天子。抗萬乘而顯天下。太史公直用是刺秦風雲，非重清之能也。

The ancestors of Widow Qing established the family fortune through the trade on cinnabar. When Qing’s husband died, the Qin state unified China for the first time. In the tumultuous times of new foreign rule, Qing, although only a widow, was nevertheless able to carry on the family business and used her wealth to buy protection for herself. The First Emperor of the Qin dynasty, considering her a virtuous woman, treated her as a guest and built the Nuhuaiqing Terrace 女懷清臺 in her honor.350 But Li Guangjin thought that Sima Qian’s record had failed Window Qing, as his misguided goal was not to write an account of her remarkable achievements but to use her story to lambast the unruly culture of the Qin Empire.

Similarly, in Li Guangjin’s view, Sima Qian did not shed proper light on the wisdom of Madam Zhuo, depicting her merely as a follower of her husband. Madam Zhuo’s family made a fortune by smelting iron. With the unification of China under the state of Qin, the policy of mass relocation of people was implemented. Madam Zhuo’s family was ordered to move to another part of the empire for resettlement. Having been taken captive and deprived of their wealth and servants, the husband and wife were left on their own, pushing their belongings in a cart. Unlike others who vied with one another to bribe officials in order to send them to some nearby locations, the Zhuo couple decided to move to a further location where they found a mountain that yielded iron ore. They continued their trade and grew rich again.351 According even less treatment on Madam Zhuo than on Widow Qing, Sima Qian’s main focus was on the insights of

350 Sima Qian, Shiji, p.341.
her husband on spotting new opportunities rather than on the wife’s contributions. What Li Guangjin saw, however, was the vision and sacrifice of Madam Zhuo:

The Grand Historian penned biographies of worthy merchants of various times, but all he recorded were the stories of male merchants, and seldom touched upon the women. [He mentioned] only the Zhuo couple who escaped from being captured, and the husband and wife reached Linqiong. They became the wealthiest people among the Dian and Shu people. Though Madam Zhou was witty, she nonetheless was willing to move with her husband. They became rich through casting metal.352

When it came to merchant women, Li Guangjin criticized Sima Qian for his parochial notion of “untitled nobility.” While Sima acknowledged that Madam Zhuo and Widow Qing were distinguished females, he made a point to comment that they were “only known by way of the market, and they did not know what the classics and six arts were.”353 (卓氏行遷，夫妻推轀，巴蜀婦清，擅利丹穴，豈不亦女中名流，僅僅以市道聞，不曉詩書六藝為何物). On the other hand, Li Guangjin emphasized that the women for and about whom he wrote were all remarkable persons who not only assisted in the family business but also prolonged family success by educating their sons. Yet, although Li Guangjin might be ahead of his times in pointing to women’s “nobility”, he averred that their moral accomplishments should be attributed to the influence of the male heads of the household. “Untitled nobility,” to Li Guangjin, was still a patriarchal privilege in the end, but he nonetheless saw the female

352 Li Guangjin, “Shou Huang mu Zhang ruren qishiliu xu” (Seventy-sixth birthday memorial for Madam Zhang, the mother of Huang) in Jing Biji, p.651.
353 Li Guangjin, “Shi mu Shen ruren shouxu’ (Birthday memorial for Madam Shen, the mother of Shi) in Jing Biji, p.728.
characters that he wrote about as superior to Widow Qing and Madam Zhuo whom Sima portrayed.

What Li wanted to properly highlight were the protagonists who were exemplifications of the female virtues exhorted by the state. One such protagonist was Madam Zheng, whose life story was similar to that of Widow Qing. Madame Zheng’s husband conducted trade in Guangdong and brought his wife along with him. Unfortunately, the husband died while their two children were still young. Madam Zheng initially thought of committing suicide with her children in order to follow her husband, but ultimately abandoned the thought given the young age of her children. She stayed in Guangdong and continued her husband’s business. Without the help of the clan and living in a land of different local languages and customs, Madam Zheng managed to raise her children and lived a happy old age surrounded by grandchildren. A retrospect of her life yielded much to be praised and admired, according to Li Guangjin:

Scholars are used to saying that it is easy to die but difficult to raise an orphan. For the wife to retain her chastity [after the death of her husband] is truly difficult. But to establish chastity in a merchant’s family is even more difficult. For a widow to stay in a foreign land, experienced all kinds of danger and obstacles, and was still able to maintain chastity like Madam Zheng is the most difficult of all. This merchant [Madam Zheng’s husband] deserves high esteem. Though having given up literary studies for trade, without the practice of rites and virtues, how could the inner chamber be influenced? Being in a bustling place oriented toward wealth and profit, struggling outside one’s hometown with no relatives to rely upon, but was still content and retaining goodwill. There is no guarantee that even a man will not waver, let alone a woman?\footnote{Li Guangjin, “Shou Anping jiemu Zheng ruren liushi xu” (Birthday Memorial on the sixtieth birthday of the chaste wife of Madam Zheng who was from Anping) in Jingbi ji, pp.724-725.}

儒者有言, 死易, 立孤難, 婦而節, 誠難矣。乃其樹節于賈人之家, 則尤難。至孀居他鄉嘗險阻, 而始終不少渝其節如鄭母寡者尤難之難也。彼賈人相矜, 以賈去文學而趨利。非有詩書禮儀之習可以化誨其閨門?而又熙穰于財利之鄉, 崎嶇桑梓之外。內骨無可依, 而意好得自快。雖丈夫子而當此不免搖惑, 何况婦人?
We may speculate that the husband of Madam Zheng was initially a Confucian scholar who gave up learning for trade. To Li Guangjin, Madam Zheng was comparable to Widow Qing who continued the husband’s unfinished work and succeeded in a foreign land while maintaining her chastity. But Li attributed her elevated moral character to the influence of the husband who had been steeped in Confucian learning, as an orthodox Confucian scholar was wont to claim. But even though “untitled nobility” was reserved for the male heads of the merchant families, Li underscored the importance of the female members, who did their part in establishing the family’s fortune and reputation.

