

Biography and the World of Discourse in Early Medieval China
A Study of "The Stele of Lord Lu, Master of Unadorned Silence

by

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ABSTRACT

Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778) was prominent poet at the Tang court. His biography of the Daoist ritualist Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-77) can be read on several levels. It functions as a source of information on Lu's life and works, but a reading focused on this alone is insufficient. Conventions of Chinese biography dictate the text is read not just with an eye towards who Lu "really was," but also how he functions as a character fashioned by an author for certain purposes. With this in mind, the reader can learn not just about Lu, but about the audience of the text and the aims of its author. Lu functioned as a model for later Daoist masters and as an exhortation to proper conduct towards them on the part of rulers and elites. Finally, with reference to the work of Michel Foucault and scholars of collective memory, this work can be read as a window onto the world of discourse in early medieval China.

DEDICATION

To my family and friends

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: TEXT AND DISCOURSE

Chinese texts are a window upon an ancient world. This is not to say they provide us with perfect vision of a bygone time; like the first Italian nobles to peer through Galileo's telescope, what we see in them is blurry, indistinct, and subject to interpretation.¹ What is clear, however, is that they give us partial access to a world of discourse, chiefly in the form of textual exchanges between lettered elites. I am interested in the shape of this world, and it makes sense to begin by laying out some universals I think are common to any world of discourse, in any time.

The first is interconnection. With his analogy of the table in *The Order of Things*,² Foucault provides us with a handy way of grasping the structures that underlie our knowledge of categories. His emphasis on horizontal linkage between separate fields within a structure, versus independent development towards some predetermined end, is particularly useful. It draws attention to the fact that intellectual changes in a field during a given period - say, Daoism in early medieval China - have more to do with contemporary developments elsewhere in that same world of discourse than they do with teleological evolution towards a ready-made ending point.³ To continue the example, Daoists in early medieval China are engaged in a debate with contemporary Buddhists and

¹ Feyerabend, *Against Method* 86-89.

² Foucault, *Order* xv-xxiv.

³ Foucault, *Order* xi.

Confucians, among others. Thus the creep of Buddhist elements into Daoist scripture⁴ should be seen as a response by Daoist writers to the popularity of Buddhism, not as evolution towards today's Quanzhen 全真 or Zhengyi 正一 sects.⁵ Thus, for a defensible - though not complete - interpretation of a given text, one must understand to some extent what is going on at the same time in other fields.

This interconnectedness also implies restriction, however. In order for a discourse to be taken seriously at a certain time, it must adhere to a set of rules common to other participants in the discourse. A well-known example from early China is the appeal to history for authority in techniques of governance, as exemplified in Confucius' dictum: "I transmit; I do not innovate."⁶ That is, the methods expounded by the Master are not of his own invention; rather, they are the techniques used by legendary rulers like the Duke of Zhou in ancient days to craft a peaceful order, which Confucius passes down unaltered. Later intellectuals - e.g., Mencius and Xunzi - accept this premise, and the general idea - of imitating virtuous rulers who brought peace to the land - would still hold strong a thousand

⁴ This is especially prevalent in texts such as the "Scripture on Salvation" (*Duren jing* 度人經). That this text is a reaction to the popularity of Buddhism in China is evident not only in the presence of resolutely Buddhist terms and concepts like the *kalpa* (*jie* 劫) and the thirty-two heavens; the title itself indicates a new concern with salvation (*du* 度) in reaction against the Mahayana Buddhist bodhisattva. Techniques like this are a clear attempt to attract believers away from competing religions. See Bokenkamp's article on the *Duren jing* in Fabrizio Pregadio's *Encyclopedia of Daoism* as well as his "Sources of the Ling-Pao Scriptures."

⁵ I do not use the term "sect" pejoratively, but merely to mean "a group distinct from other groups."

⁶ 述而不作. *Analects* 7.1. For other exhortations to imitation, see *Xunzi* 6.6 and 6.7, *Mencius* 6B2.

years later, when Song Neo-Confucians argued over whether the famous rulers of Han and Tang were worth emulating.⁷

Thus, in order for the theories of governance touted by Warring States philosophers to be taken seriously, they must be connected to the methods of the ancient sage-kings who presided over various epochs of peace and harmony. The grounding of authority in history is, broadly speaking, analogous to the Foucauldian episteme as set forth in *The Order of Things*. For Foucault, the episteme is set of unconscious rules that govern the way people in a given age think. From the introduction:

Unknown to themselves, the naturalists, economists, and grammarians employed [this set of] rules to define the objects proper to their own study, to form their concepts, to build their theories. It is these rules of formation, which were never formulated in their own right, but are to be found only in widely differing theories, concepts, and objects of study, that I have tried to reveal, by isolating, as their specific locus, a level that I have called... archaeological.⁸

Where Foucault discusses "naturalists, economists, and grammarians," one could substitute the Warring States philosophers discussed above. These men were all intellectuals operating in a certain environment, and the *a priori* common to all were what made discourse possible. An important component of the "subterranean strata" of their knowledge was the unquestioned assumption that methods of government must be traceable to the former kings in order to be legitimate.⁹ It

⁷ See, e.g., Tillman, *Confucian Discourse* 172-176.

⁸ Foucault, *Order* xi.

⁹ Han Feizi 韓非子 is the obvious exception to this rule, but he himself still uses the same technique. See page 305 of Joel Sahleen's translation of the *Han feizi* in Bryan Van Norden and Phillip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*.

was planks such as these that structured their discourse. I hold this same basic model to be true in later periods and for different genres. My current focus is a biographical stele written by Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778) in 760 or 761 commemorating the 5th-century Daoist master Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406-77). Wu Yun is well known as a Daoist at the Tang court in the 8th century,¹⁰ but I am concerned here with his performance as a biographer. As such, he was bound by generic considerations that dictated his work and provide an interpretive tool for analyzing how and why he wrote. I intend to show that Wu was not writing exclusively as a "Daoist" in isolation from other aspects of Chinese culture, but as an intellectual in conversation with a much larger group of people. As a part of this conversation, he was bound by a larger set of conventions that makes it impossible for him to be fully comprehended by the category "Daoist" alone.¹¹

Lu Xiuqing is also famous as a Daoist of medieval China. While I will go briefly into his life and works, in this essay I am operating under the assumption that he is a character fashioned for a certain purpose. This is not to say I completely reject any connection between Lu the historical figure and Lu as he appears in Wu's stele; nor is it to say that I think Wu fashioned Lu for his own purposes. Rather, I hold that part of the "archaeological level" of biography throughout much of early Chinese history dictated how Wu Yun wrote about Lu Xiuqing, and what exactly he said. Lu was serving as an example meant for

¹⁰ See Bokenkamp's article on Wu Yun in the *Encyclopedia of Daoism*.

¹¹ A more detailed examination of this category would be a useful component of a future work, but for present purposes I restrict myself to a social exploration of Wu's text.

imitation, and his actions can shed light on how - according to Wu - the ideal Daoist master should act, and how others should act towards him.

Chapter 2

WU YUN AND LU XIUJING

Wu Yun's life is well-documented.¹² What I intend to do here is not to recapitulate the body of work already done on him, but to show how he must be understood in the context of his times. Wu Yun was a defender of the Way of Transcendence and a respected Daoist master, but he was also a candidate for the imperial exams and a close associate of the emperor who counted some important officials among his friends. In order to get a more nuanced understanding of the man, we must see him not as "merely" a Daoist, but as part of the larger intellectual culture of early medieval China.

A few of Wu Yun's texts, such as "On the Mind and Eyes" (*Xin mu lun* 心目論)¹³ and "Numinous Transcendence Can Be Studied" 神仙科學論 are preserved in the *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏.¹⁴ He received ordination in the Orthodox Unity (*Zhengyi* 正一) tradition of Daoism, and is famous for his association with prominent Daoists such as Ye Fashan and Tang Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (r. 712-756), who was ordained as a Daoist himself. However, even a cursory glance at the poet's life and works illustrates how well Wu Yun problematizes the categories popular to the study of ancient China. The first line of his biography in

¹² See, e.g., De Meyer's *Wu Yun's Way*, T.H. Barrett's article in the *Encyclopedia of Daoism*, or Schafer's "Wu Yun's 'Cantos on Pacing the Void'" for an extensive list of sources.

¹³ *Daozang* (DZ) 26:69-71.

¹⁴ DZ 29:729-34. Summaries of these texts can be found in Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*.

the Daoist canon reads "Wu Yun, style name 'Loyal and Morally Upright,' was a Confucian gentleman from [the region of] Lu."

吳筠，字貞節，魯中儒士。¹⁵

Much of the information surrounding Wu's life - including his actual birthplace - is debated, however.¹⁶ Perhaps the most famous story about him - that he introduced the poet Li Bai 李白 (701-62) to the court of Tang Xuanzong is likely false.¹⁷ Nonetheless, there are some things that can be said with relative certainty.¹⁸ A few anecdotes from his life will suffice to show how he problematized the categories of "Confucian" and "Daoist" by meeting criteria for inclusion in both at various times in his life. He and his social circle have much

¹⁵ DZ 26:68.

¹⁶ Schafer favors Quan Deyu 權德輿's (759-818) biography of Wu and his preface to the master's collected works, both of which give his birthplace as Huayin 華陰, in modern Shaanxi. See Edward Schafer, "Wu Yun's 'Cantos on Pacing the Void.'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* vol. 41, issue 2 (Dec. 1981): 377-415. Perhaps in recognition of the difficulty of determining his birthplace, T.H. Barrett's article on Wu in the *Encyclopedia of Daoism* - unlike many of the other biographies in the same work - does not give a birthplace. Jan De Meyer holds that Quan's biography is a later forgery, and that his preface is the only reliable biographical document we have on the poet. Based on this preface, and with supporting evidence from Wu's poetry, De Meyer nonetheless comes to the same conclusion as Schafer. Against Wu's *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 biography, and later works that copy from it (such as the biography above in the *Zhengtong Daozang*), De Meyer holds Wu was born in Huayin. See pages six and nine of Jan De Meyer, *Wu Yun's Way: Life and Works of an Eighth-Century Daoist Master*. Leiden: Brill, 2006. This is an extensive study of Wu's life and work, and will be my main source on the poet over the course of this essay. While he provides a translation of the stele of Lu Xiuqing that is my main focus, I was not aware of it until recently. I have noted where my translation owes a debt to De Meyer's. His analysis is quite short, however, and focuses mostly on a historical account of Lu's life and travels. See 385-403.

