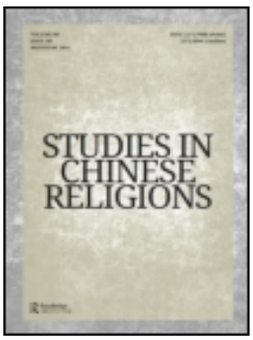

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ARTICLE

Laozi teaching Confucius: history of a text through time

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ABSTRACT

In addition to religious scriptures that survive from the Ming-Qing period, the Qing archives related to the prosecution of secret societies contain references to texts and images found in the possession of members of such societies at the time of their arrest. Texts may also be mentioned or at times quoted in full by the accused in the course of their interrogation. Some of these texts are unknown from other sources and thus the archival material offers precious insights into religious literature used by sectarian groups. This article examines a text that appears in the archives under the title *Laojun du fuzi* 老君度夫子 (The Elderly Lord Saves the Master), tracing the history of its transmission from the Song dynasty until modern days. In the course of the centuries, the text changed its title and part of its content, to the extent that it may be argued that its versions no longer constitute the same text but rather several interrelated ones, each with its own agenda and socio-cultural background.

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Confucius; Laozi; sectarian movements; secret societies; religious literature; Tangut manuscripts

The Qing archives related to the prosecution of secret societies contain occasional references to texts and other religious objects found in the possession of members of such societies at the time of their arrest.[1] Other texts are mentioned or quoted by the accused in the course of their interrogation, and such references are therefore preserved in confessions and statements, giving evidence to the type of religious literature used by particular groups. While some of the texts featuring in the archives survive and are well known to us, others have been subsequently lost and we can only rely on the titles to speculate about their content. This article examines one such text mentioned in the archives under the title *Laojun du fuzi* 老君度夫子 (The Elderly Lord Saves the Master) and attempts to document different stages in the history of its transmission. Although the text is almost entirely absent from bibliographies and library catalogues, I intend to show that there is enough information to ascertain its existence from the Song period until today. In the course of these eight or nine centuries the text continued to evolve, changing its title and part of its content, so that it may be argued that its versions no longer constitute the same text but rather several interrelated ones, each with its own agenda and socio-cultural background. Indeed, one of the intriguing aspects of such transmutation is

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how in different times the text was used by ever new groups for their own ends. Below, I trace surviving versions and references to the text in question gradually moving back in time.

1. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Religious literature played a prominent role in everyday life of sectarian movements the during the Ming-Qing period. Members of religious groups used scriptures, commentaries and other related writings on a daily basis both in ritual settings and as motivational reading.[2] The texts used by and affiliated with sectarian movements are for the most part known from surviving editions of these texts, some of which continued to be re-printed until fairly recently. A number of books and manuscripts were also acquired by collectors or scholars and eventually found their way into public collections. Yet there are many texts once in use that remained unknown beyond their sectarian context and are not part of modern collections either. Members of sectarian movements mention a number of these in confessions and statements they made in the course of being investigated by the authorities.[3] In addition, authorities sometimes made lists of books and pictures found in the home of the accused, thereby preserving titles some of which are unattested elsewhere. For example, an inventory of books and pictures appears among the case files of Fang Rongsheng 方榮升, member of the Gathering the Source Teaching (Shouyuanjiao 收元教) in the 1810s. In addition to pictures, almanacs and other materials, the list contains the title of over 20 different texts, including several precious scrolls (*baojuan* 寶卷), such as the *Yingjie baojuan* 應劫寶卷 or *Jiulianzan baojuan* 九蓮贊寶卷.[4] Most of the texts were confiscated, except for those that were present in more than one copy or were considered not directly related to heterodox teachings.[5]

In one particular case, when elaborating on the books and manuscripts found in the home of a certain Wang Bingheng 王秉衡 (ca. 1761–1816), the case files mention two scriptures which had been handed down to him by his father Wang Bao 王苞. These are referred to as *chaobaijing* 抄白經, presumably meaning that they were manuscripts without commentary, containing only the core text.[6] One of these has the title *Laojun du fuzi* 老君度夫子 (The Elderly Lord Saves the Master), and the other, *Kongzi du Yuanguan* 孔子度元關 (Confucius Crosses the Primordial Pass). According to the files, Wang was active in the Jiangnan 江南 region, propagating and practicing the Red Sun Teaching (Hongyangjiao 紅陽教), identified by the investigators as the movement alternatively also known as the Great Vehicle Teaching (Dashengjiao 大乘教), Non-Action Teaching (Wuweijiao 無為教) or the School of Purity and Stillness (Qingjingmen 清淨門). Wang was arrested at the beginning of 1816 and died in custody a month later due to illness.[7] The two titles named in Wang's file are unattested in other sources, and modern scholarship has not been able to match them with known works. The reason for this is that the titles do not occur elsewhere and since we do not have access to the texts themselves, we can only speculate regarding their content. Judging by its title, we can see that the *Laojun du fuzi* describes an interaction between Laozi 老子 and Confucius 孔子, in the course of which Laozi, using a markedly religious vocabulary, helps Confucius to the other shore, that is, leads him to salvation.

The title *Kongzi du Yuanguan* is somewhat similar to the first title but in this case the verb *du* 度 is used in the more literal, intransitive sense 'to ford, cross' and thus it suggests

that Confucius crossed some sort of pass. One of the problems in the title is the meaning of Yuanguan 元關, i.e., the Primordial Pass, which in Daoist practice usually designates the lower elixir field (*dantian* 丹田) located in the abdomen.[8] I suspect that the original title contained the term Dark Pass (Xuanguan 玄關), which Daoist texts similarly identified as being located in the body, most commonly around or above the nose.[9] The personnel recording the titles of manuscripts in Wang's possessions may have written the character 元 in place of 玄 to observe the imperial name taboo, as 玄 was part of the personal name of the Kangxi 康熙 Emperor (r. 1661–1722). Indeed, references to the Dark Pass are considerably more common in Ming-Qing sectarian literature, and the term usually referred to the area between the eyebrows. Opening the Dark Pass meant obtaining a new level of insight.[10] Yet even if I am right about the effect of the imperial taboo, the term Dark Pass in the title is still problematic because the verb *du* ('to pass'), when used in an intransitive sense, implies traversing through a place, real or mythical, rather than doing something related to inner cultivation or meditation practices. We shall return to the question of the Dark Pass in the title of this text in the next section below.

With regards to the work identified in Wang Bingheng's case file as *Laojun du fuzi*, although this exact title is unattested elsewhere, books with similar titles periodically surface at online auction sites. For example, a printed book with the title *Laojun du Kongzi* 老君度孔子 was posted on an online book auction site in May 2014.[11] Fortunately, the seller included four images which give us access to part of the content and also shows what the book looks like. It is a small thread-bound booklet 12 × 18 cm in size, printed in a relatively unsophisticated manner in traditional characters. Although undated, it seems to come from the first half of the twentieth century. The cover is uninscribed and the title *Laojun du Kongzi* appears in the first line of the first page (Figure 1). Below the title is a small handwritten note saying 'Record of the Hall of Luminous Virtue' 明德堂記, in which the last character is in simplified form. The note seems to have been added by the owner of the book, although it is hard to say whether it refers to the owner's library or the edition itself. Even though the printed book itself is without punctuation, someone at a later point added crude punctuation marks, presumably while studying or reading the text.

Other auctions and online book sites carry several items with almost the same title. One of them is the booklet *Laojun du Kongzi* 老君渡孔子, in the title of which the third character is written with the water radical as *du* 渡 instead of *du* 度. Considering that both characters can write the word *du* 'to ford, cross > to save,' the title evidently denotes the same text. This is confirmed by the photographs of sample pages posted along with the item. One of the books preserves the front cover with the title.[12] To the right of the title is a note saying that it was 'newly printed in the second month of the *yichou* year of the Republic' 民國乙丑年花月新刻, that is, in the spring of 1925. On the left side of the front cover is a note that the text is based on a printed edition preserved at the Yixintang 一心堂 library in Haizhou Dongguan 解州東關 (Figure 2).[13] Another copy with extensive tears and damages states that it was printed in the second year of the Xuantong 宣統 reign, that is, in 1910 (Figure 3).[14]

The accompanying images reveal that whether the third character in the title is written with or without the water radical, each of the above books in fact contains the same text. As far as the images show, even the lines are of equal length, showing that these editions derive from a common source. Of particular significance in this respect are the shared mistakes. One of these is writing the word *yunyou* 雲遊 ('to travel

