

FROM A LITERARY MAN TO A MODEL CONFUCIAN: HAN YU'S IMAGE

IN THE TANG ANECDOTES

by

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## Abstract

The early Northern Song witnesses the commencement of an elevation of Han Yu's status in intellectual history. However, the image of Han Yu as a cultural hero established by the Northern Song intellectuals departs greatly from how Han Yu perceived himself and how he was perceived during his day. This paper examines how Han Yu was perceived by the Tang intellectuals after him by reading the anecdotes preserved in the five compilations produced during the 9th and 10th centuries: Wei Xuan's *Liu binke jiahualu*, Li Zhao's *Guoshibu*, Zhao Lin's *Yinhualu*, Zhang Du's *Xuanshezhi* and Wang Dingbao's *Zhiyan*. This thesis argues that the Tang literati's recognition of Han Yu's commitment to some basic Confucian moral values proceeded gradually throughout the second half of the Tang dynasty. Contrary to Peter K. Bol's assertion that the transformation of Han Yu's image from a literary genius to a model Confucian took place after the Tang collapsed, the paper supplements Anna M. Shields' speculation and contends that Han Yu's understanding and practice of Confucius' teaching, along with his literature, had increasingly drawn attention from the intellectual community by the late Tang period. Not only were Han Yu's writings exalted, his consistent concern for public affairs, his stoic antagonism to Buddhism and Daoism, and his adherence to Confucian moral values in public and private life were also highlighted. Confronting unprecedented political depression and moral deficiency, the late Tang intellectual community portrayed Han Yu as a model Confucian, an image Han Yu could not imagine during his day.

## **Preface**

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Siyu Wu.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Acknowledgements .....	v
Dedication .....	vi
Introduction .....	1
Chapter One: Han Yu's image in the <i>Liubinke jiahualu</i> , <i>Guoshibu</i> and <i>Yinhualu</i> .....	20
Wei Xuan and the <i>Liubinke jiahualu</i> .....	22
Li Zhao and the <i>Guoshibu</i> .....	28
Zhao Lin and the <i>Yinhualu</i> .....	34
Conclusion.....	38
Chapter Two: Han Yu's image in the <i>Xuanshizhi</i> .....	40
The Tang literati in the <i>Xuanshizhi</i> .....	43
Han Yu as an erudite scholar .....	45
Han Yu as a benevolent Official.....	47
Han Yu as a defender of Chinese culture .....	49
Conclusion.....	52
Chapter Three: Wang Dingbao and the <i>Zhiyan</i> .....	55
A redefinition of a true talent.....	57
A man of literature.....	61
A man of antiquity .....	64
Han Yu and his associates .....	66
Conclusion.....	68
Conclusion .....	70
Bibliography.....	77
Pre-modern Sources.....	77
Modern Sources.....	79

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To my mother  
Wang Hai-qin

## Introduction

Reading Han Yu's prose and poetry, I found them to be beneficial to the world. [They are like] the decrees in the *Book of History*, the praise and criticism in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the transformation in the *Book of Changes*, the allegory and rhapsody in the *Book of Songs*, and the continuation in the *Book of Music* and the *Book of Rites*. The teaching in canons and the *Analects* are deliberated in Han Yu's mind, and his words show no divergence with Confucius' thought. Han Yu's commitment to the Way of the Sage lies in his prose and poetry. Why does he need to compile a book to verify his commitment?<sup>1</sup>

觀先生之文詩，皆用於世者也，與《尚書》之號令，《春秋》之褒貶，《大易》之通變，《詩》之風賦，《禮》《樂》之研習，經之教授，語之訓導，酌于先生之心，與夫子之旨無有異趣者也。先生之于聖人之道，在於是而已矣，何必著書而後始為然也。

This excerpt is cited from a preface to Han Yu's 韓愈 (768-824) collection. It was written by the Northern Song 北宋 (960-1127) literary man Liu Kai 柳開 (947-1000) in 970. In the preface, he parallels Han Yu's works to Confucian canons and contends that they faithfully illuminate Confucius' thought.<sup>2</sup> However, in the later part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Liu Kai 柳開, "Changliji houxu" 昌黎集後序, In Wu Wenzhi 吳文治, comp., *Han Yu ziliao huibian* 韓愈資料彙編, vol.1, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, 77-78.

<sup>2</sup> It is known that in his reverence for the political and cultural traditions of the Western Zhou (1046 B.C.E-771 B.C.E), Confucius called for both Rites (*li*, 禮) and a moral quality, Benevolence (*ren*, 仁), as the basic grounds not only for personal cultivation, but also for political and social order. Derived from Benevolence are a number of moral virtues including Rightness (*yi*, 義), Courage (*yong*, 勇), Intelligence (*zhi*, 知), Trustworthiness (*xin*, 信) and Reverence (*jing*, 敬). Based on Confucius' *Analects*, we also know that a man who cultivates these moral qualities and participates in political activities in order to improve the welfare of the common people was regarded by Confucius as a true noble man (*junzi*, 君子). This means nobility was not something based purely on birth, but on one's moral character and his commitment to public good. The ultimate aim of serving in government is thus to improve the welfare of the common people, and educate them by setting himself up as a moral example. These ideas constitute what scholars usually call Confucius' thought. They also became the core of Confucius' curriculum for his disciples and later generations of educated elites. They are conventionally referred to as Confucian thought, or the Confucian moral value system in the English language world. To be sure, "The Way" (*dao*, 道) is of course also a significant concept in Confucius' teaching. For Confucius, it is the natural order in the universe that serves as the foundation of the moral order in human society. One dialogue in the *Analects* explicitly describes "the Way" that the ancient sage kings followed: "Zi Gong asked Confucius: 'If there were a man who gave extensively to the common people and brought help to the multitude, what would you think of him? Could he be called benevolent?' Confucius answered: 'It is no longer a matter of benevolence with such a man. If you must describe him, 'sage' is, perhaps, the right word.'" For Confucius, to follow the Way is clearly to cultivate moral virtues and carry out the moral values in public service to benefit the people. See D. C. Lau trans., *The Analects*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979, 85. For discussions of Confucius' thought and Confucian thought or the Confucian moral value system in general, also see Lau trans., *The Analects*, 11-55; *Sources of Chinese Tradition, From Earliest Times to 1600*, compiled by

preface, he laments that despite Han Yu's remarkable reputation for his literature, what Han promoted in his literary works is rarely noticed and valued in the contemporary world.

Liu Kai's comment on Han Yu's works marks the commencement of an ideological appropriation and redefinition of Han Yu led by the early Northern Song literati. In 1038, Kong Daofu 孔道輔 (985-1039), the 44<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of Confucius built a temple to honor the five worthy successor of Confucius' teaching. Han Yu was placed in line with Mencius, Xunzi, or Xun Kuang 荀況 (313-238 B.C.E), Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.E.-18 C.E.) and Wang Tong 王通 (584-617). Kong's selection of the five worthies in continuing and elaborating Confucius' teaching was welcomed by his contemporaries. The Song scholar Sun Fu 孫復 (992-1057) maintained that "after Confucius' demise, all Confucian students learned Confucius' Way but few have found the right entrance" 自夫子沒, 諸儒學其道, 得其門而入者鮮矣.<sup>3</sup> According to

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William Theodore De Bary and Irene Bloom, 2nd edition, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, 41-63. For the complex history involved in the formation of the Confucian canons, see Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Although the Confucian canons remained to be the curriculum of Tang education, as is discussed by David McMullen, for the great majority of Tang students, learning the Confucian canons is an approach to acquiring bureaucratic positions and successful political careers. See David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 67-71. In the Tang intellectual discourse, Confucian students and officials are referred to as *ru* 儒. However, different terms are used to reflect the various degrees of their conviction about Confucianism. For example, the Tang official Shi Chengjie 史承節 describes the Han Confucian scholar Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 as *chunru* 純儒 (pure Confucian), who is fully dedicated to studying the Confucian canons. See Shi Chengjie, "Zheng Kangcheng ci bei" 鄭康成祠碑 in Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良, et al., comps., *Quan Tangwen xinbian* 全唐文新編, Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2000, 330: 3748. Liu Mian 柳冕, a pioneer in the mid-Tang literary reform, uses *furu* 腐儒 (pedantic Confucian) to describe those who have a good knowledge of the Confucian canons and commentaries but do not necessarily understand the Confucian Way. See Liu Mian, "Yu Quan shilang shu" 與權侍郎書 in Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, 527: 6136. Lu Zhi 陸贄, a pivotal mid-Tang chief minister, uses *shuru* 豎儒 (despicable Confucian) to denounce those who fail to appreciate the importance of expediency when applying Confucianism to politic activities. See Lu Zhi, "Xingyuan qing fuxun Li Chulin zhuang" 興元請撫循李楚琳狀 in Lu Zhi, *Luxuangong quanji* 陸宣公全集, Shanghai: Shijie shuju 世界書局, 1936, 90. Similarly, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 another important mid-Tang Confucian scholar, also defines *ru* 儒 (Confucian) as someone who can "carry out in actual affairs the ways of the *Book of Poetry*, the *Classics of Rites*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, benefiting the people, [always] keeping in mind [the necessity] to live up to Confucius' pen and tongue." Liu Zongyuan, "Song Xu congshi beiyong xu" 送徐從事北遊序 in *Liu Hedong ji* 柳河東集, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 1974, vol.1, 418. For the translation, see Jo-shui Chen, *Liu tsung-yüan and intellectual change in T'ang china, 773-819*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 92.



Sun Fu, Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong, Wang Tong and Han Yu were the only worthies who were able to understand correctly Confucius' teaching.<sup>4</sup> They distinguished themselves from the vast group of literati by consistently and exclusively dedicating to Benevolence (*ren*, 仁) and Rightness (*yi*, 義) in their writings.<sup>5</sup> Sun's student, Shi Jie 石介 (1005-1045), further exalted Han Yu as "the most excellent scholar among the five worthies" 五賢人，吏部為賢人之卓. According to Sun, "after Confucius, the Way was frequently abandoned and obstructed. It was first developed by Mencius and eventually illuminated by Han Yu" 孔子後，道屢廢塞，辟於孟子，而大明於吏部.<sup>6</sup>

In the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New history of the Tang dynasty), the Northern Song historians maintains that Han Yu's writings comply with Confucius' teaching. They picks out Han's prose including the "Essentials of the Moral Way" 原道, "On the Origins of Human Nature" 原性 and "Discourse on Teachers" 師說 as evidence of Han Yu's insightful understanding of the Way. Furthermore, they praised Han Yu's unwavering endeavor to advise and remonstrate with the emperor, to assist his friends and care for orphans, to correct and eliminate immoral deeds. Concerned about Benevolence and Rightness, Han Yu was viewed as "a noble man adhering to the

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<sup>4</sup> I am aware that Michael Nylan uses the term *Ru* or Classicist to replace the usual English word "Confucian." This is because Classicist "reflects more accurately the status of the majority of *ru* who, in general, regarded state service as their primary profession." The word "Confucian," in contrast, is used to apply to those "self-identified followers of Confucius' ethical teachings and their cultural products." See Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, 2-3 and Josephine Chiu-Duke's review of Nylan's book in the *American Historical Review* (April 2003), 492-493. Based on her study of Lu Zhi (Lu Chih), Josephine Chiu-Duke uses the term *Confucian bureaucrat* to describe the court officials who applied Confucian principles to the performance of their duty, but were not necessarily committed to them. She also characterizes Lu Zhi "in the mid-Tang Confucian revival mold" as a *true Confucian*, which is derived from Liu Zongyuan's view of a *ru* (see note 3). See Josephine Chiu-Duke, *To Rebuild the Empire: Lu Chih's Confucian Pragmatist Approach to the Mid-Tang Predicament*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000, 165 and especially note 1 of Chapter 8 on page 262. Here, similarly, I translate *ru* as Confucian students to describe those who have specific knowledge of the Confucian canons but do not necessarily hold strong conviction about Confucian moral values. In this thesis, the term "true Confucian," "exemplary Confucian" or "model Confucian" will be used interchangeably.

<sup>5</sup> Sun Fu 孫復, "Shang kongjishi shu" 上孔給事書 and "Da Zhang Jiong shu" 答張洞書, In Wu, *Han Yu ziliao huibian*, 78-79.

<sup>6</sup> Shi Jie 石介, "Zun Han" 尊韓 and "Du Yuandao" 讀原道, In Wu, *Han Yu ziliao huibian*, 89.

Way” 篤道君子.<sup>7</sup> They especially mentioned Han Yu’s fierce attack against Buddhism and Daoism, and compared it to Mencius’ criticism against Yang Zhu’s 楊朱 and Mo Di’s 墨翟 teaching. They believed that “Han Yu had achieved an equal achievement but had made more effort than Mencius had in reviving the degraded Confucianism as the ideological orthodoxy” 撥衰反正，功與齊而力倍之.<sup>8</sup>

The Northern Song intellectuals appraised Han Yu as a “noble man adhering to the Way.” Such an outlook can be partly verified by the biography of Han Yu recorded by the Tang historians. The *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Old history of the Tang dynasty), compiled during the Five Dynasties 五代 (907-960), recounts that Han Yu assiduously studied Confucian canons at an early age, and his antique style writings were highly praised by the prime minister before he passed the *jinshi* 進士 (advanced scholar) examination. Serving in the bureaucracy, Han Yu showed a persistent concern with public welfare. He remonstrated with Dezong 德宗 (742-805; r. 779-805) about the drought and famine in the capital area, and this led to his first exile to the South. He followed the Prime Minister Pei Du 裴度 (765-839) to suppress the rebellion in the Huaixi area (in modern Henan province) and composed the inscription to mark the victory. He submitted a memorial about Xianzong’s 憲宗 (778-820; r. 806-820) enthusiasm in serving the Buddha relic, the radical rhetoric of which severely irritated the emperor and led to another demotion. However, the demotions to the remote prefectures did not frustrate Han Yu’s compassion for the populace. As a local administrator, he alleviated the crocodile disaster in Chaozhou 潮州 (in modern

<sup>7</sup> A noble man (*junzi*, 君子) is an ideal moral character in Confucius’ teaching. See note 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 et al., comps., *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000, 176:4069-75.

Guangdong province) and ended the vicious child slavery in Yuanzhou 袁州 (in modern Jiangxi province). During Muzong's reign 穆宗 (795-824; r. 820-824), Han Yu was dispatched to the semi-dependent Chengde district 成德 (in modern Hebei province). He succeeded in assuaging the recalcitrant commander Wang Tingcou 王庭湊 (d. 834) and terminating a battle that the court was unable to afford. In addition to Han Yu's earnest devotion to public service, *Jiu Tangshu* also gives an approving remark on Han Yu's personal life. Han Yu was generous and loyal to his friends regardless of their social status. He promoted them among the prominent and cared for their descendants when they died. He took it to be his responsibility to cultivate and promote the younger literati so as to “revitalize Confucianism and encourage Benevolence and Rightness” 興起名教弘獎仁義.<sup>9</sup>

However, unlike *Xin Tangshu*, which is ostensibly influenced by the Northern Song intellectual trend of exalting Han Yu as “a noble man adhering to the Way,” *Jiu Tangshu* criticizes Han Yu for “occasionally being self-conceited of his own talent and occasionally running wild in his writings, which deviated from Confucius’ and Mencius’ teachings” 然時有恃才肆意，亦有戾孔孟之旨. Some of Han Yu's works were considered as “extremely erroneous and absurd” 甚紕繆.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, although *Jiu Tangshu* praises Han Yu's effort to “hold moral principles and to transform the world by humanity” 有志于持世範，欲以人文化成, it assesses Han Yu's Way as fruitless.

Whereas *Xin Tangshu* describes Han Yu as a true Confucian, *Jiu Tangshu* stresses

<sup>9</sup> Liu Xu 劉煦 et al., comps., *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000, 160: 2857-63.

<sup>10</sup> *JTS*, 160: 2863.

more on Han Yu's literary achievement while pointing out that Han Yu succeeded neither in promoting his idea of the Way among a larger intellectual group nor in demonstrating the Way in his own writings and conduct.<sup>11</sup> Such a remarkable discrepancy encourages me to examine the intellectual perception of Han Yu during his own day.

During the first half of the Tang dynasty (618-755), Buddhism and Daoism flourished as the predominant intellectual currents among Tang literati. Although Confucianism remained to be a principal curriculum in Tang education and provided moral ground for political and cultural norms, the study of Confucian canons was undertaken by a small number of scholars who mainly focused on adding and modifying the existent commentaries to the Confucian canons. Their work brought little creative idea to Confucianism and exerted slight influence on the intellectual climate.<sup>12</sup> Confronting the political crisis created by the An Lushan 安祿山 (703-757) Rebellion in 755, the mid-Tang intellectuals initiated an earnest search for Confucius' teaching underlying the original texts and revitalized its relevance to the political and social predicament in reality. However, according to modern scholars, it was the generation emerging in the late eighth and early ninth century who promoted the resurgence of Confucianism into an independent intellectual movement, the mid-Tang

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<sup>11</sup> In the "Essentials of the Moral Way," Han Yu interprets the Confucian moral Way as Benevolence and Rightness. Han Yu also points out that ancient sages corrected the mind and made intentions sincere, not only to cultivate innate virtues, but also to accomplish something in society and state. See Han Yu, "Yuan dao" 原道, in Ma Qichang 馬其昶, Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元, eds., *Hanchangli wenji jiaozhu* 韓昌黎文集校注, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1987, 17.

<sup>12</sup> According to Jo-shui Chen, "the survival of Confucianism as a system of ideas probably had more to do with the persisting strength of the social and family order, which Confucianism had come to support and justify, than with any intellectual effort on the part of the Confucian faithful." Jo-shui Chen, *Liu Tsung-yüan and intellectual change in T'ang china*, 20.

Confucian revival.<sup>13</sup> Like their predecessors, they had faith in Confucius' teaching, rather than Buddhism and Daoism, as the effective remedy for political and social illness. They tried to uncover Confucius' teaching by interpreting the canonical texts in their own terms, and applied it to address political crisis and social problems. Moreover, unlike the majority of the Tang intellectuals who studied Confucian canons primarily to attain official positions, they adhered to Confucian moral values and put forward these values in public service to achieve public welfare. Both Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819) were leading figures of this intellectual campaign. However, modern scholars discern a difference in their thought. Jo-shui Chen points out that during the mid-Tang Confucian revival, the majority of the intellectuals referred to Confucianism primarily as a political philosophy. It was a widespread mid-Tang sentiment that "Confucianism should be established or reestablished as the guiding principle of government to remedy the political ills of the time," an outlook of Confucianism which "had little to do with the internal life of individuals."<sup>14</sup> The mainstream intellectuals, including Liu Zongyuan, followed Confucianism in their public life and conceded their private life to Buddhism and Daoism. Nonetheless, Han Yu and his adherents went further to claim that Confucianism provided an "all-embracing guiding principle of human life."<sup>15</sup> Han Yu's Confucian thought is best illustrated in the "Essentials of the Moral Way (*yuandao*, 原道)," in which he interprets the Way as Benevolence, which is to love broadly, and Rightness, which is

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<sup>13</sup> For the study of the mid-Tang Confucian revival, see Jo-shui Chen, *Liu tsung-yüan and intellectual change in T'ang china*, 84-89; Josephine Chiu-Duke, *To Rebuild the Empire*, 165-168.