¹⁷ For a translated account of this story, see Schafer's "Cantos on Pacing the Void." For suggestions that it is false, see Barrett's article on Wu Yun, and De Meyer 101-102. Wu's poetry shows evidence that he had read Li Bai, however; see De Meyer 57 for details.

¹⁸ What follows is a simplified sketch of Wu's life based on information in chapter one of De Meyer.

more to do with an intellectual climate common to the day than they do with the development of strict, delineated groups.

Wu was likely born in Huayin (in modern Shaanxi) in the early 7th century.¹⁹ He came from a family with several generations of official service: his grandfather, Wu Yuan 吳元, was recommended as a "filial and incorrupt" (*xiaolian* 孝廉), while his father, Wu Yuanheng 吳元亨 was once Prefect (*cishi* 刺史) of Xiazhou 峽州, in present-day Hubei.²⁰ An ancestry prominent in officialdom would have meant Wu was likely to be born into circumstances that permitted the sort of classical education that let him follow in their footsteps. At the age of fifteen²¹ he went into reclusion on Mt. Yidi 倚帝山.²² His poems show he mastered the classical corpus required for entrance into the literati class, probably taking but failing the *jinshi* 進士 examination.²³ He first came to the capital in the fourth year (745) of the Tianbao 天寶 era (742-756), persuaded by

¹⁹ De Meyer 9, 93.

²⁰ De Meyer 9.

²¹ As De Meyer points out on page 15, this age, from Quan Deyu's preface, may be a reference to Confucius' "spiritual autobiography" in *Analects* 2.4 ("At fifteen, I set my mind on learning..."), and thus not meant to be taken literally. This sort of allusion was a classic technique of imperial Chinese biographers, meant to draw parallels, recognizable to erudite readers, between their subjects and famous figures in the same mold who had come before. In essence, Quan is saying not that Wu was exactly fifteen when he started his study, but instead that he was at some unspecified young age, and makes his point in a way that places him among the ranks of great sages like Confucius. More on the biographical tradition in imperial China will be said below.

²² De Meyer 11-12. This is near Nanyang 南陽 in southern Hunan province; for this location, see De Meyer 4.

²³ See, e.g., his *Rhapsody on the Recluse*, translated on pp. 176-205 of *Wu Yun's Way*, which is filled with allusions to characters appearing in the *Shu Jing* 書經, *Shi ji* 史記, *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, and other classic works.

Tang Xuanzong to leave reclusion on Mt. Yidi, where he requested and received ordination in the Zhengyi 正一 tradition from Feng Qizheng 馮齊整.²⁴ While at court, he probably served in Xuanzong's retinue with esteemed masters like Ye Fashan 葉法善 (631-720) and Luo Gongyuan 羅公遠 (fl. 712-713).²⁵ and fled the chaos of An Lushan's 安祿山 disastrous rebellion of 755/6 for the safer southeast.²⁶ His peregrinations in the region took him to several mountains, including Lushan 廬山 in modern Jiangxi province, where he wrote the *Jianji Xiansheng Lujun Bei* 簡寂先生陸君碑, the stele I will be translating.²⁷

While he was staying at the house of a prominent local official in Kuaiji 會稽 (in the region of present-day Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces) in 770, he took part in a "linked verse" (*lianju* 聯句) party organized in his honor.²⁸ Present were 13 poets and officials of greater or lesser eminence, including several *jinshi* from the Tianbao reign period and later.²⁹ The verses they produced are thick with references to works such as the "Scripture of the Inner Effulgences of the Yellow Court" (*Huangting neijing jing* 黃庭內景經) and the *Heshanggong* 河上公

²⁴ De Meyer 33-36. De Meyer is adamantly opposed to the notion, depicted in some accounts, that Wu received ordination in the Shangqing 上清 tradition, holding them to be groundless.

²⁵ Dates are taken from the articles on these respective figures in Pregadio's *Encyclopedia of Daoism*. For Wu's association with these men, see De Meyer 30.

²⁶ De Meyer 16-18. This is also confirmed by the end of his stele inscription on Lu Xiujing, as De Meyer notes.

²⁷ De Meyer 52.

²⁸ De Meyer 62.

²⁹ For a detailed account of this occasion, see De Meyer 62-81.

commentary to the *Laozi* 老子, as well as technical terms such as "entering into quietude" (*ru jing* 入靜).³⁰ This shows that, in addition to receiving the classical Confucian education necessary for success in the imperial exam system (*keju* 科舉), the participants were well-versed in Daoist classics. They did not just associate with, but honored eminent Daoists like Wu Yun.

The purpose of the preceding few paragraphs has not been to sketch a complete biography of Wu Yun; it has been to emphasize his connection with a larger literati culture and show how a proper account of the man requires a more complete picture of him than as simply a Daoist master.³¹ It has been an effort to place Wu in his social setting. My attention to Lu Xiuqing will not be of this sort. While I will provide a brief summary of his life and work, my chief goal as relates to Lu Xiuqing is not to talk about Lu himself, but to talk about what he represents.

³⁰ The term used to connote entrance into the "oratory" (*jingshi* 靜室) kept - according to normative texts like the *Daomen keliue* 道門科略, at least - by Daoist households for the purpose of communication with certain supernatural beings. The term, which also occurs under variant names such as *jingshi* 精室 or *qingshi* 清室, was also used to describe the secluded rooms where Han scholars met with their students. There are also references to *jinshi* being established for Buddhist clergy on imperial grounds during the time of Emperor Xiaowu 孝武 (r. 372-96) of the Eastern Jin. See Judith Boltz's article, "Jingshi," in the *Encyclopedia of Taoism*.

³¹ The contours of this category are less than clear. Kirkland, in his *Encyclopedia of Taoism* article on the subject, quote Florian Reiter in maintaining that they "represented Taoist culture on a professional basis," before going on to hold that such a figure "has mastered specific efficacious knowledge connected to the Dao, and the ritual skills whereby such knowledge can be put into effect in the world," and "who has therefore been authorized to employ such knowledge and skills for the benefit of the community." He acknowledges, however, that the body of knowledge individuals were required to master varied according to the legitimating organization, and that scholars have similarly failed to reach a consensus on the issue for their own purposes. See Russell Kirkland, "Daoishi," in Febrazio Pregadio, *Encyclopedia of Taoism* (London: Routledge, 2006). Livia Kohn holds a much more romanticized view of Daoist priest; during rituals, she writes, "...[H]e [*sic*]... commanded the divine presence, and tended to remain in isolated purity to focus on his [*sic*] inner powers." See Livia Kohn, *The Daoist Monastic Manual: A Translation of the Fengdao Kejie*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 67-68.

That is, as a character in Wu's composition, part of what Lu does is show how Wu thinks the ideal Daoist master should act, and how others should act toward him.

Lu's biography was not recorded in the official histories, and so it must be pieced together from the works of later authors. The single largest source for this is the *Daoxue zhuan* 道學傳, "Biographies of Those Who Studied The Dao," compiled by Ma Shu 馬樞 (522-81).³² This exists only in fragments; fortunately, the largest of these, at 510 characters, concerns Lu Xiuqing. His style name was Yuande 元德; he was a native of Dongqian, Wuxing county, in modern-day Zhejiang province. Nothing is known of Lu's early education or training. According to Ma Shu, he taught Emperor Wen of the Liu-Song (Liu Yilong 劉義隆, r. 424-54), though Wu Yun's stele claims he refused. Both the stele and the *Daoxue zhuan* fragments record him traveling to the court of Song Mingdi (Liu Yu 劉彧, 11th son of Song Wendi, r. 466-72), instructing him about the Dao, and curing him of illness. The latter also record him debating with Buddhists and winning, and instructing not just the Emperor but various nobles as well. It also claims he abandoned an official career, as well as his wife and children, to study the Dao.³³ These are mostly the standard tropes of Daoist hagiography, however, and thus should perhaps not be taken literally. Bokenkamp, in his article in the *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, records Lu as spending the years from 453-67 on Mount Lu 廬山, where he built a hermitage; Ma Shu claims he built the "Belvedere of

³² Baumbacher, *Fragments* 113. Ma Shu's dates are taken from Bokenkamp, "Lu Xiuqing."

³³ Baumbacher 218.

Unadorned Silence" (*Jianji guan* 簡寂觀 below the cliff of Pubu 瀑布, northeast of Lushan, and furthermore that it was from here he descended to the court of Song Mingdi. After this, Ma records Mingdi provided him with the "Belvedere for the Veneration of Emptiness" (*Chongxu guan* 崇虛觀) north of the capital. His death, and subsequent apparition to his disciples on Mount Lu, is recorded both in the *Daoxue zhuan* and Wu Yun's stele inscription, though only the latter gives the date.

Lu Xiuqing is famous as the compiler of the first Daoist canon, the "Catalogue of the Scriptures and Writings of the Three Caverns" (*Sandong jingshu mulu* 三洞經書目錄), which he presented to the throne in 471. Nearly forty years before, in 437, he compiled the first catalog of Lingbao scriptures, the *Lingbao jingmu* 靈寶經目. He also performed and codified rituals, presenting the "Ordination Ritual of the Numinous Treasure" (*Lingbao shoudu yi* 靈寶授度儀), to the throne sometime before 454. He also wrote a revised code for Celestial Master (*tianshi* 天師) Daoists, called the "Abridged Codes for the Daoist Community" (*Daomen kelüe* 道門科略), which aimed to rectify and reorganize the Daoist community of Lu's day.³⁴

However, as mentioned before, I am not interested in Lu as a historical personage so much as Lu as a character in Wu Yun's biography. I hold that Lu was intended to function as an example - not just for Daoists, but also the rulers and elites they served. This conviction is based on the nature of biography in ancient China, as well as the genre of biography in general, that will require elucidation in the next chapter.