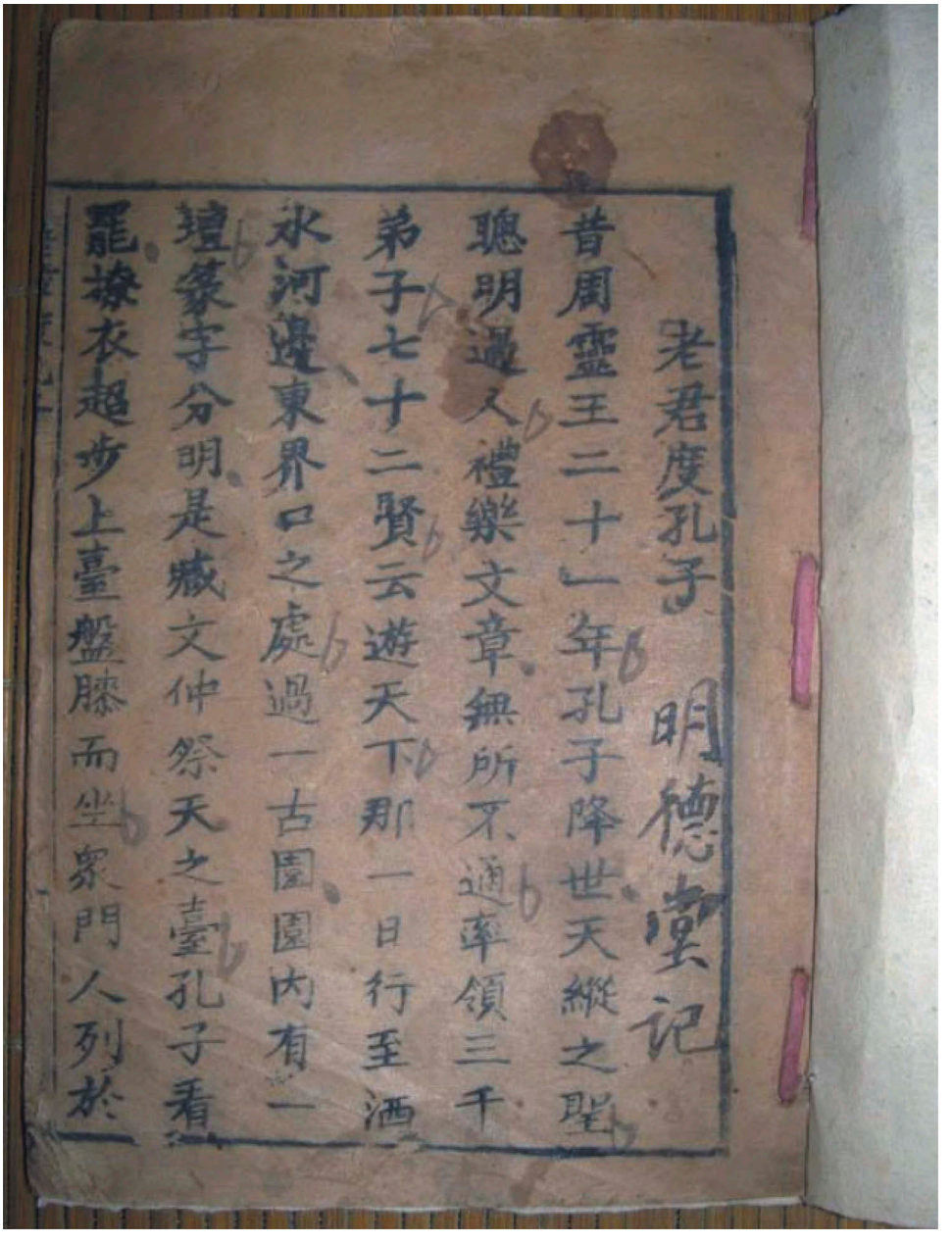

Figure 1. Undated first page of the *Laojun du Kongzi* from the Republican period (http://www.kongfz.cn/14486674/pic).

around, roam') with the character *yun* 云 ('to say') instead of *yun* 雲 ('cloud'). The two characters not only have the same phonetic value but also share the phonetic component, as a result of which the more complicated 雲 was often written with the simpler 云.[15] Thus while technically this is not correct, it was common practice in handwritten culture and in imprints of a less formal nature, and had no effect on the meaning of the

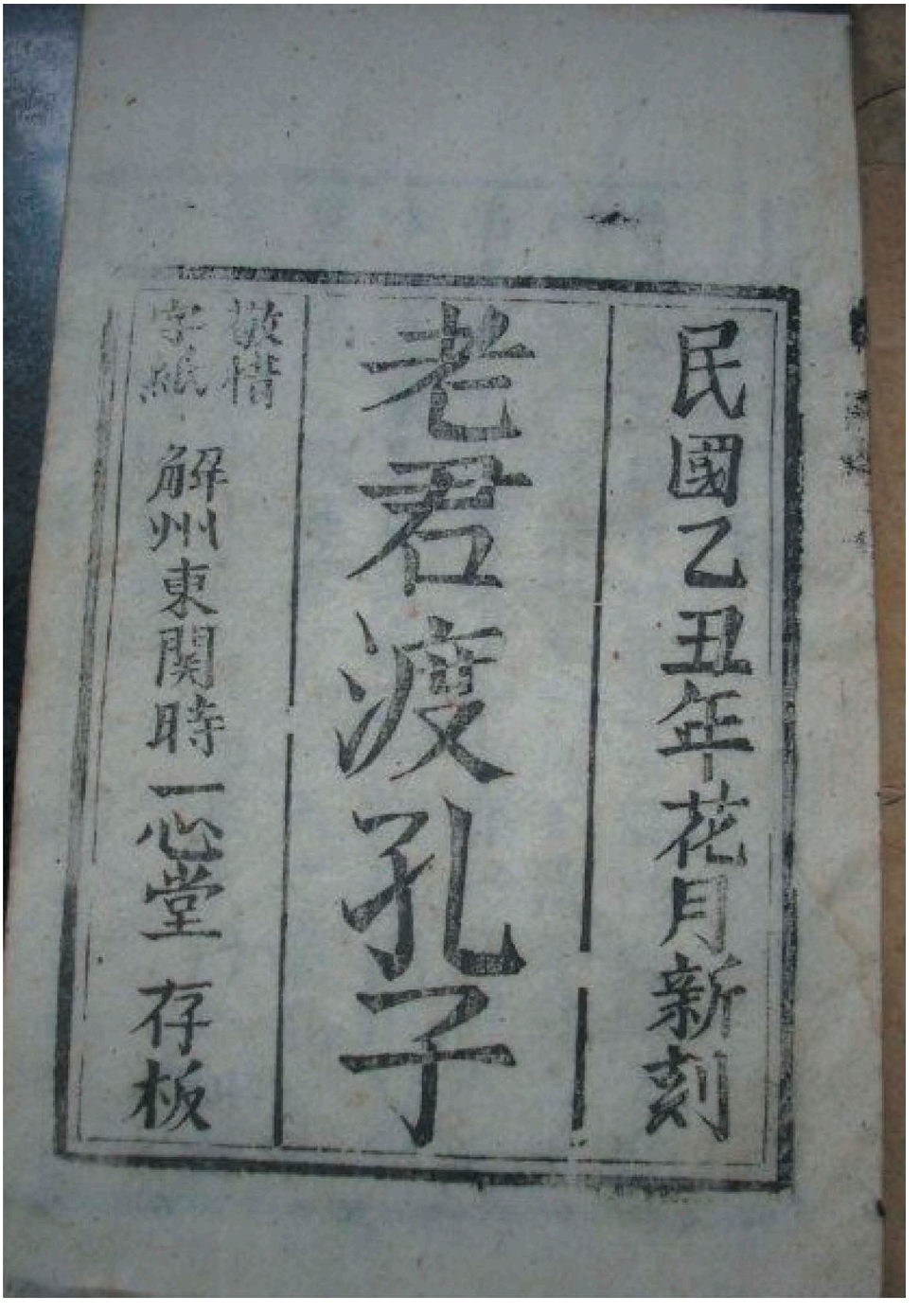

Figure 2. Inside cover of a printed copy of the *Laojun du Kongzi* from 1925 (http://www.kongfz.cn/3872624/pic).

text. A more substantial error is that in all copies offered for sale online the first character of the name of the Sishui River 泗水河 is mistakenly written as *sa* 洒. This is the river that flows through Qufu 曲阜, the homeland of Confucius in what used to

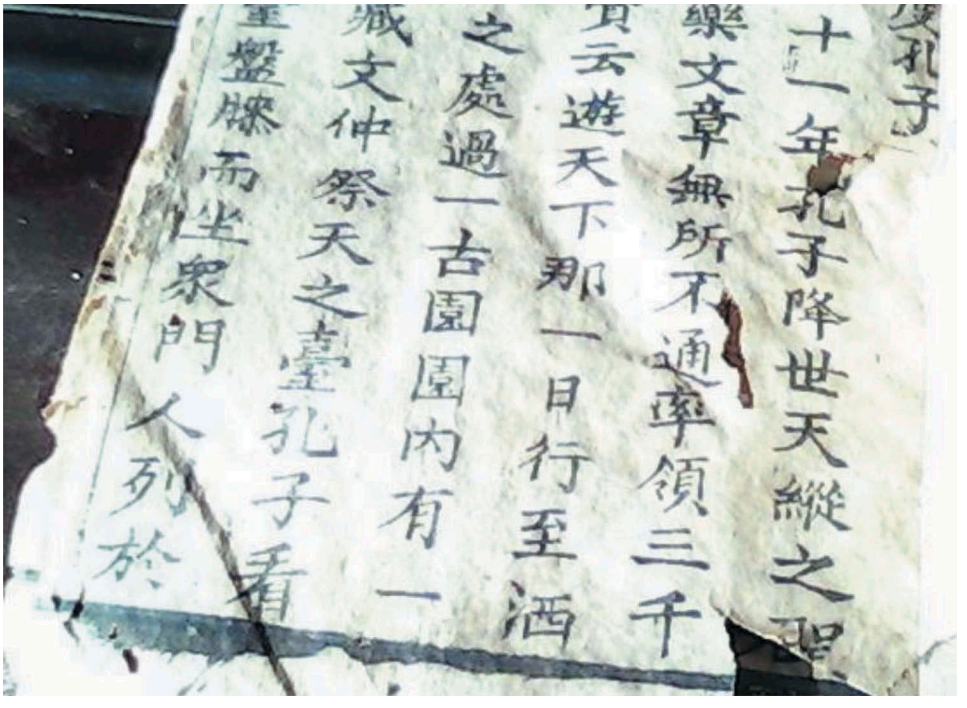

Figure 3. The first page of the *Laojun du Kongzi* from 1910 (http://www.cang.com/trade/show-8967390-2.html).

be the ancient state of Lu 魯. In traditional texts it invariably appears as Sishui 泗水 (i.e., Si River) but already in the Ming period the word *he* 河 ('river') was added to it because the word *shui* 水, originally used in the sense of 'river,' had become part of the name itself.[16] Without doubt, writing the name of the river with the character *sa* 洒, meaning 'to sprinkle, wash' is a mistake caused by the graphic similarity of the two characters. The fact that this obvious error occurs in all above editions corroborates that they are genetically related.

