

JOHN D. LANGLOIS, JR.

Song Lian and Liu Ji in 1358 on the Eve of Joining Zhu Yuanzhang

INTRODUCTION

In 1358–1360, two prominent Zhejiang literati threw their prestige behind Zhu Yuanzhang’s 朱元璋 emerging military organization. Liu Ji 劉基 (1311–1375) and Song Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381), then in their late forties and separated by only a year in age, were counted among the leading Confucian intellectuals in Yuan China. Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1398) was then only thirty and not formally tutored, yet through determination and innate brilliance he was building a military organization that was growing in power and reach. What enabled these three men to communicate with each other across the huge cultural and social gap that separated them?

Liu Ji and Song Lian in these two years were immensely creative and productive in their writings about political thought, ideals, and history. They had known each other for about fifteen years but had pursued different careers. The former chose to enter politics and provide strategic insights and philosophical support to a number of Chinese and non-Chinese Yuan defenders in an effort to prop up the faltering Yuan state. The latter chose to stay out of politics and instead remained as a local intellectual, teacher and prominent “recluse.” I put the word in quotes because he was actively engaged as a writer and teacher. But by adopting the role of the recluse, he signified his independence from the political world. In the years 1358 to 1360, both men stepped into their studies and wrote important political and literary essays that set forth their ideals and views of the contemporary world in which they lived. Song and Liu had much in common, as we shall see.

THE AUTHOR is grateful to Professor Hok-lam Chan for comments and for a prepublication look at his article, “The ‘Song’ Dynasty Legacy,” cited in n. 55, below; and to Dr. Wu Yanhong for help on certain textual matters.

Until these years, both men were strong supporters of the Yuan. Song Lian endorsed the vision of the Yuan as a world empire whose greatness struck awe in the eyes of people across Asia. Liu Ji rallied behind local Yuan warriors in efforts to prop up that once great empire. Song was a visionary while Liu was a pragmatist. But until these years, both men supported the same end, reviving the greatness of the Yuan.

During these two or three years, however, as they produced their masterworks, they each came essentially to the conclusion that the Yuan had no future, that it was hopelessly compromised, and that its decline was the cause of the massive social unrest of the day. Each man was at his peak in terms of energy, intellectual vigor, creativity, and determination to find a new cause behind which he could throw his weight. The quasi-recluse Song Lian had a dream of self-perfection that drove him to reach out beyond his study. The pragmatic Liu Ji held a belief that talent and wit could assist a leader to change the world. The challenge for both was to find something that could succeed the Yuan to provide social order.

By 1359, both men found their (same) answer, the regime of Zhu Yuanzhang, which at that time was still a relatively small organization centered on the Red Turbans acting in the name of a new Song state. In 1360, the two men joined Zhu's camp in Jiqing 集慶 (Nanjing).

Turning to the end of the story of these two scholars, Liu Ji retired in 1371 and attempted to stay completely out of politics at court. But in 1373, even though he had been retired for nearly two years, he was impeached by the left chief councillor Hu Weiyong 胡惟庸 (d. 1380). He returned to the capital to defend himself, and wound up staying there despite increasingly poor health and surrounded by factionalized politics at court. Finally the emperor sent him home in 1375, and he died soon thereafter probably of illness and old age although some have argued he was poisoned.¹

What is less doubtful is that Liu Ji's elder son Liu Lian 劉璉 killed himself by drowning in a well in 1379.² The emperor executed Song Lian's son and grandson in 1380, and Song Lian died the next year in grief, possibly by hanging himself.³

The deaths of these people stemmed directly from the emperor's despotic behavior. Through his purge of Hu Weiyong in 1380, in which

¹ Yang Ne 楊訥, *Liu Ji shiji kao shu* 劉基事跡考述 (Beijing: Beijing Library, 2004), pp. 153-68.

² Zhou Qun 周群, *Liu Ji ping zhuan* 劉基評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue, 1995), p. 358.

³ F. W. Mote, "Sung Lien," in Luther Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1972), pp. 1228-29.

15,000 people may have died,⁴ Zhu created an environment of death and became certainly one of the most ruthless tyrants in Chinese history. We have to wonder why these learned scholars linked up with this man. What were they thinking when they made their decisions to join up with the 30-year-old warlord in 1358? And was there something very compatible between the two Confucian scholars and the untutored warlord, something that the latter felt might strengthen his autocratic power? And did the two scholars somehow provide the means for the warlord to envision himself as a ruler of a new China? Were they in effect complicit in the creation of Ming despotism?

We know a lot about what they were thinking because they wrote it down in texts during these two years. They did not write about Zhu Yuanzhang, but they wrote about history, about rulers, about the ancient sage kings, and about ethics, morals, and self-cultivation.

SONG LIAN'S VISION OF YUAN GREATNESS

Although Song Lian declined to serve in the Yuan regime, in the 1340s and 1350s he wrote essays treating the Yuan dynasty not only as legitimate but great. For example, he wrote a series of poems in honor of twenty-two of the Yuan's great officials. In these poems, he was generous in his description of the Mongol imperium in Greater Asia:

Our August Yuan received the bright mandate from heaven to bring peace to the Sinic world; where the heavenly lance pointed, the myriad directions all followed. At the first drum the many (Mongolian) tribes came on board; at the second drum the (Tangut) Xia 夏 people sued for peace (in 1226); at the third drum the (Jurchen imperial) 完顏 Wanyan clan submitted (in 1234); and at the fourth drum the Southern Song was pacified (in 1279). The vast realm was unified under one teaching, all were the emperor's servants. With good plans and judgment, his every action was victorious. As well, he relied upon capable men and unwaveringly loyal officials; they enabled him to proclaim the power of heaven, and such was the divine speed with which the deeds were performed and governance was established.⁵ 我皇元受天明命，撫安方夏，天戈所指，萬方畢從。是故一鼓而諸部服，再鼓而夏人納款，三鼓而完顏氏請降，四鼓而南宋平，東西止日之出入，罔不洽被政教，共惟帝臣。雖睿謀雄

⁴ Zhang Xianqing 張顯清 and Lin Jinshu 林金樹, *Mingdai zhengzhi shi* 明代政治史 (Guilin: Guangxi Shifan Daxue, 2003), p. 738.

⁵ Song Lian, *Song Lian quan ji* 宋濂全集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1999; hereafter, *SLQJ*), p. 1, "Guo chao ming chen xu song" 國朝名臣序頌.

斷，動無不勝，亦賴熊羆之士、不貳心之臣，有以誕宣天威，故功成治定若是之神速也。

Song Lian paid respects to the achievements of Chinggis Khan, who united the Mongols and whose sons went on to conquer the Tanguts, the Jurchens, and then the Chinese Southern Song state, one after another. Indeed, the first two names on his list are general Mukhali (d. 1223), one of Chinggis' principal lieutenants and a leader of the conquest of the Jurchens, and general Bayan (1237–1295), the brilliant conqueror of Southern Song. The list includes Khubilai Khaghan's Chinese advisors Liu Bingzhong 劉秉忠 (1216–1274) and Yao Shu 姚樞 (1203–1280), the Uighur Lian Xixian 廉希憲 (1231–1280), the Khitan Yelü Chucai 耶律楚材 (1189–1241), the Confucian teacher Xu Heng 許衡 (1209–1281), and so on. The commander Aju who laid siege to Xiangyang and represented "the best of the Mongol military tradition,"⁶ is also featured. Praising Bayan's might, Song Lian wrote that the general's voice was like lightning that broke mountains: he led three armies south and made the entire Jiangnan region a trifling challenge, with the Song collapsing in fright before him. "The Song mandate was lost and the people didn't know it 宋鼎已易，民弗知."⁷

The theme of Yuan legitimacy and glory also showed up in Song Lian's celebrations of certain Mongol events at court, such as the heir-apparent's entrance into formal schooling at court in 1349,⁸ and the receipt of an imperial patent by the heir apparent in 1355.⁹

Song Lian viewed his Mongol rulers as universal sovereigns of the world, not just of China. He wrote about Chinggis Khan in the following language:

When Our Emperor Taizu arose like a dragon, his soul received the mandate of the lord, and he extended his will over the four directions, all were his servants. The Naimans surrendered, and the countries everywhere submitted to him.¹⁰ 我太祖皇帝之龍興也，靈承帝命，寵綏四方，克烈既臣，乃蠻攸服，遠近諸國，往往響風內附。

One can feel the pride in Song Lian's language. While this pride turned to disappointment by the late 1350s, the vision of an empire that had risen to glory and supremacy over the known world must have stuck with him as he thought about his options in 1359.

⁶ F. W. Mote, *Imperial China 900–1800* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1999), p. 462.

⁷ *SLQJ*, p. 2.

⁸ *SLQJ*, p. 17.

⁹ *SLQJ*, p. 16.

¹⁰ *SLQJ*, p. 90.

SONG LIAN'S PRAISE OF YUAN LOYALISM

Song Lian wrote a warm and praising memoir of Yu Que 余闕, the ethnic Tangut (*jinsshi* 進士 of 1333) who died in 1358 defending the Yuan city of Anqing against attack by bandit forces.¹¹ Similarly, he wrote about loyalty in his “linked pearl 演連珠” verses, saying, “I have heard that a loyal official will give his life for the state and not covet his physical life; and that the heroic gentleman who loves the ruler will in the end sacrifice his own head. 蓋聞忠臣殉國, 不惜於軀命。烈士愛君, 竟忘其首領。”¹² Loyalty held a position of high importance in Song Lian’s view of the roles played by officials and gentlemen. Yu Que demonstrated that ideal in his devotion to the Yuan cause on the very eve of its collapse.