Some women did in fact attain public recognition by the imperial state, thanks to their feminine virtues. Li Guangjin wrote a biography of Madam Shen, the wife of a merchant who was endowed by the state with the titles of “Amiability” (ci 慈) and “Chasteness” (jie 節) at the age of eighty for her persistence and sacrifice in supporting her son’s education. Madam Shen’s husband first pursued Confucian learning, but later collaborated with his brother and friend in a business dealing in brocade and silk in the Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. The husband was a skillful merchant who could tell the quantity and quality of the goods with his naked eyes, and eventually became a great merchant. However, he died in Hangzhou while doing business there. Madam Shi was then only thirty-two years old, and her youngest son was only an infant. In the following years, Madam Shi, against all odds, raised her three sons and supported her parents-in-law. Her husband’s savings drained fast and the family became poverty stricken. But Madam Shi insisted on hiring the best tutors for her sons’ education. She pawned her jewelry, and in the worst of times, she was forced to forage for food in the wild. However, her second son was not good at study, and so switched to doing business. But he unfortunately died in Guangdong. The eldest son continued to pursue a scholarly career but was not very talented, and he, too, died.
prematurely. Madam Shi put all her hopes on the youngest, who finally obtained the *jinshi* degree. This story shows that a scholarly career was still much esteemed by most in late Ming society, and a woman’s name and reputation were defined in relation to her ability to care for her husband and her sons. In extolling female virtues, Li Guangjin was a spokesperson of the imperial state, representing conventional views on womanly accomplishments. But he was nevertheless unstinting in his effort to properly recognize the talents and contributions of the women who engaged in trade. On that score, he might be ahead of most of his contemporaries.

**Conclusion**

This chapter contributes to the study of local history by examining the writings of a Cheng-Zhu scholar in Quanzhou, and argues that he was an orthodox literatus defending the traditional Confucian values as well as an agent of change in the complex society of the late Ming period. Li Guangjin’s writings concerning merchants and their ethos confirm the findings of current scholarship in a number of ways. In the main, they illustrate the historical phenomenon of the melding and close interaction of the scholars and merchants, showcasing the self-consciousness of the latter and the receptivity of the former. But more importantly, they also show that a Cheng-Zhu scholar such as Li Guangjin, despite his continued embrace of conventional values, such as the sponsorship of patriarchal views and the cult of chastity, nonetheless responded and adapted to the rapidly commercialized society and changed social milieu. He went back to the historical classic, the *Shiji*, in search of intellectual justifications for the elevated status of merchants, and found it wanting. He did not hesitate to revise it in order to suit the demands of his times, inserting morality and cultivation, the characteristic traits of a Confucian literatus, into the notion of “untitled nobility.” He was similar to Lin Xiyuan, who was

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a conservative Confucian scholar in their intellectual orientation, but in their capacity as the local elite class, they exhibited intimate association with the local population. They were steadfast in their intellectual faith, but in the midst of a rapidly commercialized society, they displayed agility and receptivity in meeting the new ethical demands of the age. The openness and diversity of Quanzhou as a commercial hub in history may account for the entrepreneurial spirit shared by its common people and literati class alike, which also explains the character of Quanzhou scholarly community as both the vanguard of Cheng-Zhu learning and agents of change in a new era.
CONCLUSION

The city of Quanzhou has recently received a boost in its media exposure. Thanks to the new nationally launched strategic policy of “One-Belt-One-Road,” which harks back to the ancient Silk Road that connected China with the west. Much fanfare has been generated since its launch in 2013. All the major cities along the ancient overland and maritime Silk Road, such as Xi’an and Quanzhou, are again under the spotlight. State-sponsored documentaries are produced, in which Quanzhou is featured and given special attention.\(^{356}\) In 2016, the city even hosted one of the four stages outside Beijing where the Spring Festival Gala of the national central television station was broadcast live. The Gala, being an integral part of the Spring Festival celebration in China and overseas Chinese communities, was watched by millions. Quanzhou, as a result, enjoyed remarkable publicity.

This newly attained attention on Quanzhou, however, still focuses on its past glories as a maritime port city, a window through which China looks at world and the world gazes at the China. This is how Quanzhou is to be known and remembered in the modern configuration of its image. This, however, is entirely a state initiative. Back in the Ming times, when the city lost its glamour as a cosmopolitan entrepot, the local scholarly class, as shown in this study, worked toward the integration of their hometown into the larger empire by safeguarding and promoting Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy. Indeed, Ming Quanzhou was known as the last bastion of Cheng-Zhu learning, thanks to the unstinting and purposeful efforts of several generations of local scholars who worked to construct this cultural identity for their locality. My study thus presents a view of the state-society relations in late imperial Quanzhou, revealing the local initiatives that created a

\(^{356}\) They include *Chuanyue haihang sichou zhilu* (Transverse the maritime Silk Road) aired in November 2016, and *Yuanfang de jia* (Homes far abroad) aired in August 2016 on Central Television channels.
local image which nevertheless conformed to and resonated with state’s cultural imperatives. The role of the local literati in mediating the relationship between the local and the central could be instructive to public intellectuals of today’s Quanzhou.