Yet another version of the same text with a similar title is the *Laozi du Kongzi* 老子度孔子, which uses the name Laozi instead of the epithet Laojun (Elderly Lord) seen in the above books. This copy is preserved at the Library of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica. In fact, to my knowledge this is the only copy of the text available in a public collection. The front page includes the title and the note that this is a gift copy not intended to be sold. The book itself has an orderly layout and character style, which is quite different from the unsophisticated appearance of the copies on auction sites. It is noticeably a version created with attention to the aesthetic qualities of the book. The layout is different but the text is the same. Unsurprisingly, the name of the Sishui River is written here correctly with the character *si* 泗, and the word *yunyou* 雲遊 ('to travel around, roam') is also written with the correct unsimplified character.[17] Thus in terms of the history of its transmission, this version either derives from a different – textually superior – source or represents a subsequently edited version. Comparing it with the copies from the first half of the twentieth century, which were most likely printed and

circulated in a religious framework, this version was prepared in a different kind of setting and with the explicit purpose of being given away.

The same text with the same title (i.e., *Laozi du Kongzi*) is included in the Daoist master Su Huaren's 蘇華仁 collection of Daoist material related to the *Daode jing* 道德經 and the cultivation of health (*yangsheng* 養生).[18] Unfortunately, the collection provides no information regarding the origin of the text but its inclusion in the collection demonstrates that it is still a 'living' text in use in some parts of China.[19] The text itself appears to be the same as the above versions, even though there are minor discrepancies. One of these is that the third line of a quatrain recited by Confucius, which reads 'Where is the general's formidable horse now' 將軍嚴馬今何在, in place of the expression 'formidable horse' 嚴馬 we find 'fine steed' 寶馬, which is arguably a more logical variant. Otherwise the text is remarkably close to the versions discussed above.

All of the books introduced above have the same text and the differences between them are minor and inconsequential. The titles, although not identical, are likewise closely related, representing variations on a theme: *Laojun du Kongzi* 老君度孔子; *Laozi du Kongzi* 老子度孔子; *Laojun du Kongzi* 老君渡孔子; and *Laozi du Kongzi* 老子渡孔子.[20] The differences essentially consist of interchanging Laozi and Laojun, as well as writing the word *du* 'to save' in two orthographically different ways. The title of the manuscript recorded in the Qing archives as having been confiscated from Wang Bingheng is yet another variant: *Laojun du fuzi* 老君度夫子. This title is fully consistent with the variable title of later versions, and for this reason it very likely denoted the same text. A concrete piece of evidence that links the text confiscated from Wang with the twentieth-century printed copies sold online is that Wang's case files specifically state that this text and the enigmatic *Kongzi du Yuanguan* contain the words of Laozi and urge the reader to 'enlighten his mind and see his inborn nature' 明心見性.[21] Indeed, the twentieth-century copies of the *Laojun du Kongzi* contain these very words in a heptasyllabic verse line: 'Enlighten your mind and see you inborn nature so that you can return home' 明心見性歸家去. The co-occurrence of these four characters and the nearly identical titles make it almost certain that the manuscript found in Wang's possession contained the same text as the printed books on modern auction sites. The connection is further corroborated by the social context of books, as the ones from the early twentieth century most likely also circulated in popular religious communities.

Since in the case of the twentieth-century copies we are essentially talking about the same text, henceforth I will collectively refer to the text in these copies as *Laojun du Kongzi*, regardless of the actual 'spelling' of their respective titles. Since the manuscript confiscated from Wang's home is known to us only by its title, even if we assume that it is the same text, we cannot know the degree of its similarity to the *Laojun du Kongzi*, which is why I will refer to it as 'Wang Bingheng's copy.'

Wang Bingheng's copy of the *Laojun du fuzi* takes us back to the beginning of the nineteenth century or slightly earlier.[22] This means that the text, possibly more or less the same version of it, was in existence for the past 200 years and during that time it circulated on the fringes of society without attracting the attention of scholars or collectors. Wang's copy is about a century older than the earliest dated copy of 1910 but the extant witnesses, which themselves may be decades apart, suggest that this was a relatively stable text. Paradoxically, despite its variation, the title itself likewise remained fairly consistent. That multiple printed copies survive from the first half of the twentieth century reveals that the

text would have been fairly popular during that period. It is nevertheless striking that in our digital age, when the 'world's knowledge' is progressively being converted into digital format, books that once had a considerable distribution may remain unnoticed or undocumented.

2. Content of the *Laojun du Kongzi*

Thanks to the surviving copies of the *Laojun du Kongzi*, we have the complete text of the book which was probably not too different at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The text narrates an encounter between Laozi and Confucius on the bank of the Sishui River. The theme of this encounter goes back to classical sources, most importantly the *Lunyu* 論語 (18.7) and the 'Old Fisherman' 漁父 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子.[23] Yet another locus classicus is the 'Old Fisherman' 漁父 poem in the *Chuci* 楚辭, traditionally attributed to the legendary poet Qu Yuan 屈原.[24] In terms of its length and general narrative structure, the *Zhuangzi* is certainly the closest to our text. Interestingly, neither of these early sources identifies the old man with Laozi; the *Lunyu* refers to him as a *zhangren* 丈人 ('old man; grandfather'), whereas the *Zhuangzi* uses the term *yufu* 漁父 ('old fisherman'). In contrast with this, the twentieth-century copies of the *Laojun du Kongzi* explicitly call the sage Laozi, even though at the onset he is likewise referred to as a *laoren* 老人 ('old man'). Moreover, in the *Laojun du Kongzi* the encounter only serves as the framework for a more elaborate presentation of teachings. Although the figure of the sage is exemplified by Laozi, in addition to a series of typically Daoist ideas, his words also include elements of distinctly Buddhist origin. Confucius does not appear in negative light either. He is quick to grasp the essence of the old man's teaching and towards the end of the encounter reaches realization himself, which must be the soteriological transcendence alluded to in the title. Essentially, as it is also the case in a number of stories in the *Zhuangzi*, Confucius is the embodiment of the good disciple who is capable of learning when he has the opportunity. In contrast with this, his own disciple Zilu 子路 does not recognize the sage even when he meets him face to face.

The translation of the beginning I present below of the text is based on the Haizhou Dongguan edition from 1925, the online images of which are clear and legible. Since the other twentieth-century copies are basically identical, this copy is representative of all others from this general period. Overall, the *Laojun du Kongzi* is slightly more than 2,100 characters long which means that the circa 130 characters below only constitute about 6 percent of the entire text.

The plot is essentially that Confucius travels with his disciples and passes by an altar, next to which an inscription claims that this is the place where the Lu official Zang Wenzhong 臧文仲 (d. 617 BC) had once sacrificed.[25] Confucius composes a quatrain in his memory and then, sinking into melancholy, begins to play the zither. At this point an old man approaches riding a boat and as soon as he steps on dry land, Confucius asks Zilu to go over and greet him properly. The ensuing conversation leaves Zilu utterly frustrated, as the old man shows complete disinterest in Zilu's exposition of his master's teachings. When the old man returns to his boat and leaves, Zilu hurries back to Confucius and tells him about the encounter. Confucius immediately recognizes that the old man must have been a sage and goes in pursuit. He eventually catches up with him and the two men engage in a conversation which serves as the pretext for the old man to expound his teachings, part of which is presented in pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic verses. In the end, Confucius

realizes the grand truth of the teachings, whereas the old man transforms into a white cloud and leaves.

The narrative begins during the reign of King Ling of Zhou 周靈王 (571–545 BC) with the birth of Confucius, an event presented as the descent of a supernatural being into the world:

昔周靈王二十一年，孔子降世，天縱之聖，聰明過人，禮樂文章，無所不通。率領三千弟子、七十二賢云（雲）遊天下。那一日行至洒（泗）水河邊，東界口之處，過一古園，園内有一壇。篆字分明，是臧文仲祭之臺。孔子看罷，撩衣超步上，盤膝而坐，眾門人列於左右。嘆臧文仲曰：

暑往寒來春復秋　夕陽西下水東流
將軍嚴馬今何在　野草鮮花滿地愁

In the past, in the twenty-first year of the reign of King Ling of Zhou (551 BC), Confucius descended into the world. He was a sage sent down by heaven, who surpassed others in intelligence and was thoroughly skilled in the arts of the rites and music, as well as literary composition. He led a crowd of three thousand disciples and 22 worthies, travelling around the subcelestial world. One day, he arrived at the bank of the Sishui River and at a place near its eastern edge passed by an ancient garden, where there was an altar. The seal-script characters on it were clearly visible, claiming that this was the platform where Zang Wenzhong had sacrificed. Having finished looking at it, Confucius held up his robe and stepped onto the platform. He sat down crossed-legged and his followers lined up on his left and right. Lamenting over Zang Wenzhong, he said:

Summer comes and winter goes; then it is spring, and then autumn again;
The evening sun sets in the west and the river flows to the east;
Where is the general's formidable horse now?
There are only weed and wildflower, the land is filled with sorrow.

Classical historiographical works, such as the *Shiji* 史記 or the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳, record the year of Confucius's birth as the twenty-second year of the reign of Duke Xiang of Lu 魯襄公. Technically, this corresponds to 551 BC but by specifying the year according to the Zhou calendar the focus shifts from the personal background of Confucius and positions the event in a wider perspective. Phrasing his birth as a descent from above mirrors similar statements about Laozi and so Confucius essentially becomes an incarnation of a deity who descends into the world of chaos with a mission.[26] This grand-scale prelude also separates the narrative from its ultimate prototype in the 'Old Fisherman' chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, where the story simply begins with Confucius travelling with his disciples. Instead, in the *Laojun du Kongzi* version the narrative framework is elevated onto a cosmic scale.