From these examples, it is obvious that during the early years of Song Lian’s career he respected the Yuan rulers and admired their achievements. He expected that officials would be loyal to that regime. There was no hint of his having had racial or ethnic grounds for misgivings about the legitimacy of the regime. He did not shy away from the fact that the Yuan was a conquest dynasty, for he actually praised that distinguishing feature of its prominence in East Asia.

LIU JI’S PRAISES OF THE YUAN

Liu Ji heaped praise upon the Yuan in his stele inscription for the Confucian Temple at Shanyin county, equating the Yuan with Confucius in importance:

Since the birth of mankind, in gathering all the great things together and becoming a sage, no one has surpassed Confucius. And for having such breadth of the empire, none has done more than the Yuan. In the court, they have established the imperial school, and outside the court they have established schools in the counties and prefectures, and in all there are Confucian temples with schools attached. The temples are shrines to bring honor to Confucius, and the schools are places for the teaching of the principles of Confucius. The Way of Confucius has thus greatly been practiced throughout, completely and without gaps. Great indeed! There was nothing like it in ancient times!¹³ 生民以來, 集大成而聖者, 莫盛於孔子。有天下之廣者, 莫加於有元。在內則立監書, 在外則府州

¹¹ *SLQJ*, pp. 245–48.

¹² *SLQJ*, p. 234.

¹³ “Shanyin xian Kongzi miao bei” 山陰縣孔子廟碑, in *Liu Ji ji* 劉基集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1999; hereafter, *LJJ*), p. 174.

若縣，莫不有孔子廟，而學宮附焉。廟以崇孔子之祠，學以施孔子之教。孔子之道，於是大行，彌覆載而無間。於戲盛哉！古未有也。

In about 1354, Liu Ji wrote a report about an official named Nalin-hala 納琳哈喇 who was sent by the throne in 1352 to take over eastern Zhejiang. Under him a Mongol named Shabuzhutai 沙卜珠台 arrived at Qingyuan route 慶元路 to implement plans for building a defensive wall around Qingyuan to protect against increasingly frequent pirate raids. Liu Ji praised this effort by Shabuzhutai, under whose leadership the wall was built in short order. Liu Ji commemorated the event, recorded Shabuzhutai's proclamation to the residents of the town, and ended with lofty praise of the Yuan regime. The proclamation read:

It is an institution to have a double gate to defend against violent visitors. Our Nation unified the land with military virtue. We refrained from building city walls because we wanted to show that the horses had been retired and cattle had been set out to feed, and this has gone on for seventy-plus years during which the empire did not experience warfare. One can say that the peace has been enduring.¹⁴ 重門擊柝以待暴客，制也。我國家以武德一九有，弛城郭弗葺，以示歸馬放牛之意，至今七十有餘年，天下不見金革，可謂安且久矣。

Then Liu Ji wrote a poem to celebrate the event, beginning with the lines: "The Great and Glorious Yuan received the mandate of Heaven. Warfare established things and culture preserved them, melding together the entire realm.... 於皇有元，受命於天。武定文守，以洽八埏。"¹⁵ One cannot but notice the dual importance given to war and culture as the twin pillars of a great state.

Liu Ji wrote of the unification of the realm by the Mongols as if it was a wonderful event in human history, and he celebrated its currently seventy glorious years. In a preface to the collected writings of a contemporary, he wrote about the era in this way:

Emperor Shizu 世祖 (Khubilai Khaghan) of the Yuan at the beginning of the Zhiyuan 至元 reign (1264-1295) still had not unified the empire. For a time the likes of Xu (Heng) 許衡 and Liu (Bingzhong) 劉秉忠 provided great assistance. When the heaven was about to turn, its vital breath must already have arrived. This is a definite principle. Now seventy years have passed since the unification, and as far as the sky can reach the same wind prevails.¹⁶

¹⁴ ㄌㄟㄟ, "Qingyuan lu xin cheng bei" 慶元路新城碑, pp. 178-79.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁶ ㄌㄟㄟ, "Wang Shilu shangshu wenji xu" 王師魯尚書文集序, p. 95.

有元世祖皇帝，至元之初天下猶未一也。時則有許劉諸公，以黃鐘大呂之音，振而起之。天將昌其運，其氣必先至焉。理固然矣。混一以來七十餘年，際天所覆，罔不同風。

In another preface to a contemporary's collected writings, Liu Ji used almost the same language to praise the civilization that the Yuan had fostered: "The August Yuan unified the universe, and the greatness of its culture became the equal of that of antiquity. 皇元混一宇宙文物之盛追配隆古."¹⁷

Writing elsewhere to celebrate the reconstruction of the mote around the city wall of Taizhou 台州 Circuit in Zhejiang, Liu Ji again sang the praises of the Yuan for its unification of the realm and establishment of a glorious civilization:

The August Yuan received the mandate of Heaven, reached the ends of earth and sky, where all acknowledged it as the ruler. The people grew numerous and the civilization prospered, and war was ended. The officials under the Yuan upheld the principles of civilized rule, while the people themselves devoted themselves to rejoicing. The emperor bestowed benevolence onto the people and brought good government.¹⁸ 皇元誕受天命，際乾極坤，罔不臣妾。民蕃物豐，兵刃銷戢。官吏守文，人習於娛。孽種竊茁，蔓於草萊。皇帝惠閱下民，乃熙德裨政。

In 1354 Liu wrote a poem celebrating the birthday of emperor Toqon Temur, the last Mongol ruler of China (r. 1333-1368; d. 1370).¹⁹ In the poem he praised the wisdom of chancellor Toghto (1314-1355), the capable Mongol leader and chief minister at court at the time the poem was written. Toghto had studied Chinese letters under a prominent Chinese scholar when he was a young person.²⁰ He was then nearing the end of his five-year run as chief minister. Song Lian's poem praised both the chancellor and the emperor.

While racial tensions in Yuan China were not unknown, however, and the Yuan awarded certain political advantages to non-Han persons of the realm, prominent Chinese individuals like Liu Ji and Song Lian nevertheless were proud to lend their prestige to the Yuan regime. As

¹⁷ ㄌㄧㄢˊ, "Ruo shangren wenji xu" 若上人文集序, p. 98.

¹⁸ ㄌㄧㄢˊ, "Taizhou lu xin xiu cheng hao bei" 台州路新修城濠碑, p. 180.

¹⁹ ㄌㄧㄢˊ, "Tianshou jie tong zhu yu chen bai yu Baolin jiao si. Li bi, deng pancuixuan, fen yun de ji zi" 天壽節同諸禹臣拜于寶林教寺。禮畢鄧榮翠軒，分韻得稽字, p. 331. Discussed in Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 33.

²⁰ Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 36. Toghto's teacher was the father of Wu Lai, Song Lian's mentor from Pujiang; see below.

JOHN D. LANGLOIS, JR.

we have seen in the writings of these intellectuals, the Yuan was not only legitimate, it was great.

1355-58: SONG LIAN AND LIU JI
RECOGNIZE THE END OF YUAN

The year 1355 marked a critical turning point in the Yuan's decline. The turn was triggered by the throne's disastrous decision to cashier one of its leading and most intelligent officials, the chancellor Toghto who as we have seen was highly praised by Song Lian. Against huge odds, Toghto had made excellent progress in the years 1352-1354 building a military capability coupled with improved administrative strength, particularly in the lower Yellow River reaches, southeast China and the Yangzi delta. But in the complex and messy politics at the Yuan, his rivals got the better of him. Toghto was cashiered in 1354 and poisoned to death in 1355.²¹ The Mongols lost perhaps their most capable leader and one who had extraordinary credentials as a cross-cultural intellectual.²²

By the late 1350s, it was clear to both Liu Ji and Song Lian that the Yuan was in a state of irreversible decline, causing massive social and economic dislocations. The Mongols' ability to maintain stability was gone, and the vacuum was being filled with banditry, warlordism, sectarian religious movements, and pestilence.

Literati brought up in the traditional Confucian learning possessed strong conceptual tools for dealing with such a world. Dynastic vicissitudes were nothing new in China. Confucius himself had established a role model for the engaged person to seek to work with men who had power to effect social and political reforms. Song Lian and Liu Ji were masters of these tools.

During their years just prior to joining up with Zhu Yuanzhang, Song Lian and Liu Ji wrote down their theories and observations in a series of works, mainly in parable form, that are lucid and moving. These writings reveal two thoughtful and learned men grappling with the greatest challenge of their lives: how could they be helpful to their fellow contemporaries as the once-awesome Yuan fell to pieces before their eyes?

In 1358-1360 when both men reversed courses and joined the young warlord Zhu Yuanzhang, Song Lian was at that point a quasi-

²¹ Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 43.

²² See *Yuan shi* 元史 138 (biog. of Toghto); see John W. Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians: Aspects of Political Change in Late Yuan China* (N.Y.C.: Columbia U.P., 1973), pp. 75-94.

recluse in Jinhua 金華 in eastern Zhejiang; Liu Ji had ended his work with Shimo Yisun 石抹宜孫 (d. 1360), an ethnic Khitan who in 1357 established a local military command in Chuzhou 處州 (modern Lishui 麗水) in a famous attempt to reestablish Yuan order in Zhejiang. Liu Ji had become his devoted friend and advisor but left him just before Zhu Yuanzhang's forces came into the area in 1358. In the next year Shimo was forced to flee south to Fujian. He returned to Zhejiang only to be killed in 1360.²³

The years 1358 to 1360 were a benchmark in Zhu Yuanzhang's ascendancy. By the time he celebrated his thirtieth birthday, he had been leading a military life for eight years, since the day he left his refuge in a Buddhist monastery. By 1358 he had put together the core of his military leadership, centered on his companions from his native Anhui. In that year, he led his forces to cross the Yangzi River from Jiqing, where they had camped, and entered northern Zhejiang. Making Jinhua his capital for a little over a year, Zhu began to seek top flight men of learning for his team.