³⁴ For more extensive list of Lu's surviving writings, see Schafer 1981.

Chapter 3

THE BIOGRAPHICAL TRADITION IN IMPERIAL CHINA

Lu's stele inscription is unequivocally a hagiography - the biography of a saint or holy person. I take my general view of hagiography from Robert Ford Campany, who emphasizes the central role of human beings in the shaping of narrative. He does not read hagiographies as factual texts that supply us with historically-accurate accounts of their subjects' lives. However, they can tell us something about the social world in which their authors lived. That is, Campany does not read hagiographies solely for information about their subjects; he reads them primarily for information about how their subjects were imagined by the authors and readers of hagiography.

For Campany, hagiographies are eminently social creations. "Each hagiographic narrative," he says, "is an artifact of an attempt to persuade an audience. Reading such narratives for information about the past depends on understanding what this means and entails."³⁵ That is, if we are to get any information from a hagiography about the social world that produced it, we must consider who was doing the writing and who was doing the reading. Stories, written or spoken, are "performance[s] undertaken by certain narrators for some audience," and it is only by understanding them as social products written for a purpose that we can learn something concrete about the social world that generated them. It is this social world I am interested in exploring through Lu's

³⁵ Campany, *Making Transcendents* 10.

biography, and so it is worth studying Company's theoretical framework in more detail.

Part of this context is the social conditions and constraints common to each telling of the narrative. Biographies, for example, will be expected to follow a certain form and contain certain information depending on the subtype of biography (autobiography, *liezhuan* 列傳 "linked traditions," or "arrayed traditions," etc.) and the time in which it is produced.³⁶ Also to be considered is the fact that both narrator and audience cannot be compelled to take part in the process: they must have an interest of some sort in telling or listening to the narrative. Stelae such as Lu Xiujing's are expensive to write and construct, lending weight to the inference that we must read them as being created for a certain purpose on the part of the author. Furthermore, the fact that these materials are set down in writing, or - as we have in our case - something more solid, is deceptive. It creates an air of permanence and objectivity, hiding the social nature of narrative construction, the interplay of narrative and counter-narrative about a person that ultimately produces the version(s) of a story chosen to be committed to writing. The hagiographies we have are changed by the hands and minds they pass through; they "stand at the end of very long chains of transmission ultimately rooted in informal, interactive oral discourse in small communities of people, even if those oral sources are almost always destined to remain invisible to us."³⁷ Hagiographies are produced on different social levels, all of which must be taken

³⁶ More on the *liezhuan* below.

³⁷ Company, *Transcendents* 10-11.

into account if we want to appreciate them fully as sources of information about the social worlds that produced them.

To recapitulate, hagiographies are unreliable as sources of historically accurate information about their subjects. However, this does not mean there is no relationship between the material in a hagiography and what was going on in the world of ancient China. Instead of reading them as accurate accounts of the people about which they are written, it is best to approach them as indirect sources of information on the social world that produced them. Campany says as much in the following quote, while providing useful information about the genre of biography:

...[A]n early Chinese hagiographer... to a large extent *collected and transmitted* narrative material that was already circulating among contemporaries...or else material that had been handed down in earlier texts. What such figures wrote were transmissions or traditions. To be sure, these authors, as well as the authors of the texts they relied on, often reshaped stories to fit their own particular persuasions and predilections; in a few cases we can even demonstrate that they did so, and how. But, fundamentally, authors did not make up these narratives in a vacuum and spring upon an audience... that would have perceived them as completely new; rather, they collected them from various sources, reworked and recontextualized them, and put them into renewed...circulation.³⁸

³⁸ Campany, *Transcendents* 11. Emphasis in original.

It is unlikely hagiographies can tell us "what really happened" to their subject. What they can do, however, is tell us about the social world in which their authors lived and wrote. They can tell us what sort of things their audience would have expected, the "environments in which these *types* of figures moved, the sorts of abilities and activities commonly attributed to them, and the sorts of people who did the attributing."³⁹ Hagiographies can tell us something about their subjects, but they can tell us more about the social worlds in which their authors and audiences lived.

Hagiography and biography in ancient China are closely linked, and so a few words on biography in general might be useful. For a general sketch of biographical tradition, I turn to Denis Twitchett's "Problems of Chinese Biography."⁴⁰ Though he concentrates on the "linked traditions" (*liezhuan* 列傳) that appear in official dynastic histories, Twitchett's essay provides a useful starting point for discussing the Chinese biographical tradition as a whole. The author holds that biography in China began with the appearance of Sima Qian's *Shi ji* 史記 and its large contingent of *liezhuan* concerning important officials in 90 B.C.E.⁴¹ The form of its biographies is traceable to private memorial inscriptions used in ancestor veneration.⁴² Later biographies included in official

³⁹ 22. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁰ Appearing in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Confucian Personalities*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962.

⁴¹ Twitchett, *Personalities* 25.

⁴² *ibid.*

dynastic histories depended on similar sources, among which were tomb inscriptions (*muzhi* 墓誌) buried with the deceased, epitaphs (*mubiao* 墓表 or *shendao bei* 神道碑) engraved on stone tablets and erected in front of the tomb, and sacrificial speeches (*jiwen* 祭文) addressed to the dead during funeral ceremonies.⁴³ I wish to concentrate on official biographies and *muzhi*. This sort of selective focus ensures a tight connection between the genre of biography as a whole and the stele of Lu Xiuqing.

In form, official biographies and the tomb inscriptions were quite similar. They begin with the deceased person's full name and style names, his place of origin, and information on earlier family members.⁴⁴ This is followed by a formulaic incident showing how the deceased's character manifested itself from an early age, with the understanding that this pattern of behavior continued in later life. Next comes an account of the person's career as an official, including posts held, incidents in which he figured, anecdotes about him, and notable writings. In official biographies, this was followed by brief notes on the subject's descendants, as well as the historian's comments on the individual; in *muzhi*, what follows is a eulogy (*ming* 銘) in formal, deliberately archaic verse.⁴⁵

⁴³ Twitchett, *Personalities* 27.

⁴⁴ By the time of its inclusion in an official history, this had passed through an extensive editing and approval process. On this, see Twitchett, *Personalities* 26 and 27. I use the masculine third-person singular frequently because the vast majority of official biographies were written about men.

⁴⁵ Twitchett, *Personalities* 28.

While the form and content of biographies varied widely over time,⁴⁶ one constant is their function. In contrast to Western portrait-style biographies, which aim to give a complete account of a person's life and an accurate portrayal of his or her individual character, Chinese biographies were focused from the beginning on the didactic and commemorative presentation of a given person's performance of certain roles.⁴⁷ What was important was not capturing the "essence" of a person, but rather how well (or, occasionally, how poorly), they performed these roles - for instance, as filial son or loyal minister - and by extension how worthy they were of emulation (or scorn) on the part of the reader.⁴⁸

And, as Campany informed us, exemplary lives were often reshaped according to the purposes of the author - one of which certainly would have been to provide his or her readers with a suitable example. While there was a limit to the amount of tinkering that could be done with a given life, not every anecdote within a biography was expected to have "really happened."⁴⁹ Instead, authors prioritized the creation of consistent characters that would, in turn, shape the character of the reader in positive ways. Thus, to read a hagiography for purely

⁴⁶ See, e.g., pages 37-39 of *Confucian Personalities*, which discuss varieties such as *biezhuan* 別傳, *biji* 筆記, autobiography, and the *nianpu* 年譜, all which were popular at various times throughout imperial and early 20th-cenry China.

⁴⁷ 35. As Twitchett points out, this has not always been the sole aim of Western biographies, either; for instance, the lives of the saints serve much the same dual commemorative and didactic functions for Christians as do the *liezhuan* for Confucian officials. See Twitchett, *Personalities* 34-35.

⁴⁸ For more on roles in imperial society, see Arthur F. Wright's "Values, Roles, and Personalities" in *Confucian Personalities*. For monitory examples, see Herbert Franke's chapter on the Southern Song minister Jia Sidao in *Confucian Personalities*, and the biography of An Lushan 安祿山 in *juan* 201 of the the *Jiu Tang shu*, in which he is described as both "plotting rebellion" (*ni mou* 逆謀), and as ridiculously fat.

⁴⁹ Twitchett, "Problems" 29-30.

factual information about its subject is not to do it justice. While this is certainly one legitimate use, it does not exhaust the possibilities by any stretch of the imagination. If read with a certain critical eye, we can learn about the social world in which the subjects and their authors moved, and we should not pass up the opportunity to do so.

Chapter 4

THE TEXT

簡寂先生陸君碑 The Stele of Lord Lu, the Master of Unadorned Silence

先生姓陸。諱修靜。吳興東遷人也。代為著姓。舊史詳之。⁵⁰先生道與真氣。天挺靈骨。幼含雅性。長絕塵滓。雖博通墳籍。旁究象緯。以為鍊形契道。與天地長久者。非經術占候之所能致。故存而不論。⁵¹

The master's name was Lu, honorific Xiujing. He was a man of Wuxing, of Dongqian county. His surname had been prominent for generations, about which the old histories write in detail. The Dao bequeathed the Master True Qi,⁵² Heaven propped him up with numinous bones.⁵³ In his youth, he contained⁵⁴ a cultivated nature. When mature, he cut himself off from the dust and dregs. Although he had broadly penetrated the mounds of ancient books, and had digressed [from the mainstream] to become skilled in Confucian divination, he took it to be the case that refining the body and according with the Dao and Heaven and Earth was not that which the study of the Classics and observing celestial anomalies to predict the course of nature could bring about. Thus, he held onto this knowledge but did not talk about it.