Unsurprisingly, the teachings expounded by Laozi in the text are for the most part Daoist in nature but the text also includes elements from Confucian and Buddhist lore. Most interestingly, the word *du* 度 ('to ford; save') in the title is clearly used in the transitive sense of saving someone by leading them to the other shore, which is a common concept in both Buddhist and some Daoist traditions. As discussed above, the word *du* 度 also occurs in the title of the other manuscript found in Wang's possession (i.e., *Kongzi du Yuanguan*) but in that place it probably signifies Laozi's crossing of the Hangu Pass 函谷關, which is a common Daoist topos. In the title of the *Laojun du Kongzi*, however, *du* is used in the

sense of leading another person to liberation. This theme finds further emphasis in the motif of the old man's boat, which symbolizes the raft that takes one to other shore. Although this motif is already present in the pre-Buddhist sources of the story, within the later, 'religious' context, the sage coming downstream (never upstream!) riding a boat is unmistakably linked with the concept of redemption. Besides the title, Buddhist elements are, for example, expressions such as 'the torment of transmigration' 輪迴之苦, an overt reference to the concept of *saṃsāra*; or 'the palace of King Yama' 閻王殿 that invokes the Buddhist notion of hell. In addition, the text also mentions Mount Sumeru 須彌 and the 500 Arhats 羅漢. At one point Confucius explicitly asks why the Buddha appeared in the world. To this, Laozi replies that 'when one buddha appears in the world, there are three buddhas presiding over the teaching: that of the past is Dīpamkara, that of the present is Śākyamuni, and that of the future is Maitreya Buddha' 一佛出世，三佛掌教，過去燃燈， 現在釋迦，來後即是彌勒佛也.

The concept of 'three buddhas presiding over the teaching' (*sanfo zhangjiao* 三佛掌教) goes back to sectarian teachings. It is mentioned, for example, in the *Gufo tianzhen kaozheng longhua baojing* 古佛天真考證龍華寶經, which originated around the mid-seventeenth century among followers of the Complete and Instantaneous Teaching (Yuandunjiao 圓頓教) but with time achieved much wider circulation.[27] The expression *sanfo zhangjiao* is mentioned three times in Chapter 13, once in the gāthā line 'the three buddhas preside over the teaching and continue the transmission of the lantern' 三佛掌教續傳燈, and twice in the identical phrase 'the three buddhas preside over the teaching and control heaven and earth' 三佛掌教運轉乾坤.[28] Naturally, the concept was central to the teaching of the scripture but also for other scriptures in the Ming and Qing periods.[29]

Religious syncretism combining elements of the three main Chinese religions, a feature typical of sectarian teachings, is also unambiguously expressed in the phrase 'the three teachings are originally the same' 三教原來是一般. Not only the idea but the words themselves are also attested almost verbatim in several texts associated with popular religious movements. For example, we find an early variant stating that 'the three teachings originally belong to the same school' 三教原來是一家 in a poem ascribed to the semi-mythical Daoist master Zhang Sanfeng 張三豐, possibly dating to the early Ming period.[30] The variant 'the three teachings have originally always been the same' 三教原來總一般 occurs several times in the sixteenth-century vernacular novel *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 (Investiture of the Gods).[31]

The above links with Ming-Qing sectarian literature and the syncretic nature of Laozi's teachings in the text suggest that the *Laojun du Kongzi* was probably read and used by a similar type of audience. Further evidence to this effect is its language which contains apparent vernacular elements, such as the use of directional complements (e.g., 'asked the disciples to bring over the zither' 令門人取琴過來), the use of *shi* 是 as a copula (e.g., 'the three teachings are originally the same' 三教原來是一般), or the use of the word *qu* 去 in the sense 'to go' (e.g., 'asked Zilu to go and take a look' 令子路去看). Moreover, the text has a marked preference for the vernacular second person pronoun *ni* 你, using it a total of eight times, in contrast with a single occurrence of the standard literary pronoun *ru* 汝. These elements are consistent with the type of language common in religious literature of Ming and Qing sectarian movements.[32]

Reading the text we find some internal inconsistencies. The most apparent of these is that the sage is identified at his first appearance as an 'old man' 老人, yet a few lines

later, without any justification from the point of view of the narrative, he is suddenly called Laozi. Later on, he is once again called an 'old man.' The two names alternate until about two-thirds into the text and from there on he is exclusively referred to as Laozi. The irregularity of the name of the main protagonist signals that the text has undergone some changes and its current form may be substantially different from what it used to be. It is noteworthy in this respect that Confucius does not seem to know the identity of the old man and so towards the end has to ask whether he is indeed a sage. Even at this point, the name of Laozi does not enter the picture, at least not from the perspective of Confucius. For him, the old man is just a sage.[33]

Other problems with the internal logic of the narrative include that the figure of Zang Wenzhong is not introduced in any sense and most readers would have not understood his significance here. Similarly, it is not clear why the Master would be so saddened by remembering Zang at the altar, especially since he is mostly critical of him in extant Confucian literature. In fact, Zang has no role in the narrative, his figure does not seem to contribute to the sequence of events or the discussions. As we will see later, he is a vestige of earlier versions of the story but with time the figure loses connection with the narrative framework. The only potential link to him is the general's horse in the quatrain, in which the general might be signifying him, only the audience would probably not have noticed the reference.

Let us briefly return to the question of the title *Kongzi du Yuanguan*, one of the two manuscripts found in Wang Bingheng's home. In this regard, I have suggested that the term Primordial Pass (Yuanguan) may have originally been Dark Pass (Xuanguan) and was changed to comply with an imperial name taboo. Significantly, the twentieth-century printed copies of the *Laojun du fuzi* introduced above mention the Dark Pass in a sense of a pass that can be crossed physically. In the text Laozi talks to Confucius about himself and the things he has done and, among other things, he says: 'In the past I converted the Perfected Being Yin Xi and traversed the Dark Pass' 曾化尹喜真人，過玄關. This is certainly a reference to the myth of Laozi leaving the Zhou realm towards the West and being stopped at the Hangu Pass by Yin Xi 尹喜, the guard who ostensibly asked him to write down his teachings.[34] The Dark Pass (Xuanguan) in the text unquestionably refers to the Hangu Pass, also commonly called Han Pass 函關. Although it is likely that the pronunciation of the characters 函 and 玄 was quite close in some Ming or Qing dialects, we should not see this exclusively as a case of phonetic substitution or a mistake. The phonetic similarity may have triggered the change but the name Dark Pass may have felt a better choice at one point in the course of the text's transmission. After all, Laozi's passing through the pass on his way to the West had also been understood on a metaphorical level and from this point of view the Dark Pass was arguably an improvement over the semantically opaque Han Pass.

It is also somewhat problematic that according to the title *Kongzi du Yuanguan* the person crossing the pass is not Laozi but Confucius, who is never mentioned as doing so in extant literature. For this reason, I suspect that the actual title of the book was *Laozi du Xuanguan* 老子度玄關 (Laozi Crosses the Dark Pass), possibly deriving from an original *Laozi du Hanguan* 老子度函關 (Laozi Crosses the Han Pass),[35] and the title appearing in the inventory is a mistake on the part of the personnel in charge of compiling the inventory following Wang's arrest. This conjecture is likewise suggested by the statement in the report that both of these books contained the teachings of Laozi.

Indeed, the episode of Laozi stopping at the Hangu Pass to leave behind his teachings at the request of the guardian Yin Xi is the perfect setting for an exposition of Laozi's teachings. The same setting is attested, among other sources, in the *Guanling neizhuan* 關令內傳 (Essential Biography of the Guardian of the Pass), a text which was compiled in the first half of the sixth century but now survives only in quotations.[36] This text sets the stage for Yin Xi's initiation by describing how Laozi met him while crossing the pass.[37] A more recent text with a similar setting is the *Hunyuan zhenlu* 混元真錄 (True Record of Chaos Prime), which likewise recounts the teachings Laozi passed on to Yin Xi.[38] The tradition of Laozi transmitting the *Daode jing* 道德經 to Yin Xi goes back at least to the *Shiji* 史記 but with time it acquired additional elements, such as the two men travelling together to the West for the sake of converting the barbarians.[39] Accordingly, a title that refers to Laozi crossing the Han Pass would not be unusual, whereas the figure of Confucius does not fit into this context at all.

3. Earlier versions

In addition to the versions of the *Laojun du Kongzi* discussed above, a closely related text appears in a testimony that survives among the Qing archives of the prosecution of secret societies. This is one of the texts recorded from memory by a man called Liu Zhaokui 劉照魁 in 1791, following his arrest and questioning. He claimed to have received, also orally, the texts a few years earlier from Liu Shufang 劉書芳, a member of the Eight Trigams Teaching (Baguajiao 八卦教).[40] Liu's testimony contains several shorter texts joined together without any noticeable break between them and the only way of separating them is according to their content. In principle it may be argued that the physical – albeit originally oral – presentation of the material is significant and these shorter texts together represent one composite text. After all, texts assembled from small blocks borrowed from existing sources were by no means unusual; in fact, this was a common practice in pre-modern literary culture. Yet there are some considerations why this assumption would not work for our case. First, the texts are noticeably different from the point of view of their content, even if they are lumped together in the written testimony. Second, we only have access to a modern transcription of the original material. While it may be possible to look at the archived documents in Beijing, chances are that the document in question is already a transcription or a copy made by Liu Zhaokui's questioners who themselves would not have been familiar with the texts. Finally, the existence of the same or similar versions of some of these texts elsewhere is an indication that they were in fact separate entities even at the time when they were extracted from Liu Zhaokui.

One of the consequences of being inserted amidst other material is that the text has no title. Fortunately the same text, with some variation, survives in another source associated with sectarian movements. This other source is the commentary of the Kaixin fayao 開心法要 edition of the *Wubu liuce* 五部六冊 (Five Books in Six Volumes) compiled by Patriarch Luo 羅祖 (1442–1527), founder of the Non-Action Teaching (Wuweijiao 無為教) sect. The longest of the five books, the *Poxie xianzheng yaoshi juan* 破邪顯證鑰匙卷 (Scroll of the Key to Destroying Heresy and Manifesting Evidence) briefly quotes an otherwise unknown text named *Laojun xingtan ji* 老君行壇記 (Portable Altar of the Elderly Lord). The quote is very brief but fortunately the Kaixin fayao edition includes the commentary of Lanfeng 蘭風 and Yuanjing 源靜,

which cites the entire text and thereby preserves it for us. This edition with the commentary was first printed in 1596,[41] which takes us back nearly two centuries earlier than the text recorded by Liu Zhaokui. The text in the commentary is close to that recorded by Liu Zhaokui, although there are also considerable discrepancies. Still, the two versions also share passages that match word for word and thus it is unquestionable that they ultimately derive from the same source.