SONG LIAN AND LIU JI MAKE THEIR DECISIONS TO JOIN ZHU

When Zhu's forces approached Jinhua under the banner of the Red Turban Song regime, Song Lian and many other literati fled in fear into the hills, taking their families and abandoning their properties in town. They did not know what to expect of this military leader. Song Lian had moved into Longmen Mountain in the tenth month of 1356 to dedicate himself to writing. There he wrote "Longmenzi ning dao ji" 龍門子凝道記 and "Yan shu" 燕書, finishing these by the fifth lunar month of 1357. But in the third lunar month of 1358, Zhu Yuanzhang's army took Muzhou 睦州, which bordered on Song Lian's home district. Song sent his wife and children to friends' houses on Gouwu Mountain 勾無山, Zhuji 諸暨. In the sixth month, his home district of Pujiang 浦江 fell to Zhu's army, whereupon Song Lian fled to Zhuji to be with his family. It was a time of near panic, as Song Lian recalled in a piece written in the 1370s:

Before long Jinhua fell to the troops, and the literati ran like ants. Only Liuzi village 流子里 provided a refuge, so they quickly took their wives and children there to get away. Liuzi village is part of Zhuji, just southeast of Sheng 嵯 and only a short journey away. I was in distress and frightened, and the local people were always mistreating the refugees. If they didn't take everything during the

²³ *Yuan shi* 188 (biog. of Shimo Yisun).

daylight hours, they would hide in the shadows of the trees and confiscate their baggage, sometimes even killing people.²⁴ 曾未幾何，金華陷於兵，士大夫螻蟻走，唯流子里爲樂土，亟挈妻孥避焉。流子里隸諸暨，地在嵎之東南，僅數舍即至。濂時苦心多畏，而土著民往往凌虐流寓者，白日未盡墜，輒翳行林坳，鈔其囊橐物，甚者或至殺人。

Members of the Zheng 鄭 clan, Song Lian's patrons in Pujiang,²⁶ also fled to Liuzi village to get away from the invading army.

Eventually things settled down and the Pujiang refugees returned home. Song Lian brought his family back to Jinhua in the third month. But his younger sister a few months later jumped off a cliff and committed suicide when she was chased, robbed, and almost raped by marauders. It must have been a terrifying time for Song.²⁷

In the eleventh month of 1358, when Zhu Yuanzhang was at his new headquarters in Jinhua, Zhu's local chief offered the job of Five Classics Teacher to Song Lian. Song refused, and explained in a letter to the chief that "on the 27th day of the 11th month, your envoy was sent to see me in the mountains, bestowing books and money upon me, and pressing me to become Five Classics Teacher. When I heard this, I was frightened and didn't know what to say." His long letter is full of false modesty and specious reasons to decline, but decline he did.²⁷

Song Lian was still evading Zhu Yuanzhang in 1359. In the first month of that year the young warlord set up an office designed to attract Confucian literati as officials. But Song instead retreated from Pujiang because, as he put it, "although the troops were settled, Pujiang was unlivable, what with all the military activity there 兵雖定，浦江當戎馬之衝，不可居."²⁸

Only in the third month of 1360 did he finally accept an invitation from Zhu Yuanzhang to visit Zhu in Jiqing, along with Liu Ji and a few others. Years later, Song Lian wrote of this visit in a letter to his friend Mr. Sun, saying,

²⁴ Song Lian, "Preface on Seeing Off Xu Shiyong on His Return to Yue (Shaoxing)" 送許時用還越中序, *SLQJ*, p. 484; quoted in Xu Yongming 徐永明, *Yuan dai zhi Ming chu Wuzhou zuojiaqun yanjiu* 元代至明初婺州作家群研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005), pp. 401-2.

²⁵ See John W. Dardess, "The Cheng Communal Family: Social Organization and Neo-Confucianism in Yuan and Early Ming China," *HJAS* 34 (1974), pp. 7-52.

²⁶ Song Lian, "Song lie fu zhuan" 宋烈婦傳, *SLQJ*, pp. 1989-90; Xu, *Yuan dai zhi Ming chu*, pp. 403-5.

²⁷ Song Lian, "Da junshou pin wu jing shi shu" 荅郡守聘五經師書, *SLQJ*, pp. 252-55; John W. Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1983), p. 123.

²⁸ Song Lian, "Luo shan qian ju zhi" 蘿山遷居志, *SLQJ*, p. 1356; Xu, *Yuan dai zhi Ming chu*, p. 406.

Back then, the emperor wanted to employ people (i.e., literati), but outstanding and talented people who understood war and strategy, when victory and defeat were unclear, were all hiding in the hills and were unwilling to come out... Messrs. Liu Ji, Zhang Yi 章溢, and Ye Chen 葉琛 were recommended by the recluses. Mr. Liu was the most famous, and he had an air of bravery and robustness, and like you (Mr. Sun), he had served the Yuan. He was embarrassed to serve another master. Envoys were going back and forth to him (from the emperor), but he would not budge.²⁹ 時上欲用人, 而秀民有才能者見方戰爭, 勝負未分, 皆伏匿山谷中不肯出 ... 而劉君基、章君溢、葉君琛, 尤爲處士所推。劉君最有名, 亦豪俠負氣與君類, 自以仕元, 恥爲他人用。使者再往返不起。

Of course, Liu eventually overcame his reluctance to switch his loyalty, throwing out the traditional view that a moral man would not serve two rulers or ruling houses. Liu Ji may not have been completely comfortable with his decision to switch. He hinted at this many years later:

In 1360, the Master Song Lian of Jinhua and I together arrived in the capital (Nanjing). At that time, the emperor had not long before just crossed the Yangzi River and eastern Zhejiang had still not come under his rule. The Master and I, and my fellow townsmen Ye Chen and Zhang Yi, were all staying in the Confucian Temple School. We spent the days talking and laughing and, while we were not homesick, we were not completely comfortable. Only the Master [Song Lian] was fully at ease.³⁰ 庚子之歲, 予與金華宋先生俱來京師, 時上渡江未久, 浙東方歸附。先生與予及予同鄉葉景淵、章三益同居孔子廟學, 惟日相與談笑, 雖俱不念家, 而予三人者亦皆不能無芥于心。惟先生泰然耳。

SONG LIAN'S ANALYSIS IN "LONGMENZI NING DAO JI"

Song presented an analysis of the contemporary world in his essay entitled "Longmenzi ning dao ji" ("Record of Concentrating the Way by the Philosopher of Longmen Mountain"). The philosopher in the title is the author himself, and Longmen Mountain was but a few miles away from Pujiang. He wrote the essay in a burst of activity beginning on the fourth day of the tenth lunar month of 1356 and ending on the

²⁹ Song Lian, a tomb inscription for the late Mr. Sun 故江南等處行省都事孫君墓銘; see *SLQZ*, p. 1649; quoted in Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 76.

³⁰ *LJJ*, p. 85, preface to a poem on the occasion of Song Lian's son's return to Jinhua 送宋仲珩還金華序; quoted in Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 80.

first day of the first lunar month of 1357, in other words over a short period of about two months.

“Record of Concentrating the Way” presents a moving manifesto within a question-and-answer format. It starts with a lament, almost a whine. The Philosopher says he is sick. He has been grieving at the deaths and suffering in the world due to military actions, the decline of rituals, and his inability to do anything about these things. And it seems as though he is going to play the role of an aging and disappointed man. But then the Inquisitor intervenes and turns the point on its head. The Inquisitor realizes that the Philosopher’s illness and distress are reactions to the sight of human bones piled high in the sun, the stench of blood, homes destroyed, and abandoned farms. These are symptoms of a complete breakdown in social order.

Then the Philosopher brings in his real point. Yes, there has been a complete breakdown, but it is not beyond the reach of ordinary people to change it, to reverse the breakdown:

The Philosopher of Longmen lay ill in bed and didn’t go out for several months. His students didn’t dare go visit him and told his friend Lü Qiusheng 閻邱生. When Lü Qiusheng heard about it, he rushed over to see him and asked:

“Master’s illness, is it dizziness in the head? Is it cloudy vision? Are you deaf?” Answer: “No.” “Then is it feeling heavy and crippled, you can’t walk, and you tend to be loony? Does your chest hurt and your back spasm, and are your two flanks bloated? Are you coughing up spittle and leaking air below?” Answer: “No.” “Is your spine in pain, do you run out of breath and can’t talk? Is your heart hanging like you were palpitating, ... (?) Have you got a bad injury to your kidney, are you having trouble urinating? Is your blood hot and bubbling, are you all bloated? Is your throat dry and jaundiced; is your nose blocked or bloody?” Answer: “No.”

“Ah, now I know what Master’s illness is. The master’s illness is not his own illness but the world’s illness. These days swords are crossed in battle, bones turn white and are unburied, piled up in small mountains. When the skies are dark, the cries of ghosts can be heard all around. This is Master’s illness. Official buildings are reduced to ashes, the people are refugees with nowhere to turn, ruins become their coffins, straw is their staple, their beds are the bluffs, they bathe in the swamps, their light is the moon, they beg for life and even death and don’t know which to plan for. This is Master’s illness. The fields are lying in waste, no grains

are growing, wildcats roam about in the middle of the day, the people rarely walk about and stench and filth are rife. This is the Master's illness. Am I right?"

The Philosopher of Longmen replied, "You know me well." Lü Qiusheng said, "I have heard it said that the health of a horse depends on its corral; the health of the people depends on the imperial court. The wealthy know not illness; if Master as a common man worried about it, would that not be a thought beyond his station? To worry about that which should not be feared is to be ignorant; to worry only about that which is not shown in facts is to be unbenevolent. To be ignorant and unbenevolent can hardly be called the learning of the Way of the ancient sages, can it?"