<sup>14</sup> Jo-shui Chen, *Liu Tsung-yüan and intellectual change in T'ang china*, 98.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-126.

to do what is morally fitting in the circumstances. According to Han Yu, ancient sages practiced Benevolence and Rightness and therefore protected people, established social order and created Chinese civilization. The Way was passed down from the sage kings and illustrated by Confucius and Mencius. It is fully adequate to sustain an individual's spiritual life, to manage a household as well as to rule a state. To live a meaningful life, one should follow the Way both in his private life and his public service. Han Yu argues that as a contrast to Confucius' teaching, Buddhism and Daoism turn people away from Benevolence and Rightness, the authentic content of morality, and thus bring about social disorder and moral corruption.<sup>16</sup>

It is true that as one of the leading figures in the mid-Tang Confucian revival, Han Yu shows a remarkable passion in revitalizing Confucianism and relating it to political reality and spiritual cultivation. Nonetheless, Han Yu never succeeded in promoting his philosophical contemplation beyond a small group of his associates. Compared with the mainstream perception of Confucianism, which places more stress on public affairs, Han Yu's exclusive endorsement of Confucianism in both public and spiritual realms was less representative during his day. According to *Xin Tangshu*, his fervent aversion to Buddhism not only brought him ridicule and derision from his contemporaries, but almost cost his life in his confrontation with Xianzong who held a strong Buddhist conviction.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Han Yu, "Yuan dao" 原道, in Ma, *Hanchangli wenji jiaozhu*, 17. Peter K. Bol maintains that Han Yu held a strong conviction that the Confucian moral Way provides a moral ground for a person's private and public life. "Putting it into practice was a moral reason to serve government; studying it and writing with it was a moral purpose for those outside government." See Peter K. Bol, *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992, 127.

<sup>17</sup> *XTS*, 176: 4078.

Furthermore, as is demonstrated in *Jiu Tangshu*, both Han Yu's life and his writings contain a diversity which cannot be appropriated to the image portrayed by the Northern Song intellectuals. In *Han Yu and the Tang Search for Unity*, Charles Hartman maintains that the Song Neo-Confucians' emphasis on Han Yu "as moralist and Confucian spokesman further impeded dispassionate contemplation of his literary accomplishments." He argues that one should view Han Yu's writings not as "a repository of Confucian doctrine," but as what spring from "his vision of a radically new Confucian order."<sup>18</sup> In the "Han Yu: An Alternative Image," David McMullen contends that a thorough reading of Han Yu's works in their specific social contexts demonstrates that Han's political, philosophical and literary deliberations are far from consistent and systematic. Some of Han's late writings indicate that he compromised during his late age over his antagonistic attitude towards Buddhism and Daoism.<sup>19</sup> A proportion of his writings during his tenure in the State Academy exposed his strong concern with his progress in the official hierarchy, which even took priority over his commitment to his bureaucratic responsibility. In *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, Stephen Owen also affirms that Han's didactic concern only strongly features in Han Yu's early verse. The verse composed after 806 suggests that Han viewed poetry more as an art which is "divorced from its social, ethical and political context."<sup>20</sup> Sometimes the verse is simply inspired by Han's delight in "inventing metaphors and displaying his considerable command of exotic vocabulary."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Hartman, *Han Yu and the Tang Search for Unity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, 212.

<sup>19</sup> David McMullen, "Han Yü: An Alternative Picture," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Dec., 1989), 615-617.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975, 187.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

For the majority of Han Yu's contemporaries, Han Yu established his fame mainly by his literary aptitude. The *Jiu Tangshu* affirms that Han Yu's innovative literary style reinvigorated the moral power of the prose of the Han dynasty 漢代 (202 B.C.E.-220 C.E.). It was widely imitated by Han's contemporaries, but no one could surpass Han.<sup>22</sup> Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842) recounts in his commemorative text for Han Yu that for thirty years, Han was famous for his literature throughout the literary world and the funerary memorials he wrote were of high price.<sup>23</sup> In the decree designating Han Yu as the compiler in the Office of Historiography, Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) praises Han Yu's talent for literature and history as the cardinal quality that enables him to undertake the responsibility.<sup>24</sup>

However, both Pei Du and Zhang Ji 張籍 (766-830) expressed their disapproving attitudes towards Han's playful writings.<sup>25</sup> Liu Zongyuan mentioned that Han Yu's "The Biography of Mao Ying" 毛穎傳 aroused wide criticism in the intellectual community against its baseless narrative, and another work, "The Discourse on Teachers," brought Han Yu a notorious fame as a man of arrogance and superficiality.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, both Liu Zongyuan and Liu Yuxi took issue with Han regarding his discourse on historiography, Buddhism and cosmology, through which they seriously pinpointed the flaws in Han's philosophical deliberation. For example,

<sup>22</sup> *JTS*, 160: 2863. This can also be traced through the Tang literati's comments on Han Yu collected by Wu Wenzhi. See Wu, *Han Yu ziliao huibian*, vol.1, 1-68.

<sup>23</sup> Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫, "Ji Hanlibu wen" 祭韓吏部文, in Qu Tuiyuan 瞿蛻園, ed., *Liu Yuxi ji jianzheng* 劉禹錫集箋證, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1989, 1537.

<sup>24</sup> Bai Juyi, "Han Yu bibu langzhong shiguan xiuzhuan zhi" 韓愈比部郎中史館修撰制, in Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, 661:7468.

<sup>25</sup> Pei Du, "Ji Li Ao shu," 寄李翱書 in Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, 538: 6240; Zhang Ji 張籍, "Shang Hanchangli shu" 上韓昌黎書, in Zhangji, *Zhang Ji shiji* 張籍詩集, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959, 107.

<sup>26</sup> Liu Zongyuan, "Du Han Yu suozhu Mao Ying Zhuan hou ti" 讀韓愈所著毛穎傳後題, in Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, 586: 6678-79; "Da Wei Zhongli lun shidao shu" 答韋中立論師道書, in Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, 575: 6573-74.



Liu Zongyuan criticized Han Yu's preoccupation with selfish political interest and illustrated that a historian should never seek personal fortune by compromising their moral principle. He also eloquently refuted Han Yu's assertion that Heaven interfered in human affairs by distributing rewards and punishment on them. Liu Zongyuan contended that Heaven had its natural laws and that was purposeless regarding human actions. Instead of being dominated by Heavenly will, a man should believe in his own principle of Benevolence and Rightness.<sup>27</sup>

Although Han Yu's excellence in literature was well received by his contemporaries, it is plausible to say that his comparatively innovative philosophical thought hardly found any echo outside his small circle. Neither his conduct nor his writings was fully perceived as morally paradigmatic for the intellectual community.<sup>28</sup> For the majority of Han Yu's contemporaries, Han Yu's significance in the mid-Tang cultural history mainly depended on his initiative to break with the convention of embellishment and create a new prose style, which exerted great influence on the literary character during

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<sup>27</sup> For the debate over the correlation between Heavenly and human spheres among Liu Zongyuan, Liu Yuxi and Han Yu, see Liu Zongyuan, "Tianshuo" 天說, in Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, 584: 6651-52; Liu Yuxi, "Tianlun" 天論, in Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, 607: 6870-72. For the debate over historiography and the responsibility of a historian, see Liu Zongyuan, "Yu Han Yu lun shiguan shu" 與韓愈論史官書, in Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, 574: 6559-60. For the debate over Buddhism, see Liu Zongyuan, "Song seng Haochu xu" 送僧浩初序, in Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, 579: 6611.

<sup>28</sup> The Tang poet Bai Juyi writes a poem "Sijiu" 思舊 in which he indicates that Han Yu took sulphur. See Bai Juyi, *Bai Juyi ji* 白居易集, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979, 29: 664. In the *Tang yulin* 唐語林, a Northern Song collection of Tang anecdotes, an anecdote recounts that Han Yu had two concubines named *Jiangtao* 絳桃 and *Liuzhi* 柳枝. See Wang Dang 王讜, *Tang yulin*, Shanghai: gudian wenxue chubanshe 古典文學出版社, 1957, 6:220. These two pieces of materials were considered evidence of Han Yu's addiction to drugs and sexuality. They have evoked considerable skepticism about Han Yu's commitment to Confucian moral values since the twelfth century. However, as is argued by Zheng Qian 鄭騫, Han Yu took sulphur as a medical treatment for his serious beriberi rather than a remedy for syphilis, a disease that did not appear in China until the sixteenth century. He also points out that it was very common for Tang intellectuals to have concubines and describe in literary writings how they are entertained by the concubines' or prostitutes' singing and dancing. It was not considered by Tang intellectuals as morally decadent. Therefore, these records regarding Han Yu's private life do not interfere with Han Yu's commitment to Confucianism that I shall demonstrate in this thesis. See Zheng Qian, "Gujin feihan kaobian" 古今誹韓考辯, *Shumu jikan* 書目季刊, vol.11, No. 4 (Mar. 1978), 3-22. Also see Hartman, *Han Yu and the Tang Search for Unity*, 312-313, note 223.

his day.<sup>29</sup>

The noticeable disparity between Han Yu's cultural status in his day and that in the early Northern Song brings about new questions: How did the intellectual perception of Han Yu transform from the day Han Yu died to the early Northern Song? Is there a sign in the late Tang period that heralds the early Northern Song intellectuals' elevation of Han Yu as a true Confucian? If so, under what conditions were Han Yu's thought and conduct, along with his literary writings, acknowledged as a moral paradigm of Confucianism? Peter K. Bol believes that it was not until the Song established a new sovereign that Han Yu's philosophical thought was valued by the Song literati. They were inspired to promote Confucianism as the moral guidance for all aspects of human social and spiritual life. Before that, the deteriorating political situation made the idea that the world could be transformed by grasping the Way of the Sage less convincing.<sup>30</sup>

However, Anna M. Shields' study provides a different speculation. In her study of Tang literary history represented in the Tang anecdotal compilations, she suggests that Han Yu's commitment to Confucianism has been gradually noticed and highlighted in the anecdotes collected during the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>31</sup> In this study, she examines Li Zhao's 李肇 (d. after 829) *Guoshi bu* 國史補 (Supplement to the History of the State), Zhao Lin's 趙璘 (830-after 868) *Yinhualu* 因話錄 (Records of

<sup>29</sup> Hartman also notices that as a philosopher, Han Yu was "in the minority," however, as a writer, "he was an original, an innovator whose unique and startling genius created a style that attained the moral force and urgency of the new ideas it conveyed." See Hartman, *Han Yu and the Tang Search for Unity*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Peter K. Bol, *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992, 146-147.

<sup>31</sup> Anna M. Shields, "Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History: Representations of the Yuanhe Era in Tang Anecdote Collections," Jack W. Chen, David Schaberg comps., *Idle talk: Gossip and anecdote in traditional china*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014, 107-131.

Hearsay) and Wang Dingbao's 王定保 (870-c. 941) *Zhiyan* 摭言 (Collected Sayings), which were produced at different times after Han Yu's death. According to Shields, the two earlier anecdotal compilations, *Guoshi bu* and *Yinhualu*, depict Han Yu primarily as a literary master in a vibrant and diverse literary world. However, the *Zhiyan*, compilation produced by Wang Dingbao after the Tang collapsed, offers a "historical and even more ideological assessment" of Han Yu. Wang depicts Han Yu "not only as a devoted teacher and mentor, but also as a sage like those of antiquity, someone whose stature was unequalled in his time."<sup>32</sup> Wang foregrounds Han Yu and his adherents in the mid-Tang literary history as a group that shared not only a common literary taste, but also a common faith in Confucian moral values. Shields contends that Wang's portrait of Han Yu goes beyond Han Yu's situation in his day, but hints at the elevation of Han Yu's status as a worthy follower of Confucius in the Northern Song.

Shield's use of anecdotes provides a vantage point for us to examine how Han Yu was perceived by Tang intellectual community during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Anecdote is part of the literary writings that are traditionally called *xiaoshuo* 小說 (minor discourses). The term *xiaoshuo* first appears in the *Han shu* 漢書 (the History of the Han dynasty), which is defined by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) as "the talks and hearsay that are passed along in the streets" 街談巷語，道聽塗說.<sup>33</sup> The Tang historian Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 divides *xiaoshuo* into ten types, covering unofficial historical records (*yishi*, 逸事), trivial talks (*suoyan*, 瑣言) and miscellaneous

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>33</sup> Ban Gu 班固, *Han shu* 漢書, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964, 30: 1745.

records of anomaly (*zaji* 雜記).<sup>34</sup> Stemming out of history, *xiaoshuo* predominantly comprises a wide range of accounts that are beyond the task of verification, such as supernatural occurrences, historical miscellanies, as well as local customs and scientific knowledge.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, bearing personal experience and private knowledge from a wide variety of informants, *xiaoshuo* nevertheless claims to offer information that could only be known by an eye-witness.<sup>36</sup> Such ambiguity in factuality appeals pre-modern Chinese historians, who valued a complete fidelity to historical truth and a critical scrutiny of the documents, to hold an inclusive yet cautious attitude towards *xiaoshuo*. Ban Gu cites Confucius' words to support his view of *xiaoshuo* as a minor way of learning (*xiaodao*, 小道). Meanwhile, he argues that “even the scant knowledge in the villages should be recorded and thus not forgotten” 閭裡小知者之所及，亦使綴而不忘。<sup>37</sup> The Tang historian Liu Zhiji maintains that these unofficial records can be consulted and circulated as a supplement to official histories. However, he points out some corrupting recorders' failure to discern truth

<sup>34</sup> Pu Qilong 浦起龍, ed., *Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1978, 10: 274-281.

<sup>35</sup> In “Word of Mouth and the Sources of Western Han History,” David Schaberg points out that the records of the inner court in the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu* accommodate both specialized knowledge and public hearsay in the historical account. The orthodox histories represent a conciliation of historical facts and the anecdotal narratives. See Chen, *Idle talk*, 17-37. In “Tales from Borderland: Anecdotes in Early Medieval China,” Xiaofei Tian emphasizes that the randomness and messiness of anecdotes have created an illusion of miscellaneous “reality,” which were selected and modified by the historians before entering a neat account of history. See Chen, *Idle talk*, 38-54.

<sup>36</sup> In the “Oral Sources and Written Accounts: Authority in Tang Tales,” Sarah M. Allen examines how an eyewitness of the event was created to verify the authenticity and superiority of the anecdotes. According to Allen, Tang story-tellers were aware of the instability of transmission and political intervention in historiography. The eyewitness, the figure who possesses accurate and intimate information of the event, was therefore created to validate their narratives as a contradiction or even correction to the official accounts. See Chen, *Idle talk*, 71-87. In the “The Seduction of Authenticity: ‘The Story of Yingying’,” Manling Luo explores the intricate strategies the author utilized to construct the authenticity in different layers of the story. Luo's article reveals how a convincing authenticity was carefully constructed as a justification of his romantic discourse. In that case, the “authenticity” is a product of the author's conciliation on morality and entertainment. In the light of the fact that “authenticity” can be constructed, the factuality of the Tang anecdotes and stories become dubious if we place them in a larger culture context, in which the story-tellers were eager to tell an extraordinary story without being subversive and heretical. See Manling Luo, “The Seduction of Authenticity: ‘The Story of Yingying’”, *Nan n i: men, women, and gender in early and Imperial China*, 7.1 (2005): 40-70.

<sup>37</sup> Ban Gu 班固, *Han shu* 漢書, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964, 30: 1745.

from false, which undermines the reliability of these materials.<sup>38</sup> In general, pre-modern historians simply viewed *xiaoshuo* as a pile of historical documents, the value of which primarily lay in the degree of their trustworthiness.<sup>39</sup>

However, in her study of Tang historical miscellanies, Manling Luo analyses how the anecdotes piece together a mosaic collage of the past. She considers the compiler's work as a reconstruction of a history that is manipulated by their historical position and individual concerns.<sup>40</sup> Shields' study exploits this function of anecdotes to examine how the mid-Tang literary world is perceived and represented during the post mid-Tang period. She also enunciates that the varying perceptions of the mid-Tang cultural history are largely formulated by the historical situation each compiler confronted.

Since Shields' study mainly deals with the representation of the literary history

<sup>38</sup> See Pu, ed., *Shitong tongshi*, 10: 275.