乃研精玉書。稽仙聖奧旨。知羽化在我。道不吾欺。遂勤而行之。不捨寤寐。聞異人所在。不遠千里而造之。果遇其真。爰受祕訣。乃雲棲荊岫。卻粒修行。雖身隱彌靜。而名逃益彰。江漢之人。虛往實歸者。莫知紀極。

⁵⁰ Here it is worth noting that the *Daoxue zhuan* goes into more detail about his ancestry. According to Fragment 85, he is descended from the Three Kingdoms-era Wu dynasty Councilor-in-Chief (*cheng xiang* 丞相) Lu Kai 陸凱. See Baumbacher 218-219.

⁵¹ This is a citation from the *Zhuangzi*, 齊物論, which Graham translates "[to] locate as there, but... not sort out (Graham 57). However, it is unclear whether Wu really means to evoke the entire passage - which deals with the artificial nature of the boundaries human beings impose on the universe through language - or is merely consciously or unconsciously using a poetic turn of phrase from an earlier work that would appeal to erudite readers. Opting for the latter, I have translated the passage more conservatively.

⁵² It is unclear to me exactly what this is. Searches of the *中華道教大辭典* and the *道教大辭典* produced no result.

⁵³ One of the signs that the bearer is destined to become a transcendent (*xian* 仙).

⁵⁴ The character 含, which I have translated "contain," bears the additional meaning, difficult to render into English, of doing so as part of an active process, such as when taking medicine. See HYDCD, s.v. "含."

Thereupon with single-mindedness [he devoted himself to the study of] the texts sent down from heaven,⁵⁵ and reviewed the mysterious directives of the Transcendent Sages. He comprehended [that] the process of feathery transcendence⁵⁶ was in oneself,⁵⁷ and that the Dao does not deceive us. Consequently, he assiduously put it into practice and he did not abandon it day or night. Hearing [of] where a strange and exceptional person lived, he did not consider a thousand li to be distant and went to them. It came to fruition that he encountered their perfection and received esoteric instruction. Thereupon he roosted in the clouds⁵⁸ in a mountain cavern on Jingshan,⁵⁹ abstained from grain⁶⁰ and cultivated his practice. His body was hidden and he became ever more still. He avoided his name, yet it became more manifest. People of the region of the Yangzi and Han rivers went to him empty and returned full,⁶¹ yet none knew his full extent.⁶²

元嘉末。因市藥京邑。文皇帝聞之。使大臣宣旨固請。先生確乎不拔。遽有太初之難。或推獨見之明。遂拂衣南遊。遐討絕

⁵⁵ Literally "Jade Books" 玉書, this can refer to the *Huangting Neijing* 黃庭內經, but probably refers here to just "texts sent down by Heaven." For the opposite opinion, see De Meyer 393.

⁵⁶ or the transformation of a larvae into a fully-fledged insect.

⁵⁷ The use of the pronoun 我 may indicate contrast with *wu* 物, "other things." Interpreted this way, Wu's word choice would emphasize the fact that actualizing the Dao was a matter of personal effort, as opposed to a pre-ordained lot. This clashes a bit with the mention of Lu's "transcendent bones" above, but it takes into account the use of different first-person pronouns.

⁵⁸ This is a poetic expression for dwelling as a hermit.

⁵⁹ While there are several mountains that go by this name, given the above reference to the Jiangnan region, this is probably the Jingshan in modern-day Hubei. This phrase can also be taken as verb-object verb-object: "He roosted in the clouds and made his way by cane through mountain caverns."

⁶⁰ What counts as "grain" varies according to the book consulted. Some lists include barley, wheat, rice, soy, and sesame; others include sesame, soy, two types of millet, and barley. Avoiding them was considered a step in attaining transcendence, but also marked the transcendence-seeker off from the rest of society in very stark ways.

⁶¹ This is a reference to a story in the *De chong fu* 德充符 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, in which a man marked as a criminal by having his foot cut off is a greater teacher than Confucius himself: "In the state of Lu there is a cripple named Wang Tai. Those who follow him, and those who follow Confucius, could divide Lu in half... He stands up but does not teach; he sits but does not discuss. [Those that follow him] come to him empty and leave full." 魯有兀者王駘，從之遊者與夫子中分魯。。。立不教，坐不議，虛而往，實而歸。 See Zhang 78. "Jiangnan" is a reference to a region in modern Hubei province between the Yangzi and Han rivers.

⁶² That is, no one completely understood him.

境。志悅廬嶽。乃卜其陽。眾峰干霄。飛流注壑。窈窕幽
藹。宜其為至人之所止焉。

At the end of the Yuanjia reign period,⁶³ because he was selling medicines in the market, Emperor Wen⁶⁴ heard of him. He dispatched a high official to proclaim an imperial edict firmly inviting the Master to the palace. The master refused and was unyielding.⁶⁵ Immediately after this came the Taichu difficulty.⁶⁶ Someone praised the clarity of his unmatched perception, so he "shook off his clothes and departed,"⁶⁷ traveling to the south. He sought far off a secluded place; his intention was to take joy in the Lu Alp. Thereupon, sited his house on the south⁶⁸ side. Its many peaks poked the skies; Flying flows funneled into the valleys. It was secluded and darkly covered by clouds. It was precisely suited to be a place where the perfected would come to rest.

先生方絃琴以樂元和。覃思以運正氣。佇功充而道叶。聊駕景以高舉。屬世宗明帝欲播元風於無垠。導蒼生以敦樸。非至德之士。則莫能獎而成之。素欽先生之風。乃備徵求之禮。至於再至於三。

The Master then strung the qin in order to take joy in Primal Harmony, thought deeply in order to circulate Rectified Qi. Over a period time he accumulated the fullness of his merit and then the Way became in harmony, he casually rode upon the rays of the sun and was held high aloft. Mingdi,⁶⁹ who belonged to the generations of the world,⁷⁰ desired to spread the Primal Wind to the Boundless

⁶³ 424-454 C.E.

⁶⁴ That is, Emperor Wen (r. 424-454) of the Liu-Song 劉宋 (420-479).

⁶⁵ This is a citation from the *Yijing* 易經 indicating adamantine resolution.

⁶⁶ The "Taichu difficulty" refers to the 453 rebellion of the heir apparent Liu Shao 劉劭. Liu killed his father and several courtiers before being deposed himself three months later. See De Meyer 402, 404.

⁶⁷ That is, he returned to seclusion. This is a stock phrase in biographies of important recluses, and appears in other biographies of Lu Xiuqing as well (e.g., the *Daoxuezhuan* fragments; see Bumbacher 208).

⁶⁸ That is, he situated his home on the sunlit side.

⁶⁹ Probably Liu Yu 劉彧, known to posterity as Emperor Ming 明 (r. 466-472) of Liu-Song 劉宋 (420-479).

⁷⁰ I am uncertain how to translate 屬世宗明帝. Literally it looks like "Mingdi who belongs to the world," and so I have followed this reading for want of a better one. De Meyer translates "As chance would have it, the Most Distinguished of His Generation, Song Mingdi..." See De Meyer 394.

and guide the common folk by means of the solid and uncarved. If [the chosen person] was not a gentleman of perfect virtue, then no other could promote and complete this task. Being aware of [the Master's] reputation, the Emperor prepared the rituals involved with enlisting him, with he did twice and three times.⁷¹

先生秉操逾堅。因辭以疾。天子側席意厚。理無推謝。遂恭承詔命。降跡城闕。亦既見止。帝心則愉。於是順風問道。抗對窮理。千古疑滯。一朝冰釋。乃築先生之館於外。俾朝野有宗師焉。時司徒袁公。北面請益。先生指邪以明正。循派以思源。由是翕然一變頹俗矣。

The Master grasped integrity; thus he declined, using sickness as an excuse. The Son of Heaven went to the side of his mat with thick intentions. According to the logic of the situation, the Master could not refuse. He descended to the capital, and once it came to the point where he was seen, the heart of the Emperor was thus glad. Thereupon, he followed his inclinations and asked about the Dao; with great fierceness he exhausted [the study of] all its principles. [There were] the thousand ancient doubts and blockages, [but] in one morning, the ice melted.⁷² Thereupon he constructed the Master's temple outside the capital, making it so that both the court and the people had an ancestral teacher there. At this time, the Minister of Education was Lord Yuan.⁷³ He faced north, and the Master was requested to provide additional instruction.⁷⁴ The Master pointed at deviance in order to illumine correctness. He followed the doctrinal streams in order to make clear the source. As is evinced in Mr. Yuan, he instantly transformed the decay of social customs.

⁷¹ That is, he performed the rites of enlisting Lu Xiuqing two, then three times. This can be contrasted with the behavior of Song Wendi in several ways. For a more detailed analysis, see section 4.

⁷² That is, all doubts, errors, and misunderstandings disappeared.

⁷³ Probably Yuan Can 袁粲 (? - 477). At age 59, he died in battle along with his son in the first year of Shengming reign period of the Liu-Song emperor Shundi 順帝 (r. 477-479) in a battle against the first emperor of the Qi dynasty, Xiao Daocheng 蕭道成 (r. 479-483). His biography in the *Book of Song* 宋書 does not mention him taking Lu Xiuqing as a teacher.

⁷⁴ I am unsure how to translate 請益. De Meyer interprets this - reasonably, in my view, given the context - as "requested additional instruction," and so I have adopted his translation. See De Meyer 395.

明年。天子不豫。詔先生為塗炭之齋。是夜靈壇之間。卿雲紛郁。翌日疾瘳。蓋精神所致。初先生登車之日。有熊虎猿鳥之屬。悲鳴擁路。出山而止。其忘情感物。有如此者。

The next year, the Son of Heaven was unwell. He commanded the Master to perform the Retreat of Mud and Ashes. This night in the gap of the Numinous Terrace, auspicious clouds obscured the ritual platform. The next day, [the Emperor's] illness was cured. This is what his essential spirits had attained. Now, upon the day when the Master mounted his chariot, there was a gathering of bears and tigers, apes and birds. They cried out mournfully and blocked the road, left for the mountain and stopped there. Their feelings of loss and his movement of things were like this.