The most obvious difference between the two versions is that Liu Zhaokui's oral record contains additional lines of verse that are not in the Kaixin fayao edition. Otherwise the two versions can be aligned with each other relatively well, often matching verbatim. It is also interesting to see how these two versions of the *Laojun xingtan ji* compare to the twentieth-century copies of the *Laojun du Kongzi*. For the sake of comparison, let us look at the opening passage already quoted above from the *Laojun du Kongzi*, which is in fact among the most dissimilar sections in the two versions. The version presented here first is that preserved in the commentary of the Kaixin fayao edition of the *Wubu liuce*, because it is the older of the two versions and because it came down to us in a printed form. Immediately below this comes Liu Zhaokui's version from 1791.

2.1. *Kaixin fayao edition (1596)*

昔者，周公末帝，孔子降，領徒眾，雲遊天下。到溶陽，泗水縣東有一臺，上高數丈，臺上有碑，碑上寫藏文仲祭天之臺。孔子曰：

暑往寒來春復秋　夕陽西下水東流，
將軍戰馬今何在？　野草閑（鮮）花滿地愁。

In the past, [the time of] the Duke of Zhou and the last emperors,[42] was when Confucius descended [into the world]. He led a crowd of followers, roaming the subcelestial realm. Having arrived in Rongyang, to the east of Sishui County there was a platform, several *zhang* in height. On the platform, there was a stele with an inscription saying that this was the platform on which Zang Wenzhong had sacrificed to Heaven. Confucius said:

> Summer comes and winter goes; then it is spring, and then autumn again;
> The evening sun sets in the west and the river flows to the east;
> Where is the general's battle horse now?
> There are only weed and wildflower, the land is filled with sorrow.

2. *Liu Zhaokui's version (1791)*

昔日，周朝已畢，孔聖下世，領眾三千，雲游天下，修真化愚作賢。一道（到）雲陽縣以西，泗水縣以東，見一賢臺。臺高數丈，臺上有牌，牌上有字，上寫著臧文仲祭天之臺。孔子觀罷，嘆曰：

暑往寒來幾春秋　夕陽橋下水東流
將軍戰馬今何在　先賢古話遍地留

In the past, when the Zhou dynasty had already ended, Confucius the sage descended into the world. He led a crowd of three thousand, roaming the subcelestial realm. He cultivated perfection and taught the ignorant how to become worthy. As soon as he arrived west of Yunyang County, east of Sishui County, he saw a hero's platform.[43] The platform was several *zhang* in height and on the top was a stele with an inscription

saying that this was the platform on which Zang Wenzhong had sacrificed to Heaven. Having finished looking at it, Confucius sighed:

> Summer comes and winter goes; and it is almost autumn [again];
> Underneath the Evening Sun Bridge the river flows to the east;
> Where is the general's battle horse now?
> Only old tales remain of former heroes throughout the land.[44]

The two versions clearly follow the same narrative thread but the differences are also noteworthy. It is almost as if someone told the story anew, partly in their own words. As mentioned above, this part is among the most divergent sections and there is a higher level of similarity between the two versions later on. That the version in the Kaixin fayao commentary predates Liu's version by two centuries and is preserved in a printed edition does not automatically mean that it is a better text or that it preserves a more authentic version. For example, at the very beginning of the text, the Kaixin fayao version has the words 'Zhou gong modi' 周公末帝, which are highly problematic and probably represent a corrupted bit of text. Literally perhaps the best translation would be 'the Duke of Zhou, the last emperor' but it is unclear why the Duke of Zhou would be considered a *di* 帝 ('emperor'), let alone a *modi* 末帝 ('last emperor'), a term he was not associated with even in Ming-Qing popular lore. The timing is also off, as Confucius lived about half a millennium later than the Duke of Zhou, which suggests that the Duke of Zhou is introduced into the text by accident. The corresponding part in Liu Zhaokui's version preserves a much better variant: 'when the Zhou dynasty ended' 周朝已畢.

Another obvious error is that the surname of Zang Wenzhong is written with the character 藏 instead of the correct 臧. Since Zang was a well-known historical figure, it is clear how his name should be written. Interestingly, one of the printed copies from the beginning of the twentieth century we examined above also writes his name in the same manner, even though the text is otherwise identical to the other ones from the same period.

There are also bits of text that do not align well together but nevertheless appear in both the Kaixin fayao and the Liu Zhaokui versions. For instance, the sentence 'He cultivated perfection, teaching the ignorant how to be worthy' 修真化愚作賢 in the Liu Zhaokui version does not occur in the parallel section of the Kaixin fayao commentary but is mentioned verbatim later in that text, as part of Zilu's bragging about his master.[45] These misplaced bits of text are inconsequential from the point of view of the overall flow of the narrative and may in fact be result of Liu's version having been recorded from memory. Yet in general we get the impression that both versions are characterized by a significant amount of textual corruption. More interestingly, the version told by Liu Zhaokui has occasional details which are closer to the twentieth-century versions of the *Laojun du Kongzi*, such as mentioning that Confucius leads three thousand followers. Similarly, Liu Zhaokui's version has the phrase 'having finished looking at it, Confucius…' 孔子看罷, which is missing from the Kaixin fayao commentary but appears in the *Laojun du Kongzi* in an almost identical wording (i.e., 孔子觀罷). These points of similarity are significant to establish a direct textual connection between the texts.

As for the date of these two versions, we have seen that the earlier one survives as part of the commentary in the Kaixin fayao edition of the *Wubu liuce*, which was printed in 1596. Liu Zhaokui's version is from 1791 and was committed to paper during

his interrogation. It is important to note, however, that the part of the main text of the *Wubu liuce* to which the commentary with the text of the *Laojun xingtan ji* is attached quotes a short bit from that text and identifies the source by this title, thereby attesting to its existence in the early sixteenth century.[46] The first edition of the *Wubu liuce* was printed in 1509 and Patriarch Luo must have compiled it not long before that. Thus we can confidently say that the *Laojun xingtan ji* was already in existence around 1500, although this is merely the upper end of the possible time range. In order to narrow down the time frame of the composition of the text, we can attempt to query some of the time-specific information in it.

For example, Liu Zhaokui's version of the *Laojun xingtan ji* states that Confucius and his disciples came across Zang Wenzhong's platform 'west of Yunyang County, east of Sishui County' 雲陽縣以西，泗水縣以東. Yunyang County (today in Chongqing 重慶 municipality) was known under this name only after 1374,[47] and so in principle this would be evidence that the text was written after that time. The problem is, however, that this bit of text only occurs in Liu Zhaokui's version of the text, whereas the corresponding part in the Kaixin fayao version claims that they came across the platform 'in Sishui County, Rongyang' 溶陽泗水縣. This variant is likewise problematic because Rongyang 溶陽 is not a real place name. It is apparent, however, that Yunyang and Rongyang have a phonetic semblance, which may have been even stronger between certain dialects.[48] On the one hand, this tells us that the two variants are related and, on the other hand, that one or both of them are the result of textual corruption. Looking at the topography of the region of the Sishui River, the most obvious solution is that Rongyang is a mistake for Ningyang 寧陽, possibly caused by misreading the character *ning* 寧, or one of its non-standard forms (e.g., 甯 or 寍) as *rong* 容/溶. Yunyang, in turn, may be a phonetic corruption of Rongyang, which goes well with the fact that it was written down from memory. The strongest support for identifying both of these toponyms with Ningyang is that the Sishui River flows about 10 km south of Ningyang County 寧陽縣, which is still adjacent to Sishui County. Thus the place specified in terms of the two counties and the Sishui River is a very specific location on the northern side of the river, in contrast with the non-existent Rongyang, or Yunyang County 700 miles away in modern-day Chongqing.

Ningyang County was originally set up during the Han with this name but later the name changed and was only restored to Ningyang County during the Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234). In turn, Sishui County acquired its current name during the Sui 隋 period (581–618). In light of this, the surviving version of the *Laojun xingtan ji* could not have been composed before the Jin dynasty, which still leaves us with an uncomfortably wide window of three centuries until Patriarch Luo quotes it in the *Wubu liuce* in the early sixteenth century. We should, however, also allow the possibility that an earlier text evolved and acquired new elements, including the toponyms we tried to use for dating purposes.

An obvious textual problem in the Liu Zhaokui version is that on two occasions the text mentions the Wei River 渭水 (once Weishui River 渭水河) as the place where the old man landed. In the first case, Confucius tells Zilu to go down to the bank of the Wei River and greet the old man he finds there. The second occurrence is when Zilu, following his conversation with the old man, goes back to report about his meeting. He says, 'I met an old man on the bank of the Wei River' 弟子在渭水邊見一老人. Yet since the whole event is supposed to transpire near the Sishui River in Shandong, there

is an obvious problem in going down to the Wei River which is hundreds of miles to the west in modern Gansu and Shaanxi. It simply cannot be the river intended here. Instead, it seems that there is an interpolation from the tradition of Lü Shang 呂尚, also known as Taigong 太公 or Taigong Wang 太公望, the legendary advisor of King Wen of Zhou 周文王, who played an instrumental role in the conquest of the Shang. According to this tradition, the aged Lü Shang fished with a straight hook in the Wei River when the king found him while hunting.[49] This legend appears in a number of early texts such as the *Liutao* 六韜 and the *Shiji* but Lü Shang also commonly exemplifies the figure of masterful strategist in Ming-Qing popular culture, including vernacular novels such as the *Fengshen yanyi*.[50] The two legends shared the motif of meeting a sage by a river and it is easy to see that this must have been the primary reason why the Wei River was accidentally intermixed in a version of a narrative discussing a similar type of meeting on the banks of the Sishui River.