<sup>39</sup> According to Confucius, a historian is supposed to leave lacunae in writing histories when he lacks reliable evidence and knowledge to restore the original events. See Lau, *The Analects*, 15:135. For the discussion of the pre-modern Chinese historiographic epistemology and the use of unofficial records and trivial talks in official histories, see Jack W. Chen, "Blank Spaces and Secret Histories: Questions of Historiographic Epistemology in Medieval China," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 69, No. 4, (Nov., 2010): 1071-1091. In *The Writing of Official History under the T'ang*, Denis Twitchett examines the institutional system in which the Tang official histories were written and revised, the limitation and pressure this system has imposed on the historians, and the stages through which the official records were refined, selected and edited. However, he also reminds us of the official historians' great effort to record what they considered to be true, to exhaust the historical archives they could find and to offer moral teachings through their judgment of the historical events. See Denis Crispin Twitchett, *The writing of official history under the T'ang*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

<sup>40</sup> Manling Luo, "Remembering Kaiyuan and Tianbao: The Construction of Mosaic Memory in Medieval Historical Miscellanies," *T'oung Pao* 97, 4-5, (2011): 263-300. Before Luo, Rania Huntington notices the cultural function of these short narrative accounts of "things seen and heard" (*jianwen*, 見聞), regardless of their dubious veracity, in constructing a memory of history. According to Huntington, whereas official historiography provides a perspective of "this is what happened" and individual works provide that of "this is what happened to me," the miscellaneous anecdotes offer a perspective of "this is what happened to someone" to mediate between the official stance and personal claim of events, which "helps to create a sense of general human experience in ordinary or extraordinary times." See Rania Huntington, "Chaos, Memory, and Genre: Anecdotal Recollections of the Taiping Rebellion," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 27 (2005): 59-60. Stephen H. West argues that one should consider the boundary between history and *xiaoshuo* "more from the point of view of the site of production and rhetoric than from the nature of sources." In his study of *Nanjin jiwen* 南燼紀聞 (A personal account of southern leftovers), he maintains that while this anecdotal compilation may comprise fabrication and creation, it unfolds "a version of history that resonated with deeply held beliefs about the nature of a universe beyond China, about how humans and the cosmos were linked, and about the terrors of life in a world of death." See Stephen H. West, "Crossing Over: Huizong in the Afterglow, or the Deaths of a Troubling Emperor," *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China*, edited by Patricia B. Ebrey and Maggie Bickford, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2006, 608.

during the Yuanhe reign 元和 (806-820) in Tang anecdotal compilations, her discussion does not centrally focus on the transformation of Han Yu's personal image in the anecdotes. Second, Shields' analysis of Han Yu's image is based on a selective base of materials. Such compilations as the *Liubinke jiahualu* 劉賓客嘉話錄 (A record of adviser to the heir apparent Liu's fine discourses) and the *Xuanshezhi* 宣室志 (A record of the room of Xuan) that offer limited portraits of the mid-Tang intellectual landscape are excluded from her study, even though they both present a multifaceted yet coherent image of Han Yu through multiple anecdotes. This thesis examines Han Yu's image preserved in five anecdotal compilations produced during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries: Wei Xuan's *Liu binke jiahualu*, Li Zhao's *Guoshibu*, Zhao Lin's *Yinhualu*, Zhang Du's 張讀 (834-c.886) *Xuanshezhi* and Wang Dingbao's *Zhiyan*. Through reading the compilers' representation of Han Yu within the specific textual, historical and social contexts, this thesis argues that Tang literati's recognition of Han Yu's commitment to Confucianism proceeded gradually throughout the second half of the Tang dynasty. Contrary to Bol's assertion that Han Yu's commitment to Confucianism was not widely acknowledged until after the Tang collapsed, my thesis supplements Shields' speculation and contends that Han Yu's illustration and practice of Confucian moral values had increasingly drawn attention from the intellectual community by the late Tang period. Confronting unprecedented moral deficiency in the intellectual community, the late Tang literati not only exalted Han Yu's writings, but also highlighted his practice of Confucian moral values, his stoic antagonism to Buddhism and Daoism, and his consistent concern for public welfare so as to establish

him as a model Confucian.

The first section of the thesis deals with Wei Xuan's *Liubinke jiahualu*, a collection of Liu Yuxi's idle talks, Li Zhao's *Guoshibu*, and Zhao Lin's *Yinhualu*, three anecdotal compilations that preserve the perception of Han Yu held by Han's contemporaries and the literary man immediately after him. As active participants in mid-Tang politics and culture, both Liu Yuxi and Li Zhao present an intimate yet critical observation of Han Yu's writings and conduct. They consider Han Yu more as a frivolous literary man than a model Confucian. Such a perception is in harmony with the common remarks Han Yu received from most of his contemporaries. Later than Liu Yuxi and Li Zhao, Zhao Lin might have heard the anecdotes about Han Yu from Han's contemporaries, and he assesses Han Yu mainly in light of his literary achievement. However, Zhao respectfully depicts Han Yu as an exemplary literary leader during his day, who pioneers literary change and cares for young literati. Compared with Liu Yuxi's and Li Zhao's portraits of Han Yu, Zhao Lin's description marks an elevation of Han Yu's status and reputation as a literary man, which was largely shaped by his admiration for the bygone mid-Tang glories to which his prominent family attached.

The second section deals with Zhang Du's representation of Han Yu in the *Xuanshezhi*, which was completed during 860 and 863. Unlike the anecdotal compilers discussed in the first section, Zhang shows particular interest in Han Yu's public service as a Tang official. He depicts Han Yu primarily as a rectitude official who held a strong faith in Confucianism in his public service, a composite yet coherent image that echoes Han Yu's earnest care for the populace during his political career. Zhang's

representation of Han Yu might have been influenced by his discontent with the moral decadence and perfunctoriness in the officialdom during Xuanzong's reign 宣宗 (810-859; r. 846-859). The public spiritedness he advocates in the *Xuanshizhi* manifests itself in the paradigmatic image of Han Yu as a Tang official.

The third section deals with Wang Dingbao's representation of Han Yu in the *Zhiyan*, which was composed after the Tang collapsed in 907. In the *Zhiyan*, Wang's interest lies in Tang's implementation of the examination system and the candidates struggling in the testing compound. His concern about the neglect of morality in the recruiting procedure and the rampant frivolity in the intellectual community propels him to endorse a unity of literary skills and morality in redefining a true talent. Wang's portrait of Han Yu, a faithful Confucian both in public service and private life, can be viewed as an incarnation of Wang's intellectual ideal. Linking the *Zhiyan* with the historical situation Wang found himself in, I contend that Wang's perception of Han Yu marks a late Tang literati's rediscovery of Han Yu's philosophical thought, which was not widely accepted in Han's day, in the wake of the moral crisis prevailing in the late Tang literati community.

Not all the existing anecdotes about Han Yu are incorporated in the five anecdotal compilations I discuss here. The rest of them sporadically appear in various compilations produced after the *Xuanshizhi*. In the conclusion, I discuss the circulation of these anecdotes during the late Tang and Five-Dynasties and contend that they all place an exclusive emphasis on the Confucian moral qualities manifested in Han Yu's writings and conduct. Such an examination further supplements my conclusion that it



was during the late Tang and Five-Dynasties, instead of the early Northern Song, that Han Yu's Confucian thought and his effort to reinvigorate Confucian moral values in private life and public activities gradually gained attention and recognition in the intellectual community.

## Chapter One: Han Yu's image in the *Liubinke jiahualu*, *Guoshibu* and *Yinhualu*

In this section I examine Han Yu's images preserved in three anecdotal compilations: Wei Xuan's *Liubinke jiahualu*, Li Zhao's *Guoshibu* and Zhao Lin's *yinhualu*. The *Liubinke jiahualu* is a record of Liu Yuxi's idle talks. As Han Yu's friend, Liu Yuxi views Han Yu from an intimate perspective and thus offers a personal knowledge of Han Yu's life and personality. Although there is no evidence suggesting Li Zhao's personal acquaintance with Han Yu, Li Zhao is an active participant in the political world during Xianzong's and Muzong's reign (806-824). His understanding of Han Yu is framed by the knowledge and anecdotes circulating during Han Yu's day. Unlike Liu Yuxi and Li Zhao, Zhao Lin enters Tang bureaucracy ten years after Han Yu's death. However, his knowledge of Han Yu might have come from Li Han 李漢 (c.790-c.860), Han Yu's son-in-law who models himself on Han Yu both in writings and moral practice, and the seniors in his family. Generally speaking, the anecdotes preserved in these three compilations demonstrate how Han Yu was perceived by his contemporaries and the literary man immediately after him.

In her study on the Tang literati's representation of mid-Tang literary history in the anecdotal compilations, Shields maintains that Li Zhao views the mid-Tang literary world as the literati's competing field for exams, posts and celebrity, which "too often

led to outrageous behavior, extreme stances, and hypocrisy.”<sup>41</sup> Such a utilitarian literati spirit also permeates through Li Zhao’s disapproving representation of Han Yu, a literary model who values unconventionality in writings and conduct. Shields also examines Zhao Lin’s description of Han Yu, which she believes is inspired by Zhao’s admiration for a brilliant literary past. Zhao Lin depicts Han Yu as “a bellwether of Yuanhe (806-820) literary change” whose prose is of the highest quality and imitated by his contemporaries.<sup>42</sup> Since Shields’ study focuses on mid-Tang cultural history, her comparison between the *Guoshibu* and the *Yinhualu* mainly lies in the compilers’ different perceptions of the mid-Tang literati community, rather than the literary man Han Yu. Furthermore, the *Liubinke jiahualu* is excluded from her study due to its weaker relevance to Shields’ thesis, even though it preserves Liu Yuxi’s comments on several contemporary literati, including Han Yu.

This section examines Han Yu’s images in these three anecdotal compilations and argues that the three compilers primarily view Han Yu as a literary man who earns his reputation mainly for his literary accomplishment. Compared with Liu Yuxi, Li Zhao gives more positive remarks on Han Yu’s literary achievement by viewing him as a literary model. However, both of them present a critical portrait of Han Yu’s personality and conduct that depart from Confucius’ teaching. As a contrast, Zhao Lin’s observations, which is from a farther distance, displays an elevation of both Han Yu’s literary status and reputation in the mid-Tang literary world. From the *Liubinke jiahualu* to the *Yinhualu*, a morally paradigmatic image of Han Yu as a literary man

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<sup>41</sup> Shields, “Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History,” 117.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

gradually replaces the unfavorable ones, and becomes the basic tone of the representations of Han Yu in later anecdotal compilations.

### **Wei Xuan and the *Liubinke jiahualu***

In 822, a young man called Wei Xuan came to Kuizhou 夔州 (in modern Hunan province) to learn with his father's good friend, Liu Yuxi. According to Wei Xuan's account, Liu offered him clothing and food, and treated him like his own son.<sup>43</sup> In the preface to his compilation, Wei recounts that:

During a break in explaining Classics and Histories, [Liu] occasionally talked about the interesting chats of the literary men of this dynasty, the novel words of the ranking officials, and extraordinary dreams, such as jesting, divination, prophetic ballads and well-written lines.<sup>44</sup>

解釋經史之暇，偶及國朝文人劇談，卿相新語，異常夢話，若諧謔卜祝，童謠佳句。

Thirty-three years later, when Wei Xuan was serving in Jiangling 江陵 (in modern Hubei province), he recounted Liu's words and compiled them into the *Liubinke jiahualu*.

The persona of Liu Yuxi appearing in this anecdotal compilation provides us with a vantage point to observe how Han Yu was perceived in his day. Liu entered the court in 803 as an investigating censor, and met his colleagues Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan in the Censorate. These young officials, who were excellent in literature and passionate about exerting their political aptitude, debated over varying issues and competed in

<sup>43</sup> Wei Xuan, *Liubinke jiahualu*, in Ding Rumeng 丁如明, et al., punctuated comps., *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan* 唐五代筆記小說大觀, vol.1, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2000, 792.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 792. Cited from Tori Clifton Anthony Richardson, " *Liu Pin-k'o chia-hua lu* [A Record of Adviser to the Heir Apparent Liu [Yu-hsi's] Fine Discourses]: A study and translation," The University of Wisconsin-Madison Ph.D Dissertation, 1994, 91.

literary writings. Both Liu Yuxi and Liu Zongyuan were considered by Han Yu as his close friends before Han was dismissed from the Censorate and sent to Yangshan 陽山 (in modern Guangdong province).<sup>45</sup> During Shunzong's reign 順宗 (761-806; r. 805), the two Lius were summoned into Wang Shuwen's 王叔文 (753-806) clique, which Han denounced as a group of opportunists inspired by selfish political ambition. In 806, when Liu Yuxi was demoted to the remote South after the aborted political reform, he met Han Yu in Jiangling. Han, despite his opposing political stance, absolved the two Lius of guilt and expressed sympathy for them in a poem.<sup>46</sup> The individual political vicissitude did not inhibit Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan and Liu Yuxi from competing in literary works and debating over philosophical issues, records of which are preserved in their letters. When Liu Zongyuan died in 819, Liu Yuxi asked Han Yu to write the funeral inscription for Liu and to care for Zongyuan's descendants. When Han Yu died in 824, Liu Yuxi respectfully eulogized Han's achievements in a commemorative text. Li Ao (李翱 774-836), Han Yu's close friend, recounted that Liu Zongyuan and Liu Yuxi were the only two men who rivaled Han Yu and himself in prose writing.<sup>47</sup> Li Ao's assertion was later confirmed by Liu Yuxi himself.<sup>48</sup> It is fair to say that Liu Yuxi's representation of Han Yu is from a perspective of an intellectual who not only enjoyed an equal literary reputation but also had an intimate knowledge

<sup>45</sup> Han Yu suspected that Liu Yuxi and Liu Zongyuan divulged his words regarding the drought in the capital area, which incensed the capital prefect Li Shi 李實 and led to his demotion. See Bian Xiaoxuan 卞孝萱, "Liu Yuxi yu Han Yu" 劉禹錫與韓愈, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 四川師院學報 1 (1983): 44.

<sup>46</sup> See Han Yu, "Yongzhen xing" 永貞行, in Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, ed., *Han Changli shi xinian jishi* 韓昌黎詩系年集釋, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1984, 332.

<sup>47</sup> For Li Ao's life and his philosophical thought, see T. H. Barrett, *Li Ao: Buddhist, Taoist, or neo-Confucian?* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

<sup>48</sup> See Liu Yuxi, "Tang gu zhongshu shilang pingzhangshi Weigongji ji" 唐故中書侍郎平章事韋公集紀 in Qu, *Liu Yuxi ji jianzheng*, 484.

of Han Yu. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the *Liubinke jiahualu*, Liu called Han Yu by his family ranking: Han, the eighteenth (*Han shiba*, 韓十八), which sounds more intimate and casual than by his name. The first anecdote provided by Liu Yuxi describes Han Yu as a flippant literary man:

Han, the eighteenth [male in his generation] was truly too flippant. He once said to Li Cheng 李程 (764-841), the twenty-sixth [male in his generation]: “The Chief Minister Cui, the eldest, Qun 崔群 (772-832) and I have had contact with each other since we passed the *jinshi* the same year. He is truly more intelligent than others.” Li Cheng inquired: “In what respect is he more intelligent than others?” Han Yu answered: “In the more than twenty years that I have had communication with him, Cui Qun has never discussed writing literature with me. Doesn’t his intelligence surpass others?”<sup>49</sup>

韓十八愈，直是太輕薄，謂李二十六程曰：“某與丞相崔大群同年往還，直是聰明過人。”李曰：“何處是過人者？”韓曰：“共愈往還二十餘年，不曾共說著文章，此豈不是敏慧過人也。”

In a letter Han Yu wrote to Cui in 802, Han Yu paid an earnest compliment on Cui’s insightful canonical learning and moral virtues.<sup>50</sup> Prudent as Cui is, according to Han Yu’s claim in this anecdote, for more than twenty years Cui has been shrinking from discussing literature with him, which indicates Cui’s recognition of Han’s unparalleled literary authority. It is clear that Liu Yuxi holds a disapproving view of the way in which Han boasts about his prowess in literature, which Liu ridicules as “being flippant.”

Such a facetious image of Han Yu also appears in another anecdote, in which Han expresses his discontent with a deceased official. According to the anecdote, when the Secretary Xi Kui 席夔 (d. 817) passed away, people discussed the reason why Xi had no good sons. Someone suggested it was because Xi had eaten something unclean.

<sup>49</sup> Wei, *Liubinke jiahualu*, 804. Cited from Richardson, “‘Liu Pin-k’o chia-hua lu’,” 153-154.

<sup>50</sup> See Han Yu, “Yu Cui Qun shu” 與崔群書, in Ma, *Hanchangli wenji jiaozhu*, 186.

Han Yu claimed that “it was too late for Xi not to eat anything unclean, because the words Xi uttered were inappropriate” 席不吃不潔太遲,出語不是. Liu Yuxi links Han’s words with the fact that Xi composed the decree for Han’s demotion. The decree reads: “He [Han Yu] passed the civil service examination early and was famous as well” 早登科第, 亦有聲名. Liu Yuxi speculates that it was Xi’s degrading comment that irritated Han, and thus entailed Han Yu’s contemptuous attitude towards Xi.<sup>51</sup> By directly quoting Han Yu’s caustic words, Liu Yuxi depicts Han Yu as a literary man who takes extreme pride in his literary achievement and is intolerant of anyone who failed to notice it.

The *Liubinke jiahualu* also preserves Liu’s comments on Han Yu’s literary writings. In 817, the Prime Minister Pei Du launched an expedition to Huaixi and suppressed Commander Wu Yuanji’s 吳元濟 (783-817) rebellion, which marks a critical triumph in reconsolidating the central authority over the empire. As a member of Pei’s staff, Han Yu was ordered to compose an inscription to commemorate the victory. Having been demoted to the remote South, Liu Zongyuan and Liu Yuxi also wrote texts to eulogize Xianzong’s accomplishment. The anecdotes in the *Liubinke jiahualu* display the two Lius’ less satisfied attitude towards Han’s inscription.

Liu Zongyuan, the eighth [male in his generation] criticized the “Inscription on the Pacification of Huaixi” written by Han Yu, the eighteenth [male in his generation]: “[Han said] ‘[the general] gave food to the left and congee to the right.’ How could it rival my words in the ‘Ode on the Pacification of Huaixi’ that ‘[the local people] saw their fathers when looking up and saw their sons when looking down.’” Liu Yuxi said: “Your exaltation of Xianzong’s care for

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<sup>51</sup> Wei, *Liubinke jiahualu*, 804, Cited from Richardson, “‘Liu Pin-k’o chia-hua lu’,” 154. According to Yuan Zhen’s 元稹 “He Bailetian dongnan xing” 和白樂天東南行, Xi Kui died in 817. In 816, when both Han Yu and Xi Kui served as the Secretaries, Han Yu wrote the “He Xiba shier yun” 和席八十二韻, in which he compliments Xi’s literary talent. See Qian, *Hanchangli shi xinian jishi*, 962-66.

the populace is as great as it can be.” Liu Zongyuan said: “Han’s inscription is not straightforward. If I wrote it, I would directly say the court took military action to suppress the rebellion.”<sup>52</sup>

柳八駁韓十八《平淮西碑》云：“‘左飧右粥’，何如我《平淮西雅》雲‘仰父俯子’。”禹錫曰：“美憲宗俯下之道盡矣。”柳曰：“韓《碑》兼有帽子，使我為之，便說用兵討叛矣。”

According to the Tang dynastic histories, Han’s inscription was quite controversial in his day. He was criticized for overemphasizing Pei Du while slighting the General Li Su 李愬 (773-821), whose gallant overnight raid on Caizhou 蔡州 (in modern Henan province) determined the ultimate victory. Han Yu’s inscription was eventually effaced and replaced by the Hanlin scholar Duan Wenchang’s 段文昌 (772-835 ) writing due to the complaint of Li Su’s wife.<sup>53</sup> In this anecdote, Liu Yuxi points out through Liu Zongyuan’s words that Han Yu has obscured the fact that it is the military intervention presented by the general, rather than the moral inculcation presented by the Prime Minister, that reestablishes the imperial authority in Huaixi. Meanwhile, in another anecdote, Liu Yuxi makes favorable comments on Duan Wenchang’s writing, which, as a contrast to Han’s work, explicitly attributes the triumph to the military strategy and action.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, Liu Yuxi also expresses his content with his own poems on the pacification of Huaixi, which he believes have described Li Su’s surprising capture of the city in a clever and novel way.<sup>55</sup> Instead of treating Han Yu as an admirable literary leader, Liu Yuxi, who enjoys a fame equal to Han, simply considers Han Yu as a member of the mid-Tang intellectual community whose writings are ready to be examined, compared and criticized. Such a perspective also provides

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<sup>52</sup> Wei, *Liubinke jiahualu*, 815.