Can the findings of the study of the Quanzhou scholars be applicable to the study of literati of other locations? In what ways were they similar to or different from their peers in other parts of China? In the past three decades or so, there have undoubtedly been many admirable studies of the local histories of the many regions in late imperial China. However, much of this scholarship has focused on areas in the prosperous Lower Yangzi Delta. Little attention has been given to the peripheries of the empire. The Quanzhou scholars distinguished themselves in two ways: their intellectual orientation toward Cheng-Zhu learning, and their receptivity and even participation in the mercantile ethos of the era. While the increased merging and blurring of the scholarly and merchant classes was a general trend of the late imperial period, the intellectual allegiance of the Quanzhou scholars made their endorsement and even direct participation in commercial activities a peculiar phenomenon. This seeming conundrum could be solved when taking into consideration the specialness of the locale of Quanzhou. Even though the city was no longer a hub in the global trade network, the entrepreneur spirit within the population had never died out. The Cheng-Zhu scholars grew up and worked in a milieu of vibrant mercantile ethos. They were surrounded by people driven by adventurous entrepreneur spirit and they knew their hardship first hand.

They acted out of their deep concern for the livelihood of their countrymen, and it was also out of their love for their hometown that they tried to promote it on the national level. Here, their dual identity as scholar-gentry and as scholar-official merged seamlessly, and where intellectual history and local history found communication. To construct and highlight the self-
proclaimed and much-hailed intellectual lineage traced back to Zhu Xi was a deliberate strategy to distinguish the locale and its scholars while associating them with the larger intellectual domain at the national level. This forging of an intellectual lineage and community mutated into and merged with the creation of a cultural memory of local prominent figures such as Cai Qing and his followers. These memories further found concrete manifestations in monuments dedicated to the scholars deemed to have carried the mantle of Cheng-Zhu learning. As specific sites in central locations that embodied both the intellectual and cultural memories of Quanzhou, they became a part of the daily lives of the common people, constantly reminding them of the identity of Quanzhou as a stronghold of Cheng-Zhu learning. Efforts on the part of the Quanzhou scholars to strengthen this identity by securing imperial recognition showed that the local literati were never divorced from a metropolitan perspective. Ultimately, legitimacy came from the state, and the local only had meaning when it was related in a meaningful way to the cultural imperatives of the court and dynasty.

It comes as no surprise that Quanzhou now suffers an amnesia of sort, quite ignorant of its intellectual past. The sites of memory that bear witness to its intellectual heritage are poorly maintained or in ruins. With the exception of Cai Qing’s shrine which is now converted to the office of the editorial committee of the city, monuments that represent to the cultural and symbolic capitals of Quanzhou have either been destroyed or in dire state. Below is a picture of the former residence of Chen Chen. It is now deserted and in danger of collapse. Ironically, in the central court is an altar with portraits of ancestors still hanging on the wall. Apparently, the former residence abandoned the compound together with memories of their ancestors.
During my field research, it was a fortuitous occurrence that I managed to locate the compound, as very few local villagers were aware of its existence. Even Cai Qing’s former residence which now still houses his direct descendants is in very bad shape and leaks when it rains. The current resident expresses his dissatisfaction with the local government, for the family is not allowed to renovate the compound on their own since it has to conform to the conservation standards of historical sites. Such an endeavor requires special knowledge and financial investment which could only be undertaken with government support. But the local government has not shown any keen interest in such an enterprise.

This dissertation hopes to rescue the intellectual and cultural histories of sixteenth-century Quanzhou from obscurity, showing that Quanzhou is more than a trade entrepot of late
medieval China. It demonstrates that as an intellectually vibrant place, mercantile wealth and scholarly faith did not contradict one another. On the contrary, they went hand in hand, melding the unique identity of the locale. In the rapidly changing society of late Ming era, the activities of Quanzhou scholars provide glimpse into the transition from the old to the new, from the traditional to the early modernity, if the latter term is historically felicitous.

In recent decades, there have been scholarly debates over what early modernity was and whether it occurred in China and other non-western civilizations. Scholars have generally come to the conclusion that the European path to modernity is not the only model to be duplicated and repeated by other cultures. In fact, history demonstrates a diversity of modernization processes, discrediting the assumption of global conformity with European’s modernity.\(^{357}\) Scholars have therefore called for studies of multiple modernities and early modernities on their own terms. However, such studies tend to be based on such key concepts as nation-states and public society, which are by and large derived from European experiences. Such hallmarks of modernity in their view include the formation of national consciousness, distilled into the concepts of citizenship and nationalism, the rise of a capitalist economy as opposed to mercantile economy, and the emergence of rational-scientific thinking that shook off the yoke of religious rationale. All of which established a distinct rupture from medieval Europe. China, however, seemed to have experienced many of these developments. For instance, the modern nation-state only became a reality in the early twentieth century. Some scholars suggest approaching the issue from the perspective of intellectual history, and posit that knowledge revolution and transfer of culture

from the elite to the masses could be taken as thresholds of early modern period.\textsuperscript{358} The centuries between 1350 to 1750 saw the dethroning of theology and specialization of value systems which started first within the high culture of the elite, but gradually disseminated among the popular masses through the facilitation of printing and creation of libraries. But China did not experience a rupture in its intellectual tradition from the past, such as in the form of the rise of scientific rationality, and the much-touted evidential studies in the Qing dynasty did not quite qualify as the latter.\textsuperscript{359}