The Philosopher of Longmen just sat in silence and Lü Qiusheng went away. Then the Philosopher of Longmen called in his students and said, "If I were not a man, that would be one thing. But as a man, how can I not worry about the world? How can I not worry about the world?"³¹

The image of death and rotting corpses shows up again a few sections later in the "Record." Song Lian had seen the evidence of warfare with his own eyes. In a moving paragraph he writes:

Philosopher of Longmen took an outing in the hills at the big tombs and saw abandoned carcasses just rotting there, with packs of hawks pecking at them. Philosopher of Longmen wept profusely and said, "Are you alone not the children of mothers and fathers? In the time of the former kings, the birds and beasts were able to live out their lives, their offspring didn't die young, their eggs didn't get destroyed, and people's lives were better off. The laws of the Han cannot be compared to those of the former sage kings, but even in Han times murderers were sentenced to death. Now you good people were captured and killed. Is this the right way for people to die?"³²

SONG LIAN'S PRE-ZHU YEARS

Song Lian competed in the first-level civil service examination in 1338 and failed to win a place. Eleven years later in 1349, by which time he had become renowned for his learning, Song was invited by members of the National History Bureau in Beijing to join them in the Bureau as an official. He declined the offer and chose to take up

³¹ *SLQJ*, p. 1754.

³² *SLQJ*, p. 1767.

the role of a Daoist and quasi-recluse on a mountain in Jinhua, while remaining as the teacher of the local Zheng clan. Liu Ji wrote a poem congratulating him on his decision to do this.³³

Song Lian had succeeded his mentor Wu Lai 吳萊 (1297–1340) as the Confucian teacher of the Zheng clan in Pujiang, a county in Jinhua, in 1340, and held that position for almost 20 years. Wu Lai, like his father before him, had taught that it was the obligation of the learned man to dedicate his effort to serving the needs of society. Wu was one of the leading lights in the Jinhua school that merged idealistic Confucian thinking with practical statecraft.³⁴

The Zheng family was a prominent extended communal clan whose assets were pooled and whose clan rules were among the models of the genre.³⁵ The clan had been honored by the Yuan court in 1311 for its communal solidarity, and well through early Ming times it remained famous for upholding its formal rules and observing proper Confucian behavior for ten generations over two and half centuries.³⁶ Song Lian wrote the preface for the publication of the *Zheng Clan Rules*,³⁷ and he wrote dozens of essays, biographies, poems, funerary inscriptions, and memorial pieces in honor of male and female members of the Zheng clan. Zheng clan leaders reciprocated the favor by writing laudatory essays and biographical notes about their beloved teacher. Song Lian came from a family of modest means; he had to borrow books when he was growing up as the Song family had very limited resources of its own. Song Lian's livelihood thus depended on the clan's support. When Song Lian left his home in 1360 to link up with Zhu Yuanzhang, it marked the beginning of a new source of livelihood for Song.

Song Lian's Prescriptions for the Way Forward

Song Lian spent the decade 1349–1358 in his quasi-recluse mode while he kept the teaching job at the Zheng clan school. During those years Song Lian wrote a number of works that reveal his thinking. Among the most famous are the aforementioned “Record of Concentrating the Way by the Philosopher of Longmen,” as well as “Differentiating the Philosophers” (“Zhu zi bian” 諸子辯), “The History of the

³³ *LJ*, p. 213, “Song Longmenzi ru Xianhua shan ci (bing xu)” 送龍門子入仙華山辭並序.

³⁴ John D. Langlois, Jr., “Political Thought in Chin-hua under Mongol Rule,” in idem, ed., *China Under Mongol Rule* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1981), pp. 137–85.

³⁵ Dardess, “Cheng Communal Family”; John D. Langlois, Jr., “Authority in Family Legislation: The Cheng Family Rules (*Cheng-shih kwei-fan*),” in Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke, eds., *State and Law in East Asia: Festschrift Karl Büniger* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981).

³⁶ See *SLQ*, p. 1280, “Zheng jiefu Huang shi zhuan” 鄭節婦黃氏傳.

³⁷ *SLQ*, p. 1382, *Jing yi bian yin* 旌義編引.

State of Yan” (“Yan shu”), “On the Six Classics” (“Liu jing lun” 六經論), and “Miscellaneous Notes from Mt. Vine” (“Luo shan za yan” 蘿山雜言). Each of these essays was written in the last couple of years of his residence in the mountain near Jinhua just prior to his decision to join Zhu Yuanzhang.

As we saw above, Song Lian posed the rhetorical question, Am I a man, and what is a man to do? Can one do anything at all in this environment? The Yuan was finished. There was no point in providing support to it any longer. But what could one do? His answer was in two parts.

First, he answered that sageliness – the correct way of being – was present within oneself as an inherent characteristic of human nature. This view is set forth in the “Record of Concentrating the Way.” Song Lian wrote that the “Philosopher” had a dream:

In the dream he ascended to a Pure City 清都, where he saw a strong man who was impressive in stature and was followed by an orderly line of disciples. The Philosopher thought, “Is there anyone like this in the world? He is so thoroughly endowed with awe-inspiring virtue, how different is he from people [in the real world]. He is a sage!... If I could associate with such a person, I would die without regret!” Then the strong man’s disciple called him over and asked, “Who are you?” The Philosopher of Longmen said, “I am Song Lian from western Yue (Zhejiang).” “How do you know this strong man is a sage?” (asked the disciple). Answer: “I can tell from his virtuous appearance.” Reply: “Right. ... You admire him but you don’t emulate him, why is that?” Answer: “It is not that I don’t want to emulate him. It’s my lack of strength.”

Reply: “The sages have been gone from the world for 2,000 years. What you saw today are those whose spirits are with the god [in heaven]. How can you associate with them? If you are willing to cultivate [yourself], I should inform you: the sage is within you and is not the slightest bit different from the strong man. If you work on it day and night from beginning to end, you are the strong man.”

When the Philosopher of Longmen woke up in a cold state, he said to his disciples, “The sage is within me; why tire myself emulating that which is outside me?”³⁸ 曰：聖人去世二千年矣，爾今所見者，殆其神陟降帝之左右者耳，爾安得與游？爾若願學焉，吾當有以告

³⁸ *SLQJ*, p. 1766. Reference to spirits who are with the god of heaven alludes to “Wen wang” in the *Shi jing* (*Book of Odes*).

爾也：爾心中有聖人焉，與丈夫無毫髮異，爾朝夕以終始之，是亦丈夫而已矣。龍門子泠然而寤，謂其門人曰：聖人在吾身爾，何勞外慕哉？

Song Lian here has outlined an essential truth of Confucianism, one that eventually blossomed in the teachings of Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529) a century and a half later. Sageliness, or more precisely the possibility of human perfection, resides in every person; one has only to find this inherent quality and cultivate it. Such cultivation is the proper task of a human being. This optimistic view of human nature and the world probably gave Song Lian courage and comfort.

Second, Song Lian said that of the sacred books of ancient learning, the classics of *Odes*, *History*, *Rites*, *Changes* – all of these things were really “teachings of the mind.” This idea is set forth in an essay he wrote in the same year with the title “On the Six Classics”:

The Six Classics are all studies of the mind. All of the principles in the mind are written there, and that is why the words of the Six Classics are all encompassing. The Six Classics put the brush to the principles that are in the mind.³⁹ 六經皆心學也，心中之理無不具，故六經之言無不該。六經所以筆吾心之理也。

Song Lian elsewhere described the mind in mystical terms as “the utmost of emptiness and inspiration: if you look at it, it has no shape; if you listen to it, it has no sound; if you probe it, you won’t find its venue. 至虛至靈者心。視之無形，聽之無聲，探之不見其所廬。”⁴⁰

This mystical thing called the mind was endowed with an enormous capability to bring order to the world:

If the mind is established, all the countries in the world can be governed; if not, you can’t even preserve one person. If everybody knows what the mind is, then every household can produce a sage like Yan or Meng, and everybody can be a sage king like Yao or Shun, and there would have been no need for writing the Six Classics.⁴¹ 心一立，四海國家可治；心不立，則不足以存一身。使人人知心若是，則家可顏孟也，人可堯舜也，六經不必作矣。

We can imagine that for Song Lian, the realization that the individual could find sageliness within, despite the abominable state of the world, could have provided a good measure of comfort, motivating him to reach out from his study into the world of a warlord.

Song Lian said he wrote “Differentiating the Philosophers” in 1358, after he had sent his family into the hills when Zhu Yuanzhang’s

³⁹ *SLQJ*, p. 72.

⁴⁰ *SLQJ*, p. 50, “Miscellaneous Notes from Mt. Vine.”

⁴¹ *SLQJ*, p. 202.

army took over the adjacent prefecture.⁴² “Differentiating the Philosophers” makes the point that in the years following the end of the era of the ancient sage kings, the teachings of learned men had split into all kinds of different directions even though they originally began from the same source. The early learned men “developed their own private knowledge, and some even perverted the Great Way 各奮私知而或鑿大道也。” Song reviewed them all, entirely from memory, in this essay and found many works to have been forgeries of later eras.⁴³ Many of the works of the latter type were still extant in Song Lian’s time and he wanted to be sure they were properly understood. Song Lian’s purpose – in his own words – was to “undo misconceptions 解惑.”⁴⁴ By this I think he meant to weed out writings that provided no useful guidance for the contemporary era.