<sup>53</sup> *JTS*, 2859.

<sup>54</sup> Wei, *Liubinke jiahualu*, 816.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 815.



grounds for Liu Yuxi's accusation against Han Yu's complacency about his literary talent.

In the commemorative text Liu Yuxi wrote for Han Yu, Liu compliments Han Yu on his literary fame by asserting that the funerary texts written by Han Yu are of high value. However, in Liu Yuxi's idle talks about Han Yu, it seems that Liu views Han Yu more as an intimate literary comrade than a distant literary leader of the intellectual community. Liu's personal acquaintance with Han Yu ostensibly allows him to observe the multiplicity of Han Yu, including his occasional awkwardness in writings and frivolity in conduct, according to which Liu presents an image of Han Yu that is less appealing to his contemporaries.

Although Liu Yuxi notices the emergence of unofficial Confucian canonical learning during the mid-Tang, towards which he shows great interests, he does not consider it as the contemporary literati's primary concern.<sup>56</sup> During the early years, Liu had a strong faith in Confucianism and was ambitious to launch a political reform. However, expelled from the court for more than twenty years, Liu Yuxi did not acquire much opportunity to practice his political ideal despite his persistent search for assistance from his friends, including Han Yu. During his later years, he further embraced Buddhism in private life.<sup>57</sup> In the *Liubinke jiahualu*, Liu Yuxi is preoccupied with the literati's vicissitudes in officialdom, which are more often dominated by an unfathomable fate than by their own capability. Confronting the

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<sup>56</sup> In one anecdote, Liu Yuxi recounts that Liu Zongyuan, Han Tai 韓泰 and him listened to the lecture on the *Book of Songs* presented by Shi Shigai 施士丐, one of the famous unofficial Confucian scholar during mid-Tang. See Wei, *Liubinke jiahualu*, 813.

<sup>57</sup> Luo Liantian 羅聯添, "Liu Mengde nianpu" 劉夢得年譜, in *Tangdai shiwen liujia nianpu* 唐代詩文六家年譜, Taipei: Xuehai chubanshe, 1986, 257-462.

uncertainty in officialdom, the Tang literati appear as opportunists and their impulse to protect themselves seems to override their sense of official responsibility. His extensive concentration on the Tang literati's search for political success might have contributed to his insufficient attention to Han Yu's and Liu Zongyuan's commitment to Confucianism.

### **Li Zhao and the *Guoshibu***

We know little about the exact dates of Li Zhao's birth and death. After holding a series of posts in Chang'an 長安 (in modern Shanxi province), Li was assigned to be a Hanlin scholar in 819, the same year when Han Yu was demoted to Chaozhou for his audacious "Memorial on the Buddha Relic." Li was soon transferred to the post of Right Omissioner (*zuobuque* 左補闕) in 820. In 821, Li was dismissed from the court and made Prefect of Lizhou 澧州 (in modern Hunan province). He was respected by the local people for his benevolent service. He came back to the capital before 823 and was serving as the Palace Secretary until 829, which might be his last official post.<sup>58</sup> According to the preface to the *Guoshibu*, Li Zhao compiled anecdotes circulating during the Kaiyuan reign 開元 (713-741) and the Changqing reign 長慶 (821-824). The compilation was finished after he came back to Chang'an.<sup>59</sup> It is reasonable to say that *Guoshibu* was compiled during the period when Li was actively involved in

<sup>58</sup> For the details of Li Zhao's life and political career, see Cen Zhongmian 岑仲勉, "Ba Tang zhiyan" 跋唐摭言, *Guoli Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 國立中央研究院歷史語言研究所季刊 9 (1947): 246. See also Li Yifei 李一飛, "Tang guoshibu zuozhe Li Zhao xingji kaolue" 唐國史補作者李肇行跡考略, *Wenxian Wenxian*, 2 (1991): 109-113.

<sup>59</sup> Li Zhao, *Guoshibu*, in Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol.1, 158.

public service for the Tang Empire. Therefore it offers a close observation of the political and cultural figures during this period.

Unlike Liu Yuxi, Li Zhao is ambitious to supplement the official history through collecting and recording anecdotes. In the preface to the *Guoshibu*, he explains how he selects materials:

[As for those accounts that] spoke of vengeance and retribution, or told of ghosts and spirits, or verified dreams and oracles, or approached the curtains [of the bedchamber], I completely expunged them. If they recorded facts and events, investigated natural phenomena, distinguished the suspect and deluded, displayed good advice or warnings, collected local customs, or contributed to refined chat and pleasantries, then I wrote them down.<sup>60</sup>

言報應，敘鬼神，徵夢卜，近帷箔，悉去之；紀事實，探物理，辨疑惑，示勸戒，采風俗，助談笑，則書之。

Such self-consciousness as a historian enables Li to observe political and cultural affairs from an official stance, which gives public interest an absolute priority over individual concerns. In the *Guoshibu*, a considerable number of anecdotes recount the meritorious service provided by the officials and commanders. Li Zhao praises officials who defended public welfare at the sacrifice of themselves, who valued established laws more than imperial authority, and who refused to abuse political priority for personal gains, even though some of them only held low office in the bureaucracy. Li Huideng 李惠登, the Prefect of Suizhou 隋州 (in modern Hubei province), is depicted as the most benevolent official during his day. Li Zhao specifically recorded his words that “there are two characters in my name. I only know ‘benevolence’ but I don’t know ‘ascending’ ” 吾二名，唯識惠字，不識登字.<sup>61</sup> Prime Ministers like Li Mian 李勉 (717-788) and Liu Yan 劉晏 (716-780) are praised for

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 158. Cited from Shields, “Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History,” 113.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

their incorrupt governance and frugal life style, whereas Du You is criticized for his addiction to his post despite his old age.<sup>62</sup>

As a contrast, the Tang literati appear in the *Guoshibu* as a group that was detached from the imperial court and the political arena. In spite of the fact that most of the Tang literati held posts of varying ranks, their devotion to public service is obscured in Li Zhao's account. Instead, Li views the Tang literati as a group preoccupied with personal success and gains, which is displayed through their superficial and utilitarian conduct. According to Li's account, Gu Kuang's 顧況 (c.725-c.814) verse is "permeated with frivolity" 尤多輕薄 and Cui Ying 崔膺 is "arrogant and reckless in personality" 性狂率.<sup>63</sup> Li points out that some of Wang Wei's famous verses were plagiarized from other places.<sup>64</sup> He asserts that Li Hua's eulogy for the "Four Seniors" (*sihao*, 四皓) and Yuan Dexiu 元德秀 (c.695-c.754), historical figures who retreated from officialdom, is inspired by his regret for capitulating to the rebels during the An Lushan Rebellion.<sup>65</sup> Such a contrast between literary excellence and moral weakness runs through Li Zhao's representation of the mid-Tang literati group. Therefore, in the *Guoshibu*, the mid-Tang literati show no interest in morality and treat literature merely as an approach to fame, profit and political success. The dissolution of morality within the intellectual community prompts Li Zhao to ascribe "superficiality" (*fu*, 浮),

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 167. Chiu-Duke has also noticed Tang literati's criticism against Du You in terms of his neglect of duty as a Prime Minister. She mentions another anecdote in *Liubinke jiahualu*, which recounts that Du You's wish after his retirement is "simply do nothing but amuse himself with variety shows in the market." Du You's cautious attitude towards political dangers prevented him from striving to transform the ruler's conduct and realize his political ideals. In that sense, Chiu-Duke regards Du You as a "pragmatist Confucian" whose "sympathy for the people could become secondary when personal interest or *raison d'état* intervened." See Chiu-Duke, *To Rebuild the Empire*, 162-163.

<sup>63</sup> Li Zhao, *Guoshibu*, in Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol.1, 163-177.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

“carelessness” (*dang*, 蕩) and “strangeness” (*guai*, 怪) to the mid-Tang literary style and literati spirits.<sup>66</sup>

Li Zhao’s portrait of Han Yu is written from his outlook on the mid-Tang literary world. In the *Guoshibu*, Li regards Han primarily as a literary man, whose unconventional prose style is highly commended and widely imitated.<sup>67</sup> He praises Han Yu’s “Biography of Mao Ying” as an excellent piece of prose which is paralleled to Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (145 B.C.E-86 B.C.E) work.<sup>68</sup> In another anecdote, Li presents an approving account of Han Yu’s humor and intelligence. When both the senior administrator Lu Changyuan 陸長源 (d. 799) and Han Yu were serving in Dong Jin’s 董晉 (724-799) office, people ridiculed the generation gap between them. Han smartly replied: “Both tiger and mouse are among the signs of the Chinese zodiac. What is the surprise” 大蟲老鼠，俱為十二相屬，何怪之有? The next day Han’s words circulated throughout Chang’an.<sup>69</sup> Compared with Liu Yuxi’s representation of Han Yu, Li Zhao’s anecdotes demonstrate a more favorable attitude towards Han Yu’s literary talent and establish him as one of the literary models during the mid-Tang.

However, Li Zhao also notices a sense of frivolity and utilitarianism in Han Yu’s deeds. In one anecdote, Li recounts Han’s embarrassing experience on Mount Hua:

Han Yu loved the unconventional, and with his fellow travelers he ascended Mount Hua’s highest peak. But when he got there, he could not return. He thereupon wrote his final testament and became wild with bitter wailing. The Huayang magistrate, after trying dozens of ways, [finally] reached him, and Han then descended.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 180. Cited from Shields, “Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History,” 116. In a poem Han Yu wrote to his friend Zhang Che in 806, Han Yu recounts his ascent of the Mount Hua in 802, in which he describes his feeling as

韓愈好奇，與客登華山絕峰，度不返，乃作遺書，發狂慟哭，華陰令百計取之，乃下。

By juxtaposing Han's fame as an explorer of strangeness and his deranged behavior when confronting real strangeness, Li consciously satires Han Yu's well-known fascination with unconventionality, which, from Li's point of view, is more like a superficial performance to claim uniqueness and acquire celebrity in the literary world.

Another anecdote recounts Han Yu's effort to promote his followers:

Those whom Han Yu recommended always succeeded, so among those seeking to pass the examinations, many sent him letters to ask for his help, and people of the time called them "the disciples at Han's gates." Once Han Yu rose to a high position, he no longer did this.<sup>71</sup>

韓愈引致後輩，為舉科第，多有投書請益者。時人謂之“韓門弟子”。後官高，不復為也。

In this anecdote, Li Zhao affirms Han Yu's reputation as a generous patron of examination candidates. However, he indicates that Han is not inspired by a pure eagerness to promote talents, rather, it is a way by which Han attracted supporters for his literary style and ideal so as to advance his own official status. The connotation in the anecdote impels Shields to view it as a clear attack against Han Yu's political ambition.<sup>72</sup>

Li Zhao also gives a description of the contemporary Confucian canonical milieu:

After the Dali reign (766-779), there were scholars such as Cai Guangcheng who specialized in the *Book of Changes*, Qiang Xiang in the *Analects*, Tan Zhu, Zhao Kuang and Lu Zhi in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, Shi Shigai in the *Book of Songs*, Diao Yi, Zhong Ziling, Wei Tong, and Pei Chai in the

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"insane with regret," which forces him to "gnaw his fingers." See Qian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, 397. For the translation of this poem, see Owen, *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, 192.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 195. Cited from Shields, "Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History," 116.

<sup>72</sup> Shields, "Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History," 116. It is also true that most of Han's recommendation of examination candidates took place when he was serving in the imperial academy, a post that requires educating and recommending talents for the empire. McMullen maintains that during his tenure in the imperial academy, Han Yu frequently expresses his impatience with the idleness and uselessness of this educational office and his ambition for a more politically significant post. In that sense, Han's quest for higher office to exert his political talent took priority over his concern for promoting junior candidates. It is quite possible for Han to decline the request from literati when he no longer serves in the imperial academy. See McMullen, "Han Yü: An Alternative Picture," 623-32.

*Book of Rites*, and Zhang Tinggui, Xue Bogao and Xu Run who have thorough knowledge in all Confucian canons.

大曆以後，專學者有蔡廣成《周易》，強象《論語》，啖助、趙匡、陸贄《春秋》，施士丐《毛詩》，刁彝、仲子陵、韋彤、裴茆講《禮》，章廷珪、薛伯高、徐潤並通經。

According to the *Xin Tangshu*, in spite of the fact that some of these scholars held academic office, the mid-Tang canonical scholarship, represented by the Chunqiu 春秋 school, was detached from the official institutional framework and the exegetical tradition. They denounced the commentarial approach to the canonical texts. Instead, they tried to directly rely on the original texts to uncover Confucius' teaching and applied it to political and social activities. This greatly influenced the later Confucian revival led by Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan, who, by carefully examining the canonical texts, formulated their own ideas of Confucius' teaching to address the social problems they confronted.<sup>73</sup> It seems that Li Zhao has noticed the decentralization of contemporary Confucian scholarship. However, Han Yu's and Liu Zongyuan's interests in Confucian canons and their understanding of Confucius' teaching has not drawn his attention.

To conclude, Li Zhao's historical position allows him to make a close and direct observation of Han Yu. Compared with Liu Yuxi's representation, Li Zhao recognizes Han as one of the stylish models in the literary world and favorably praises one of his most outlandish writings. Meanwhile, Li describes Han Yu as one of the selfish competitors in the intellectual community who is preoccupied with literary celebrity and political success, an image which to some extents deviates from Confucius'

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<sup>73</sup> For the details of the mid-Tang Confucian canonical study, see David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 94-111.

teaching.

### **Zhao Lin and the *Yinhualu***

Later than Liu Yuxi and Li Zhao, Zhao Lin belongs to the younger generation that grew up during Xianzong's reign. According to modern scholars, Zhao was probably born in 803. He passed the *jinshi* examination in 834, ten years after Han Yu's death. After serving in the lower offices for more than ten years, Zhao entered the imperial court in 853 as the Left Omissioner (*zuobuque* 左補闕). During 856 and 862, he served successively as the Prefect in Hanzhou 漢州 (in modern Sichuan province) and Quzhou 衢州 (in modern Zhejiang province). One of his literary writings shows that he was still alive in 870.<sup>74</sup>

It seems that the compiling work of the *Yinhua lu* continued throughout Zhao Lin's life. He mentions in the compilation that most of the anecdotes have been collected by 839, when he was serving in Yuezhou 越州 (in modern Zhejiang province).<sup>75</sup> However, the details in other anecdotes indicate that he was still making supplements to the compilation during Xizong's reign 僖宗 (862-888, r. 873-888).<sup>76</sup> Generally speaking, most of Zhao's recording of anecdotes is based on his own experience and materials from reliable sources. As one of the most prominent families in mid-Tang society, the Zhao clan has marital, political and intellectual interconnections with

<sup>74</sup> Zhou Xunchu 周勳初, *Tangren biji xiaoshuo kaosuo* 唐人筆記小說考索, in Zhouxunchu, *Zhou Xunchu wenji* 周勳初文集, vol.5, Nanjing: Jiangsu guji, 2000, 182.

<sup>75</sup> Zhao Lin 趙璘, *Yinhualu*, in Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol.1, 847.

<sup>76</sup> Zhao Lin recounts events happened during Dazhong reign 大中 (847-860) and Xiantong reign (860-874). He also mentions the *Zixiaji* 資暇集, an anecdotal compilation produced during Xizong's reign (873-888), when he was more than 70. Therefore it is possible that Zhao Lin's compiling work continued throughout his life. See Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, 870; 874; 852; 866.



multiple aristocratic families as varied as the imperial court, the Cui's 崔氏, the Wei's 韋氏, the Liu's 柳氏 and the Xiao's 蕭氏. Such a close relationship with Tang aristocrats provides its family member, Zhao Lin, with immediate and accurate access to the private past of the court and luminaries from or associated with these prominent families during the mid-Tang.<sup>77</sup>

However, it is also important to notice that, as a descendant of the mid-Tang luminaries, Zhao's admiration for the glorious history of his family, and the upper social hierarchy it was attached to, has influenced the way in which he selected the materials. One of Zhao Lin's great-uncles, Zhao Zongru 趙宗儒 (746-832), served as Dezong's Prime Minister. another great-uncle of Zhao Lin, Liu Bing 柳并 (fl. 779), served the prominent general Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (697-781) during Daizong's reign.<sup>78</sup> Zhao Lin consciously portrays the eight Tang emperors from Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-762 r. 712-756) to Xuanzong 宣宗 (810-859 r. 846-859) as benevolent and righteous rulers. Even Dezong's excessive suspicion of his officials is described as "dealing with administrative work by himself and caring for each designation inside and outside the court" 躬親庶政, 中外除授, 無不留神.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, according to Zhao Lin's description, the rulers are surrounded by a bureaucracy of loyal commanders, worthy prime ministers, beneficial officials, and literary talents who provide good governance for the empire. This picture of an efficient bureaucracy collaborating with brilliant rulers creates a vibrant yet distorted political and cultural

<sup>77</sup> Lu Ming 魯明, "Yinhualu yanjiu" 因話錄研究, Fudan University Mater Thesis, 2004, 17-38.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-38.