In terms of the rise of nation-state, national consciousness and intellectual breakthrough, China would not enter early modernity until the late nineteenth century. But it is evident that late Ming China is noted for its robust capitalist economy, and it was, in many aspects (culturally and socially), very well developed, if not more developed than Europe. According to Kenneth Pomeranz, the “great divergence” between Europe and China came only after 1800, due to former’s availability of new resources in the New World.\textsuperscript{360} Hence, given that Ming China’s economic performance outshone that of many other civilizations, and with its manifold cultural achievements that produced commodities that lured the covetous eyes of European merchants, was China less modern or early-modern than Europe?

This study of the Cheng-Zhu Confucians of Quanzhou thus sheds some light on the question of periodization in Chinese history. In the main, their role in negotiating the space between the local and the state, and their embrace and celebration of mercantile ethos, heralded the transition of the locality from the medieval times to a new era. Periodization, if it is useful at


all, facilitates our understanding of historical changes by identifying developments that
distinguished the old and the new. But each period is not as clear-cut as historians wish it to be,
since every historical time frame accommodated both continuity and discontinuity. This is best
illustrated by sixteenth-century Quanzhou and the activities and thoughts of its scholars. The
Quanzhou literati were orthodox and conservative in their intellectual orientation, but they were
also active agents of change in the rapidly changing society of the late Ming period. They were
not hesitant to make adjustments to their thinking which would better reflect the demands of the
time while also keeping faith in their traditional learning. At the same time, they were prolific
writers whose commentarial works on the core Confucian classics kept the Cheng-Zhu tradition
alive, contributing to the rise of evidential learning in the subsequent Qing dynasty. They
acknowledged the importance of commerce and the indispensability of the merchants. Their
opposition to the outdated imperial ban on maritime trade endorsed Quanzhou’s involvement in a
new kind of global trade. Their effort to create and perpetuate the cultural and symbolic capitals
of Quanzhou generated a distinct local identity that fostered a consciousness that bridged the
transition from denizens of a locality to citizens of a nation. Quanzhou was made into a unique
place, and its scholars became a special community of learning distinguished from the rest of the
country, but integral to the larger empire. In these various sense, sixteenth-century Quanzhou
was a place where we might see elements of the new, although it remains to be argued if they
constituted a sort of Chinese early modernity.

In sum, this dissertation is a socio-cultural study of local history through the prism of the
community of Cheng-Zhu scholars in sixteen-century Quanzhou. It studies the activities of the
local literati, and shows how they amalgamated intellectual and cultural memories as capitals in
order to create and nurture the uniqueness of their locality which they associated with the
cultural imperatives of the state. Simultaneously as guardians of state-endorsed tradition and
local elites safeguarding the welfare of their hometown, they sought integration of the center and
the periphery. In the process, local peculiarities were validated through sharing the cultural
visions of the state. In other words, the constructed local identity, cherished by the literati and
common folks alike, was endorsed by the imperial state at the same time. The fact that this
intellectual-cultural memory seems no longer extant in today’s Quanzhou is sad but intriguing.
One may well ask if the socio-cultural history of sixteenth-century Quanzhou is relevant to the
public intellectuals in today’s China when it comes to the question of locality-state relations.
APPENDIX:
Quanzhou Community of Scholars
*(arranged in ascending order of birth year)*

Lin Pin: 林玭
Other names: 廷珍，雲室
Years of birth and death: 1434-1506
Status at birth: commoner
Place of birth: Fuzhou prefecture, Houguan county
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1464, age 30
Highest official position: Assistant Surveillance Commissioner of Yunnan province

Biographical note: first appointed to the Bureau of Revenue, but asked for a leave of absence under the pretext of serving ailing parents. He stayed home for the next seventeen years, teaching the Classic of Changes at Miaofeng temple. Cai Qing came under his instruction at this time. He resumed official posts after the completion of mourning period for his parents in 1481.

Lin Jun: 林俊
Other names: 待用，見素
Years of birth and death: 1452-1527
Place of birth: Putian prefecture, Xinghua county
Status at birth: commoner
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1478, age 26
Highest official position: Minister of Bureau of Punishment
Posthumous title: 貞肅
Posthumous post: 太子少保
Major Works: Jiansu wenji (Collected of Lin Jiansu)

Biographical note: He was first appointed as a supernumerary attendant of the Bureau of punishment during the tenure of which he asked for the execution of a monk who won the favor of Emperor Chenghua through his sorcery. He was then exiled to Yunnan. In 1488, he was promoted to be the Vice Surveillance Commissioner of Yunnan. He asked for the destruction of more than three hundred local shrines and temples. The money and land confiscated were used to build schools.