4. The Song period

Above, we have traced the story of Laozi teaching Confucius from early twentieth-century copies to the beginning of the sixteenth century when Patriarch Luo compiled the *Wubu liuce*. Yet the initial scene of Confucius arriving at the river bank with his disciples and lamenting over the fate of Zang Wenzhong also appears at the beginning of a Song edition of the *Dongjia zaji* 東家雜記 (1134), a collection of varia related to the home of Confucius. The book was compiled by Kong Chuan 孔傳, a direct-line descendant of Confucius. This Song edition has a note following a picture of Confucius shown on a platform with his disciples, and has the title 'Explanation to the Apricot Platform' 杏壇說.[51] It reads as follows:

昔周靈王之世，魯哀公時，夫子車從出國東門。因覩杏壇，逡巡而至，歷級而上，弟子侍列，顧謂之曰：「茲魯將臧文仲誓盟之壇也。」覩物思人，命琴而歌。歌曰：

暑往寒來春復秋　夕陽西去水東流
將軍戰馬今何在　野草閑花滿地愁

Formerly, during the reign of King Ling of Zhou, in the time of Duke Ai of Lu, the Master's carriage was leaving through the eastern gates of the city. Having noticed the Apricot Platform, he paused in his journey and went over there. He ascended the stairs and turned to his disciples who were waiting on him, saying: 'This is the altar where the Lu general Zang Wenzhong swore his allegiance.' Seeing the object (i.e., the altar) and thinking about the man (i.e., Zang Wenzhong), he asked for his zither and started singing. The song said:

Summer comes and winter goes; then it is spring, and then autumn again;
The evening sun sets in the west and the river flows to the east;
Where is the general's battle horse now?
There are only weed and wildflower, the land is filled with sorrow.

The lines translated here represent the entire text of the 'Explanation to the Apricot Platform' at the beginning of the Song edition of the *Dongjia zaji* and there is no mention of Zilu or the old man, nor the ensuing teachings which Confucius receives in the later versions. The quatrain sung by Confucius is the same as in the twentieth-century *Laojun du Kongzi* cited above and it would be tempting to identify the *Dongjia zaji* as its ultimate source. Yet the *Dongjia zaji* itself

probably borrowed it from elsewhere, since the same lines are attributed in Chan 禪 literature to the Chan master Fohai Huiyuan 佛海慧遠 (i.e., Xiatang Huiyuan 瞎堂慧遠, 1103–1176). The *Jiatai pu denglu* 嘉泰普燈錄 lists the quatrain with the title 'Ciming's water basin' 慈明水盆, as this was a poem written as a comment to a story about Chan master Cimingyuan 慈明圓 (986–1039).[52] According to the story, one day Cimingyuan placed a basin of water on the floor, across which he laid a sword and underneath a pair of straw sandals. He then sat down with a staff in his lap and every time a monk came in, he pointed at the installation. When the monk ventured to offer an interpretation, the master immediately hit him with his staff.[53] The quatrain attributed to Confucius in the *Dongjia zaji* was Fohai Huiyuan's comment to the story. In that context, it had nothing to do with Confucius or Zang Wenzhong but was somehow connected with Cimingyuan's cryptic installation. Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to associate the sword placed above the basin with the poem's reference to a general and his battle horse, or the straw sandals and the weed with the wildflowers that grow on former battlefields.

Purely based on Fohai Huiyuan's dates, it is likely that he composed the quatrain later than 1134, which is the time when Kong Chuan allegedly compiled the *Dongjia zaji*. Yet we should not assume that the Chan master merely borrowed an existing poem to comment on Cimingyuan's water basin, especially since the *Dongjia zaji* contains entries that are later that 1134[54] and it is entirely possible that the quatrain along with the rest of the 'Explanation to the Apricot Platform' was added after Kong Chuan's time. The fact that it appears at the very beginning of the book without being closely integrated with what comes after it adds some support for this possibility.[55] In view of the above, as well as that Chan sources are very specific in ascribing this poem to Fohai Huiyuan, the poem may have indeed been written by the Chan master, who in turn may have been drawing on yet an earlier source. Yet we see a curious bifurcation in the attribution of the poem in the different traditions, as Chan texts associate it with Fohai Huiyuan, while non-Buddhist sources quote it as coming from the *Dongjia zaji*. Whatever may be the case, the lines preceding the poem, which describe Confucius arriving at the scene with his disciples, appear only in the *Dongjia zaji*. This, of course, is not unexpected because these are the lines that link the poem with the lore of Confucius.

The text identifies the platform as the place where 'the Lu general Zang Wenzhong swore his allegiance.' Note that historically Zang Wenzhong was a high official and not a general, and there is no mention of him taking an oath of allegiance in historical sources. Instead, there is a passage in the *Guoyu* 國語 which describes how when a seabird called *yuanju* 爰居 stopped outside the eastern gates of Lu for three days, Zang Wenzhong made the people offer sacrifices to it, for which he was later criticized as going into excess.[56] The text at hand seems to be consistent with this legend, as Confucius comes upon the platform after exiting the eastern gates of Lu, which is where the bird had allegedly stopped.[57] There is no explanation, however, why Zang Wenzhong is mentioned as swearing an allegiance or is called a general. It is not likely that there had been a now lost tradition involving Zang Wenzhong as a military leader, thus the problem is probably textual in nature. One of the possible reasons for the interpolation of the word 'general' is that the quatrain mentions a battle horse belonging to a general and identifying

Zang Wenzhong as the general provides a convenient referent for this otherwise disconnected detail. In contrast, the Kaixin fayao and Liu Zhaokui versions of the *Laojun xingtan ji* merely state that the inscription on the altar identified the platform as the place where Zang Wenzhong had sacrificed, which is entirely consistent with the *Guoyu* tradition. Still, there seems to be little justification for having the figure of Zang Wenzhong feature in the narrative at all, which corroborates the exogenous origin of the quatrain in this setting.

An important detail in the *Dongjia zaji* version of this scene is the mention of the Apricot Platform 杏壇 as the location. This name ultimately goes back to the 'Old Fisherman' chapter of the *Zhuangzi* which is one of the prototypes of Confucius's encounter with and old sage. Right at the beginning of the story, the *Zhuangzi* states that Confucius sat down to rest on the Apricot Platform in the course of his journey. Whatever the term originally meant to signify in the *Zhuangzi*, later commentaries explained it as a higher place in or by the river where apricot trees grew, and with time the phrase Apricot Platform came to denote the place where Confucius taught his disciples, or, by extension, an educational setting in general.[58] The picture of Confucius with his disciples at the beginning of the Song edition of the *Dongjia zaji* has no caption but because it shows Confucius with 10 disciples on a platform under a tree, plus it is accompanied by the short bit of text titled 'Explanation to the Apricot Platform,' we can be fairly certain that the picture depicts the same event at the Apricot Platform. In fact, an almost identical copy of the picture appears in the Southern Song encyclopedia *Shilin guangji* 事林廣記 (1269), and there it is explicitly identified as the 'Picture of Confucius at the Apricot Platform' 夫子杏壇之圖.[59]

Versions of the 'Picture of Confucius at the Apricot Platform' seem to have been well known from the first third of the twelfth century onward, as they are attested in several sources besides the *Dongjia zaji*. Intriguingly, the earliest mention is in a Korean memorial from 1117, submitted to the Goryeo 高麗 throne by the Confucian scholar Kim Bu-sik 金富軾 (1075–1151). According to Kim, the picture and several others had been received as an official gift from China, demonstrating not only that the picture and the theme were popular at that time but also that they were part of elite court culture, suitable for official gifts in a diplomatic setting.[60] The date of the memorial (1117) is conspicuously close in time to the date of the *Dongjia zaji* (1134), attesting to the repeated occurrence of the theme in different sources around that time.

Fortunately, we have yet another witness of the text in the form of a Tangut manuscript excavated in 1908 at the ruins of Khara-khoto (i.e., Heishuicheng 黑水城) in modern-day Inner Mongolia, along with an enormous collection of handwritten and printed books written in Chinese and Tangut.[61] The manuscript with a text describing the old man's meeting with Confucius is a small booklet dated by a colophon to 1122, which is, once again, very close in time to the early sources that reference this story.[62] Although the beginning is missing, the last page contains the title *Gọrno ɣwawạ la*, which was interpreted by Russian scholars who first studied the text to mean *Records about the Altar of Confucius's Conciliation* or, alternatively, *Record at the Altar about Confucius's Conciliation*.[63] Accordingly, the Chinese title was reconstructed as *Kongzi hetan ji* 孔子和壇記, and this is how the text became

known in modern scholarship.[64] Technically speaking, a more accurate reconstruction is *Fuzi hetan ji* 夫子和壇記, as the first word in the Tangut title is not the name of Confucius but the more generic word 'master,' equivalent to the Chinese word *fuzi* 夫子 ('master').

Based on its content, the Tangut text was judged to be a translation of a now lost Chinese work.[65] It was not initially recognized, however, that the overall narrative structure was very similar to the *Laojun xingtan ji* in the Kaixin fayao edition of the *Wubu liuce* and, by extension to the later versions of the story detailed in the first part of this article. The Tangut text similarly opens with the scene of Confucius staying with his disciples in a quiet place and playing the zither. Unfortunately, due to a physical damage to the manuscript, the beginning of the Tangut text is missing and thus we cannot see whether it contained the quatrain sung by Confucius. Even though the text does not fully correspond to the *Laojun xingtan ji* and thus could not have been a translation of the same text, the general narrative structure is analogous. What differs is the details of the teachings Confucius receives from the old man but even there we can find a series of correspondences.