<sup>79</sup> Zhao, *Yinhualu*, 837.

image of the mid-Tang. Han Yu appears in this flourishing image as an exemplary literary leader and patron:

Han Wengong [Yu] and Meng Dongye [Jiao] were close friends. Han's prose compositions were of the highest quality, while Meng excelled in pentasyllabic verse; they were called at the time "Meng the Poet and Han the [Prose] Brush." During the Yuanhe, younger writers modeled themselves on Han, and the styles of prose changed greatly. [At the same time,] there were also Liu Zongyuan of Liuzhou, Secretary Li Ao, Director Huangfu Shi, Head of Household Administration Feng Ding, Libationer Yang [Jingzhi], and my Chief Examiner Li [Han], all of whom were revered by students for their excellent prose. But Han, Liu, Huangfu, and Li made it their aim to promote the younger scholars who came after.<sup>80</sup>

韓文公與孟東野友善。韓公文至高，孟長於五言，時號“孟詩韓筆”。元和中，後進師匠韓公，文體大變。又柳柳州宗元、李尚書翱、皇甫郎中湜、馮詹事定、祭酒楊公、余座主李公，皆以高文為諸生所宗，而韓、柳、皇甫、李公皆以引接後學為務。

Zhao Lin points out in this anecdote that Li Han, Han Yu's son-in-law, is his chief examiner in the *jinshi* examination in 834. The personal connection between Zhao and Li provides grounds to speculate that this anecdote about Han Yu might have come from Li Han. In this anecdote, Zhao Lin portrays the mid-Tang literary world as a flourishing field of talents, among whom Han Yu is foregrounded as an unparalleled literary model. As is noticed by Shields, Zhao views Han as "a bellwether of Yuanhe literary change" whose prose is of the highest quality and imitated by his contemporaries.<sup>81</sup> Zhao also stresses that as a leading patron of the candidates, Han Yu views it as his responsibility to promote the young students. In another anecdote, Zhao Lin mentions how Han Yu praised Cheng Xifan's (程昔範) prose and recommended him among the officials. When Cheng failed the examination, Han Yu claimed that Cheng was downgraded. This anecdote supplements Han Yu's image as a caring

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 846. Cited from Shields, "Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History," 118.

<sup>81</sup> Shields, "Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History," 119.

literary patron.<sup>82</sup> Unlike Li Zhao, who perceives Han Yu's recommendation as an approach to his own political advancement, Zhao Lin views it in a more respectful and favorable way.

As the grandson of Xiao Yingshi's 蕭穎士 (717-768) daughter, Zhao Lin heard the details about the pedigree of the Xiao family from the seniors in the family. In one anecdote, Zhao recounts that Xiao Cun 蕭存 (fl. 780-792), Xiao Yingshi's son, retreated from the court for not compromising with the flamboyant supervisor Pei Yanling 裴延齡 (728-796). After Xiao died, Han Yu, who received Xiao's patronage in his early years, visited his old house in Lushan 廬山 (in modern Jiangxi province), he wrote a poem, which is quoted in full length by Zhao, to lament the decline of the Xiao family and offered a good amount of cloth to support Xiao's daughters.<sup>83</sup> Han Yu's literary talent is again demonstrated through the poem. Furthermore, the anecdote also showcases Han Yu's unchangeable loyalty to his friend, and thereby establishes an exemplary image of Han Yu that contrasts to Liu Yuxi and Li Zhao's representations. However, in most cases, Zhao Lin seems more inclined to assess Han Yu regarding his writings and literary fame rather than his moral conduct.

Unlike Liu Yuxi and Li Zhao, who refers to Han Yu directly by his rank within the family or his name, Zhao Lin refers to Han Yu as "Han wengong" 韓文公, the posthumous honorary title he received from the court, and this displays Zhao Lin's more distant and respectful attitude towards Han Yu. In the *Yinhualu*, Han Yu's status is further elevated to be the pioneer of literary change and the master of prose writing.

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<sup>82</sup> Zhao, *Yinhualu*, 846.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 852.

Liu Yuxi's and Li Zhao's charges of his frivolous behavior and selfish ambition are also replaced by Zhao Lin's reverent recounting of Han Yu's altruistic care for his students and his friends' descendants. Although Liu Yuxi, Li Zhao and Zhao Lin all view Han Yu mainly as a literary man, Zhao's portrait of Han Yu marks a shift from a morally controversial image, represented from the perspective of insiders of the mid-Tang, to a morally paradigmatic image, represented from the perspective of a descendent of the mid-Tang luminaries. It seems that the time lapse between Han Yu and Zhao Lin provides Zhao with more freedom to manipulate Han Yu's image based on his emotional attachment to the mid-Tang world.

### **Conclusion**

This section examines Han Yu's image in the anecdotes produced or collected by his contemporaries and the literary man immediately after him. The existent anecdotes preserved in the *Liubinke jiahualu*, the *Guoshibu* and the *Yinhualu* suggest that at least before the late 830s, Han Yu was regarded mainly as a literary man and primarily assessed in terms of his literary writings. None of the anecdotes offers particular illustration of Han Yu's commitment to Confucianism. Such a perception of Han Yu accords with the mainstream comments Han Yu received during his day. Both Liu Yuxi's and Li Zhao's critical assessment of Han Yu in the anecdotes reminds us of the concerns Pei Du, Zhang Ji as well as other Tang literati expressed regarding Han's dramatic character and unconventional conduct, which they considered as a deviation

from Confucian moral values.

From *Liubinke jiahualu* to the *Yinhualu*, there is a steady elevation of Han Yu's literary status which eventually establishes Han Yu as an unparalleled pioneer and model in the mid-Tang literary world. Meanwhile, Han Yu's efforts to promote young literati, which is viewed by Li Zhao as an expedient for his own political success, and his caring for his friends' descendants, which contrasts to the flippant image described by Liu Yuxi, are highlighted as the virtuous and honorable conduct of a literary leader. With the passage of time, the uncomfortable image of Han Yu derived from an intimate knowledge of him fades out and is replaced by a more paradigmatic image described by the younger generation after Han Yu. Zhao Lin's favorable perception of Han Yu becomes the basic tone of Han Yu's image in the following anecdotal compilations.

## Chapter Two: Han Yu's image in the *Xuanshizhi*

In Shields' study, she maintains that compared with the two earlier anecdotal compilations, the *Guoshibu* and the *Yinhualu*, Wang Dingbao's *Zhiyan*, which was composed after the Tang collapsed, marks a "significant shift toward a more historical and even more ideological assessment" of Han Yu and the literary history of his day made by the late Tang literati.<sup>84</sup> According to Shields, in the *Zhiyan*, Han Yu and his associates are placed at the center of his time. Wang Dingbao depicts Han Yu "not only as a devoted teacher and mentor, but also as a sage like those of antiquity, someone whose stature was unequalled in his time."<sup>85</sup> The members in Han Yu's group shared not only a common literary taste, but also a common faith in Confucian moral values. As is pointed out by Shields, Wang's portrait of Han Yu departs from Han Yu's situation in his day and is much closer to the Northern Song literati's appropriation of Han Yu as a Confucian culture hero.

Although I agree with Shields regarding the significance of the *Zhiyan* in redefining Han Yu's status in cultural history, I feel it necessary to mention another work produced between the *Yinhualu* and the *Zhiyan*. It is the *Xuanshizhi* 宣室志, an anecdote collection compiled by Zhang Du 張讀 (834-c.886). Shields excludes it from her study due to its obsession with ghostly and supernatural events. However, a reading of the *Xuanshizhi* shows that the ubiquitous recounts of ghosts and immortals is the perspective from which Zhang insightfully addresses his vision of Tang society.

<sup>84</sup> Shields, "Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History," 109-110.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

The *Xuanshizhi* consists three anecdotal tales about Han Yu, which have never appeared in the previous compilations.

In Zhang Du's representation, an inscrutable and arbitrary supernatural force is disposed on Tang literati. The fortune and calamity they confronted are randomly predestined and divulged through supernatural signs. Moral values were deemphasized and even sacrificed by them so as to improve their fate. However, Han Yu appears in Zhang Du's tales as a contrast to those who capitulated to the dominant supernatural forces. He is depicted as an ideal Tang official who is able to understand Heaven's will, to transform the ferocious beasts by internalized morality, and to determine his decease for fulfilling his political ideal. Unlike Wang Dingbao, Zhang Du does not allude to Han Yu's discourse on Confucius' teaching. Nevertheless, he credits Han Yu with an image of a benevolent official who integrates Confucian moral values with his public service. Such an image of Han Yu is highlighted as a moral exemplar for the whole Tang intellectual community. This section examines Zhang Du's portrait of Han Yu in the anecdotes, and argues that it represents a much earlier recognition for Han Yu's commitment to Confucianism than *Zhiyan* does. In that sense, this section provides new evidence which suggests that Han Yu's prominent status as a model Confucian might not be established overnight; rather, it may have experienced a gradual development throughout late Tang history.

We don't know much about Zhang Du, the compiler of the *Xuanshizi*. He was born in 834. The two Tang dynastic histories record that Zhang demonstrated his literary

intelligence at an early age.<sup>86</sup> He passed the *jinshi* examination in 852, at the age of nineteen. From 856 to 858, he was an official of Zheng Xun (鄭薰 fl. 828-873), the Prefect of Xuanzhou (宣州, in modern Anhui province).<sup>87</sup> In 879, he was promoted as the vice-President of the Ministry of Rites. As the chief examiner of the *jinshi* examination, Zhang was renowned for his ability to select true talents for the government. In 881, he was appointed as the vice-President of the Ministry of Personnel. He stayed in this post toward 884 when he followed Xizong 僖宗 (862-888, r. 873-888) to Sichuan to escape from Huang Chao's 黃巢 (835-884) rebellion.<sup>88</sup> They came back in 885, and Zhang probably died during the following two years.

The *Xuanshi zhi* was compiled during the early period of Zhang Du's bureaucratic career. It was probably finished between 860 and 863. Zhang Du's compilation is a continuation of his family's interest in the anecdotal tales. His great-grandfather Zhang Zhuo 張鷟 (658-730) is the author of the *Chaoye qianzai* 朝野僉載 (Comprehensive Records on affairs at court and in country), a contemporary record of the court and society during the early Tang period. Zhang Du's grandfather (on his mother's side) Niu Sengru 牛僧孺 (779-847), the Prime Minister during Muzong's and Wuzong's 武宗 (814-846; r. 840-846) reigns, compiled the *Xuanguailu* 玄怪錄 (Tales of mysteries and monsters), an anecdote collection of ghostly tales, religious stories as well as satires on the social reality. Although Zhang Du did not mention such

<sup>86</sup> *JTS*, 149: 4026; *XTS*, 161:3879.

<sup>87</sup> The *Xin Tangshu* records that Zhang was hired by Zheng after he passed the examination. According to Yu Xianhao, Zheng Xun was the prefect of Xuanzhou during 856 and 858. See Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang cishi kao* 唐刺史考, Hefei: Anhui daxue, 2000, 2235.

<sup>88</sup> Huang Xiufu 黃休復, *Yizhou minghua lu* 益州名畫錄, Chengdu: Sichuan renmin, 1982, 42.



a literary tradition in his family, scholars believe he was familiar with Zhang Zhuo's and Niu Sengru's works and shared a common interest in recording the supernatural events he hears about.<sup>89</sup> It is through his recounting of the miscellaneous supernatural events that the Tang intellectual community gradually unfolds in the *Xuanshizhi*.

### **The Tang literati in the *Xuanshizhi***

In most of the cases, the Tang literati appear in the *Xuanshizhi* as officials in the Tang bureaucracy. Zhang Du observes them not in terms of their literary talent, but in terms of their behavior in officialdom. Indeed, Zhang Du depicts in the *Xuanshizhi* a bizarre world where literati, Buddhists, Daoists, ghosts, monsters and immortals flourish. The world is manipulated by religious magic and supernatural powers which are beyond human knowledge. The Tang literati has little choice but accept what a predestined fate distributes to them. Therefore, a sense of fatalism pervades the anecdotal tales and provides explanation for the literati's vicissitudes in officialdom. In the *Xuanshizhi*, political success or failure is irrelevant to individual moral quality but is doomed by arbitrary supernatural forces. According to these tales, Li Deyu 李德裕 (787-850), the Prime Minister of Wenzong 文宗 (809-840; r. 826-840) was demoted because he had consumed his allotment of sheep distributed by Heaven.<sup>90</sup> The Prime Minister Pei Du's victory to suppress Wu Yuanji's rebellion in 817 was also

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<sup>89</sup> Li Jianguo 李劍國 regards Zhang Du's commitment to collecting ghostly tales has its origin within his family. See Li Jianguo, *Tangwudai zhiguai chuanqi xulu* 唐五代志怪傳奇敘錄, Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1993, 833. Liu Yeqiu 劉葉秋 also believes that Zhang Du's work has been influenced by Zhang Zhuo's *Chaoye qianzai* and Niu Sengru's *Xuanguailu*. See Liu Yeqiu, *Lidai biji gaishu* 歷代筆記概述, Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2011, 52.

<sup>90</sup> Zhang Du 張讀, *Xuanshizhi*. In Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, 1063.

predestined by the stele inscriptions excavated before the warfare.<sup>91</sup> The amount of each man's fortune and wealth was rigorously controlled and even the Tang emperors were unable to change their own fates.<sup>92</sup>

Convinced of the supernatural forces that shape their fate, Tang officials resort to Buddhists or Daoists for their guidance to secure good fortune and eliminate calamity. Moral values are therefore comparatively deemphasized and even sacrificed in these tales. For example, a student lived in seclusion for years to study Confucian canons. However, he was unable to understand the textual meaning until he was illuminated by a spirit and ate some ginseng.<sup>93</sup> In another tale, an official killed two white poisonous spiders to prevent them from killing people. Nevertheless, his benevolence was not rewarded. A god approved of the third spider taking his life as a compensation for his killing.<sup>94</sup>

In the *Xuanshizhi*, Tang officials are preoccupied with the uncertainty in their individual fate. Such an anxiety about their self-interest overclouds their responsibility for the public welfare. However, in some anecdotes, Zhang Du reveals some moral qualities he expects for an ideal official. First, an ideal official is concerned with the interest of populace. Benevolent officials receive supernatural rewards for their moral virtues while corrupt officials evoke public resentment. In one anecdote about Li Linfu 李林甫 (683-753), a jealous minister during Xuanzong's reign, a Daoist eliminated an instant calamity for him, but he admonished Li that he would eventually be punished

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 1027.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 1010.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 1025.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 988.

for the demerits he had accumulated.<sup>95</sup> Second, a good official refuses to be dominated by supernatural forces and abides by morality. In one anecdote, Zhang shows his approval attitude towards a censor who chose to live in a house haunted by a ghost. The censor invited the ghost in and assuaged her anger at the injustice she had encountered. Knowing that the ghost's tomb was destroyed, the Censor reburied her bones to appease her spirit.<sup>96</sup> In the *Xuanshizhi*, three anecdotal tales are about Han Yu, ranking him first among all the Tang literati mentioned in the compilation. In the following paragraphs, I examine these three tales and illustrate how the image of Han Yu they piece up demonstrates Han Yu's commitment to Confucianism in his public service.

### **Han Yu as an erudite scholar**

The first anecdote is about a malicious monster. According to the tale, there was a deep pool in a mountain in Quanzhou 泉州 (in modern Fujian province), and a dragon lived in it. It devoured any men and livestock walking close to the water. The local people suffered from the dragon for so many years that many of them moved out of the County. In a night of 810, thunder boomed in the south of the mountain. It rumbled for hundreds of miles like the collapse of a mountain. Tiles on the roof clashed while trees were uprooted. In the next morning, people found that the mountain had collapsed and the rocks had filled the pool. The water, contaminated by the dragon blood, flooded the fields. On the cliff, there appeared an inscription of

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 1068.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 1031-1032.

nineteen characters. They were in an archaic style and no literati in Quanzhou understood them. A tourist copied the text and showed it to Han Yu, who was the Prefect of Henan at that time. Han Yu deciphered the text instantly, and suggested that it was a divine decree to the great fish to show Heaven's sympathy for the men and livestock the fish killed. At the end of the anecdote, Zhang Du says: "The characters are in a 'tadpole' style (an archaic form before the Qin Dynasty). No wonder that no literati in Quanzhou understands them."<sup>97</sup>

Zhang Du's comment underscores that Han Yu is extraordinarily erudite as a scholar. He has a great knowledge of paleography and thus is able to understand the will of Heaven. Compared with the Tang officials who were anxious about unfathomable supernatural forces, Han Yu appears as a spokesman of the supernatural force that reveals an ultimate justice in favor of the populace.

What lies behind Han Yu's image as a master of paleography is Han Yu's earnest embrace of "the Way of Antiquity (*gudao* 古道)." Han Yu interprets it as the Way of Benevolence and Rightness, transmitted from the ancient sage kings to Confucius and Mencius.<sup>98</sup> Inspired by his passion for examining and illuminating "the Way of Antiquity," Han Yu was fascinated with the existing records of the ancient past. For example, in the "Song of the Stone Drums" 石鼓歌, Han Yu maintains that the inscription on the stone drum is a record of the political achievements of King Xuan of Zhou Dynasty 周宣王 (r. 827-782 B.E). It has perpetuated the imperial moral virtues. Therefore Han Yu urged the court to preserve and exhibit it in the Imperial Academy,

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 1026-1027.

<sup>98</sup> Han Yu, "Yuan Dao," in Ma, *Hanchangli wenji jiaozhu*, 17.

and thereby all Confucian students could improve their understanding of the king's moral values.<sup>99</sup> It is plausible to say that Han Yu's knowledge of paleography not only reveals his erudition, but also serves as one of his approaches to revealing the Confucian moral Way. Interestingly, in Zhang Du's anecdote, the archaic form of the inscription and the meaning it bears combines together to provide a good annotation of "the Way of Antiquity," in which public welfare is valued and taken care of. Han Yu's decipherment of the inscription reminds readers of Han Yu's insightful understanding of Confucian moral way and his persistent effort to illuminate it to the mid-Tang society.

### **Han Yu as a benevolent Official**

The second anecdote recounts Han Yu's sacrifice to the crocodile in Chaozhou. According to the tale, three days after his arrival in Chaozhou as the prefect, he inquired of the local people about their concerns. The local people told Han that there was a huge crocodile in a pond. It had devoured countless livestock drinking along the bank. Han Yu said:

I heard that extreme sincerity moves gods. When Lu Gong 魯恭 (32-113) was the magistrate of Zhongmou County 中牟 (in modern Henan province), the pheasants were docile and locusts receded. When Huang Ba 黃霸 (130B.C.E-51 B.C.E) governed Jiujiang 九江 (in modern Jiangxi province), even the tigers ran away. Therefore I know good governance transforms beasts. 吾聞至誠感神,昔魯恭宰中牟,雉馴而蝗避;黃霸治九江,虎皆遁去。是知政之所感,故能化禽獸矣。

Han Yu held a sacrificial ceremony to the crocodile, asking it not to harm people. In

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<sup>99</sup> Qian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, 794.

that evening, thunder and wind echoed in the mountains. Next morning, the pond, with the huge crocodile inside, was moved sixty miles away. People no longer suffered from it.<sup>100</sup>

In this anecdote, Zhang depicts Han Yu as a benevolent official who is concerned with public welfare. Despite the political frustration, Han enthusiastically undertakes his responsibility for the local people. Unlike the majority of the Tang officials in the *Xuanshizhi* who capitulate to the uncontrollable world, Han Yu has faith in the transforming power of a governor's moral virtues and regains dominance over the natural world. In the anecdote, Han Yu models himself on Lu Gong and Huang Ba, two virtuous officials in the Han dynasty. That he successfully expels the crocodiles through moral persuasion accords to him an accomplishment as miraculous as that of the two Han officials.