先是洞元⁷⁵之部。真偽混淆。先生刊而正之。涇渭乃判。故齋戒儀範。為將來典式焉。初桂陽王橫逆。暴骨蔽野。先生悉具棺槨。收而葬之。立德施仁。皆此類也。雖跡寓塵躅。而心遊象外。為迫恩命。

First was the Donxuan portion [of the Daoist canon]. True and false were mixed and muddled.⁷⁶ The Master revised and rectified it. The waters of the Jing and Wei Rivers were thereupon distinguished.⁷⁷ Thus he arranged and codified [regulations] for retreats and precepts, establishing classical models and methods for the future. Now, the Prince of Guiyang⁷⁸ rebelled, and exposed bones covered the plains. The Master provided coffins for all of them, [and] collected and buried them. He established meritorious works and spread humaneness; all [his deeds] were of this type. Although his activities were in the dusty world, his heart-mind roamed beyond the traces, compelled by the beneficent command [of the emperor].

⁷⁵ This 元 is an avoidance character for 玄, chosen by Tang editors in order to pay due deference to Tang Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (r. 712-755).

⁷⁶ The Daoist Canon is commonly split into three parts: "Penetrating Perfection" *dongzhen* 洞真, containing texts of the sect known as "Highest Clarity" *Shangqing* 上清; "Penetrating Mystery" *dongxuan* 洞玄, containing texts of the "Numinous Treasure" *Lingbao* 靈寶 sect, and "Penetrating Spirit" *dongshen* 洞神, containing texts of the "Three Augusts" *Sanhuang* 三皇 tradition. Here, the order is incorrect. As Lu was famous as a codifier, this must refer to his work in collating the first Daoist canon.

⁷⁷ This is a metaphor for right and wrong being confused. The waters of the Jing were said to be clear; the waters of the Wei, turbid. To confuse one with the other was used as a metaphor for mixing up good and bad qualities in the evaluation of people or affairs.

⁷⁸ This is 18th son of Song Wendi. See De Meyer 396. For the rebellion of the Prince of Guiyang, see De Meyer's note on the same page.

有違宿志逮元徽五年春正月。謂門人曰。吾將還舊山。可飾裝整駕。弟子僉怪 詔命未許。而有斯言。至三月二日。乃偃然解化。膚色暉 爍。目瞳朗映。但聞清香。惟不息而已。化後三日。廬山諸徒。咸見先生。霓旌紛 然。還止舊宇。斯須不知所在。相與驚而異之。

In contradiction of the resolve he had expressed in previous lives, in the fifth year of Yuanhui reign period,⁷⁹ in the first month, [the Master] called to his disciples and said, "I wish to return to the old mountain."⁸⁰ You can prepare and ornament the carriage." His disciples considered it strange that the command of the emperor had not yet permitted it, yet [the Master] spoke these words. In the third month, on the second day, the Master shed his corporeal form and completed the Way. His skin and face were bright and radiated light; his eyes and pupils were bright and shone, but he smelled pure and fragrant, and it did not stop. Three days after his transformation, his disciples were on Mount Lu. All saw the Master. Rainbow clouds enveloped him; he had returned to dwell at his old home. In a flash, no one knew where he was. Among one another, they were startled and marveled at this.

顧命盛以布囊。投所在崖谷。門人不忍。遂奉還廬山。春秋七十有二。所謂鍊形幽壤。騰景太微者也。凡著述論議。百有餘篇。並行於代。有詔以先生之居為簡寂觀。諡曰簡 寂先生。果有道也。

His last command⁸¹ was to put [his remains] in order in a cloth bag and throw him off a cliff that was there. His disciples did not have the heart to do it. Following this, they carried him off to Mount Lu. His age was seventy and two. [His death] is what is called "refining of the form in the dark earth, and the rising up of the phosphors to Grand Tenuity." All of his works and writings, in excess of one hundred *pian*, all were put into circulation in this generation. By imperial edict, the Master's dwelling was called "Belvedere of Simplicity and Silence." In truth, he had the Way.

天寶末。筠與友人荀太象避地茲境。敬 先生之洞府。慕先生之高風。感世祀之綿遠。慨銘志之湮滅。乃與道士吳太清宋沖虛

⁷⁹ A reign period of the Prince of Guiyang, with its fifth year in 477. This tallies with other sources for the year of Lu's death, e.g., Bokenkamp, "Lu Xiuqing," in Pregadio's *Encyclopedia of Taoism*.

⁸⁰ That is, Mt. Lu.

⁸¹ This is a reference to a passage in the *Book of Documents* 尚書 in which King Cheng of Zhou (r. 1104-1168 BCE), knowing he is about to die, gives his last command to his lieutenants in the form of an essay called "Take Care of My Commands" 顧令. The phrase, according to later commentators, was used to refer the deathbed wishes of a king.

詢謀僉同。建此貞石。其詞曰。猗先生。本天真。蘊至妙。懷深仁。知名疏。悟體親。忽榮祿。辭囂塵。餐霞景。甘隱淪。道彌高。聲益振。不得已。登蒲輪。揚元風。還紫宸。功允著。德惟新。忽解形。為帝賓。僊道密。難昭陳。紀遺烈。庶不湮。大唐上元二年歲次辛丑九月十三日。中岳道士翰林供奉吳筠撰。

At the end of the Tianbao reign period, Yun and his friend Xun Taixiang live in seclusion at this realm, pay respect to the Master's grotto-residence,⁸² cherish the memory of the master's great teachings, are moved by the ancientness of this generation's offerings, and sigh with regret at the impermanence of words written on stone. Thus together [we] and the Daoist masters Wu Taiqing and Song Chongxu⁸³ conferred and reached a consensus, and erected this stele. It says: the fine Master, essentially a Heavenly Perfected. Storing ultimate wondrousness, grasping to his breast the profoundly humane. [He] knew that names were far, but the body was near.⁸⁴ He ignored fame and fortune; he took leave of the dusty world. He ate the phosphors of rosy clouds [and] relished transcendence.⁸⁵ As his way became broader and taller, his voice became more and more expansive and resonant. Inevitably [he served the Emperor, who] raised to him the grass wheel.⁸⁶ [The Master] propagated the primal wind, and he met with the good effects [of his work]. His effort is clearly manifest; his virtue is constantly renewed. Suddenly, he was liberated from form to become a guest of the *di*.⁸⁷ The Way of Transcendents is difficult to illuminate and speak of. The outlines [were left by] former worthies, and thus the common people are not blocked. Great Tang, second year of the Shangyuan reign period. The year is Xinchou, the ninth month, the thirteenth day. The Daoist masters and literati of the Middle Marchmount⁸⁸ furnished [funds]. Wu Yun wrote.

⁸² Another term for the abode of a transcendent.

⁸³ These individuals' prenames, translatable as "Humble Void" and "Grand Clarity," show that they are probably not given names, but names adopted upon ordination. This is also true of Sun Taixiang - "Great Image Sun" - whose prename is a name given to the Dao in the *Daode jing* 道德經.

⁸⁴ That is, he engaged in Daoist practice.

⁸⁵ 隱淪 can also mean "living in seclusion."

⁸⁶ This compact phrase implies a gesture of respect. Worthies and other nobles were often presented with carts whose wheels were wrapped in grass, which made their journeys more comfortable. "To be presented the grass wheel" is, here, probably shorthand for gestures of respect due an important person.

⁸⁷ The character 帝, which I leave transliterated here, is often translated "thearch." It can refer to departed human lords, but also to important celestial figures who were never human at all.

⁸⁸ This is a mountain in modern-day Hunan province.

Chapter 5

AUTHOR AND AUDIENCE

As mentioned above, analyzing imperial Chinese biographies solely with the aim of extracting historically accurate information about their subjects is to misread them. It is in this spirit that I want to read Wu Yun's biography of Lu Xiuqing. In this way, we can learn a bit, not just about Lu himself, but about what Wu Yun expected from the ideal Daoist master. After studying some of the actions Lu takes in this biography, I will then analyze his relationships with the elites in the text, before moving on to suggest what this might say about the composition of Wu's audience.

The biography opens in a fashion we have, by now, come to expect. Wu gives Lu's surname and honorific, followed by his county and village of birth. He discusses his subject's ancestors by metonymically reducing them to the Lu family surname, before giving indications that 1) Lu was destined to be a transcendent, and 2) this nature manifested itself at a young age. We see the first hint of social posturing in the next line:

雖博通墳籍。旁究象緯。以為鍊形契道。與天地長久者。非經術占候之所能致。故存而不論。

Here, we learn that Lu possesses all the knowledge necessary to a successful life as an official, being skilled both in unspecified "ancient books" (we can probably assume he means the Classics), and the divinatory practices necessary to assisting

the ruler.⁸⁹ However, having already established Lu as "cut off from the dust and dregs" 長絕塵滓, Wu makes clear that Lu has higher goals in mind: practicing various ascetic disciplines 鍊形,⁹⁰ following the Daoist path more broadly 契道, and the quest for transcendence (here referred to as "living as long as heaven and earth" 與天地長久). Being a precocious young man, he understands that all of his textual knowledge, and the divinatory skill so useful in predicting anomalies, will not avail him in his pursuit of these goals; hence he "retains it, but does not talk about it," 存而不論.

Here, Wu is unequivocally positioning Lu against the more typical literatus-official of his day. Lu has all the knowledge he needs to be an excellent official, but is (allegedly) uninterested in the world of politics. He chooses to cut himself off from this world and pursue less mundane goals instead. This leads, eventually, to his being seen as superior to literati-officials such as Yuan Can. We see the first steps of this process in the next line:

研精玉書。稽仙聖奧旨稽仙聖奧旨...遂勤而行之。不捨寤寐。
聞異人所在...乃雲棲荆岫。卻粒修行。雖身隱彌靜。而名逃益彰。
江漢之人。虛往實歸者。莫知紀極。

⁸⁹ In the Han era, the textual corpus known as "the Classics" consisted of the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經), the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), the *Book of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), and the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經). The idea that this refers to classical texts, instead of, for instance, enduring practices in the ancestral temple (as it is interpreted by Brian W. Van Norden in his translation of *Mencius* 6B.8) is strengthened by the later reference to "textual study" 經術.