One of the enigmas concerning the Tangut manuscript was the title, especially the phrase *ɣwawạ* (Ch. *hetan* 和壇), which was unknown both in Chinese and Tangut. The solution to the problem came from linking the Tangut text first with the *Dongjia zaji*, where the scene happens at the Apricot Platform (*xingtan* 杏壇), and then the *Laojun xingtan ji* in the commentary of the Kaixin fayao edition of the *Wubu liuce*, where the corresponding phrase is Portable Altar/Platform (*xingtan* 行壇).[66] Once we realize that the original text must have been Apricot Platform, it is easy to see that in the latter case the 'misspelling' of the phrase was due to a simple phonetic error (i.e., miswriting *xing* 杏 as the nearly homophonous *xing* 行),[67] whereas in the case of the Tangut title the problem resulted from a graphic error (i.e., miswriting *xing* 杏 as *he* 和), which may have involved variant forms of the character 和 (e.g., 香) that are graphically reminiscent of the character 杏.[68]

Therefore, the Tangut manuscript contains a translation of a Chinese work that would have originally been titled *Fuzi xingtan ji* 夫子杏壇記 (Record of the Master at the Apricot Platform). The text quoted in the *Wubu liuce*, however, would have been called *Laojun xingtan ji* 老君杏壇記 (Record of the Elderly Lord at the Apricot Platform), which still differs in one important detail, namely, that it features the Elderly Lord (Laozi) instead of the Master (Confucius).

Based on chronological considerations, as well as the pictures of Confucius in the *Dongjia zaji* and other Song sources, it is likely that the original title had Master, rather than Elderly Lord, which probably represented a newer stage in the transmission of the story that explicitly identified the figure of the old man with Laozi. This identification must have also triggered the necessity to alter the title to reflect that the main figure in the text was not Confucius but Laozi. Until the sage remained an unnamed old man, it was reasonable to name the text after Confucius, but once the old man became identified with Laozi, the title had to change as well. Consistent with this scenario, the Tangut text does not assign a date to of the Daoist sage but consistently refers to him as 'old man.' In this it follows the *Zhuangzi* where he is referred to either as 'old man' or 'old fisherman.'

5. Conclusion

This article traced various stages in the evolution of a text structured around the story of Confucius meeting a Daoist sage and learning from him the mysteries of the Way. Printed copies of a text with the title *Laojun du Kongzi* 老君度孔子 (or variations of these) circulated in the early part of the twentieth century and may continue to be used in religious communities today. The title can be traced back through the Qing archives related to the prosecution of secret societies to 1816, when a text with a similar title (i.e., *Laojun du fuzi* 老君度夫子) was mentioned as having been in the possession of a religious activist Wang Bingheng. Likewise within the world of sectarian movements, two versions of an analogous text take us further back in time: (1) an untitled version recorded by Liu Zhaokui in his 1791 testimony; and (2) a printed version entitled *Laojun xingtan ji* 老君行壇記 in the commentary to the Kaixin fayao edition of the *Wubu liuce*, first printed in 1596. The title of this latter text, and a short quote, already occurred in the main text of the *Wubu liuce*, first printed in 1509. Finally, if we go back further in time, the oldest extant stage of the text is the Tangut translation from 1122, which also includes the title, albeit in a corrupted form. Table 1 below displays the various stages of the text traced back to the Song period in a visually apparent way. The two columns on the right show the dates when the text and the title of the given version are attested.

Thus we have a progression of witnesses from the early twelfth century until today, with a total span of almost nine centuries. Ironically, the earliest version survives in a foreign language and the Chinese text that served as the basis for the translation is lost. Nevertheless, the translation is proof enough that a Chinese original existed at that point or even slightly earlier. In a way, the 'Old Fisherman' chapter of the *Zhuangzi* is the earliest stage of this sequence and it undoubtedly provided the inspiration for the composition of the *Fuzi xingtan ji* sometime in the late medieval period, possibly at the beginning of the twelfth century or shortly before that. A noteworthy aspect of the later transmission of the text is that all extant Chinese witnesses survive in the context of sectarian movements, as part of the religious literature. Perhaps this is also the reason why editions of the text did not enter mainstream bibliographies or collections; not because they were handed down in secret but simply because they held no value for secular scholarship and elite social strata.

Looking at extant versions and their titles, an important question that comes to mind is whether they represent the same text. Surely, they share the same narrative framework that revolves around the meeting of the sage with Confucius but there are also

Table 1. Stages of the text and its title through time.

No.	Title of text	Corrected title	Text	Title
T1	*Laojun du Kongzi* 老君度孔子 (*Laozi du Kongzi* 老子度孔子)		1910 +	1910 +
T2	*Laojun du fuzi* 老君度夫子 Wang Bingheng's copy (only title)		—	1816
T3	Liu Zhaokui version (untitled)		1791	—
T4	*Laojun xingtan ji* 老君行壇記 Kaixin fayao commentary to *Wubu liuce*	*Laojun xingtan ji* 老君杏壇記	1596	1509
T5	Tangut manuscript *Gǫrno ɣwawɑ la* (*Fuzi hetan ji* 夫子和壇記)	*Fuzi xingtan ji* 夫子杏壇記	1122	1122

major differences. In a way, the versions discussed in this article should be seen more as adaptations on a common theme, rather than individual stages in a long chain of textual transmission. The notion of oral transmission is also relevant, especially in cases such as Patriarch Luo quoting the *Laojun xingtan ji* but accidentally miswriting the title with a nearly homophonous character (i.e., 行 < 杏), or Liu Zhaokui committing a version of the text to paper entirely from memory. The chain of witnesses discussed in this article demonstrates the complex nature of textual transmission, how versions of a text can shift not only between written and oral dimensions but also between different languages, religious traditions or social strata. It is perhaps inevitable that a text circulating under such conditions undergoes a series of changes that result in versions that may no longer be considered the same text.

Notes

1. This article is a continuation of a research project that began with the study of a Tangut manuscript in the Kozlov collection at St. Petersburg. The first result was published in this journal three years ago (Galambos, "Confucius and Laozi at the Altar") and it seems fitting to circulate the next instalment on the pages of the same journal. I am grateful for the help I received from Gábor Kósa, Paul van Els and Lin Pei-ying, as well as members of the seminar "Recent Advances in Tangut Studies" held at SOAS on 28 February 2017, where some of the findings presented here were introduced. Research for this article was supported by the Chinese Social Sciences Fund project "Sichou zhi lu zhongwai yishu jiaoliu tuzhi" (16ZDA173).
2. Susan Naquin points out that the possession of scriptures was essential for the functioning of sectarian groups and joining the ranks of such a group would have provided an opportunity to gain access to such scriptures. Naquin, "Transmission of White Lotus Sectarianism," 263.
3. A large collection of this material from the Qing archives has been recently published in a forty-volume edition; see Liu Ziyang, *Qingting chaban mimi shehui an*. References to archival material in this article are generally made to this publication.
4. Liu Ziyang, *Qingting chaban*, v. 2, 543–544.
5. The inventories meticulously record which texts were and were not confiscated and it is clear that a copy of each text was retained by the authorities, except in the case of subversive religious literature, in which case all copies were taken.
6. The expression *chaobaijing* is not a standard term but it was at times used by the Qing officials when describing some of the written material associated with sectarian movements. Its use in such such a context is illustrated by another case where various book forms are listed with different measure words: "two pieces of scripture printing blocks, six sets of scriptures, a bundle of *chaobaijing*, another six booklets of scriptures, a notebook of songs and three sheets of letters" 經板二塊，經文六套，抄白經文一束，又經文六本，倡言一冊，書信三紙; quoted in Ma and Han, *Zhongguo minjian zongjiao shi*, 949–950.
7. Liu Ziyang, *Qingting chaban*, v. 2, 587–590.
8. See Kohn, *The Taoist Experience*, 183 for the translation of *yuanguan* as Primordial Pass.
9. Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*, 141.
10. See, for example, the discussion in Seiwert, *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Texts in Chinese History*, 278–280.
11. http://www.kongfz.cn/14486674/pic; last accessed November 15, 2018.
12. http://www.kongfz.cn/3872624/pic; last accessed November 15, 2018.
13. As another item for sale, a copy of the same edition is offered as part of a larger volume along with several other texts such as the *Xingshi baojian* 醒世寶鑑, *Tianbo renxin* 天撥人心,

Zhiyan quanxiao ge 直言勸孝歌 and the *Shiziwen* 十字文; http://www.kongfz.cn/18056515/pic; last accessed November 15, 2018.

14. http://www.cang.com/trade/show-8967390-2.html; last accessed November 15, 2018.
15. Following the simplification of characters in the People's Republic of China, both characters were written as 云, but the rationale for choosing this particular simplified form was that long before the reforms both words were already commonly written in this way.
16. The name Sishuihe occurs, for example, in the chantefable *Da Tang Qin wang cihua* 大唐秦王詞話 (Novel on the Prince of Qin of the Great Tang Dynasty), thought to have been published in the early seventeenth century; Nienhauser, *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, v. 1, 851.
17. Other minor differences include writing the numeral "twenty-one" 二十一 as 廿一, which is a trivial variation in parallel texts in general.
18. Su et al., *Laozi Daodejing yangsheng zhi dao*, 334–338.
19. This also means that additional copies of the text probably still circulate in Daoist and other religious communities throughout China and, as part of the current growing interest in such publications, some of these will inevitably be collected by scholars and collectors in the coming years. Even though the text is conspicuously absent from public collections, similar late-Qing or Republican copies are likely to survive in many places.
20. This last version was apparently published in Taibei by the publisher Sanyang yinshua qiye youxian gongsi 三揚印刷企業有限公司 under the title *Shenlong zhi hui, Laozi du Kongzi* 神龍之會 - 老子渡孔子. Unfortunately I am unable to get hold of this publication.
21. Liu Ziyang, *Qingting chaban*, v. 2, 588. The concept of enlightening one's mind and seeing one's inborn nature is most commonly associated with Chan Buddhism.
22. The report in his case files also describes some of his activities during the 1780s, showing that he was already involved with religious movements back them. Also, we know that these texts were given to him by his father so they could be a decade or two earlier than the time of his arrest. Liu Ziyang, *Qingting chaban*, 588–589.
23. See the discussion of the relevant parts of the *Lunyu* and the *Zhuangzi* in Galambos, "Confucius and Laozi," 240–242. The translation of the relevant part of the *Lunyu* is available in Lau, *The Analects*, 185–187; that of the *Zhuangzi*, in Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 344–352.
24. For English translation of the Qu Yuan version, see Hawkes, *Ch'u T'zu: The Songs of the South*, 90–91.
25. Zang Wenzhong was chief advisor in the state of Lu in the seventh century BC, a century before Confucius. Contrary to the melancholic remembrance of Zang Wenzhong in our text, in early sources such as the *Lunyu* and *Zuozhuan* Confucius is recorded criticizing him on several occasions. In contrast, in a newly discovered Warring States bamboo manuscript called *Ji Kangzi wen yu Kongzi* 季康子問於孔子 (Ji Kangzi Queries Confucius) from the Shanghai Museum collection, Confucius cites Zang Wenzhong's views, apparently with approval; see Hunter, *Confucius Beyond the Analects*, 273. For a more detailed analysis of Zang Wenzhong and his status in Lu in connection with Confucius, see Enno, "The Background of the Kong Family of Lu and the Origin of Ruism," 15–20.
26. E.g., the third-century text *Sanwu liji* 三五歷紀, quoted in the *Hunyuan shengji* 混元聖紀, asserts that the Elderly Lord descended into the world. Similarly, there are obvious similarities with Buddhist jātaka stories where the birth of the Bodhisattva is often presented as a cosmic event.
27. Jansen, "Sacred Text," 301–307; see also Overmyer, *Precious Volumes*, 248–271 and Sawada, *Ryūkakyō no kenkyū*.
28. The same idea also comes up in Chapter 11, only in a slightly different wording.
29. See, for example, the discussion in Liu Xiongfeng, *Ming-Qing minjian zongjiao sixiang yanjiu*, 96–102. For this concept in the *Foshuo huangji shouyuan baojuan* 佛說皇极收圓寶卷, see Che, "Zhongguo baojuan manlu sizhong," 165–166.
30. Zhang Sanfeng, *Zhang Sanfeng quanji*, 30.