I believe that this anecdote stems out of the "Address to the Crocodiles" Han Yu wrote one month after his arrival in Chaozhou in 819. In this work, Han creates a virtual sacrificial scene in which he sacrifices one pig and one goat to the crocodiles and orders them to leave for the sea within seven days.<sup>101</sup> Han Yu's claim in the anecdote is also in accord with the belief Han Yu expresses in this text. In the "Address to the Crocodiles," Han Yu says:

Now, the Son of Heaven has succeeded the Tang throne, who is sagacious, benevolent and courageous. All land under Heaven is taken care of by him, let alone this area, which is inherited from the sage king Yu 禹 and close to the prosperous city of Yangzhou 揚州 (in modern Jiangsu province). It is governed by prefects and magistrates, and pays tribute to worship the gods of Heaven, Earth, as well as the royal ancestors. The crocodiles are no longer

<sup>100</sup> Zhang Du, *Xuanshizhi*, 1013.

<sup>101</sup> See Han Yu, "the Crocodile Text," In Ma, *Hanchangli wenji jiaozhu*, 574.

allowed to dwell with the prefects.”<sup>102</sup>

今天子嗣唐位，神聖慈武。四海之外，六合之內，皆撫而有之。況禹跡所掩，揚州之近地，刺史縣令之所治，出貢賦以供天地宗廟百神之祀之壤者哉？鱷魚！其不可與刺史雜處此土也。

Despite Han Yu's expression of his concern with public welfare, Charles Hartman believes Han Yu wrote this text mainly to extol the grandeur and achievements of Xianzong for his amnesty.<sup>103</sup> Therefore Han Yu places great emphasis on the emperor's moral virtues while deemphasizing the role of the local officials. Such a respectful and humble attitude exposes Han Yu's anxiety about his own political career. As a contrast, Zhang Du's portrait of Han Yu sheds brighter light on his consciousness of the influence a moral prefect exerts on local governance. Han Yu appears in the anecdote not as a humble subordinate of the emperor, but an independent Confucian official who had faith in his sincerity and moral power to manipulate the natural world and create public benefit. In the "Address to the Crocodiles," we know nothing about the result of the virtual sacrifice. However, in Zhang Du's anecdotal tale, the pond and the crocodile were moved by a supernatural force, which serves as a confirmation of the prefect's internalized morality and its influential power.

### **Han Yu as a defender of Chinese culture**

The third anecdote is about Han Yu's death. Zhang Du portrays Han Yu as a Tang official by using his highest official titles.

In the summer of the fourth year of the Changqing reign period, Han Yu, the vice-President of the Ministry of Personnel, was unable to work due to his sickness. In the ninth month of the same year, he resigned his post.

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 574.

<sup>103</sup> Hartman, *Han Yu and the Tang Search for Unity*, 92-93.

吏部侍郎韓愈，長慶四年夏，以疾不治務，至秋九月免。

One day, when Han Yu was lying on bed, he saw a god coming into his room:

The god said: “ The State of Weizi 威梓國 is a non-Chinese state at an infinitely remote area. It comprises multiple tribes and has a long-standing feud with the Han clan (*Hanshi* 韓氏). Now it renounces allegiance, indulges in treachery, and covets Chinese [territory]. The [*Di*] is going to launch an expedition to attack it, and so [one should not think that] we do not have sufficient strength. What is your opinion?” Han said: “I am ready to follow the army and suppress it.” The god nodded and left. Han Yu wrote down the god’s word and placed it on the right of his seat, but had no idea about its meaning. Han Yu died in next month.<sup>104</sup>

神人曰：“威梓國絕域遠夷，部落繁聚，世與韓氏為仇，而乃騁悖肆奸，覬覦中夏，今將付之，非力不給，卿以為何如？”韓愈對曰：“願從大王討之。”神人頷之而去。於是書其詞置於座右，終不能解。至十二月而卒。

Knowing that the non-Chinese state was a threat to *zhongxia* 中夏, the Chinese authority, he claimed his allegiance and resolution to defend the latter. Like the other anecdotes in the *Xuanshizhi*, Han Yu’s encounter with the god is a supernatural portent of his impending death. It is true that Han Yu failed to evade the death, but to some extent, he died in a way determined by himself, thus making himself distinguished from other officials in the *Xuanshizhi* who were prostrate with fear and reluctance in the similar situation. Furthermore, Zhang Du depicts Han Yu’s death as a transformation from a Tang official to a divine defender of Chinese authority in the spiritual realm, which represents Zhang’s recognition of Han Yu’s public service in the secular world.

In this anecdote, Zhang Du also underlines Han Yu’s Confucian political ideals. When the god mentioned the State of Weizi, he emphasized that the state had “a long-standing feud with the Han clan.” This assertion hints at Han Yu’s cautious

<sup>104</sup> Zhang Du, *Xuanshizhi*, 1001.



attitude toward the political and cultural intrusion of non-Chinese groups. After the An Lushan Rebellion, all intellectuals in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century sought to reclaim the Chinese military power against the recalcitrant non-Chinese so as to restore the political unity of Tang China.<sup>105</sup> Han Yu was extraordinary among the contemporary literati for his vehement appeal to establish a homogeneous Chinese cultural identity solely based on Confucian moral values. Han Yu viewed this pure cultural identity as more essential for restoring a politically and culturally united Tang China. To defend the purity of the cultural orthodoxy, he fiercely criticized Buddhism, a non-Chinese religion prevailing during his day, as the standards of barbarians that misled the whole population to barbarianism.<sup>106</sup> This conviction propelled him to remonstrate with the Emperor Xianzong for his reverence for Buddha relic, which resulted in his exile to Chaozhou. One of Han Yu's disciples, Li Ao 李翱 (772-841), recounted that when Han Yu was the Metropolitan Prefect of Chang'an, the soldiers and bandits dared not to offend him, because "he was the one who claimed to burn the Buddha relic."<sup>107</sup> In that sense, Han Yu's radical repudiation of the Buddhism was already renowned throughout the society during his day.

This anecdote not only depicts Han Yu as a Tang official who chooses to die for his obligation to public service, but also echoes his adherence to a purely indigent cultural

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<sup>105</sup> The mid-Tang literati emphasized that the cultural antagonism between the Chinese and the non-Chinese was the primary reason for the contemporary regional independence. See Charles Hartman, *Han Yu and the Tang Search for Unity*, 119-172. Chen Yinqe 陳寅恪 also maintains that to expel non-Chinese and defending Chinese is the primary concern of the Confucian revivalists in the post rebellion era. See Chen Yinqe, "Lun Han Yu" 論韓愈, *Jinmingguan congkao chubian* 金明館叢稿初編, Shanghai: Shanghaiguji, 1980, 293-294.

<sup>106</sup> See Han Yu, "Yuan Dao," in Ma, *Hanchangli wenji jiaozhu*, 17.

<sup>107</sup> Li Ao, "Gu zhengyi dafu xing shangshu libu shilang shangzhuguo ci zijinyudai zeng libu shangshu Hangong xingzhuang" 故正議大夫行尚書吏部侍郎上柱國賜紫金魚袋贈禮部尚書韓公行狀. In Zhou, *Quan Tangwen xinbian*, vol.3, 639:7217.

orthodoxy for Tang China. The god's appearance predicts Han Yu's death, yet it also reveals the extent to which Zhang Du appreciates Han Yu's commitment to his Confucian ideal both in thought and in action.

### **Conclusion**

The anecdotes about Han Yu in the *Xuanshizhi* demonstrates Zhang Du's representation of Han Yu. In these anecdotes, Han Yu is portrayed as an erudite scholar, a benevolent official and a persistent defender of a pure Chinese ideology. Compared with the other Tang literati in the *Xuanshizhi*, Han Yu appears in the *Xuanshizhi* as a Confucian official who is concerned more with public welfare than self-interest. As an incarnation of Confucian political ideal, he seeks to bring about benefit for the populace through his moral governance. He is able to understand and even manipulate the supernatural world, which is impossible for anyone else. Even his death is sanctified as his transfer to a spiritual realm to guard the Chinese political authority. Closely related to Han Yu's commitment to Confucianism through his life, these fragmental images piece together to establish Han Yu as a faithful Confucian, an image we do not see in the *Liubinke jiahualu*, the *Guoshi bu* and the *Yinhualu*. In that sense, Zhang Du's portrait marks a shift in Tang literati's evaluation of Han Yu from an exclusive attention to his literary talent to a comprehensive appreciation of his commitment to Confucianism. We see how Han Yu's obscured passion for invigorating Confucian moral values was gradually noticed, clarified and redefined before the Northern Song. The whole process was concurrent with a steady elevation of Han Yu's

status among the Tang literati.

Since we know little about Zhang Du's social relationship and political thought, we can only speculate about the reason for his distinctive representation of Han Yu. First, according to the anecdotes in the *Zhiyan*, Han Yu has personal connection with Zhang Du's grandfather, Niu Sengru. When Niu came to Chang'an to take the *jinshi* examination in 803, he presented his literary works to Han Yu and Huangfu Shi 皇甫湜 (777-835). Han Yu was so delighted at Niu's talent that he helped to promote Niu's fame among the literati community.<sup>108</sup> This might have affected Zhang Du's evaluation of Han Yu.

Second, like Zhao Lin, Zhang Du's early official service fell in Xuanzong's 宣宗 (810-859; r. 846-859) reign. According to the two Tang dynastic histories, Xuanzong is attentive to the *jinshi* examination and respectful to Confucian scholars. He once maintained that a good governance largely depended on capable bureaucrats.<sup>109</sup> Each time he received the minister's memorial, he burned incense and washed his hands before reading them.<sup>110</sup> As the son of Xianzong, Xuanzong was an obsessive admirer of his father's legacy. He held a great interest in hiring the son of the high officials in Xianzong's reign.<sup>111</sup> The posterity of Pei Du and Linghu Chu 令狐楚 (766-837) were both promoted not for their ability but for their prominent family history.<sup>112</sup> Zhang Du's particular attention to the bureaucratic roles the Tang literati undertake might have been inspired by Xuanzong's political strategy.

<sup>108</sup> Wang Dingbao 王定保, *Tangzhiyan* 唐摭言. In Ding, Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan, 1637.

<sup>109</sup> Sima Guang 司馬光, et al., comps., *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956, 248: 8032.

<sup>110</sup> *JTS*, 18:420.

<sup>111</sup> *ZZTJ*, 248:8037.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 248: 8030.

Meanwhile, Xuanzong is a monarch who was extremely jealous and suspicious. He has difficulty in delegating authority to his high bureaucrats. His monopoly on political power has created a strong sense of uncertainty and fear in the court, which discourages the officials from displaying their initiative.<sup>113</sup> His arbitrary appointment of officials regardless of bureaucratic standards also leads to a pervading utilitarianism in the bureaucracy.<sup>114</sup> The officials' spirit was so depressed that they even conceded the power to the eunuchs to decide the succession of the throne after Xuanzong's death.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, it is plausible to view the group of officials fully dominated by supernatural forces in the *Xuanshizhi* as an epitome of the officialdom in Zhang Du's day, who found themselves powerless in a political world permeated with danger and uncertainty. It is possible that the depressing historical situation Zhang finds himself in inspires him to establish Han Yu, a benevolent official who was able to transform the uncertain world by means of Confucian moral values in Xianzong's reign, as a political model for his own time.

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<sup>113</sup> Denis Twitchett, John K. Fairbank, comps., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol.3, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 671-675.

<sup>114</sup> In 858, one official remonstrated with Xuanzong: "Recently it is so easy to get an official post that the literati relies entirely on fluke." See *ZZTJ*, 249: 8051.

<sup>115</sup> Zhou Xunchu 周勳初, ed., *Tangyulin jiaozheng* 唐語林校證, vol.2, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987, 659.

### Chapter Three: Wang Dingbao and the *Zhiyan*

In Shields' study of Tang literary history represented in the Tang anecdotal compilations, she discerns a "historical and even more ideological assessment" of Han Yu presented by the *Zhiyan*, a Five-Dynasties compilation produced by Wang Dingbao 王定保 (870-941), which she believes hints at the elevation of Han Yu's status as a Confucian scholar in the Northern Song. According to Shields, as we recall, Wang depicts Han Yu "not only as a devoted teacher and mentor, but also as a sage like those of antiquity, someone whose stature was unequalled in his time."<sup>116</sup> He depicts Han Yu and his adherents in mid-Tang literary history as a group that shares not only a common literary taste, but also a common faith in Confucian moral values. Shields believes that Wang's portrait of Han Yu is outside Han Yu's situation in his day but close to the Northern Song literati's appropriation of Han Yu as a Confucian culture hero.

Unlike the previous Tang anecdotal collections, the *Zhiyan* possesses a thematic focus on the Tang civil service examination, the annual recruiting program that enormously moulds the Tang literati's literary practice. In the *Zhiyan*, the 480 texts are classified in 105 thematic categories, depicting the development of the rituals, social relationships and value system in the testing grounds from the early Tang to the end of the dynasty. Out of the 480 texts, Han Yu appears in 11 texts and his original works were cited in another 6 texts, and this presents a good opportunity to examine Han Yu's image as formulated in the *Zhiyan* almost a century after his death. Shields' discovery points out the significance of the *Zhiyan* in terms of defining Han Yu's status in Tang intellectual history. However, since Shields' study mainly focuses on Wang's reconstruction of the

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<sup>116</sup> Shields, "Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History," 123.

mid-Tang literati community, she does not present a complete and detailed analysis on Han Yu's image in the *Zhiyan*.

Furthermore, Shields treats Wang's interpretation of Han Yu as a coincidental byproduct of Wang's unique way of selecting and transcribing Tang materials. The excessive citations of Han Yu's and his associates' original works permit this literati group to speak for itself and thus construct its own image.<sup>117</sup> Shields views Han Yu's image in the *Zhiyan* as less relevant to Wang's own historical position and cultural stance. However, Wang's sharp comments about the candidates demonstrates that this compilation is more than an impassionate observation of the Tang recruiting system. Wang fiercely condemns the prevalent superficiality, luxuriousness and decadence of morality in this system. Noticing a universal neglect of morality in the Tang examinations, he advocates a unity of literary skills and Confucian moral values as the cardinal quality of a true talent. The contemporary moral decline that concerns Wang Dingbao has, to a considerable extent, shaped his representation and assessment of Han Yu and his adherents, in whose works he found a valuable historical justification of his redefinition of a true talent.

This section examines Wang's representation of Han Yu in the *Zhiyan*, and argues that apart from acknowledging Han Yu's literary accomplishment, Wang consciously stresses Han Yu's constant adherence to Confucian moral values in his literature and deeds. By linking Han Yu's image with Wang's redefinition of a true talent in the *Zhiyan*, the section further argues that such an image is not accidentally created by an inventive way of selecting and transcribing materials. Rather, it represents a late Tang literati's rediscovery of Han Yu's idea of Confucianism, which was not widely accepted in Han's day, in the wake of the moral crisis prevailing in the late Tang and post-Tang literati

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

community.

### A redefinition of a true talent

The Chinese examination system initially emerged in Sui dynasty 隋代 (581-618); through it the central government selected capable men from each prefectures and conferred degree titles on the graduates. The Tang rulers inherited the system and created more degrees for professional expertise. During Empress Wu's reign (624-705; r.683-705), selecting officials by examining their literary skills became a new fashion.<sup>118</sup> According to Charles Hartman, Empress Wu's ministers and high officials "all achieved their success through literature."<sup>119</sup> The *jinshi* degree, which extensively stresses the candidates' literary skills in poetry and rhapsody, gradually occupied its prestigious status in the examination system since the late seventh century. Such an excessive preference for *belles lettres* reveals an inherent neglect of the candidates' moral quality in the Tang examinations, which was frequently criticized by the Tang officials.<sup>120</sup>

Passing the *jinshi* examination in 900, seven years before the Tang collapsed, Wang hardly had the opportunity to serve Tang government.<sup>121</sup> After Zhu Wen 朱溫 (852-912), the founder of the Latter Liang 後梁 (907-923), overthrew the Tang Emperor Aidi 唐哀帝 (892-908; r. 904-907) in 907, Wang entered the Lingnan area 嶺南 (in modern Guangdong and Guangxi province) to serve the governor Liu Yin 劉隱

<sup>118</sup> In 680, the Tang official Liu Sili 劉思立 proposed to include a test of canonical knowledge and a test of literary composition in the *jinshi* examination. According to the decree of 681, *jinshi* candidates were required to write two literary genres in the examinations. However, whether or not one passed the examinations greatly depended on the candidates' literary skill rather than canonical knowledge. See Fu Xuancong, *Tangdai keju yu wenxue* 唐代科舉與文學, Xi'an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2007, 169.

<sup>119</sup> Hartman, *Han Yu and the Tang Search for Unity*, 121.

<sup>120</sup> Fu, *Tangdai keju yu wenxue*, 382-400.

<sup>121</sup> Sometime after 897, Wang Dingbao was appointed by the Tang government as a circuit judge in Rongzhou, the base of the Ningyuan military command that governed the eastern end of modern Guangxi. See Wu Renchen 吳任臣, comp., *Shiguo chunqiu* 十國春秋, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, 62:892.

(873-911) who, according to the historical records, recruited those ex-Tang officials who were reluctant to submit to the new sovereign and treated them with politeness.<sup>122</sup> Wang finished compiling the *Zhiyan* during his stay in Liu's government, before the second governor Liu Yan 劉龔 (888-942) renounced his allegiance to the Tang and established Southern Han 後漢 (917-971) in 917.<sup>123</sup> When Wang Dingbao, coming back from his trip to Jiangling, saw Liu's newly designated capital, he pointed out the illegitimacy of the new sovereign:

When I entered the southern gate, the plaque of “Qinghai military command” was still there. Establishing a new sovereign without abolishing the old provincial title, won't we be mocked at by the world?<sup>124</sup>  
吾入南門，清海軍額猶在，其不見笑于四方乎？

According to Oliver Moore, Wang Dingbao is a “loyal survivor of political collapse” who has “a pathological nostalgia,” and his knowledge is “that of the insider who boasts familiarity with the workings of a fallen regime.”<sup>125</sup> Indeed, Wang Dingbao's reminiscence of the Tang examination system is by no means an impassionate historical record, but is saturated with a participant's admiration for and critical reflection on the development of the system. Such an emotional engagement entails an inextricable distortion of some historical truth, but it also provides a vantage point to examine an ex-Tang official's deliberation on Tang intellectual culture moulded by the Tang examination. In his research on the *Zhiyan*, the Qing scholar Liu Yusong 劉毓崧 (1818-1867) points out that the *Zhiyan* is embodied with moral allegories and remonstrations:

Wang criticized the extravagant, reprimanded the frivolous, cautioned the obsequious and advocated for the unevenly treated talents. He gave gentle

<sup>122</sup> Wu, *Shiguo chunqiu*, 62:892.