⁹⁰ Wu probably includes alchemy among Lu's ascetic practices as well, as *lian* 鍊 ("to refine") is a term used in both Daoist alchemy and the smelting of metals. The more literal alchemy of Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343) is likely intended here, as Wu wrote (and Lu lived) before the popularization of inner alchemy in the beginning of the Song 宋 (960-1279).

Having rejected the Confucian Classics as objects of his long-term cultivation, Lu devotes himself to the study of "Jade Books" sent down from heaven (see pg. x n. y above), and the "mysterious directives" of the transcendents.⁹¹ Wu thus establishes a different, competing canon for Lu and those who follow him; while Lu has mastered the Confucian classics, he rejects them and adopts instead unspecified revelations as his objects of study. This is not the only way Lu is marked as different, however. His subsequent actions set him off from conventional society in even starker ways.

After seeking out a teacher and receiving esoteric instructions, Lu enters into reclusion and abstains from grains.⁹² This is far more than just a dietary practice, however; as Campany points out, it separates him from mainstream Chinese society in several ways.⁹³ Grains were used in ancestral sacrifices, and as part of the state cult; they were the form taken by official salaries; they were a staple of the Chinese diet, whether northerner or southerner; and the consumption of cooked grain marked Chinese off from "barbarians" (*hu* 胡). By exempting himself from all of these considerations, Lu was placing himself outside some of the most fundamental processes of Chinese life. This ostensible separation is a necessary part of his career as a teacher.

⁹¹ It is unclear what this refers to; if Lu received Shangqing 上清 ordination (or if Wu believed he did), this may refer to directives bestowed upon the Xu 許 family in the fourth century by transcendent figures who visited their medium, Yang Xi 楊羲 (330-86).

⁹² This was not necessarily unusual in early medieval China, though the sort of instructions he receives, *jue* 決, are set off from typical instruction in the Classics in that they are the oral instructions required to properly interpret a text received from celestial beings.

⁹³ See *Making Transcendents* 62-87.

I say “ostensible” because though he dwells “far from the dust and dregs,” prospective students seem to have no trouble finding him. Indeed, based on the sequence of events in the story it tells, Wu’s biography implies that it is precisely because Lu cuts himself off so profoundly from society and cultivates his conduct 修行 that his “name became more manifest” 名逃益彰. Eventually, one of the great paradoxes of reclusion becomes operative: his fame as an ascetic is such that the people of the surrounding region hear of him and are drawn to his hermitage for teachings.

We next get a glimpse of Lu at the end of the Yuanjia reign period. Instead of retreating further from society, Lu has begun selling medicines in the market. This brings him into contact with the ruler at the time, Song Wendi of the Liu-Song, and it is here we get the first glimpse of how Wu thinks Daoist masters should be treated by those in power:

元嘉末。因市藥京邑。文皇帝聞之。使大臣宣旨固請。先生確乎不拔。遽有太初之難。或推獨見之明。

It is worth noting several aspects of this interaction. First, Wendi does not come to Lu himself; he sends someone else of lower rank. Second, that person (and by extension, the monarch who sent him) does not pay deference to Lu; he "firmly invites" the teacher to Wendi's palace. Finally, we receive no hint that Wendi was at all emotionally invested in the outcome of the interaction. We cannot make many positive statements about Wendi from this interaction alone - only that he approached Lu and was rebuffed. The extent of his failure to respect Lu only

becomes clear, however, when contrasted with the approach taken by a better ruler:

屬世宗明帝欲播元風於無垠。導蒼生以敦樸。非至德之士。則莫能獎而成之。素欽先生之風。乃備徵求之禮。至於再至於三。先生秉操逾堅。因辭以疾。天子側席意厚。理無推謝。遂恭承詔命。降跡城闕。亦既見止。帝心則愉。於是順風問道。抗對窮理。千古疑滯。一朝冰釋。乃築先生之館於外。俾朝野有宗師焉。

We have here what is essentially the same story: a ruler asking for teachings from Lu Xiujing, and the master responding. However, this version is much richer. Wu has added a preface detailing why, exactly, Mingdi approaches Lu: a desire to spread Daoist teachings and employ them in governance. However, he is impeded in this because he lacks ministers of "ultimately cultivated virtue." 至德之士. He hears of Lu's reputation, and approaches him to rectify the situation.

The manner of his approach is quite different from that of Song Wendi. Where Wendi sends a high official, Mingdi comes himself, preparing the proper rites for seeking teachings. When this fails, he does it a second time, and then a third. Even this fails, with Lu pleading sickness. The Emperor's distress becomes evident at this point, and it is only this which prompts Lu to accept, after which the Emperor pursues his studies with evident interest and rewards Lu with a temple outside the capital.

The benefits of allowing Lu such power become clear to the elite reader in the next sentence:

明年。天子不豫。詔先生為塗炭之齋。是夜靈壇之間。卿雲紛郁。翌日疾瘳。蓋精神所致。

Here, we face a situation similar analogous to the "Taichu difficulty" of Song Wendi, but this time it is Mingdi in a life-threatening situation. However, since he sincerely desires to study and propagate the Dao, and since he has treated Lu with the respect the teacher deserves, he has Lu on his side. This makes all the difference: where Wendi is killed by his own son during the rebellion, Mingdi's illness is rapidly dispelled by Lu's alchemically-refined bodily spirits.

At this point, it is worth reexamining how Lu interacts with Song Wendi and Song Mingdi, as well as reminding ourselves how this fits with the biographical tradition in early medieval China. We saw in chapter 2 that, while there were certain standards of verisimilitude to which biographers were held (or to which they held their sources), in general biographies were not meant as shot-for-shot retellings of an individual's life. They were literary creations with a specific goal. Some events and interactions were dropped from the record, while "new" ones modeled on famous figures of old were added to produce a consistent life that served as an example to the reader. Furthermore, biographies are social products that demand to be read with the interests of reader and audience in mind. Thus, it is necessary to read Lu as he appears in this biography as both a historical individual, and as a character crafted to convey a certain message. The likely targets of this message are clear from the important characters in the story: rulers and ministers are some of the only named individuals in the piece, and so it is appropriate to treat them as Wu's primary audience.

It is in that spirit that I read the interaction between Lu and the elites that appear in his biography. Song Wendi is our first case. As I mentioned above, his

shortcomings only become clear when his portion of the biography is set off against that of Song Mingdi. While it is impossible to draw solid conclusions from the absence of evidence, I believe Wu's silence in this case speaks volumes when contrasted with his portrayal of Mingdi. I draw this technique from the study of the Hebrew Bible, and a brief digression into this work, and the work of Meier Sternberg, is required to bring home the full force of the point.

The Books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings on the surface appear to be a combination of exciting storytelling and dry chronicle. However, a current theory in Biblical studies holds that all these books are suffused with the morality of the Book of Deuteronomy, which takes a strong rhetorical stance against the institution of kingship.⁹⁴ A representative work in this tradition is Meier Steinberg's *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, in which the author develops several new narrative techniques to analyze these works. I am concerned here less with these, than with the general stance the work takes on 1 Sam – 2 Kgs, which broadly agrees with the interpretive tradition described above.

This distaste for kingship extends even to unflattering portrayal of Israel's greatest kings, David and Solomon.⁹⁵ In the cycle of David, which extends from the Books of Samuel to the 2nd Book of Kings, David is never explicitly criticized; instead, the reader is left to form his or her own opinions based on the contrast between David's conduct and the behavior of an ideal ruler, as set forth in Judges

⁹⁴ See the introductions to Deuteronomy and Kings in the *HarperCollins Study Bible* for elaboration on this.

⁹⁵ The "wise" Solomon, for instance, in his failing age, takes foreign wives who guide him down the wrong path and doom the institution of kingship. See 1 Kgs 11.

and 1 and 2 Samuel. Explicit condemnation is not necessary, because educated readers will be able to read between the lines and grasp the narrator's point: King David is far from a moral ruler and wise king.

2 Kings 11 begins with: "At the turn of the year, at the time when kings go forth to battle, David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah, and David stayed in Jerusalem." The ironic contrast in this passage between what David ought to have been doing and what he actually is doing intensifies when one considers that leading the military in battle is both one of the primary reasons the people of Israel asked for a king, and one of the firmest measures of establishing kingly authority.⁹⁶ In fact, while his predecessor Saul is yet king, David is nonetheless viewed by the Israelites as their rightful ruler because he leads them in battle, while Saul's authority is diminished because he stays at home.⁹⁷

Thus, when David tarries in Jerusalem while his army is in the field, he is recapitulating the behavior of Saul. Israel's first king, though initially presented in a flattering light, is in the end a monitory character, not an exemplar; his jealousy of David caused the Lord's favor to be removed from him, and David set in his place as a righteous king.⁹⁸ However, the chronicler never states this explicitly; instead, he lays out information in an ostensibly neutral way, then relies on his

⁹⁶ Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative* 186-196. 1 Sam 8:19, 11:5-15.

⁹⁷ 2 Sam 5:2, 1 Sam 18:19.

⁹⁸ Sternberg, *Poetics* 186-196.

readers' previous knowledge of how kings should and should not behave to draw a portrait of David that is deeply unflattering.

It is this same technique of condemnation by implication that I see in Wu's biography of Lu Xiuqing. Wu does not need to go into detail about the steps Wendi should have taken in approaching a teacher, because the reader will already know that codes of behavior have been violated. In case he does not get the point, Mingdi is included as a foil – the “good king” who sincerely wishes to employ and propagate Daoist teachings, follows protocol in requesting them, pursues his study with ardor, and is rewarded by being saved from death. Wu does not need to condemn Wendi's actions explicitly; their results are laid out for the reader to see in a process that appears to be a dry chronicle, but is in fact charged with moral judgment. Where the pre- and post-Saul characters of David make him, in a sense, his own foil, Song Wendi's foil is provided in the later character of Song Mingdi.