Song Lian’s Views on Government

In the writings from his mountain years, Song Lian also adopted the Confucian position that government was obliged to work for the sake of the people and that the rulers’ task was to look after the people’s well being. At the same time, the rulers were granted a high degree of authoritarian privilege to do what they thought was best, including the imposition of punishments on people who misbehaved. In “The History of Yan,” dated the summer of 1357, he explained that the job of government and rulers was to “protect the people 保民”:

I inquired into the training of a bird of prey but learned about how to control one’s generals. The gentleman said: “It is hardly just a matter of controlling generals; governing the people is exactly the same.”⁴⁵

Someone said, “Fish need a river in order to live, but these days you [rulers of the state of Zheng] just give them a spoon of water and you toy with them every day, and you say, ‘I love fish, I love fish.’ It’s a rare fish that doesn’t rot!” The gentleman said, “The people are like fish. Unfortunately the governors of the people these days are all men from the ancient state of Zheng!”⁴⁶ 吾因問調鶴，而得馭將之術也。君子曰：豈惟馭將哉，治民亦猶是爾。人曰：魚以江爲命，處以一勺之水，日玩弄之，而曰：我愛魚，我愛魚。魚不腐者寡矣。君子曰：民猶魚也，今之治民者，皆鄭人也哉。

⁴² Three months later Pujiang also fell; *SLQJ*, p. 149.

⁴³ Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 republished this work; Beijing: Pu she 樸社, 1926.

⁴⁴ *SLQJ*, p. 128.

⁴⁵ *SLQJ*, p. 165.

⁴⁶ *SLQJ*, p. 168.

In the same essay, Song Lian used the water metaphor again to describe the role of the ruler and the protection of the people:

The ruler leads the people. The people follow the ruler as the water follows the tide. This has been so since ancient times. Now to say that the people are the heaven of the ruler means what? Although heaven gives birth to the people, and can cause the ruler to rule them, it doesn't cause him to mistreat them; mistreat them and you are not a ruler. Thus the ruler is set up for the people and the people are the most important.⁴⁷ 君者，主民；民之從君，猶水朝宗：振古然也。而曰民爲君之天何也？雖然，天之生民，使君主之，不使虐之，虐之非君也。是則君爲民立，民亦重矣哉。

In Song Lian's model of governance, the ruler is obligated to provide plenty of water for the "fish" to swim in. The fish have no particular demands on governance other than this. The Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang may have tapped Song Lian's ideas later on when he issued countless proclamations requiring the officials to "love the people" and to "respect the people," because the people are the "water" and the ruler is the "boat."⁴⁸

In deciding what to do in 1358, the choice Song faced – either doing nothing and staying in the hills or joining a military leader who could potentially restore order and, maybe, become educated to temper his harshness – was probably not a choice at all. It was not in his nature as a Confucian simply to opt out. He wanted to be engaged, and Zhu Yuanzhang – who at this point was still operating under the flag of the Red Turban Song state and who had sent out feelers to him – must have begun to look viable.

LIU JI

Liu Ji's admirer in early-Ming times, Xu Yikui 徐一夔 (1318–1400), wrote that the reason Liu Ji resigned his post and retreated to the hills in 1358 to write his masterwork *Yulizi* 郁離子 was out of frustration at the drifting and prevarication of Yuan officials.⁴⁹ The meaning of the word *yuli* in the title of the book is explained by another early-Ming writer as "civilized" (*wen ming* 文明). According to this writer, who was

⁴⁷ *SLQ*, p. 170.

⁴⁸ Wu Liangkai 吳量愷, "Zhu Yuanzhang zhenxing Mingchao de lilun ji qi shizheng fang-lue 朱元璋振興明朝的理論構想及其施政方略," *Ming shi guoji xueshu taolunhui ji Fu Yiling jiaoshou danchen jiushi zhounian jinian lunwenji* 明史國際學術討論會暨傅衣凌教授誕辰九十周年紀念論文集 (Xiamen: Xiamen Daxue, 2003), pp. 163–64.

⁴⁹ See the preface to *Yulizi* by Xu Yikuei dated 1386, in *LJ*, pp. 675–76; quoted by Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 67.

a Hanlin academician and a native of the same district as Liu Ji as well as a personal friend of Liu Ji's son: "The expression *yuli* means civilized. It is not a nickname."⁵⁰ He explained that Liu Ji wrote the work in the hope that his words would provide the basis for civilized rule 文明之治. Liu Ji himself said he wrote *Yulizi* in the hope that it would provide insights for the next true king in the world. The work can thus be viewed as a literary attempt to conjure up a civilized society out of the dismal environment of the late 1350s by providing ideas for a new leader yet to emerge. Since *Yulizi* is also the name of the main speaker in the work, we could actually call him "Mr. Civilization."

Liu Ji's Pre-Zhu Years

Liu Ji won the *jinshi* degree in 1333 and began government employment in 1336 in Jiangxi as a county official, staying there until 1340.⁵¹ In 1340 he returned to his home in Chuzhou, Zhejiang. We do not know what he did over the next five or six years.⁵² In 1346 he went to the Yuan capital Dadu 大都 in an effort to obtain another government appointment. He succeeded in being assigned to a slightly higher position, this time in Zhejiang as an assistant intendant for Confucian schools.⁵³ In 1348 he held the same title but moved to Hangzhou. In 1351 he quit the Hangzhou job due to illness, staying in Hangzhou until the spring of 1352.⁵⁴

The Red Turbans became well organized and very active in the years 1351–1352. In the tenth month of 1351, they established the Song regime in Hubei.⁵⁵ A year later a Red Turban general led an army to attack Raozhou 饒州 in Jiangxi, and four months later Hangzhou was attacked by the Red Turbans. The siege was lifted by Yuan troops after about a week. But the city of Hangzhou was almost destroyed in the process.⁵⁶ Liu Ji wrote about the devastation there in his poem "How Sad the Walls of Hangzhou", ending with the lines:

⁵⁰ Wu Congshan 吳從善, preface to *Yulizi*, in *LJJ*, p. 677. Wu wrote a preface to the collected writings of Liu Ji's son Liu Lian 劉璉 (1348–1379) in 1380. See *Qinding si ku quan shu zong mu* 欽定四庫全書總目 169.

⁵¹ Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 13.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, citing Zhou Songfang 周松芳, "Liu Ji Zhizheng liu nian ganye shiji kaolun" 劉基至正六年幹謁事蹟考論, *Zhejiang shehui kexue* 浙江社會科學 2 (2004).

⁵⁴ Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 20.

⁵⁵ See Hok-lam Chan, "The 'Song' Dynasty Legacy: Symbolism and Legitimation from Han Liner to Zhu Yuanzhang of the Ming Dynasty," *HJAS* 68.1 (June 2008), pp. 91–133. Chan discusses how the name Tianwan 天完, given by the official *Yuan History* to this regime, is a fabrication.

⁵⁶ Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 22.

In the long night, the wind blows, the stench of blood enters, the rivers and streams of Mt. Wu are desolate; on the walls the war clouds congeal and do not fly, a solitary person is speechless, his tears pouring down.⁵⁷ 長夜風吹血腥入，吳山浙河慘蕭瑟；城上陣雲凝不飛，獨客無聲淚交溢。

In 1352 Liu Ji joined the fight against the rebel Fang Guozhen 方國珍 (1319–1374), working briefly for two Mongol military officials. But Liu Ji in 1354 moved his family to Shaoxing 紹興 and stayed there to 1356 mainly to keep his family safe.⁵⁸ Yuan forces had frustrated the ambitions of the Song regime in 1353 and restored order in the lower Yangzi region. But things were unstable, and popular uprisings kept emerging in many places.

Liu Ji still was a strong supporter of the Yuan at this point.⁵⁹ In 1356 he was invited to work with Shimo Yisun in Chuzhou. Shimo became one of Liu Ji's closest friends. Liu Ji admired him for his contributions to the maintenance of order, his efforts against the rebels, and his achievements in traditional Chinese letters. About 97 poems written for Shimo Yisun are found in Liu Ji's collected writings. Liu and Shimo along with other literati in Chuzhou compiled a collection of over 300 poems that they wrote to each other.⁶⁰ In Liu Ji's preface to this collection, he stressed among other things the importance of loyalty to the ruler, an ethic that tightly bound Liu and Shimo.⁶¹ Liu Ji assisted Shimo Yisun to fight against the rebels – including Zhu Yuanzhang – until the 12th lunar month of 1358 (that is, early 1359).⁶² Liu Ji retired to his home in Chuzhou and began work on his *Yulizi*. Zhu Yuanzhang conquered Chuzhou in 1359.⁶³

LIU JI'S CRITIQUE OF THE YUAN: *YULIZI*

Liu Ji recognized that a ruler's position could be won with military force, but its retention depended on the support of the people. When he was serving in Hangzhou, he wrote a proclamation to the elders of

⁵⁷ *LJJ*, “Bei Hang cheng” 悲杭城 21, p. 395.

⁵⁸ Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, pp. 28–30, reviews the textual problems in this chronology.

⁵⁹ Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 34.

⁶⁰ The collection was called *Shaowei chang he ji* 少微倡和集; Zhou, *Liu Ji ping zhuan*, p. 54.

⁶¹ Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 55; *LJJ* 2, pp. 91–92.

⁶² Bi Yingchun 畢英春 and Hu Yihua 胡一華, *Liu Ji yu Zhu Yuanzhang* 劉基與朱元璋 (Xi'an: Xibei Daxue chubanshe, 2005), p. 94.

⁶³ Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, p. 61. See biog. of Shimo Yisun, *Yuan shi*; Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy*, p. 124.

the town in which he said that for over eighty years, Yuan rule had been times of prosperity and peace. But, he asked,

Who bestowed this gift? The virtue and magnanimity of the ruler aim at allowing people to rest, giving them happiness and peace. That is why if the government's legal order is lax and not maintained properly, and if the wrong people are placed in government, people will become degenerate and corrupt, making it impossible for [the ruler] to display moral civilizing influence and overcome blockages. The fault is with the officials, not with the ruler's intentions.⁶⁴ 誰之賜歟? 帝德寬大, 務在休息, 與百姓安樂太平. 故禁網漏而不修, 官缺其人, 偷惰潛生, 致⁶⁵不能宣德化, 達壅滯. 咎在有司, 非主上意也.