Cai Qing: 蔡清
Other names: 介夫，虛齋
Years of birth and death: 1453-1508
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Status at birth: military
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1484, age 31
Highest official position: Vice Education Intendant Censor of Jiangxi
Master-disciple relations: studied with Lin Pin
Posthumous title and position: Grand Academician Wenzhuang (文莊), Vice Minister of Rites
Major Works:  
Sishu mengyin (Commentary Guide for Youth on the Four Books)  
Yijing mengyin (Commentary Guide for Youth on Classic of Changes)  
Taiji tushuo (Diagrammatic explication of the grand ultimate)  
He-luo sijian  
(Personal views on the Yellow River diagram and the Luo River book)

Biographical note: see chapter two

Li Cong: 李聰
Other names: 敏德，木齋
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1490
Highest official position: editor of Hanlin Academy
Friends: with Cai Qing
Teacher-disciple: teacher of Chen Chen
Family relation: great grandfather of Li Shuyuan

Wang Xuan: 王宣
Other names: 子鐘，一臞
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: provincial candidate, 1504
Occupation: Dean of Yifeng Academy (established in 1529)
Master-disciple relation: studied with Cai Qing

Biographical note: He did not pass the metropolitan examination, and gave up the scholar-official career. Gu Kejiu 顧可久, the prefect of Quanzhou prefecture, established Yifeng Academy, and invited Wang Xuan to be one of the main instructors.

Chen Chen: 陳琛
Other names: 思獻，紫峰
Years of Birth and Death: 1477-1545
Status at birth: commoner
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Master-disciple relations: studied with Li Cong, then with Cai Qing
Highest degree obtained: *jinshi*, 1517, age 40
Highest official position: served in the Bureau of Revenue in Nanjing
Major Works: *Sishu qianshuo* (On the *Four Books*)
*Yijing qianshuo* (On the *Classic of Changes*)
*Zhengxue Bian* (On orthodox learning)
*Collected Works of Chen Zifeng*

Biographical note: He initially studied with Li Cong, at whose place Cai Qing read his writings and was shocked by his caliber. This encounter happened in 1502 at Li Cong’s resident where he showed Cai Qing the writing of Chen Chen. Cai apparently found a bosom friend through his writing. He said, “what I attained through much hardship, and which other people would not understand when communicate my discovery with them, it did not come to me that this Chen Chen had found out by himself. I would teach him without any reservation from now on.”¹ Chen Chen was lauded in literature as the intellectual heir of Cai Qing. In 1506, when Cai Qing was appointed as the Education Intendant of Jiangxi province, he brought Chen Chen with him to be the tutor of his two sons. Presumably, Chen Chen spent three years with Cai Qing’s family before he returned to his hometown. His first appointment after attaining jinshi degree was to be put in charge of the department of punishment in Shanxi province. He was later transferred back to Nanjing to serve in the Revenue Bureau and then the Bureau of Personnel. But he did not seem to have a strong liking for government service. In 1522, he asked for retirement and withdrew back to Jinjiang. He was later offered positions in Guizhou and Jiangxi which he both rejected on the premise of his ailing mother. While at home, besides reading and writing, he was also actively engaged in infrastructure building of the locale (road building and irrigation system)

**Zhao Jianyu: 趙建鬱**

Other names: 本學, 虛舟
Years of birth and death: 1478-1544
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Status at birth: descend of Song dynasty royal family
Master-disciple relation: studied with Cai Qing
Major Works: *Taoling neiwai pian* (Two volumes on military strategies)
*Zhao zhu Sunzi bingfa* (Zhao’s commentary on Sunzi’s *Book of Arts*)

Biographical note: He was a descent of Song dynasty royal family who moved to Quanzhou during Southern Song dynasty. He deduced battle formations and military strategies from the *Classic of Changes*, and transmitted his teachings to Yu Dayou.

Shi Yuguang: 史于光

Other names: 中裕, 筚江  
Years of birth and death: 1479 -1526  
Status at birth: commoner  
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county  
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1517, age 38  
Highest official position: Supervising secretary of Office of Scrutiny for Personnel  
Major Works:  
    Yishuo (On the Classic of Changes)  
    Sishu Shuo (On the Four Books)  
    Zhengmeng jie (On orthodox learning for youth)  

Biographical note: After attaining jinshi degree, he was chosen as a Hanlin bachelor, but he asked for sick leave and returned home teaching and writing. He was later given a post in the Ministry of Personnel which he served for a short time before asking for leave to return to his hometown.

Lin Xiyuan: 林希元  

Other names: 茂貞, 次崖  
Status at birth: military  
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Tong’an county  
Years of Birth and Death: 1482-1567  
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1517, age 35  
Highest official position: Grand Councilor of Court of Judicial Review in Beijing  
Major Works:  
    Sishu cunyi (Questions on the Four Books),  
    Yijing cunyi (Questions on the Classic of Changes),  
    Jiajing Qinzhou zhi (Qinzhou gazetteer of Jiajing reign)  

Biographical sketch: He was first appointed to the Court of Judicial Review, and later promoted to the Surveillance Commissioner of Guangdong province. He was demoted to the Prefect of Qinzhou prefecture, Guangxi province because of his warmongering attitude toward the rebellions in Datong and Liaodong areas. Qinzhou was along the border of Annam who had not been paying tributes to Ming court since the usurpation of Mạc Thái Tổ. Lin Xiyuan again advocated for punitive war against Annam. He regretted that he did not have the chance to personal study with Cai Qing. In his old age, he studied various scholars’ views on the controversial passage of “investigation of things and extension of knowledge” in the Great Learning. Appended with his own views, he produced a manuscript and titled it “the finalized version of the corrected Great Learning and Zhu Xi’s editions” 更正大學經傳定本 (now lost). He presented this together with his two works on the Four Books and the Classic of Changes to the emperor, hoping to be published nationwide. However, he was removed from his official status and privileges because of this.
Zhang Yue: 张岳