By this comparison, I do not mean to imply a direct connection between Wu Yun and the writers of the Hebrew Bible – only that a narrative technique employed by scholars of Biblical literature can be used to detect a moral charge to the telling of history that would otherwise lay hidden beneath the surface. This fits well with what has already been said about Chinese biography, and leads into my next question: who is Wu Yun's audience?

Until now, I have been ambiguous about the identity of Wu's readership. I hold that, based on context provided by the genre of biography, we can infer two main groups: elite patrons and Daoist masters. My main criterion for this is their

heavy representation in the text. Government-sponsored biographies and histories were intended as aids for later emperors and emperors-to-be, and it is logical to extend this same principle to biographies that were not directed at members of these groups. As a tool intended to shape the reader according to the aims of the writer, Wu Yun's biography of Lu Xiujing is aimed at the sorts of people who would see themselves in the text.

We have already seen how Wu believes emperors should act; Mingdi's sincerity and deference earns him the clientage of Lu Xiujing (though doubtless Lu and Wu would phrase it differently), while Wendi's brusqueness deprives him of the teacher's salvific power. One other elite is mentioned in the text: Yuan Can (d. 477).

時司徒袁公。北面請益。先生指邪以明正。循派以示源。由是翕然一變頽俗矣。

Yuan Can "faces north," the traditional posture of a subject facing the Emperor, and requests additional instruction.⁹⁹ This is worth pausing over because of the relative social positions of Lu and his student. Yuan's post, "Minister of Education" (*situ* 司徒), was one of the highest in the kingdom at the time. In Zhou times (1111-255 B.C.E.), he would have been in charge of inculcating proper moral and political values in the subjects of the realm. During the Han and afterwards, the Minister of Education was one of the prestigious officers known

⁹⁹ The exact nature of the instruction is not specified, but given Lu's interest in altering the landscape of Daoist ritual and general practice at the time, it seems likely he was correcting what he saw as errors in ritual matters.

collectively as the "Three Dukes."¹⁰⁰ Assuming the position still retained some of the flavor of moral education it had held in earlier days, Lu would have been indirectly in charge of the moral welfare of much of the state - a powerful position, indeed. By depicting Lu as the superior party in this social exchange, Wu is placing his ideal Daoist master ahead of one of the most important scholar-officials in government service, enhancing Lu's prestige and providing a precedent for his elite readers to imitate in their dealings with Daoist masters of later ages. The rhetorical message of Wu's stele is that, if one wishes to reform "decaying social customs" 變頹俗 and rectify the morals of the common people - that is, to carry out the duties of a *situ* - there are no better techniques than those supplied by Daoist masters.

Wu is speaking to more than just elites, however. Lu Xiuqing, as the text's principle character, shows that there is one more group he is influencing, deliberately or no: future Daoist masters. By reiterating certain well-worn tropes about these individuals, he is helping shape the figure of the Daoist master in early medieval China. Biographical accounts of officials and rulers supplied models for imitation on the part of later occupants of similar posts, and thus helped form an inventory of figures and their deeds upon which later individuals could draw for inspiration in their own actions. Wu's portrait of Lu Xiuqing helped fashion expectations of Daoist masters in a similar way. He constructed this partially out of his sources on Lu's life, and partly from extant ideas in circulation at the time about how Daoist masters were expected to behave. He only chooses

¹⁰⁰ Hucker, *Dictionary* 458.

some of these ideas to employ in describing Lu, however, and his list is by no means exclusive.

Let us consider Lu's death, for instance. This is how it is recorded on Wu's stele:

有違宿志逮元徽五年春正月。謂門人曰。吾將還舊山。可飾裝整駕。弟子僉怪 詔命未許。而有斯言。至三月二日。乃偃然解化。膚色暉 爍。目瞳朗映。但聞清香。惟不息而已。化後三日。廬山諸徒。咸見先生。霓旌紛然。還止舊宇。斯須不知所在。相與驚而異之。顧命盛以布囊。投所在崖谷。門人不忍。遂奉還廬山。春秋七十有二。所謂鍊形幽壤。騰景太微者也。

Here Lu appears to predict his own death, which is described as "being liberated from form" 解化, and also as "refining of the form in the dark earth, and the rising up of the phosphors to Grand Tenuity" 鍊形幽壤。騰景太微者也。 Wu describes the postmortem luster and fragrance of Lu's corpse, before recounting a vision Lu's disciples had on Taishan of their master's return amidst rainbow clouds. Finally, he records Lu's last request that his earthly remains be placed in a bag and tossed off a cliff 盛以布囊。投所在崖谷。 Unusual as this constellation of features might be, it is not the only way for a Daoist to die.

For instance, another common trope in Daoist hagiographies was "escape by means of a simulated corpse" (*shijie* 尸解). In this method, the master - usually an adept in the arts of seeking transcendence in the employ of an official who sought transmission of the adept's methods - would die and be buried, only to be seen in some far-off province by an acquaintance or family member. News of this would be relayed to his former patron, who would dig up the grave and open the

coffin, only to that it contained not a corpse, but an object of some sort - a staff, a sword, or a pair of shoes, for instance - that had been buried in place of the "deceased." The master was thus freed of his or her onerous obligation.¹⁰¹ Lu does not share many attributes of the figures who usually attain *shijie*, but the option was nonetheless there for him as a Daoist of some renown. My concern here is not to ask why Wu chose one option over the other for his subject, but rather to point out that in his description of Lu's death, he is providing later Daoist masters with a model for how to die - and later biographers with a model for how to write about those deaths. He is expanding the repertoire of features individuals in both groups have available to them.

Several other points can be inferred about how Wu expects Daoist masters to act while alive. One fruitful approach is to return to Lu's interactions with emperors. Daoist masters must portray themselves as separated from the world of politics and refuse to serve emperors who do not treat them with the proper respect. They are nonetheless compelled to aid those rulers who do show due deference and a genuine desire to both learn Daoist arts and employ them in governance. Far from abstaining absolutely from politics, masters have an obligation to participate in governance - though only as a teacher of officials, not as an official themselves - when they will be able to spread the Dao to good effect. This is reflected in Lu's interaction with Mingdi. When the Emperor "moves to

¹⁰¹ Kirkland, "Shijie." Company, *Making Transcendents 1; To Live As Long as Heaven and Earth* 52-60. It is worth noting that Stephen Bokenkamp argues elsewhere that, for Shangqing and Lingbao Daoists, there was no escaping transcendent records. See Stephen Bokenkamp, "Simple Twists of Fate? The Daoist Body and Its Ming," in *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture*, edited by Christopher Lupke, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), pp. 151-168.

the edge of his mat, thick with intention" 天子側席意厚, Lu is compelled to teach him 理無推謝. The use of the word *li* 理 here adds force to this idea. The word originally described the grain in a piece of jade, being extended as a noun to cover the fundamental order of things, and as a verb meaning "to govern" - with the idea that this government would be in accord with the basic order of the situation. I do not hold that this word was intended with its full philosophical weight in this instance, but it is nonetheless clear that Wu does not portray Lu's acquiescence to Mingdi as a matter of personal choice. The *li* of the situation permit no other possibility. Leaving reclusion for the world of dust and dregs, then, is occasionally an obligation.¹⁰²

I do not claim to have unpacked every instance of social posturing in Wu's stele. My intent has been to show how reading it for concrete evidence about Lu's life is insufficient. The conventions of Chinese biography and the structural constraints of Wu's time demand that we mine the biography for information about the social world in which Wu and Lu moved. While there is important information that we can use in reconstructing a figure we might call "Lu the historical personage," we stand to gain a much more complete picture of early medieval intellectual life if we interpret this information in light of its textual and social context. That is, the Stele of Lord Lu is a sequence of assertions directed at an audience with certain interests and expectations by an author whose own interests and expectations sometimes overlapped with theirs. Some of these assertions we can confirm based on other sources, while others are purely

¹⁰² The text justifies this with the phrase 雖跡寓塵躅。而心遊象外。

speculative. All, however, provide us with clues about the early medieval worldview that would escape us if we considered Wu's document solely as a source of information about a single subject. With this in mind, I turn to another important question.

Until now, I have concentrated on the examples with which Wu was furnishing later elites and masters. I now want to shift my focus to Wu himself. When he wrote this stele, the poet was doing far more than commemorating a famous and influential teacher of an earlier era. He was fashioning himself a place in a particular imagined community of Daoists.

I take the phrase "imagined community" from Benedict Anderson's book of the same name, in which he defines a nation as an "imagined political community."¹⁰³ "It is imagined," he writes, "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."¹⁰⁴ This image, I hold, can be applied not just to nations, but to groups of other sorts as well. This includes the unwieldy phenomenon scholars have come to call "Daoism." While this modern category is not exactly coterminous with the categories employed by medieval "Daoists," it is no stretch to say that many of these figures shared a sense that they belonged to a single group, despite the fact that its members were separated by a great deal of time and

¹⁰³ 6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

space. It is for this reason that Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" can be fruitfully applied.

In order to understand just how it can be applied, however, I must return for a moment to the genre of biography. The information that went into official biographies, *mu zhi*, and commemorative stelae such as the *Stele of Lord Lu* was based on accounts of an individual's life commissioned by kin or close acquaintances.¹⁰⁵ At first glance, this raises a problem for Wu Yun. He was not of the Lu family, and lived centuries after Lu Xiuqing. Why should he, a stranger, undertake an act typically reserved for those far closer to the deceased? The answer is that groups like "friends" and "close kin" are more fluid than they appear at first glance. The connection between these groups and the memorial activities that are their provenance works both ways. If friends and kin create memorials, then the act of memorializing makes one friend and kin. In writing the *Stele of Lord Lu*, Wu is taking advantage of this correlation. This assertion is strengthened by the involvement in the memorialization process of two individuals that certainly would have seen themselves as, in some sense, Lu's descendents. These are the "Daoist masters" the text speaks of - Wu Taiqing and Song Chongxu. In placing himself among such company, Wu is joining an imagined community of Daoists that stretches - at least, in our text - back to the fourth century.