31. E.g., *Fengshen yanyi*, 439. See also Zhu, "*Fengshen yanyi* yu zongjiao," 82. For an English translation of the novel, see Chew, *Tales of the Teahouse Retold*.
32. For example, Baren ter Haar observes that parts of the *Wubu liuce* were written colloquial language, whereas the parts borrowed from pre-existing sources retained the literary idiom; ter Haar, "Patriarch Luo as a Writer and Reader," 27 and 34.
33. The variation of the protagonist's name is analogous to the case of the Daoist classic *Wenzi* 文子, the transmitted version of which is made up of dialogues between the philosopher Wenzi 文子 and his teacher Laozi, yet in one place, at the end of the "Daode" 道德 chapter, we suddenly have King Ping 平王 asking a question from Wenzi. The cause of this irregularity was understood when in 1973 a bamboo-slip manuscript of the *Wenzi* was found in a Western Han tomb dated to 55 BC, and the discovery revealed that originally the dialogues were between King Ping as interlocutor and Wenzi as the teacher. The change to Wenzi being the questioner and Laozi the teacher must have occurred sometime after the mid-first century BC and was thorough, except for that one instance at the end of the "Daode" chapter. See van Els, *The Wenzi: Creation and Manipulation of a Chinese Philosophical Text*, 116.
34. On the evolution of the figure of Yin Xi and his connection to Laozi, see Kohn, "Yin Xi: The Master at the Beginning of the Scripture."
35. Naturally, it is also possible that the original title would have used the epithet Laojun for Laozi, i.e., *Laojun du Hanguan*.
36. The longest surviving quote is in the Daoist encyclopaedia *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (Bag of Pearls from the Three Caverns), identified as the *Wenshi xiansheng wushang zhenren guanling neizhuan* 文始先生無上真人關令內傳 (Esoteric Biography of the Guardian of the Pass, the Most Highly Perfected Being, Master at the Beginning of the Scripture). Kohn, "Yin Xi," 110–111.
37. *Sandong zhunang, juan* 9. The Tang encyclopaedia *Chuxue ji* 初學記 also quotes the beginning of the text on two different occasions (*juan* 7 and *juan* 29), once identifying the source as *Guanling neizhuan* 關令內傳 and once as *Guanling zhuan* 關令傳. The two instances of the quoted text, as well as the long quote in the *Sandong zhunang*, contain minor discrepancies.
38. Kohn, "Yin Xi," 116–118.
39. Kohn, "Yin Xi," 87–92 and 108–113. This tradition is also attested in epigraphic sources from the Northern Dynasties; see Zhang Xunliao, "Daoist Stelae of the Northern Dynasties," 525–527. For the development of beliefs about Laozi transmitting alchemical knowledge to Yin Xi, see Baldrian Hussein, "Inner Alchemy," 172–175.
40. Liu Ziyang, *Qingting chaban*, v. 2, 777–793. The same documents are recorded once again in v. 18 of the same publication (ibid., v. 18, 4307–4312). A translation of the testimony is available in Hegel, *True Crimes in Eighteen-century China*, 177–183. See also Naquin, "Connections Between Rebellions," 355–356.
41. Seiwert, *Popular Religious Movements*, 222, n27; Chen, "Kaixin fayao," 599.
42. It is clear that the text is corrupted here; see the discussion below.
43. The word *xian* 賢 ("worthy; hero") in *xiantai* 賢臺 ("hero's platform") is probably the result of textual corruption because otherwise the term *xiantai* refers to the platform allegedly built by King Zhao of Yan 燕昭王 (d. 279 BC) during the Warring States period. The Yuan scholar Hao Jing 郝經 (1223–1275) composed a poem entitled "Xiantai xing" 賢臺行 with a note explaining that *xiantai* was the popular name of the ancient *huangjintai* 黃金臺 ("golden platform"); *Hao Wenzhong gong Lingchuan wenji*, 94–95; see also Luo and Sun, "Huangjintai kao."
44. After this part, Liu Zhaokui's version has six more heptasyllabic lines, seemingly continuing the previous four. These extra lines are not in the Kaixin fayao edition and in reality they have nothing to do with the previous four lines and cannot be taken as the words of Confucius, especially because they refer to him in the third person as the Master (*fuzi* 夫子). Accordingly, there is little doubt that these six additional lines are an interpolation, whether they were added by Liu Zhaokui or at some earlier point in the course of the text's transmission.

45. Since in the Kaixin fayao commentary this is a direct speech spoken by Zilu, we would translate it in the present tense, even though the Chinese text is identical in both versions.
46. This also means that the title and the quotation are also part of other editions of the *Wubu liuce*, which do not have this commentary.
47. On this, see the local gazetteer *Yunyangxian zhi*, v.1, "Xianpu" 縣譜 (unpaginated).
48. Liu Zhaokui was originally from Shaanxi but he had received this text from Liu Shufang who was a native of Shandong.
49. For a study of the figure of Taigong Wang in Zhou and Han texts, see Allan, "The Identities of Taigong Wang 太公望 in Zhou and Han Literature," esp. 83–87. Allan points out that the earliest occurrence of the fishing legend is in the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (late third century BC) and most other texts that mention it are from the Han period.
50. In the *Fengshen yanyi* Lü Shang is called Ziya 子牙 and the story is retold in Chapter 24; *Fengshen yanyi*, 217–228.
51. This Song edition of the *Dongjia zaji* is in the collection of the National Library of China.
52. *Jiatai pu denglu*, T79.1559; 0469a10–0469a12.
53. The whole incident, including the comments of later monks, is preserved in the *Chanlin leiju* 禪林類聚, which has a preface dated to 1307. A shorter version is in *Fohai Xiatang Chanshi guanglu* 佛海瞎堂禪師廣錄, T69.1360;0590a05–0590a06.
54. I am grateful to Julia Murray for pointing this out to me; she suggested that bits of text were added to the *Dongjia zaji* until the end of the Southern Song period.
55. As pointed out in Peng, "Xingtan kao," 177, in the Song edition of the *Dongjia zaji* from the collection of the National Library of China, which is the only early edition with the "Explanation to the Apricot Platform" and the picture of Confucius and his disciples, the explanation is written in a different style of characters and may be a later (possibly Yuan) addition to the book. Yet some sources mention the presence of this part in Song editions, therefore even if in the extant copy of the book the relevant pages are later additions, they were possibly replacing pages that had been originally present but became lost or damaged; see Galambos, "Confucius and Laozi," 253–255.
56. *Guoyu*, 154.
57. The *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (25, 592–593) from the early sixth-century notes that the site of the sacrifices mentioned in the *Guoyu* was in the vicinity of the Si River.
58. See, for example, the entry in the *Guoyu cidian* 國語辭典.
59. *Shilin guangji*, "Wenyi lei" 文藝類.
60. *Tongmunsŏn* 35.
61. Following their excavation, the material was shipped to St. Petersburg and today it is kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts. For the discovery and its circumstances, see Galambos 2015, *Translating Chinese Tradition and Teaching Tangut Culture*, 17–52; Yusupova, "P. K. Kozlov's Mongolia and Sichuan Expedition."
62. The date is only partially visible and thus it had to be reconstructed; see Kychanov, *Zapis' u altarja o primirenii Konfutsija*, 11–12.
63. Nevskij, *Tangutskaja Filologija*, v. 1, 87 and Kychanov, *Zapis' u altarja*. In an English-language introduction of the manuscript, Kychanov ("The Altar Record on Confucius' Conciliation") translated the title into English as *The Altar Record on Confucius' Conciliation*.
64. E.g., Keqianuofu and Nie, *Xixiawen 'Kongzi hetan ji' yanjiu*.
65. Nevskij, *Tangutskaja Filologija*, v. 1, 97; Kychanov, "The Altar Record," 3.
66. For a more elaborate description of the problem of the title and the solution to it, see Galambos, "Confucius and Laozi."
67. The mistake may have been due to Patriarch Luo quoting the text from memory and thus miswriting the character in question by using another one with a similar phonetic value. The commentators, who may have noticed the mistake, did not repeat it but instead referred to the text in an abbreviated form as *ji* 記 ("note"), thereby bypassing the problem.
68. This proves that the mistake happened before the title was translated into Tangut. Galambos, "Confucius and Laozi," 245.

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