Other names: 維喬，淨峰
Years of Birth and Death: 1492-1552
Status at birth: commoner
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Hui’an county
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1517, age 25
Highest official position: governor of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces
Posthumous title: 襄惠
Posthumous post: 太子少保
Major Works: Xiaoshan leigao (Collected works of Zhang Yue), Shengxue zhengchan (Orthodox transmission of Sage learning), Zaidao ji (On the transmission and carriage of the Way)
Maps of Annam
Memorials of famous officials of Song dynasty
Quanzhou prefecture gazetteer
Hui’an county gazetteer

Biographical note: While in Beijing attending metropolitan examination, Zhan Yue together with Lin Xiyuan and Chen Chen, stayed in a temple and studied the Classic of Changes every day. His first appointment after attaining jinshi degree was a clerkship at the Messenger Office under the Ministry of Rites. It was during this time that he went to meet Wang Yangming in person. In 1519, his opposition to Emperor Wu’s (reign title Zhengde) southern trip offended the Emperor who ordered his demotion coupled with public humiliation of court beating (with wooden sticks) and five days of kneeling. He resumed the post with the enthronement of the new Jiajing emperor.

When Mạc Thái Tông (1470-1541) of Annam (modern day Vietnam) usurped the throne and stopped paying tribute to China since then, the Jiajing Emperor was prepared for war to bring Annam under China’s knees. Zhang Yue, however, maintained that negotiations would bring the same result. He wrote letters to Lin Xiyuan, trying to dissuade him from his militant views. In 1540, Annam submitted to Ming court without war.

Later, he was put in charge of pacifying the ethnic rebellions of Li people in Hainan island (1540), the Yao people in Guangdong province (1544), the Zhuang people in Guangxi province (1545), and the Miao people in Hunan province (1548). He died on his post in Yuanzhou, Hunan province, 1552.

Yi Shizhong: 易時中

Other names: 嘉會，媿虛
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: provincial candidate, age 40
Highest official position: Judge of Shuntian Fu (present-day Beijing)
Master-disciple relations: studied with Cai Qing

Biographical note: He was first assigned as instructor in Dongliu county, Anhui province. He was later promoted to the magistrate of Xiajin county, Shandong province.

Yu Dayou: 俞大猷

Other names: 志輔，虛江
Years of birth and death: 1503-1580
Status at birth: military
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: martial jinshi, 1535, age 32
Highest official position: Military Commander-in-chief of Nanjing
Major Works: Zhengqi tang ji (Collected works of Yu Dayou)
Jian jing (Classic on swords)

Biographical note: His focus of study in his early age was the typical official career path. But at the age of twenty, with the passing of his father, he was forced to take up the inherited military position. His focus thereafter shifted to martial arts. He lived close to the location of Yifeng Academy in Jinjiang, and received instructions from Wang Xuan and Lin Fu. Soon after he attained the martial jinshi degree, war was being prepared against Annam. Yu Dayou was put in charge of defending Jinmen Island off the shore of Xiamen. Later, he was put in charge of the defense of Tingzhou and Zhangzhou in Fujian, and killed more than three hundred sea bandits.2 He was then promoted to the Military Commissioner of Guangdong province. In 1549, Yu Dayou successfully quelled the incursions of the rebel leader of Annam, Fan Ziyi 范子儀. The same year, the ethnic Li people of Hainan rebelled. Yu pacified them and proposed the Han Chinese way of governance. 1552, he was appointed the Assistant Military Commander of East of Zhejiang province, and defeated the wokou in sea battles. 1555, he was promoted to the Vice Military Commander of Nanjing. 1563, together with Qi Jiguang 戚繼光, fought against the sea bandits wreaking havoc in costal Fujian and Zhejiang provinces.

Wang Shenzhong: 王慎中

Other names: 道思，遵嚴居士
Years of birth and death: 1509-1559
Status at birth: commoner
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1526, age 18
Highest official position: Assistant administer of Henan province
Master-disciple relation: age 11, studied with Chen Reng (陳讓, Chen Chen’s brother),
Age 14, studied with Yi Shizhong

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2 MLYK, juan 62.
Major Works: *Zunyan ji* (Collected works of Wang Shenzhong)

Biographical note: first appointed to the Bureau of Revenue, then Bureau of Rites. He was renowned for his literary achievements, regarded as one of the eight talented men of the Jiajing reign. While in Nanjing, he had close connections with Wang Yangming’s disciples such as Wang Ji (王畿). He was later promoted to be the Assistant Administrator of Jiangxi province where it was the hotbed for Wang Yangming’s teachings. He had close connections with many of Wang’s followers (歐陽南野，鄒守益，羅念庵，聶豹). While he was the Assistant Administrator of Henan province, he was suddenly removed from office as a result of court politics. He was only thirty-three years old. He spent the rest of his life traveling and writing. He died in his hometown at the age of 51.