In a deeper sense, though, Wu and his compatriots are not joining a community, but rather creating it. Imagined communities do not exist naturally,

¹⁰⁵ Twitchett, "Problems" 27-29. For the use of eulogies written by friends to construct a delimited group of Neo-Confucian intellectuals in Song China, see Tillman, *Confucian Discourse* 4.

but are formed by human beings in creative acts such as the memorialization undertaken by Wu Yun and his Daoist associates. Speech and writing lend physical weight to groups that otherwise exist only as abstract entities, and this concreteness acts as an anchor - or a flag around which living people can rally. This was grasped by the petty kings of the Warring States, who destroyed the annals of the kingdoms they conquered.¹⁰⁶ In obliterating the physical records of a kingdom, the victors denied their enemies the mortar that cemented their imagined community. Conversely, in creating the *Stele of Lord Lu*, Wu Yun and company lent reality to an imagined Daoist community that included Lu as their distinguished forebear. The next section will examine this process in more detail.

¹⁰⁶ Lewis, *Writing and Authority* 130.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION: IMAGINED COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

I began this essay by suggesting that the world of discourse of early medieval China followed certain rules, and that these rules determined, to an extent, the form and content of the biographical literature generated during the period. I want to conclude by discussing how memorials like the *Stele of Lord Lu* allow us to access this world of discourse, and suggesting one prominent feature: it transcends the categories scholars commonly apply to it.

As I have mentioned above, objects such as Wu's stele play an essential role in the creation of the imagined community of early medieval Daoists. In order to more fully understand this role, I need to refine the concept of the imagined community with reference to the study of collective memory. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to provide a detailed overview of the field, it suffices to say that history and collective memory are regarded as closely linked by scholars who concern themselves with the subject.¹⁰⁷ As history and memory are implicit in Anderson's concept of the imagined community, it is well worth engaging their work.

The kind of imagined community in which Wu Yun and his compatriots are situating themselves depends on a shared sense of belonging to a group that transcends the times and places of its individual members. These sorts of groups are sometimes reified and conceived of as having "memories" independent of their individual constituents. Historian Geoffrey Cubbit presents his definition of

¹⁰⁷ For an excellent introduction to collective memory studies, see Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies."

this phenomenon, known as "collective memory," as follows: "*Collective memory* is the species of ideological fiction, itself often generated by and within... processes of social memory, which presents particular social entities as possessors of a stable mnemonic capacity that is collectively exercised, and that presents particular views or representations of a supposedly collective past as the natural expressions of such a mnemonic capacity."¹⁰⁸ Thus the history of sites such as Alcatraz Island is considered to belong to America's "collective memory," despite the fact that no single American has experienced every facet of that history. It contained figures such as Al Capone and the Birdman, and is notorious as one of America's highest-security prisons in its day. However, this collective memory of Alcatraz does not tell the whole story.

Collective memory is inherently partial. The museum that currently occupies Alcatraz Island is run by the National Parks Service, and focuses on Alcatraz's time as a prison. As chronicled by Cynthia Duquette-Smith and Theresa Bergman in "You Were On Indian Land," however, it is also much more. From 1969 to 1971, Alcatraz was occupied by Native Americans claiming the former prison - recently declared surplus land by the Department of the Interior - under the Sioux Treaty of 1868.¹⁰⁹ This nineteen-month occupation was the single most important driving force behind sweeping changes in the treatment of Native

¹⁰⁸ Cubitt 18. Emphasis in original. I do not believe Cubitt uses the term "fiction" here pejoratively, but rather as related to its original Latin sense of "creation." This is also how I use the term.

¹⁰⁹ Greg Dickson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, *Places of Public Memory* 164.

Americans by the federal government.¹¹⁰ However, the award-winning audio tour that dominates visitors' experience of the island almost completely neglects its time as a site of protest. Instead, the tour emphasizes the cellhouse, providing visitors with memories that emphasize their separation, as law-abiding citizens, from the criminal inhabitants of Alcatraz during its time as a prison.¹¹¹ This simple binary forges a picture of the American government as the champion of justice, locking away dangerous elements for the good of society, while simultaneously forgetting its more unpleasant history as an oppressor of native peoples. The collective memory acquired by (or imposed upon) visitors to the Alcatraz National Museum thus accords with Cubitt's definition; it is an ideological fiction presented as a natural extension of the stable mnemonic capacity of a collective entity - in this case, the U.S. government and its citizens.

At first glance, this may not appear connected to Wu Yun's *Stele of Lord Lu*. However, much of the rhetorical work done by the U.S. government in fashioning a coherent picture of Alcatraz is also done in Wu's stele. We see the creation of a group that places certain individuals as its primary members: Wu, the priests, Lu Xiuqing, and his disciples; certain as patrons: Mingdi and Lord Yuan; and certain as excluded entirely: Wendi.¹¹² This parallels the museum's binary focus on law-abiding citizens and dangerous criminals. We also know, from other accounts of Lu's life that were circulating at the time and from

¹¹⁰ 160.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² This demonstrates how later emperors can surpass their forebears in honoring Daoism, which Lu would certainly have been interested in.

conventions of the biographical genre as a whole, that certain facts about Lu were excluded during the forging of this picture of his life in the name of producing a coherent narrative, just as certain facets of the history of Alcatraz were necessarily excluded when it was portrayed exclusively as a prison. Finally, in both cases these narratives are shaped according to certain interests. In the case of Alcatraz, the U.S. government is portrayed in a positive light; in the case of Wu Yun's stele, prominent officials are given virtuous models to emulate in their treatment of Daoist masters, and a certain image of these Daoist masters is forged as an educative device for later members of the group.¹¹³ With these parallels drawn, it is time to focus on just how these collective memories are created.

This is the collection of processes Cubitt names "social memory." In order to adequately define it, I must quote at length from his introduction. For Cubitt, social memory is

the process (or processes) through which a knowledge or awareness of past events or conditions is developed and sustained within human societies, and through which, therefore, individuals within those societies are given the sense of a past that extends beyond what they themselves personally remember... The ways in which individuals, as participant members of societies, formulate and articulate their own experience are a vital ingredient in the processes that produce knowledge and awareness of the past in those societies. They are not, however, the only things that contribute to these processes, and social memory is therefore not, in my understanding of it, reducible to a kind of sum total or cumulative effect of individual remembering. Rather, processes of social memory... characteristically also involve the operation of a wide variety of cultural devices, and of elements of institutional or social structure, whose effect is

¹¹³ I do not mean to portray the authors of either narrative as cynically manipulating history for their own ends. No doubt Wu believed his portrait of Lu was accurate and honest, and the museum at Alcatraz also includes information about the Native American occupation. My point is merely that, in generating one collective memory, alternative memories must inevitably be suppressed, no matter how good the author's intentions might be.

often to loosen the connection that given bodies of data may have to specific contexts of individual recollection. The past that people acquire a sense of through their participation in and exposure to these processes is not an accumulation of individual pasts that in principle might be disaggregated, but a past (or a set of pasts) that is (or are) envisaged as being somehow general and collective.¹¹⁴

To sum up: the processes of social memory mediate between the memories of individual agents as they go about their lives and the collective memory that is created when these agents experience processes of social memory that detach individual memory from the context of its creation and transform it into something adopted by a larger group as its own.

The knowledge presented in Wu Yun's *Stele of Lord Lu* is part of this process of social memory. The narratives it contains about Lu Xiuqing's life have felt the shaping hand of the biographical tradition, which created from them an account of Lu's life that is meant to be read as an example to others. The stele itself is also one of the "cultural devices" Cubitt mentions. It functions as a mnemonic device that is intended to preserve a certain image of a certain person, to transmit this image to later generations of elites and Daoist masters, and to transform the way they act in the world. As Cubitt notes,

The mnemonic effects of objects may be confined to the mind and consciousness of a single individual but they may also - as in the case of public monuments - may be intended to be more general, and may come... to have an influence that is transgenerational. Portraits and heirlooms and saintly relics are objects that may pass from one generation to another within a group or community, offering regular 'reminders' of people or moments in a group's past, and hence also of the group's own continuous existence.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Cubitt 14-15.

¹¹⁵ 192.

The *Stele of Lord Lu* is just one such object, with the caveat that it is designed only partially with members of the Daoist community in mind. It also targets the elites and rulers Daoists often found themselves serving. In one sense, objects like Wu's stele serve to "keep the past alive," as Cubitt says, but - as he also later notes - they also form structured, guided mnemonic environments intended to instill a certain vision of the past in their viewers.¹¹⁶ They are part of the process of social memory, and as such they generate a certain vision they intend to impose on certain groups.

Thus we see how imagined communities such as Wu's Daoists are formed. Objects and records such as Wu Yun's *The Stele of Lord Lu* are not neutral accounts of an individual's life; they are deliberately crafted narratives shaped according to interests - conscious or unconscious - that have particular effects in the world. This includes the creation of imagined communities that transcend generations. Concomitant with this is the creation of a certain vision of history that is intended to influence the behavior of those who will come later. In the case of Wu's biography, the targets are Daoist masters, rulers, and elites, who are meant to be shaped by the positive and minatory examples Wu provides.

All of this leads to a broader conclusion about accessing the world of discourse of early medieval China. The tools we have at our disposal include texts such as the *Stele of Lord Lu*. We later readers can glean important historical information about their subjects from the reading process, but we can also learn so much more. Read with sensitivity, works such as these can tell us about what the

¹¹⁶ 193-197.

writer was trying to do - who she was trying to shape, and how. We can infer much about the social position in which a writer saw herself: the groups she felt she belonged to, who her associates and audience were, her literary background, and her likely social status. We can penetrate deeper still into the intellectual milieu of our authors, however.

As mentioned in the introduction, I take for granted the idea that thought in early medieval China followed certain regularities. By studying how different imagined communities thought, and the processes through which their thought acquired a certain shape, we later readers can learn about the assumptions - the Foucauldian "rules of formation" - that underlay their worldviews. Read in great quantity, and across widely differing genres, texts - biography included - can reveal to us the contours of thought in early medieval China.

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