Here Liu Ji shielded the ruler from blame where government was not well run. Yet conditionality was inherent in the argument, and it set the stage for his analysis in the *Yulizi* of a situation where bad governance persisted and nothing seemed to be working to keep the officials in line:

The gentleman asked: "I would like to hear what the master's ambition is." Yulizi said sadly: "... Today bows are stretched, arrows are flying, fighting is everywhere, spirits have fallen and energies have ebbed. Animals and serpents are running amok, dogs have lost their masters and turned into wolves, with long claws and fangs, sucking blood and eating flesh, decadence everywhere, drowning in fat, plumbing the depths, bones spread over the tombs of the emperors, no one coming to the rescue. The Way of Heaven is virtually dead, and yet some are wishing to become rich and happy, dancing in joy: is this not tragic?" 公子曰: "願聞先生之志." 郁離子愀然曰: "... 方今成弧絕弦, 枉矢交流, 旬始櫓槍, 降魄流精, 爲獮爲豺, 爲蛟爲蛇; 犬失其主, 化爲封狼, 奮爪張牙, 飲血茹肉, 淫淫澗澗, 沈膏膩, 窮淵積, 骸連太陵, 無人以救之, 天道幾乎熄矣, 而欲以富貴爲樂, 娛遊爲適, 不亦悲乎?"

Given this depressing outlook, Liu Ji pointed the way to a resolution: the emergence of a true king:

I want to tell you sir about the Way of Yao and Yu and the affairs of Tang (the Shang king) and Wu (the Zhou king), teach the examples of (Tang's and Wu's respective aides) Yi and Lü, of Zhou and Shao (who together assisted King Cheng of Zhou), examine the lessons of the institutions of the kings of old, analyze the government that can rescue the age, illuminate the laws and institutions,

⁶⁴ *LJJ*, "Yu Ou Gua fu lao wen" 諭甌括父老文, p. 157.

⁶⁵ The text in *LJJ* has the word *yi* 以 here. I follow the SKQS text, which writes *zhi*; see *Chengyi bo wen ji* 誠意伯文集 (SKQS online edn.) 10.

teach the rites and music, and await the emergence of the king. It is not my aim to wait for miracles by chance, or play tricks, or appeal to the greedy and the ignorant, hoping for chance to save the day.⁶⁶ 僕願與公子講堯禹之道, 論湯武之事, 憲伊呂, 師周召, 稽考先王之典, 商度救時之政, 明法度, 肄禮樂, 以待王者之興. 若夫旁塗捷岐, 狙詐詭隨, 鳴貪鼓愚, 傲倖一時者, 皆不願也.

Liu's King Is Second Best

Liu Ji recognized that sage kings had only emerged once in human history. When he said he was waiting for the emergence of a king, he certainly did not have in mind a Yao or a Shun. Rather, he had in mind a more pragmatic or realistic outcome, someone who would be “the next best” thing to a sage king, a man with the power to create orderly government but with sufficient moral virtue to insure that power was used properly. In *Yulizi* he addressed this question by describing “the next best.”

Yulizi said, “... Heaven in giving birth to humans does not normally produce people like Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, or King Wen to become the rulers, so the next best 其次 take their places. How can that be? Like emperor Gaozu of Han, and emperor Taizong of Tang, these were heroes that appear infrequently and are not easily produced. They each passed down [their rule] for several hundred years and the people of the empire depended upon them and were safe, and the people were prosperous, and the barbarian tribes acknowledged their culture, and the material civilization and institutions were impressive. Their achievements were not insignificant. Yet some people insist on digging out their faults, blaming them, and indeed exaggerating their errors, letting people of later times criticize them by saying, ‘Can even people like these receive the mandate of heaven and rule the empire? Not likely!’ And then people stop studying these rulers’ strengths and instead mimic their shortcomings. Isn’t this the bad result of [what Confucius called] exposing a man’s faults in the name of honesty?”⁶⁷ 郁離子曰: “... 夫天之生人, 不恆得堯舜禹湯文王以爲之君, 然後及其次焉, 豈得已哉? 如漢之高祖, 唐之太宗, 所謂間世之英, 不易得也, 皆傳數百年, 天下之生賴之以安, 民物蕃昌, 蠻夷嚮風, 文物典章可觀, 其功不細, 乃必搜其失而斥之以自夸大, 使後世之人舉以爲詞曰: ‘若是者, 亦足以受天命, 一九有!’ 則不師其長而效其短, 是豈非以訐爲直者之流害哉?”

⁶⁶ *Yulizi*, *LJJ*, p. 62.

⁶⁷ *Yulizi*, *LJJ*, p. 30; allusion to *Analects* xvii/24.

Now Liu Ji brings in Confucius, who had taught about the sage kings of old. But he puts the old master's teachings in the context of Liu's own times:

Yulizi said, "These are the common words of scholars and are not the teachings of Confucius. Confucius wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as a warning to the worthy. That is why he recorded the achievements of Huan of Qi and Wen of Jin. He had no personal bias. He felt that their achievements were sufficient to move men. He recorded their achievements but did not herald their mistakes out of concern that others would doubt him; and he established the teaching of the Way. So the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of History* were edited by Confucius. What he intended with respect to the great kings of Shang and Zhou was simply to herald their beautiful points."⁶⁸ 郁離子曰：“是儒生之常言，而非孔子之訓也。孔子作春秋，爲賢者諱，故齊桓、晉文皆錄其功，非私之也，以其功足以使人慕，錄其功而不揚其罪，慮人之疑之，立教之道也。故詩書皆孔子所刪，其於商周之盛王，存其頌美而已矣。”

Liu Ji is saying that Confucius too was willing to accept “second best,” in other words, those rulers who were not sage rulers but who were good enough. Their positive deeds outweighed any minor flaws. The sacred books that Confucius had supposedly edited were meant to provide inspiring examples to later rulers who were themselves not sage rulers, who were merely “the next best”.

Liu is warning his contemporaries not to be zealous idealists; don't think that Confucius would have us wait for the emergence of another Yao or Shun before engaging in public service. Indeed, quite the opposite. Confucius would have us support “the next best,” the ruler who had the potential to become a Han Gaozu or a Tang Taizong.

The remaining question, unanswered in *Yulizi*, is who in Liu Ji's day had the qualifications to become “the next best”, a founder of a new dynasty? Did Liu Ji think that among the various contenders for power, someone would eventually demonstrate the ability to found a new dynasty? Did he have Zhu Yuanzhang in mind when he wrote this? Or Zhang Shicheng? We will never know.

Liu Ji's King Would Use Coercion and Moral Force

Yulizi assigned an important role to the necessity of punishments in order to establish order in the world. He likened punishments to prescription medicine dispensed forcefully on those in society who re-

⁶⁸ *Yulizi*, *LJJ*, p. 30.

quired it. Being a “doctor” to the world required expertise in diagnosis, so the correct medicine could be administered:

Yulizi said, “Ruling the empire is like being a doctor. ... If you don’t know the symptoms and can’t read the pulse, but just pick up random advice and issue prescriptions, while telling people, ‘I can cure you,’ you are the villain of the empire. That’s why order and disorder in the world are the symptoms, and the laws and rules of discipline are the pulses. Moral example and punishments are like the prescription and the treatment. The talent of a person (the ruler) is the medicine.”⁶⁹ 郁離子曰：“治天下者其猶醫乎。... 不知証不知脈，到聽途說以爲方，而語人曰我能醫，是賊天下者也。故治亂証也，紀綱脈也。道德、政刑方與法也。人才藥也。”

Expanding on the importance of punishments, Yulizi said, Punishments are commands of intimidation. When the law reaches the point of killing, the way of giving life to people is preserved. Amnesties are commands of virtue. Their point lies in giving life, and in them is preserved the way of killing people. In the *Book of History* it says, “Punishments aim at the elimination of punishments.” 郁離子曰：“刑，威令也。其法至於殺，而生人之道存焉。赦，德令也。其意在乎生，而殺人之道存焉。書曰：‘刑期于無刑。’

This is a restatement of the traditional Chinese view of the deterrent value of punishments. Punishments, it was believed, when applied rigorously and consistently, would deter people from doing evil. In the end, their deterrent effect would triumph over the human capacity to do wrong. Just in case there was any doubt, *Yulizi* laid it out again in simple language:

This is why in instituting punishments, one aims at making the people fear punishments. If they are always carried out for certain, the people will know that if they violate the rules they will be killed. Then the number of people who actually die will be few. Amnesties dispense pity on fools and forgive mistakes. Knowing that something is a violation and then not preventing it, and even forgiving it, just gives rise to a psychology of happy go lucky, encouraging wrongdoing. If someone is allowed to do bad things over and over and then finally in desperation you execute him, that it is turning grace into a trap.⁷⁰ 是故制刑期於使民畏刑，有必行，民知犯之之必死也，則死者鮮矣。赦者所以矜蠢愚，宥過誤，知罪不避而輒原焉，是啓僥倖之心，而教人犯也。至於禍稔惡積，不得已而誅之，是以恩爲阱也。

⁶⁹ *Yulizi*, *LJJ*, p. 5.

⁷⁰ *Yulizi*, *LJJ*, p. 14.