**Zhan Yangbi: 詹仰庇**

Other names: 汝欽，咫亭, 巢雲居士
Years of birth and death: 1534-1604
Status at birth: commoner
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: *jinshi*, 1565, age 31
Highest official position: Vice minister of Bureau of Punishment
Posthumous post: Minister of Bureau of Punishment
Major Works: *Chiting wenji* (Collected works of Zhan Yangbi),
*Zhan shaosikou zhoushu* (Collection of Minister Zhan’s memorials)

Biographical note: first appointed as Magistrate of Nanhai county, Guangdong province). He offended the Longqing Emperor Muzong, and received punishment of hundred strokes by wooden stick and was reduced to commoner. He was recalled to service by the new Wanli Emperor in 1573 as Assistant Commissioner of Guangdong, but withdrew from office due to illness. He stayed home for thirteen years before he was reappointed back to office. He served as Surveillance Commissioner first in Jiangxi province, then in Shandong province. While he was the Left Censor-in-Chief, he asked for posthumous title to be given to Cai Qing

**Huang Fengxiang: 黃鳳翔**

Other names: 鳴周，儀庭，止菴
Years of birth and death: 1538-1614
Status at birth: commoner
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: *jinshi*, 1568, age 30; second place in palace examination
Highest official position: minister of the Bureau of Rites in Nanjing
Posthumous title: 文簡
Posthumous post: 太子少保
Major Works: *Jiajing dazhengji* (Important events during the Jiajing reign), *Dazheng biannian lu* (Annals of important political events), *Tianting cao* (Collected works of Huang Fengxiang)

Biographical note: He was first appointed to the Hanlin Academy as editor. 1580, He served as the examiner of metropolitan examination in which Zhang Juzheng’s two sons were candidates. Zhang wanted him to pass his two sons, but was sternly rejected. He was later appointed as Attendant at the Ministry of Rites. He was promoted to the Minister of Bureau of Rites in Nanjing to which he rejected and stayed in his hometown until his death.

**Su Jun: 苏濬**

Other names: 君禹, 紫溪  
Years of birth and death: 1542-1599  
Status at birth: salt  
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county  
Highest degree obtained: *jinshi*, 1577, age 35  
Highest official position: Assistant Administrator of Guangxi  
Master-disciple relation: teacher of Li Tingji  
Major Works: *Sishu jieling* (Awakened explication of the *Four Books*)  
*Yi mingming pian* (The Profundity of the *Book of Changes*)  
*Jiming ouji* (Recordings at dawn)  
*Yijing ershuo* (*Classic of Changes* for children)  
*Sishuo ershuo* (*Four Books* for children)

Biographical note: He was first appointed to the Ministry of Punishment in Nanjing. When he served as examiners in metropolitan examination in 1583, he picked Li Tingji as the first place *jinshi*. He was later appointed as Educational Intendent of Zhejiang, Assistant Commissioner of Shaanxi province, and Surveillance Commissioner of Guangxi province.

**Li Tingji: 李廷機**

Other names: 俐張, 九我  
Years of birth and death: 1542-1616  
Status at birth: commoner  
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county  
Highest degree obtained: *jinshi*, 1583, age 41  
Highest official position: minister of Bureau of Rites  
Posthumous title: 文節  
Posthumous post: 太子少保  
Major Works: *Sishu yishuo* (Conjectures on the *Four Books*)  
*Chunqiu jiangzhang* (Chapters on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*)
Biographical note: He had served as Directorate of Educational, Attendant in the Ministry of Rites before he was promoted to the Minister of the Bureau of Rite and the Grand Secretary of the Grand Secretariat. He was on the post for nine months but he could tolerate the court politics no more, and asked for retirement. To demonstrate his determination to leave government, he sold his residence and properties in Beijing, sent his family back to Quanzhou, and himself moved to stayed in a temple. However, he submitted altogether one hundred and twenty-three resignation memorials, to which the Wanli emperor never replied. His residence in the Beijing temple lasted for five years before he finally decided to return back to Quanzhou without the emperor’s permission. He died four years later at the age of seventy-five.

Li Xi: 李熙
Other names: 穆之, 序齋
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1568
Highest official position: vice commissioner of Guangxi

Li Guangjin: 李光縉
Other names: 宗謙, 衷一
Years of birth and death: 1549-1623
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: provincial candidate
Master-disciple relation: studied with Su Jun
Friends: Huang Fengxiang, He Qiaoyuan
Major Works: Yijing qianjie (Explications on the Book of Changes)
              Sishu Yaozhi (The essentials of Four Books)
              Zhongyong yishuo (Private opinions on the Doctrine of the Mean)
              Jinbi ji (Collected works of Li Guangjin)
Biographical note: see Chapter five.