<sup>123</sup> See Wang Su 王素 and Li Fang 李方, “*Tang zhiyan zuozhe Wang Dingbao shiji bianzheng*” 唐摭言作者王定保事蹟辯正, *Wenshi* 文史, vol.20, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, 337-338.

<sup>124</sup> Wu, *Shiguo chunqiu*, 62:892.

<sup>125</sup> Oliver Moore, *Rituals of Recruitment: Reading an Annual Programme in the Collected Statements by Wang Dingbao (870-940)*, Leiden: Brill, 2004, 6.



consolations to the literati who had a grudge [against the examinations] and objective judgment to the examiners who were slandered. He paid a huge compliment to the literati whose behavior could be established as a principle. Even the tiny goodness done by the humble servants was saved by him from oblivion.<sup>126</sup>

故奢侈者必諷之，輕薄者必誡之，好奔競者必警之，受屈抑者必稱之，舉子多怨尤者則婉言以導之，主司被謗議者則平心以論之，而于士大夫之行誼足以為法者尤好極力闡揚，及下至僕隸之微有一善可書者亦不欲任其淹沒。

In the *Zhiyan*, Wang Dingbao imposes his moral judgment on the Tang examiners and patrons, as well as the candidates involved in the annual recruiting program. Confucian morality, which is beclouded by literature in the imperial examinations, is underlined by Wang Dingbao as the primary quality of a true talent. In the thematic category of “Moral Principle (*jiecao*, 節操),” Wang includes three anecdotes recounting the literati who are praised simply for their innate integrity rather than their achievement in the examinations.<sup>127</sup> As a contrast, Wang also records the members of the “Ten Philosophers of the Fragrant Grove (*fanglin shizhe*, 芳林十哲),” who passes the examinations by ingratiating themselves with the usurping eunuchs. Despite their examination success, Wang views their deeds as a betrayal of Confucian moral values.<sup>128</sup> According to Wang, the Tang examination system was established to actualize the Tang rulers’ resolution to promote the true talents throughout the world. However, what he sees in the late testing grounds are the candidates who favor squandering and outlandish behavior to elevate their fame, yet despises canonical learning and moral discussions.<sup>129</sup> The prevailing utilitarianism and moral decadence in the examination system produces degree-holders who, from Wang’s perspective, are completely unqualified. With such an intellectual concern, Wang Dingbao repeatedly illustrates the significance of Confucian

<sup>126</sup> Liu Yusong, *Tongyitang wenji* 通義堂文集, vol.12, in *Xuxiu Siku Quanshu* 續修四庫全書, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2002, 1546:536.

<sup>127</sup> Jiang Hanchun 姜漢椿, ed., *Tang zhiyan jiaozhu* 唐摭言校注, Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 2003, 84-87.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 187-188.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

moral values in defining a true talent:

Among Fanxuan's 范宣 (d. 548 B.C.) "Three Establishment," "Morality" is placed first. Among Confucius' "Four Disciplines," "Deeds" is placed first. As for the "Five Constancies," they are epitomized by "Benevolence," while hundreds of concerns are tested by seeking profits. Fortune and misfortune cannot bring us back to ultimate morality. Wealth and impoverishment cannot show us what ultimate humanity means.<sup>130</sup>

范宣之三立，德居其首；夫子之四科，行在其先。矧乃五常者，總之於仁；百慮者，試之於利。禍福不能回至德，貧富不能窺至仁。

According to Wang Dingbao, morality claims primacy over literature in evaluating the candidates. A true talent adheres to Confucian moral principles regardless of the situation he finds himself in. He constantly improves his canonical knowledge and literary skill and cultivates his innate morality, never frustrated by failure in the examinations.<sup>131</sup> From Wang's point of view, a man's success in the examinations is predestined by his fate. A true talent concentrates on self-cultivation and waits for his time. Before his time comes, he makes no complaint but reflects on his own learning and behavior. If his time never comes, he accepts his proper fate, since his ultimate goal is not to attain the degree title but to achieve innate moral perfection through his own practice.<sup>132</sup> In other words, Wang believes that true talent lies not in a degree title but in the attainment of a unity of morality and literature. He alludes to Confucius' words and refers to a true talent as "a gentleman *ru* (*junziru*, 君子儒)."<sup>133</sup> According to the Tang Confucian scholars' annotation, a gentleman *ru* cares for illuminating morality throughout the world while "a petty *ru* (*xiaorenru*, 小人儒)" cares for establishing his own fame.<sup>134</sup> In the *Zhiyan*, Wang Dingbao's redefinition of a true talent highlights

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 174-175.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>134</sup> Cheng shude 程樹德 compl. *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990, 389-390. Here, *ru* refers to men for whom the qualities of the scholar were more important than those of the warrior. As is known, it was after Confucius' time that *ru* came to be the name given to the men who had specific knowledge of Confucian

morality as a cardinal quality to rectify the biased standards established by the imperial examination system.

The following paragraphs of the section examine Han Yu's image in the *Zhiyan* within the framework of Wang Dingbao's redefinition of a true talent. In the *Zhiyan*, the anecdotes and citations of the Tang literati's original works depict Han Yu as a degree-holder, a mentor as well as a patron in the Tang examination system. However Han Yu is portrayed, Wang rediscovers and emphasizes Han's adherence to Confucian moral values in his literature and conduct, and thus establishes Han as the best incarnation of his intellectual ideal.

### **A man of literature**

A considerable number of anecdotes in the *Zhiyan* explicitly reveal Han Yu's unparalleled literary reputation among his contemporaries. Not only was his name renowned throughout the world, anyone recommended by him gained a much greater opportunity to pass the examination, which propelled Wang Dingbao to refer to him as "the dragon gate of a generation" 一代之龍門.<sup>135</sup> One anecdote records that in 802, Han Yu recommended ten literati to Lu Can 陸慘, the advisor of that year's *jinshi* examination. Six of them procured the *jinshi* degree in that year while another three passed the examination in the following five years.<sup>136</sup> Interestingly, in the *Zhiyan*, a group of Tang literati are remembered for their relationship with the literary model, Han Yu. It seems that Wang Dingbao feels their acquaintance with Han Yu amplifies their significance in intellectual history, either as Han Yu's friends or Han Yu's literary

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canons. SEE Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, 2-3. For the translation, see D. C. Lau trans., *The analects*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979, 6:83.

<sup>135</sup> Jiang, *Tang zhiyan jiaozhu*, 118.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

rivals.<sup>137</sup> Such an effort further verifies Han Yu's unquestionable reputation and influence on the contemporary literary world.

Moreover, Wang Dingbao recounts how Han Yu, as a well-known literary model, shrewdly distinguished young men's literary aptitude and actively assisted them to find success in the examinations. In one anecdote, Han Yu showed great respect to Li He 李賀 (790-817), a seven-year-old boy who demonstrated his poetic artistry by extemporizing a poem in front of him. When Li He grew up, he was impeded from taking the *jinshi* examination by malicious slanders. It was Han Yu, according to the anecdote, who composed the "Discourse on Taboo Names" 諱辯 to justify Li He's right to take the examinations.<sup>138</sup> Although Li He never met Han Yu at the age of seven, the anecdote highlights in an exaggerated way Han Yu's respect for literary aptitude regardless of a man's age or social status.<sup>139</sup> It also shows that not only is Han Yu eager to know young literati, he is also willing to take advantage of his own literary influence to protect them from misunderstanding and unjust treatment.

In another anecdote, Han Yu utilized his own reputation to elevate a candidate's fame before the examinations. According to the anecdote, when Niu Sengru first came to Chang'an to take the examinations, he presented his works to Han Yu and Huangfu Shi. Both of them regarded his works as "high prose (*gaowen*, 高文)." To elevate Niu's fame, they intentionally visited Niu's place while he was out, and left a message on his

<sup>137</sup> For example, Meng Jiao, though famous for his poetic artistry, is introduced as "a friend of Li Guan and Han Yu." See Jiang, *Tang zhiyan jiaozhu*, 216. Likewise, Cui Qun, the prime minister whose political achievement was far beyond Han Yu's, is mentioned as a graduate "who passed the examination in the same year as Han Yu did and was Han Yu's friend." See Jiang, *Tang zhiyan jiaozhu*, 96. Moreover, Liu Ke, a literary man who was initially a monk, appears worth mentioning because "his fame in prose matches Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan." See Jiang, *Tang zhiyan jiaozhu*, 222.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>139</sup> According to Du Mu, Li He died at the age of twenty-seven. Fifteen years after his death, Du Mu wrote the preface for the compilation of Li He's poems, which was in 831. Therefore Li He was born in 790. In 796, when Li He was at the age of seven, Han Yu was assigned as the official in Bianzhou 汴州. Therefore, it was impossible for them to have met in Chang'an in 796. Li He first met Han Yu in 808, when he came to Luoyang for the *jinshi* examination of Henan Province. See Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, "Li He nianpu huijian" 李賀年譜會箋, *Mengtiaoan zhuanzhu erzong* 夢苕盒專著二種, Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 12-14.

door: “Han Yu and Huangfu Shi came to visit the senior who will soon receive an official post. They did not meet him” 韓愈皇甫湜同訪幾官先輩，不遇。<sup>140</sup> In the next day, all celebrities in Chang’an were attracted by the message. Niu’s name was therefore widely known. This anecdote is classified in the category of “objective recommendation (*gongjian*, 公薦),” while its variant is put under “promoting or suppressing the juniors (*shengchen houjin*, 升沉後進).”<sup>141</sup> Both themes pinpoint Han Yu’s respect and cordiality towards younger literary talents, which, from Wang Dingbao’s point of view, represent Han Yu’s innate benevolence. In his commentary, Wang says:

Elevating the fatherless and forgiving enmity, this is what the sage praises. Expanding oneself and beclouding the talented, this is what the commoner despises. Admirable are these noble men! Whether to advance or to stop, they adapt to the changing times. They persistently hold to the Way. They recommend the worthy without prejudice.<sup>142</sup>

舉孤棄仇，聖人所美；下展蔽善，匹夫所鄙。懿彼數公，時行時止。守道克勤，薦賢不倚。

Although Han Yu’s understanding of talent shows a great emphasis on literary skills, his beneficial deeds to advance the younger candidates’ cause in the examinations is credited with a moral significance. Unlike Li Zhao, who perceives it as a means by which Han Yu procured his political success, Wang regards it as something that conforms to Confucian moral Way. Han Yu appears as a literary model with a moral superiority.

Han Yu’s image as a literary model is well-represented in the anecdotal compilations before the *Zhiyan*. However, none of these representations involves a moral assessment as the *Zhiyan* does. It is worth mentioning that although the *Zhiyan* frequently quotes anecdotes from the *Guoshi bu*, Wang Dingbao excludes the one in which Li Zhao recounts that Han Yu stopped promoting young candidates after he rose to a high

<sup>140</sup> Jiang, *Tang zhiyan jiaozhu*, 119.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

position, indicating that his manipulation of the materials is based on his perception of Han Yu as a perfect historical paradigm of his intellectual ideal.

### A man of antiquity

Han Yu's reputation spread all throughout the world. Li Ao 李翱 (774-836) and Zhang Ji 張籍 (766-829?) both ascended to court. Zhang took Han Yu as his teacher, and Han wrote to Cui Lizhi 崔立之: "Recently there have been Li Ao and Zhang Ji who are following me to study literature." Li Ao wrote in his "Letter to Vice-minister Lu Can": "Han Yu's writing is not the literature of this generation but the literature of antiquity; as a person, he is not of this generation, but a person of antiquity."... According to the *Veritable Record*, "As for those with close connections to Yu, after any of them passed away, Han Yu comforted and aided their orphans, and helped them make marriages; in the case of men such as Meng Dongye and Zhang Ji, it was like this."<sup>143</sup>

韓文公名播天下，李翱、張籍皆升朝，籍北面師之，故愈答崔立之書曰：“近有李翱、張籍者，從予學文。”翱《與陸參外》書亦曰：“韓退之之文，非茲世之文也，古之文也；其人非茲世之人，古之人也。”……案《實錄》：愈與人交，其有淪謝，皆能恤其孤，複為畢婚嫁，如孟東野、張籍之類是也。

As is noticed by Shields, in the *Zhiyan*, Wang Dingbao is fond of using “fragments of many different kinds of text to assemble a portrait of a complex cultural practice.”<sup>144</sup>

This anecdote creates a mosaic yet a coherent image of Han Yu by quoting Han Yu's and Li Ao's words as well as the *Veritable Record*. First of all, Wang underscores Han Yu's preeminence as a literary master in his day, which also appears elsewhere in the *Zhiyan*. Meanwhile, Wang cites Li Ao's words and illustrates through Li's voice that Han Yu was a literary master of “Antiquity.” The word “Antiquity” frequently appears in the mid-Tang literati discourse, which, according to Han Yu and Li Ao, indicates a moral and spiritual perfection inherent in the ancient sage kings' rule.<sup>145</sup> Li Ao perceived Han Yu as a man who followed Confucian moral Way and illuminated them in his literature. Wang continues to quote the *Veritable Records* to show Han Yu's benevolence and

<sup>143</sup> Jiang, *Tang zhiyan jiaozhu*, 99.

<sup>144</sup> Shields, “Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History,” 122.

<sup>145</sup> In the “Essentials of the Moral Way,” Han Yu illustrates that the ancient sages applied Benevolence and Rightness in their rule to protect people, to establish social order and to create civilization. The moral governance springs out of the sages' innate sincerity and integrity. See Han Yu, “Yuan dao,” 17.

rightness towards his friends, which confirms Li Ao's assertion. Overall, this anecdote indicates that it is the moral principles demonstrated in Han Yu's literature and conduct that distinguishes him from the contemporary literati.

Han Yu's image as a man of Antiquity also appears in another two texts in the *Zhiyan*, both of which are lengthy citations of Li Ao's works. In the first text, the "Letter to Vice-minister Lu Can," which is mentioned in the text above, appears in its full length.<sup>146</sup> Again, through Li Ao's voice, Wang Dingbao depicts Han Yu as the first person since Mencius who held to the true knowledge of morality. Han Yu is placed in the intellectual pedigree of Confucianism as the only qualified heir of the values transmitted from the sage kings to Confucius and Mencius. In the second text, Wang quotes Li Ao's "A Recommendation Letter to the Minister Zhang in Xuzhou Prefecture" 薦所知于徐州張僕射書, in which Li depicts Han Yu as a man "who has inherited the custom of Antiquity and knows the fundamental principle for good governance."<sup>147</sup> That Wang classifies this text into the category of "objective recommendation" reveals his confirmative attitude towards Li Ao's comment.

As Han Yu's close disciple and friend, Li Ao views Han Yu as less a man of *belles lettres* than a spokesman of Confucianism who has achieved excellence in literature, administrative ability and morality. By quoting Li Ao's words, Wang Dingbao chooses the same perspective as Li Ao does. He well outlines Han Yu as a faithful Confucian whose political capability is based on internalized moral perfection. His literature, as a natural outgrowth of his innate integrity, is thus credited with moral privilege and significance.

Convinced of the primacy of morality over literature, Wang Dingbao seems not content to depict Han Yu merely as an extraordinary literary model. Rather, he quotes Li

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<sup>146</sup> Jiang, *Tang zhiyan jiaozhu*, 108.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 132.

Ao's words and the historical record to shed light on Han Yu's faith in Confucianism and credits him with excellence both in morality and literature. Such a unity of literature and morality was what Han progressively advocated in his day. However, it was not until a century later that it was underlined and valued by a man outside Han's group who was so concerned about the moral corruption of the intellectual community.

### **Han Yu and his associates**

Wang Dingbao exhibits a great interest in Han Yu's works. Sometimes his citations of Han Yu's original texts are simply inspired by his admiration for Han's literary artistry.<sup>148</sup> The excerpts of the letters, epitaphs, and eulogies Han Yu wrote for his associates foreground an intellectual group around him, which occupies the central place in Wang's representation of mid-Tang intellectual history. The following paragraphs analyze Wang's representation of this group and argue that, like Han Yu, the group members' strong faith in Confucianism as the moral guidance for their public and private life presents a historical justification of Wang's intellectual ideal, which propels him to reevaluate the group's historical significance and influence.

In the *Zhiyan*, most of the group members are introduced through Han Yu's voice. For example, Wang quotes Han Yu's "Epitaph for Ouyang Zhan 歐陽詹 (d.801?)" to praise Ouyang's aptitude in canonical learning and composition.<sup>149</sup> Li Guan 李觀 (766-794), according to Wang's citation of Han Yu's words, is "a man whose literature surpasses his contemporaries while his deeds surpass the ancients."<sup>150</sup> Wang also includes Han's eulogy for an inkstone, in which Li Guan's benevolence and rightness were highly

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<sup>148</sup> Moore believes Wang's citations of Han Yu's works reflects his "avid reception of his literary achievements" and his admiration for "the most famous group of intellectual careers in the early ninth century." See Moore, *Rituals of Recruitment*, 112.

<sup>149</sup> Jiang, *Tang zhiyan jiaozhu*, 303.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.



praised.<sup>151</sup> In another anecdote, Wang provides a lengthy excerpt from a letter Han Yu writes to his friend Cui Qun 崔群 (772-832). Han says:

Cui are the only man I earnestly admire, whose words and deeds I examine and find no mistake, whose sophisticated and deep learning I scrutinize and find no boundary, whose nature is clear and pure, and whose brilliance is renewed day by day. Silly and ignorant as I am, I know the Sage's works and have read all of them. Although I haven't fully understood their essence and details or their nuances and subtleties, it cannot be said that I have not explored their development. Inferring and examining from this, I certainly know that you are extraordinarily outstanding. Don't ask how I know that.<sup>152</sup>

至於心所仰服，考之言行，而無瑕尤，窺之闔奧，而不見畛域，明白淳粹，輝光日新者，惟吾崔君一人。僕愚陋無所知曉，然聖人之書，無所不讀，其精粗巨細，出入明晦，雖不盡識，抑不可謂不涉其流者也。以此而推之，以此而度之，誠知足下出群拔萃，無謂僕何從而得之也。

Han Yu's comment on Cui Qun also reveals a stress on canonical learning and moral quality in judging a talent. Such criteria are justified by the Confucian Principle Han learned from the Sage's words. The excerpt cited above also reveals Han Yu's passion for Confucianism and the great effort he made in canonical learning. Both Han Yu and his associates appear in the *Zhiyan* as the literati who not only possessed literary and canonical excellence, but also followed the Confucian principles in their moral cultivation.