Liu Ji believed it was a terrible error to appease wrongdoing, for it only led to more wrongdoing, not less. He wanted the ruler to be a strict disciplinarian, but one with a balancing moral virtue. This position was a traditional Confucian one. It comes out explicitly in *Yulizi*:

Someone asked about the Way to win the Empire. He answered, "It lies in virtue." "How can virtue win?" Answer, "Great virtue wins over small virtue, and small virtue wins over no-virtue. Great virtue wins over brute force, and small virtue can withstand brute force. Force gives rise to enemies, virtue gives rise to power. Force gets life from virtue, and the empire has no enemy. Reliance on force can lead to short-lived wins. Virtue gets more victorious as time goes by. Now force is not just one man's force; each person has his own force. Only great virtue can command the force of the many. So virtue is inexhaustible, whereas force can be frustrated."⁷¹ 或問勝天下之道。曰：“在德。”“何以勝德？”曰：“大德勝小德，小德勝無德。大德勝大力，小德敵大力。力生敵，德生力。力生於德，天下無敵。故力者，勝一時者也。德愈久而愈勝者也。夫力非吾力也。人各力其力也。惟大德爲能得羣力。是故德不可窮，而力可困。”

LIU'S VIEW OF THE PEOPLE:
THEY CANNOT GOVERN THEMSELVES

Liu Ji wrote a poem-essay in four-word verse on government when he first assumed office in Yuan times. This piece,⁷² whose title "Principles of Government Office" ("Guan zhen" 官箴) was a standard one often adopted by writers from Han times through the Qing, has three sections, each addressed to different listeners. Part one is aimed at the person "holding the reins 執羈," meaning the ruler, while the second and third parts are aimed at ordinary people and officials in government.

The first section of the poem starts out with the belief that the natural state of nature among human beings is one without order. "Heaven gave birth to people, they were naked and ignorant. Their desires were uncontrolled, and they were as wild beasts. It gave them a ruler, and provided them with a teacher. 維天生民，擗擗蚩蚩。有欲罔制，廼豹廼螭。爰立之君，載作之師。"⁷³ Liu Ji developed this theme years later in *Yulizi*. He wrote that chaos was the natural state of mankind, and that order could only be achieved through the imposition of external force by a ruler. The metaphor he chose to describe this state was "loose sand,"

⁷¹ *Yulizi*, *LJJ*, p. 8; cf. Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy*, p. 141.

⁷² *LJJ*, pp. 167-69. Zhou Qun dates this piece to 1336; Zhou, *Liu Ji ping zhuan*, p. 37.

⁷³ *LJJ*, p. 167.

anticipating Sun Yat-sen's famous use of the same metaphor early in the twentieth century.⁷⁴ Because they are just so much loose sand, the people must have order imposed on them from above:

Yulizi said, "The people are like sand. Only he who can pull them together and concentrate them is the one who holds the empire. The people under Yao and Shun were like sand that had been pulled together by lacquer, and they fell apart in no time... . The people during the Three Ages were as sand that had been pulled together by glue; although they stayed together for a time, they fell to pieces... . The people under the hegemony were like sand that had been pulled together with water. When they are together, they cannot be broken apart, like water in the form of ice; but one day when it melts, they fall to pieces. The bottom case is when force pulls them together, like sand that has been pulled together in one's hand. When you make a fist, they stay together; when you open the fist, they fall apart. If one does not pursue the Way of pulling them together, and blames the people, and says, "These renegades just love to revolt." Whoa! How bad is that thinking?⁷⁵

郁離子曰：“民猶沙也，有天下者，惟能搏而聚之耳。堯舜之民，猶以漆搏沙，無時而解。三代之民，猶以膠搏沙，雖有時而融，不釋然離也。霸世之民，猶以水搏沙，其合也，若不可開，聚於一握，然一旦消釋，則渙然離矣。其下者，以力聚之，猶以手搏沙，拳則合，放則散。不求其聚之之道，而以責於民，曰：‘是頑而好叛。’嗚呼！何其不思之甚也！”

Given that the people would not form into an orderly state of governance spontaneously, there had to be applied a kind of social cement or organizing power by a superior force. Otherwise their default position of "loose sand" would prevail and civilization would be permanently damaged. Hence the ruler – the proper ruler, that is – was needed:

Yulizi said: "Heaven gave rise to the people but they cannot govern themselves, so it created the ruler, and gave to him the power of giving life, letting him prohibit violent behavior and execute those who commit rebellion, suppressing those who do evil things, and giving assistance to the weak and the good. If he cannot pro-

⁷⁴ Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People*, trans. Frank W. Price, ed. L. T. Chen (Shanghai: China Committee, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927). "What do foreigners mean when they say that China is a sheet of loose sand? Simply that every person does as he pleases, and has let his individual liberty extend to all phases of life; hence China is but a lot of separate sand particles. Take up a handful of sand; no matter how much there is, the particles will slip about without any tendency to cohere—that is loose sand. But if we add cement to the loose sand, it will harden into a firm body like a rock, in which the sand, however, has no freedom."

⁷⁵ Yulizi, *Lǐjī*, p. 6.

hibit violent behavior, or if he cannot execute those who commit rebellion, and if those who do evil things are not suppressed, then good people will be weakened and eventually disappear, and fools will be converted and follow those people, and this is really excessive.”⁷⁶ 天生民，不能自治，於是乎立之君，付之以生殺之權，使之禁暴誅亂，抑頑惡而扶弱善也。暴不禁，亂不誅，頑惡者不抑，善者日弱以消，愚者化而從之，亦已甚矣。

The Parables of the Bee Keeper and the Monkey Leader

While Liu Ji believed that the people needed to have a ruler who would impose order on their lives, he also believed that the ruler was obliged in practice to behave like the proverbial bee keeper. If the bee keeper was a tyrant, the bees would simply fly away. In *Yulizi*, he tells a parable of a bee keeper who treated his bees well, helped to maintain the hives, helped regulate the temperature and the exits and entrances, and took honey only when there was excess. He made sure there was only one queen bee. He thrived and made an excellent living off the bees. One day he died and his son took over. The son simply took out the honey and did not look after the bees' livelihood. The bees eventually flew out of the hives and left him. He became poor. Yulizi said, “Hark! You children should heed this story. The ruler of a state should take a lesson from this 噫! 二三子識之，爲國有民者可以鑒矣。”⁷⁷

While the ruler should impose order through the use of punishments, he was not meant to become a tyrant. He only could exist as ruler provided the people themselves voluntarily acceded to the ruler's existence. Like the bees, the people could fly away. In the early poem on the principles of governance, he said, “Intimidation is hateful, this is the eternal rule of a state. The weak must not be mistreated, nor the ignorant cheated... There is an eternal saying: treat the people like your children. 威匪予憎，國有恒規。弱不可陵，愚不可欺... 人有恒言，視民如兒。”⁷⁸

Liu Ji's parable of the monkey leader is equally interesting for its emphasis on the voluntary nature of the people's compliance with a ruler. The story goes that once upon a time there was a master and a group of monkeys. The monkeys supported the master by collecting fruits and berries and giving ten percent to the master each day. Any monkey who failed to cooperate was beaten by the monkey master. One day a young monkey asked the other monkeys if there was some reason why they were giving one-tenth of their labor to the master when the fruits were growing naturally in the forest and were not owned by

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁸ *Lǐjī*, p. 167–68.

the master. Suddenly they realized that it was out of pure habit that they were doing this and they had enlightenment. At that, the monkeys took all the fruit they could carry and fled, never to return. As a result, the master starved to death. The lesson of the story was given by Yulizi as follows:

Yulizi said, "Some in the world use tricks to control the people and do not follow the Way; they are like the Monkey Master. They are confused and unenlightened. The moment the people realize this, the tricks don't work."⁷⁹ 郁離子曰: 世有以術使民而無道揆者, 其如狙公乎. 惟其昏而未覺也. 一旦有開之, 其術窮矣.

People Versus Birds and Beasts

Liu Ji asked the question, what differentiates the human being from the beast? His answer was that mankind has the ability to learn and to be trained. From this, he derived the principles of government:

Yulizi said, "Birds and beasts and human beings are of different classes. But a person can train them and make them follow. What is there that a person can't do? Birds and beasts originally make their homes in mountain streams and swamps, and so to raise them in pens is to go against their nature. But in the end a person can train them because one can let them obtain what they desire and not go against that. Today there are those who raise birds and beasts but who cannot train them; it's because they don't feed them with what they desire in their hearts, or give them a place that gives peace to their nature. Instead they use force to compel them; the result is some die. Alas! How is that the way to train them? Humans are all of one class, and their feelings/circumstances are easily shared, unlike the ignorant birds and beasts. But if one takes away that which they desire, and gives them that which they do not desire; if one cuts off what they want, and compels them to accept that which they do not want, forcing them to follow, how could the result be happy minds and sincere submission? Won't this only give rise to their fears and leave them no choice? If they are not of happy minds and do not sincerely submit, and do so only out of necessity, and if one desires to use these people to govern the state, or look out for our interests, not even Yao or Shun could do it."⁸⁰ 郁離子曰: 鳥獸之與人, 非類也. 人能擾而馴之, 人亦何所不可為哉. 鳥獸以山藪為家, 而參養於樊籠之中, 非其情也. 而卒能馴之者, 使之得其所嗜好而無違也. 今有養鳥獸而不能使之馴, 則不食之以其心之所

⁷⁹ Yulizi, *Lǐjī*, pp. 18–19.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

欲，處之以其性之所安，而加矯迫焉，則有死耳。烏乎。其能馴之也？人與人爲同類，其情爲易通，非若鳥獸之無知也。而欲奪其所好，遺之以其所不好，絕其所欲，彊之以其所不欲，迫之而使從，其果心悅而誠服耶？其亦有所顧畏而不得已耶。若曰非心悅誠服，而出不得已，乃欲使之治吾國，徇吾事，則堯舜亦不能矣。