He Qiaoyuan: 何 倪遠
Other names: 條孝, 匡莪, 鏡山先生
Years of birth and death: 1555-1632
Status at birth: commoner
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Jinjiang county
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1586, age 31
Highest official position: Assisting minister of the Bureau of Works
Posthumous post: Minister of Bureau of Works
Major Works:
- Shi Daxue (Explication on the Great Learning)
- Shi Wucheng (Explication on Wu Cheng)
- Shi Dagao (Explication on the Great Pronouncement)
- Zhao Gao (‘Zhao Gao’ in the Book of History)
- Luo Gao (‘Luo Gao’ in the Book of History)
- Mingshan Cang (Book hidden in the Famous mountain)
- Min Shu (Book on Fujian province)
- Huangming wenzheng (Exemplary Writings of Worthy men of Ming dynasty)

Biographical note: He was first appointed to the Ministry of Works. When Hideyoshi Toyotomi attacked Choson Korea in 1592, and Ming forces were experiencing defeats in Korea battle fields against the Japanese forces, there were court officials who suggested caving in to Japan and award it tributary status. To this He Qiaoyuan strongly opposed and maintained the necessity of the presence of Ming forces in Korea. When he was implicated in the wrongdoing of his subordinate, He Qiaoyuan requested for leave from office which inaugurate the twenty-year stay in his hometown. In 1608, his son died and his daughter-in-law committed suicide in observance of the cult of chastity. Thereafter, he turned all his energy to the composition of the monumental work Minshu which he completed in 1620. He returned to office in the same year, and served as examiner in Jiangxi and then in the Office of Transmission. Three years later, he asked for retirement and returned to Quanzhou where he taught in the Quanshan Academy.

Cai Xianchen: 蔡獻臣
Other Names: 體國, 虛壹
Years of birth and death: unknown
Place of birth: Quanzhou prefecture, Tong’an county
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1589
Highest official position: officer at Ministry of Rites

Biographical note: He was first appointed to the Ministry of Penalty after obtaining the jinshi degree, later promoted to Ministry of War and then Ministry of Rites.

Cheng-Zhu Scholar outside Fujian who was Friend with Qingyuan Scholars

Luo Qinshu: 羅欽順
Other names: 允昇，整庵
Years of birth and death: 1465-1547  
Place of birth: Jiangxi province, Taihe prefecture  
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1493, age 28 (third place in palace examination)  
Highest official position: Minister of Bureau of Personnel in Nanjing  
Posthumous title: 文莊  
Posthumous post: 太子太保  
Major Works: Kunzhi ji (On difficulties in acquiring knowledge)  
Zhengan cungao (Preserved manuscripts of Zhengan)  
Zhengan xugao (Continued manuscripts of Zhengan)  

Biographical note: first appointed to the National Academy. He was removed from post because he offended the powerful eunuch Liu Jin (劉瑾). He retained official posts after Liu Jin’s death, and was appointed to the Bureau of Personnel in Nanjing until he achieved the ministerial position. Tired of court politics, he asked for retirement in 1527 at the age of 62, and was approved. He spent the rest of his life reading and writing in his hometown. He associated himself with Buddhist monks when young, but later became a staunch Cheng-Zhu scholar. He had a series of letter correspondences with Wang Yangming, and his disciple Ouyang De, debating scholastic subjects. He died at the age of 83.

Wang Yangming Scholars who are Friends with Qingyuan Scholars

Nie Bao: 聶豹  
Other names: 文蔚，雙江  
Years of birth and death: 1486 – 1563  
Place of birth: Ji’an county, Jiangxi prefecture  
Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1517, age 31  
Highest official position: Minister of Bureau of Military  
Posthumous title: 貞襄  
Posthumous post: 太子少保  
Major Works: Kunbian lu (Record of difficult debates)  
Shuangjiang ji (Collected works of Nie Bao)  

Biographical note: He had served as prefect of several prefectures before became the minister of the Bureau of Military. He was a first-generation disciple of Wang Yangming and was active in promoting Wang’s teaching whenever he went.
**Xu Jie: 徐階**

Other names: 子昇，少湖，存齋

Years of birth and death: 1503 – 1583

Place of birth: Huating county, Songjiang prefecture

Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1523, aged 20 (third place in palace examination)

Highest official position: Grand Secretariat of the Inner Court

Posthumous title: 文貞

Posthumous post: 太師

Major Works: Jingshitang ji (Record of the Jingshi Hall)

Shaohu wenji (Collected works of Xu Jie)

Biographical note: He was appointed to the imperial academy, then promoted to the minister of the Bureau of Rites. He was in court with the notorious grand official Yan Song (1480-1567) for more than a decade. When Yan passed away, he took over his place as the grand secretariat of the inner court. He received the teachings of Wang Yangming from Nie Bao.

**Geng Dingli: 耿定力**

Other names: 叔台，子健

Years of birth and death: 1541-?

Place of birth: Huang’an county, Hubei province

Highest degree obtained: jinshi, 1571, aged 30

Highest official position: censor-in-chief on the right

Biographical note: He was the younger brother of Geng Dingxiang 耿定向 and Geng Dingli 耿定理. In his retirement, the trio established academy at Tiantai Mountain and spread the teachings of Wang Yangming.
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2007 BA – National University of Singapore, Political Science

Publications (selected)
2010 “Ming zhongye Zhuxue dizhu – Cai Qing shengping xueshu shulüe” (An Intellectual Biographical Account of the Mid-Ming Neo-Confucian Cai Qing [1453-1508]), Xin Ya luncong (Hong Kong),11 (2010): 142-150.

Awards and Scholarships (selected)
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Humanities Without Walls Consortium, Chicago, U.S.A.
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Association for Asian Studies, U.S.A.
2015 Fall Graduate Student Residency (fellowship)
Institute of Arts and Humanities, Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.

Conference Presentations
2012 “Music, Le (Happiness), and the language of Affect in Early Confucian Thought”, Regional Conference of Mid-Atlantic Regional Association for Asian Studies, West Chester University, Pennsylvania, November 3, 2012