One anecdote especially manifests how Han Yu and his associates strive to follow Confucian moral values in their writings and their conduct. Wang cites a letter written by Zhang Ji, one of Han Yu's disciples. In this letter, Zhang remonstrates with Han that his fictional and playful works hurt his virtue. He also views Han's belligerence in argument and intolerance of other's shortcomings as a violation of morality. He further points out that Han's engagement in gambling games infringes on Confucian teaching. Wang also cites Han Yu's reply to Zhang Ji's criticism. Han Yu reflects on his belligerence and repents for his engagement in gambling. However, Han views composing playful works

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

as a way of entertainment which is better than indulging in alcohol and women.<sup>153</sup>

Such a record of moral debate provides an explicit annotation to the relationship between Han Yu and his associates: it is their common faith in Confucian moral values rather than friendship or discipleship that links them together. Both their agreements and disagreements spring out of the canonical texts which they refer to as moral guidance for the contemporary life. Moreover, even the debate itself is regarded by Wang as an actualization of the teaching in the *Book of History*: “A man doesn’t have fixed teachers; he treats any man of goodness as their teacher” 人無常師，主善為師。<sup>154</sup>

Obviously, Wang highlights, mostly through Han Yu’s voice, that this intellectual group around Han Yu was based on their common faith in Confucianism. Apart from literature, canonical knowledge and Confucian moral values that were regarded by the group members as indispensable in self-cultivation, such a concentrated devotion to relating Confucianism to the individual spiritual realm distinguishes Han Yu’s group from the other Tang literary groups. They possess what Wang regards as absent in his day and what he advocates in his redefinition of a true talent. Therefore it is not surprising that Wang Dingbao casts special light on Han Yu and his associates in mid-Tang literary history.

## Conclusion

In his review of Tang literature, the Five-Dynasties scholar Niu Xiji 牛希濟 (fl. 925), examines the contemporary literary world replete with superficiality and ornament. He points out that the excessive preference for poetry and rhapsody in the examinations has consigned Confucius’ teaching to oblivion. He asks in his “On Literature” 文章論:

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

“How can a superficial and ornamental prose attain a perfection in moral principle” 浮豔之文，焉能臻於理道？ To reestablish political order, he considers it imperative to promote canonical learning and moral principles to replace literature.<sup>155</sup>

Niu has described explicitly the literary world that Wang Dingbao confronted. Like all the other critics throughout Tang history, both Wang and Niu have noticed that the Tang examination system has detached the literati from canonical learning and moral cultivation. After three hundred years’ practice of the Tang examinations, moral corruption reached its peak in the late Tang society.<sup>156</sup> The annual recruiting system failed to select talents who could save the dynasty from political collapse. It also failed to maintain the ex-Tang officials’ loyalty and rightness towards the mighty bygone power.

This is the social context in which Wang Dingbao finished compiling the *Zhiyan*. Although he does not launch a fierce attack on the Tang examination system, from time to time, he shows his disagreement with the recruiting standard by emphasizing morality as the primary quality of a true talent. What he advocates in the *Zhiyan* is a unity of literature and morality in the literati’s public and private life. Therefore, there is no surprise that he foregrounds Han Yu and his associates, who promoted Confucianism as the universal guidance for politics, culture and moral practice in their day, and underscores their commitment to cultivating Confucian morality. His portrait of Han Yu as an embodiment of literature and moral perfection represents his rediscovery of the value of Han Yu’s Confucian contemplation. Although it was not widely accepted in Han’s day, it is considered by Wang as the best cure for the moral crisis produced by the long absence of morality from the literati’s pursuit of political success.

<sup>155</sup> Niu Xiji, “On Literature” 文章論, in *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966, 742: 3878.

<sup>156</sup> Chen Yinque, *Yuanbai shijian zhengao* 元白詩箋證稿, Shanghai: sanlian shudian, 2001, 89-98.

## Conclusion

Despite Han Yu's unparalleled literary accomplishments during his day, his followers failed to consolidate the popularity of antique prose among the late Tang literati. According to Luo Liantian 羅聯添, Li Ao inherited Han Yu's enthusiasm in developing original and independent ideas, yet in a plain and fluent fashion. Huangfu Shi and Fan Zongshi 樊宗師 (fl. 808-823), on the other hand, inherited Han Yu's fascination with strangeness by creating extremely unconventional expressions, the obscurity of which daunted their readers and thus impeded antique prose from widely prevailing.<sup>157</sup> According to the Northern Song historians, none of them or their followers was able to establish a literary reputation that rivaled what Han Yu did during his day. After Han Yu's death, the archaic prose style he advocated as an embodiment of the Confucian moral Way was eventually eclipsed by the ornamental parallel prose written by Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813-858) and Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (812-870). Compared with the mid-Tang literati, the late Tang literati displayed a greater interest in canonical and historical knowledge in their book-collecting and compiling work. Nonetheless, the mid-Tang enthusiasm for redefining Confucian values and relating them to political reality receded among the late Tang intellectuals.<sup>158</sup> Outside of Han Yu's circle, the discourse on Han Yu's deliberation of

<sup>157</sup> Luo Liantian, *Han Yu yanjiu* 韓愈研究, Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1974, 213-218.

<sup>158</sup> William H. Nienhauser presents an insightful research on Pi Rixiu's life, literature and philosophy. In terms of Pi's Confucian thought, Nienhauser views Pi Rixiu as a follower of Han Yu and a forerunner of the Neo-Confucians in Northern Song. See William H. Nienhauser, *Pi Rixiu's Jih-hsiu*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979, 52-68. For the study

Confucianism after his death is quite limited. Only two late Tang intellectuals mentioned Han Yu in their writings. Probably in 834, Du Mu wrote a work in response to Han Yu's inscription for the Confucian Temple in Chuzhou 處州 (in modern Zhejiang province). He asserts that Confucius' words provide a set of veritable values in defiance of Buddhism and Daoism, and prevent Chinese people from being transformed to barbarians. Du credits Han Yu with his perspicuous illumination of Confucius's respectable status in Chinese culture.<sup>159</sup> However, it is not until the 860s, almost the same time when *Xuanshezhi* was compiled, that Pi Rixiu 皮日休 (834-883) reiterates the succession of the Way and points out that Han Yu is the only Confucian in the Tang who persistently practices the Way of the Sages and speaks the words of the Sages. Pi appeals to honor Han Yu as one of Confucius' disciples in the Imperial Academy.<sup>160</sup> Important as they are, these two pieces of materials are far from enough to formulate the late Tang literati's perception of Han Yu. Fortunately, the anecdotes that circulated among the mid-Tang and the late Tang intellectual community provide us with a valuable knowledge of Han Yu after his death.

It is important to point out that not all the existing anecdotes about Han Yu are covered by the five anecdotal compilations I have discussed. Some anecdotes individually appear in various compilations, making it implausible to formulate a

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of the scholarship and poetry from the late ninth century to the early tenth century, see Zha Pingqiu 查屏球, *Tangxue yu Tangshi: ZhongwanTang shifeng de yizhong wenhua kaocha* 唐學與唐詩：中晚唐詩風的一種文化考察, Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2000, 237-309.

<sup>159</sup> According to Wu Zaiqing 吳在慶, Du Mu might have written this piece of work in 834 when he travelled to Zhejiang. See Wu Zaiqing, ed., *Du Mu ji xianian jiaozhu* 杜牧集系年校注, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008, 684.

<sup>160</sup> In the prologue to the *Pizi wensou* 皮子文藪, Pi says he compiled his work in 866 after failing the examination. Therefore, this letter was written before 866. According to the text, Pi wrote the letter to engage the government to establish Han Yu's stature in the Imperial Academy. It is most likely that Pi wrote the letter when he was in Chang'an from 865 to 866 to prepare for the examination. See Pi Rixiu, *Pizi wensou*, edited by Xiao Difei 蕭滌非 and Zheng Qingdu 鄭慶篤, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1981, 87-88.

conception of Han Yu and impose it on a certain compiler. In the following paragraphs, I will examine the circulation of these anecdotes to further support my conclusion that there was a gradual shift in Han Yu's image from that of a literary talent to a model Confucian in the late Tang literati's perception.

Liu Yuxi's and Li Zhao's accounts of Han Yu's frivolous behavior are seldom mentioned in the compilations after the *Xuanshizhi*. In the *Yunxi youyi* 雲溪友議 (Xunxi's records of his friends' talk) finished during 879 and 880, Fan Shu 范攄 (fl. 873-888) models his work on Wei Xuan's *Liubinke jiahualu* and directly cites Liu Yuxi's words from Wei's compilation. However, Fan only includes one piece of Liu's talks about Han Yu. In this piece, Liu treats Han Yu as one of his high-minded friends in court, together with whom Liu morally praises or criticizes his contemporaries. As a contrast, Liu's other unfavorable comments on Han Yu are excluded from the *Yunxi youyi*.<sup>161</sup>

In the *Youxian guchui* 幽閒鼓吹 (Advocating a leisure life), a compilation produced during Xuanzong's and Yizong's reigns (846-873), the compiler Zhang Gu 張固 records an anecdote about Li He, in which Han Yu's self-consciousness as a literary patron is again highlighted:

Li He visited Han Yu with his verse. Han Yu, serving as the Erudite in the Imperial Academy in Luoyang, felt extremely tired after meeting guests. When the guard presented Li He's poems to him, he read them while loosening his belt. The opening lines of the "Song for the Governor of Wild Goose Gate" read: "Black clouds press down on walls, the walls seem about to collapse; glint of armor faces the sun, golden scales appear." Han Yu fastened his belt and summoned Li He immediately.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Fan Shu, *Yunxi youyi*, in Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol.2, 1296-98.

<sup>162</sup> Zhang Gu 張固, *Youxian guchui* 幽閒鼓吹, in Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol.2, 1450-1451. The translation of the poem is cited from Stephen Owen, *The Late Tang: Chinese Poetry of the Mid-ninth Century*

李賀以歌詩謁吏部韓愈。時為國子博士分司，時送客出歸，極困。門人呈卷，解帶旋讀之。首篇《雁門太守行》雲。黑雲壓城城欲摧，甲光向日金鱗開。卻插帶，急命邀之。

The anecdote demonstrates Han Yu's ability to identify young literary talents and his enthusiasm in promoting them. Around the 930s, an anecdote recounting Jia Dao's deliberating a couplet was circulating in Sichuan. According to the anecdote, Jia Dao was deliberating a couplet while walking on the street. Han Yu, the Metropolitan Governor at that time, was coming along the same street. Deeply indulged in composing the lines, Jia Dao accidentally ran into Han Yu's entourage. The guard dragged Jia before Han Yu to have him reprimanded. Surprisingly, having heard what Jia was struggling with, Han Yu cordially gave Jia his suggestion on the couplet and invited Jia to have further discussion on poetry.<sup>163</sup>

In addition to Han Yu's commitment to promoting young literati, Han Yu's antagonistic attitude towards Buddhism was frequently recounted by the anecdotal compilers after Zhang Du. In the *Yunxi youyi*, Fan Shu records an anecdote about Liu Ke 劉軻 (fl. 820-839).<sup>164</sup> Liu Ke was originally addicted to Daoism and Buddhism. One night he dreamed of a Confucian student who asked him to rebury his bones and promised a reward. Liu found the student's bones, put them in a coffin and reburied it. The student came to Liu's dream again and gave him three eggs as a reward. Liu chewed one and swallowed the other two as whole. Since then Liu Ke gained a good knowledge of Confucianism and became excellent in prose writing. He took the

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(827-860), Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006, 164.

<sup>163</sup> He Guangyuan 何光遠, *Jianjielu* 鑒誡錄, in Fu Xuancong, et al., comps., *Wudai shishu huibian* 五代史書彙編, vol.10, Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanshe, 2004, 5931-32. He Guangyuan served in the Later Shu during the Five-Dynasty period. See Zhou Xunchu, *Tangdai biji xiaoshuo xulu* 唐代筆記小說敘錄, in Zhou, *Zhou Xunchu wenji*, 463.

<sup>164</sup> For the life and career of Liu Ke, see E. G. Pulleyblank, "Liu K'o, A Forgotten Rival of Han Yu", *Asia Major*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (Jan., 1959), 145-159.

examinations and served in the Office of Historiography. Han Yu, who knew Liu Ke well, promised to write a eulogy about Liu's conversion to Confucianism. However, the plan was interrupted by his later banishment.<sup>165</sup> Obviously, Han Yu appears in this anecdote as a proponent for Confucianism who welcomed Liu's intellectual conversion. His opposing attitude towards Buddhism and Daoism is well indicated. In Gao Yanxiu's 高彦休 (854-884?) *Queshi* 闕史 (The missing history), which was finished by 884, Gao describes the fanatical worship of the Buddha relics led by the Emperor Yizong, and alludes to Han Yu's memorial as an exemplary criticism against the social disorder Buddhism creates.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, Han Yu's encounter with a god, which was recorded in the *Xuanshizhi* as to highlight Han Yu's eagerness to defend Chinese culture, was later included in Huangfu Mei's 皇甫枚 (fl. 871-910) *Sanshui xiaodu* 三水小牘 (A book compiled in Sanshui), an anecdotal compilation finished in 910.<sup>167</sup> From 926 to 963, Sun Guangxian 孫光憲 (895-968) collected anecdotes and compiled the *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 (Trivial talks in Beimeng). In one anecdote, Sun Guangxian recounts the Tang censors' remonstrations with Yizong for his indulgence in Buddhism. He parallels their memorials with what Han Yu has submitted to Xianzong, by which means he exalts Han Yu as a political pioneer, whose antagonistic position against Buddhism has been inherited by the late Tang ministers who took pains to save the toppling imperial sovereign.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Fan Shu, *Yunxi youyi*, in Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol.2, 1276-1277.

<sup>166</sup> Gao Yanxiu, *Queshi*, in Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol.2, 1357-58.

<sup>167</sup> Huangfu Mei, *Sanshui xiaodu*, in Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol.2, 1176.

<sup>168</sup> Sun Guangxian, *Beimeng suoyan*, in Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol.2, 1805. Unfortunately, none of the anecdotal compilations mentioned in this thesis is extant today. Generally speaking, the Tang anecdotes are incorporated and reorganized in Song collections such as the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive records of the Taiping reign), the *Tang yulin* 唐語林 (Tang forest of words), and the *Tangshi jishi* 唐詩記事 (Anecdotes of Tang



Two conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of Han Yu's images in the mid-Tang and late Tang anecdotes. First, Han Yu's literary reputation experienced a gradual elevation throughout the late Tang period. Han Yu's contemporaries, Pei Du and Zhang Ji criticized Han Yu's playful writing as a violation against Confucian morality. Liu Zongyuan and Liu Yuxi asserted that Han Yu's "Inscription on the Pacification of Huaixi" held a biased perspective and therefore was inferior to their own works. Li Zhao unfavorably indicates that it was Han Yu who led the Yuanhe literati's outlandish literature and behavior regardless of moral principles. Nevertheless, these disapproving comments on Han Yu's literary writings faded out in the anecdotes circulating after Han Yu's day. From Zhao Lin to Wang Dingbao, the anecdotal compilers were more inclined to depict Han Yu as an unparalleled literary leader whose writings were widely imitated yet never superseded. Not only did they repudiate the preceding criticism against Han's entertaining writings, they further credited Han Yu's role as a literary leader with a moral significance. They exemplified Han Yu's efforts in promoting young literati, which were originally considered a part of his obligation when serving as an erudite, as what was inspired by the Confucian moral value.

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poetry). Modern scholars restore these anecdotal compilations based on the original source of each anecdote in the Song collections. With few original texts extant, it is difficult to estimate the degree to which Song intellectuals have tampered with the texts. However, as is argued by Shields, "with careful contextualization," these anecdotal texts can "give us a finer-grained picture of Tang cultural activity." See Shields, "Gossip, Anecdote, and Literary History," 125. We don't know much about the readership of these anecdotal compilations. However, the prefaces and the narrative variations preserved in some of the compilations reveal that these anecdotes were widely transmitted, recorded and transcribed among the Tang intellectuals. For example, *Guoshibu* was cited by *Zhiyan* and *Beimeng suoyan*. Fan Shu confesses in the preface that he models his work on *Liubinke jiahualu*. In the preface to *Queshi*, Gao Yanxiu says that "there is not any anecdote left unrecorded before the Zhenyuan (785-805) and Dali (766-780) periods." Manling Luo believes that Gao's statement "suggests that collections enjoyed relatively broad circulation among educated men, to the extent that later compilers were often aware of their textual predecessors." For Fan Shu's preface, see Ding, *Tang-Wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan*, vol. 2, 1259. For Gao Yanxiu's preface, see *Ibid.*, 1327. For Manling Luo's statement, see Luo, "Remembering Kaiyuan and Tianbao," 269.

Second, the anecdotes circulating during the late Tang and Five-Dynasties, especially those in the *Xuanshizhi* and the *Zhiyan*, indicate an increasing emphasis on the Confucian moral values demonstrated in Han Yu's writings and conduct. Such a perspective is to a great extent formulated by the political crisis and moral decadence that the late Tang literati confronted during their own time. Concerned with the depressing spirit of the late Tang officialdom, Zhang Du depicted Han Yu as a paradigmatic Confucian official who is able to understand and transform the supernatural forces exerted by Heaven through his internalized morality. Wang Dingbao, having noticed the universal neglect of morality in the Tang recruitment system, displayed Han Yu's persistent adherence to Confucian moral values in private life and establishes him as a model who displays a unity of literary and moral perfection. Other anecdotes circulating during the late ninth century and early tenth century describe Han Yu either as a caring literary mentor or as a persistent Confucian defender. Such a perception departs from the intelligent, frivolous and politically utilitarian image Han Yu's contemporaries ascribed to him. It not only redefines Han Yu as an influential literary leader in his time, but also highlights his commitment to Confucianism which distinguishes him from the mid-Tang intellectuals. It is based on such an ideological perspective that the early Northern Song literati passionately honored Han Yu as an exemplary Confucian during a time when Confucianism is regained the dominant power over the public and private spheres of intellectual life.

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