LIU JI'S "TWO GHOSTS" POEM

Liu Ji was the boldest commentator on his times. At one point early in his career under Zhu Yuanzhang he wrote a fantastic song-style poem entitled "The Two Ghosts" ("Er gui" 二鬼), which reads as an allegory for his own and Song Lian's lot under the ruler they chose to serve. In the poem, he and Song are the Two Ghosts, and the poet both pities them and laughs at them for being fools at the beck and call of a capricious ruler.⁸¹

The poem tells how Pan Gu 盤古, when he created the world, made the sun and the moon his pair of eyes. The Lord of Heaven felt bad that the sun and moon had to work so hard, so he commissioned the Two Ghosts Jielin 結璘 and Yuyi 鬱儀 to serve as their protective spirits. He let them go down among human beings to enjoy some fun. But suddenly the whole world went topsy-turvy. There were snow storms in summer and massive floods, and snakes with horns appeared, and meanwhile the Lord of Heaven had no one to rely upon. He lost his ability to see clearly. The Two Ghosts cured him with medicine and went on to fix up the world using Confucian principles. But the Lord of Heaven still blamed them for serious errors and locked them in a corral made of silver silk and steel. The Two Ghosts then waited for the Lord of Heaven to cool his anger and eventually made their way back to heaven to enjoy their games.⁸²

⁸¹ *Lǐjǐ*, pp. 279–81; *Fu pou ji* 覆瓿集, in *Chengyi bo wenji* 10. Scholars Xu and Sun see the poem as an allegory of Liu Ji's and Song Lian's relationship with Zhu Yuanzhang; see Xu and Sun, *Mingdai wenxue shi*, p. 5. Lin Jiali dates the poem to late 1373 or early 1374, but she provides no evidence for this dating; see Lin Jiali 林家麗, "Liu Ji nianbiao 劉基年表," in *Lǐjǐ*, p. 654. I believe it most likely was written sometime in either late Yuan or early Ming, when Liu Ji had already begun working with Song Lian in Zhu Yuanzhang's camp. Zhou Qun, *Liu Ji ping zhuan*, p. 304, however, believes the poem relates to the Yuan, not to Zhu Yuanzhang's regime. He says the Lord of Heaven is the last Yuan emperor, Shun Di, and the two ghosts are Liu Ji and the Mongol official in Zhejiang Tieli Tiemu'er, dismissed in 1353. His reasoning is that the poem is included in Liu Ji's collected works *Fu pou ji*, which was printed in early Ming and includes only pre-Ming writings. Zhou concludes that the poem therefore relates to the time when Liu Ji was working for the Yuan. This is not a necessary conclusion, and the poem more closely fits the relationship with Zhu Yuanzhang.

⁸² This is the summary by Zhou Qun; Zhou, *Liu Ji ping zhuan*, pp. 303–4.

In Liu's poem the Two Ghosts are virtual captives of a volatile and quirky Lord of Heaven. And Liu provides a cynical hint to help us understand why the "Two Ghosts" allow themselves to be kept under the ruler's heavy thumb: it was in order to gain refuge from cold and hunger.

The Lord of Heaven took pity on the Two Ghosts and for a short period of time allowed them to join in human pleasures. 天帝憐兩鬼，暫放兩鬼人間娛。... One ghost rode a white dog, the other ghost rode a white pig... 一鬼乘白狗... 一鬼乘白豕... Suddenly the cosmos transformed and strange things happened; in the sixth month it snowed and ice blocked up Heaven 忽然宇宙變差異六月落雪冰天達... The flying celestial spirit king received the edict of the Lord of Heaven and summoned immediately 500 *yaksha*⁸³ spirits bearing gold ropes and steel nets, and sent them to follow their paths to catch them, ordering them never to let the Two Ghosts escape into the craggy mountains. 飛天神王得天帝詔，立召五百夜叉，帶金繩，將鐵網，尋踪逐跡，莫放兩鬼走逸入嶮巖。... They searched 99,999 deep valleys and captured the Two Ghosts. 搜到九萬九千九百九十九仞幽谷底，捉住兩鬼。... The Two Ghosts just looked at each other and laughed. Since they got freedom from cold and hunger, and found long-term pleasure with no grief, they would wait for the Lord of Heaven's anger to cool and his suspicion to melt. Then as before they would play together in heaven. 兩鬼亦自相顧咲，但得不寒不餓長樂無憂悲，自可等待天帝息怒解猜惑，依舊天上作伴同遊戲。

LIU JI'S DEATH, 1375

Liu Ji suffered from poor health in his later years. When he retired at the age of sixty and returned to his home village, his physical condition was poor. His relationship with Zhu Yuanzhang had soured, but he tried to stay out of politics at the court. He was an outsider to the Anhui cronies of the emperor who in turn were engaged in schemes at court to aggrandize their power and wealth. The emperor commented on Liu Ji's death some fifteen years after the fact in an informal edict honoring Liu's second son:

When Liu Bowen (Liu Ji) was here, the entire court was in factions; he alone did not go along with them. As a result he was poisoned by them. His eldest son was tough, for sure, and he also didn't go along with them. And he was killed. I destroyed those treasonous officials and despoiled their tombs. 劉伯溫他在這裡時滿朝都是黨。只

⁸³ A Hindu nature-spirit.

是他一個不從。他吃的他每蠱了。他大的兒子這小的也利害，不從他。也吃的他每害了。這起反臣都吃我廢了。墳墓發掘了。

In a separate edict, the emperor wrote:

Back then Liu Bowen stood up and joined me. Nobody could understand his celestial observations. He took full advantage of his scholar's reason. Look at the Poyang Lake battle, there was slaughter everywhere. He contributed to it all. Later on the Hu [Weiyong] family formed a faction and he was poisoned by them. On that day he came to see me and said, "Sire, there is something really hard knotting up in my guts. I am frightened." I sent someone to take him back home and he died there. Later I summoned his son and asked about it. He said, "He got swollen up real bad, then he had diarrhea and died." He was poisoned for sure. When his son was in Jiangxi, he too was poisoned.⁸⁴ 劉伯溫那時挺身來隨著我，他的天文別人看不着。他只把秀才的理來斷。到強如他那等鄱陽湖裏到處廝殺。他都有功。後來胡家結黨，他吃他下了蠱。只見一日來和我說，上位，臣如今肚內一塊硬結。但諒着不好。我着人送他回去家裏死了。後來宣得他兒子來問，說道。脹起來緊緊的。後來瀉的驚驚的卻死了。這正是着了蠱。他大兒子在江西也吃他藥殺了。

SONG LIAN'S DEATH, 1381

Song Lian's grandson in 1380 was implicated in the Hu Weiyong treason case and was imprisoned. In the eleventh month of that year he was executed along with his uncle. Song Lian himself was sentenced to death by the emperor and was scheduled to be cut in half at the waist. Only after pleas for his life by empress Ma and by his former student heir-apparent Zhu Biao 朱標 (1355-1392) did the emperor allow Song Lian to live. One source says the heir-apparent was so distraught by the sentence that he threw himself into a stream in an attempt to kill himself, moving the emperor to abandon his plan to execute Song. In the end, the emperor sent the Song family into exile in Sichuan. The stress and depression of all these events drove Song Lian to despair. He died in exile in Sichuan, perhaps by hanging himself.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ The quotations from Zhu Yuanzhang's edicts are found in "Chengyi bo ci zi hemenshi Liu Zhongjing yu en lu" 誠意伯次子閤門使劉仲環遇恩錄, in *LJJ*, pp. 667-71. See also Zhou, *Liu Ji ping zhuan*, p. 115. Despite Zhu Yuanzhang's words, Yang Ne is doubtful that Liu Ji was poisoned and believes it likely that he died of old age; Yang, *Liu Ji shiji*, pp. 153-68.

⁸⁵ Wang Chunnan 王春南, *Song Lian zhuan* 宋濂傳, in Wang Chunnan 王春南 and Zhao Yinglin 趙映林, *Song Lian Fang Xiaoru ping zhuan* 宋濂方孝孺評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue, 1998), p. 112; Mote, "Sung Lien," pp. 1228-29.

COMPLICITY IN TYRANNY?

Liu Ji's prominent attention to the strict application of punishments has led some scholars to conclude that his views were compatible with tyranny and that they helped Zhu Yuanzhang become the tyrant he became. Even the idealist Song Lian's thought has been seen in this way.⁸⁶

Traditional Confucian writings about governance had always focused on the so-called two "handles" of government power: virtue and punishment. Dating back to the pragmatist and legalist schools of thought in early times, power was conceived in terms of this metaphor. Liu Ji and Song Lian tapped that tradition to make a convincing argument to Zhu, one that was acceptable to Zhu in principle. At the same time, both Song and Liu strongly emphasized the need for the ruler to treat the people as his children, to be benevolent, to be like the bee keeper. This line of thinking was straight out of Mencius. They promoted the Confucian antidote to evil autocracy, the notion that the people were the root. This meant that the people had to be served; failing that, the people justly would rise up and throw out the tyrant.

Zhu Yuanzhang himself frequently adopted the same metaphors and manners of expression, and on numerous occasions adopted the Confucian expressions of benevolence. At the same time, he always reserved the power to impose punishments on those he felt were opposing him.

It ended badly, however, personally for Liu and Song, and institutionally for the nature of Ming governance. Confucian checks on the abuse of autocratic power were often a poor match for the iron will of Zhu Yuanzhang and his successors.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- SLQJ* Song Lian, *Song Lian quan ji* 宋濂全集
LJJ Liu Ji, *Liu Ji ji* 劉基集

⁸⁶ Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy*, p. 171. A review of this work is in F. W. Mote, *HJAS* 46.1 (June 1986), pp. 302-17.