# The Learning of the Mind as an Ideological Movement: Probing the Historical Origins of the School of Wang Yangming

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**Abstract:** As an influential scholar, the Ming 明 Neo-Confucian master Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) was also active in the political world. While showing philosophical ingenuity, Wang launched an ideological movement which reached beyond Neo-Confucian discourse and into the social and political spheres. By promoting his *xinxue* 心學 teachings, Wang aimed to change Ming political life through fostering a moral retrenchment among future officials. To achieve his goals, Wang Yangming implemented several strategies, such as turning to humble local literati for a following, teaching them as a sitting official, and supporting nonofficial academies with his political power. These strategies succeeded to some extent, in part because the Ming court had relaxed the ideological intolerance of the early Ming. The real-world background of Wang Yangming's success can be further explored by comparing Wang with his two predecessors, Xue Xuan 薛瑄 (1389–1464) and Wu Yubi 吳與弼 (1391–1469).

**Keywords:** Ming 明 dynasty, Neo-Confucianism, Wang Yangming 王陽明, ideological movement, Xue Xuan 薛瑄 (1389–1464), Wu Yubi 吳與弼 (1391–1469)

In the scholarship on Neo-Confucianism during the Ming 明 dynasty, Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) is generally considered to be the most influential thinker and has received the most attention. Indeed, Wang Yangming's learning of the mind (*xinxue* 心學), or Yangmingism, occupied the attention of the Ming intelligentsia for more than a century. Yet, although they never exercised the influence that Wang Yangming did, other Ming Neo-Confucians similarly built their reputations and attracted numerous followers before his time. These earlier Neo-Confucians adhered to the orthodox Cheng-Zhu 程朱 learning of principle (*lixue* 理學), which had lost its novelty for the Ming literati by Wang Yangming's time.

As a theory of moral self-cultivation, the learning of principle placed much emphasis on becoming deeply learned and, through extensive inquiry, distinguishing clearly moral principles that pertain to every aspect of a person's life. Wang Yangming questioned the scholasticism and dogmatism of the Ming iteration of this tradition of Neo-Confucian learning, claiming instead that mind itself is principle, and that all people have the innate capacity to discern moral truths naturally through moral introspection. He called this capacity the innate knowl-



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edge of the good (*liangzhi* 良知), and this doctrine, as well as others that he taught throughout his lifetime, attracted much attention. Nevertheless, the appeal of Wang's heterodox propositions regarding the innate knowledge of the good alone does not explain his enormous success.

Since its beginning in the Song 宋 dynasty, Neo-Confucianism was not solely philosophical in nature, and not a matter of scholars debating theoretical issues. Rather, it was a set of principles that guided believers, most of whom came from the literati class. Members of this class often became leaders of local societies or political elites. Thus, the intellectual worldview embraced by that class was not only purely philosophical but also historical, with political and social ramifications. To promote their ideas, Neo-Confucian masters like Wang Yangming launched ideological movements among the literati class, which in turn had an impact on society and politics.

Thus, studying branches of Neo-Confucianism requires much more than reading and analyzing the masters' philosophies. Neo-Confucian ideological movements grew out of concrete historical contexts consisting of a variety of political, social, cultural, and economic factors. Together with the philosophical appeal of Yangmingism, specific historical factors made Wang Yangming's ideological movement the culmination of a series of earlier events in Ming history. These factors can be discussed and explained on their own, but it is better to view them in the light of historical factors that fostered or curtailed prior Neo-Confucian movements. In this way, Wang Yangming can be normalized and understood less as an exceptional individual who did something that no one had previously done, and more as an outstanding individual belonging to a group of similar figures. This approach will also help us understand the movement he fostered in the context of the changing intellectual and political environments of the Ming dynasty.

**An Ideological Movement Generated by Politics**

Many scholars have noticed that Wang Yangming's enthusiasm for initiating a movement was deeply related to the political reality he faced. Discussing how Wang's career as a Neo-Confucian teacher started in 1505, Tu Wei-ming 杜維明 writes, "[Yangming] felt so uncomfortable in the political climate around him that he tended to seek his social function as a Confucian teacher rather than as an official" (Tu 1976: 89). Tu further added that "Yang-ming's commitment to teaching was an effort to create a more meaningful world within a world of petty concerns rather than a withdrawal from political activism" (Tu 1976: 89). Yu Ying-shih 余英時 points out that Wang Yangming's famous enlightenment in Longchang 龍場 was triggered by his reflection on the bitter experience of having taken part in the political movement aimed at bringing down Liu Jin 劉瑾 (?–1510), the powerful eunuch who was dominating the court of the Zhengde 正德 emperor (Zhu Houzhao 朱厚照, 1491–1521; r. 1506–21). This movement's failure fully revealed the nastiness of Ming politics (Yu 2008: 175–84).

Even after returning to Beijing, Wang Yangming experienced deep disillusionment with the high politics of the Ming. George L. Israel makes use of several letters that Wang Yangming wrote to his father in this period to demonstrate that Wang

was trying to choose between serving and leaving office. He considered leaving because he felt that he was failing to fulfil his responsibilities as an official and could do nothing to improve conditions at the capital (Israel 2017: 67–68). Even though Liu Jin had fallen out of favor and been executed, court politics did not improve. The emperor's alarming conduct showed no sign of changing in a way that would be favorable to officialdom. Another eunuch, Zhang Yong 張永 (1465–1528), who had played a major role in taking down Liu Jin, had risen to power in his place. Leading court officials such as Li Dongyang 李東陽 (1447–1516) and Yang Yiqing 楊一清 (1454–1530) were shamelessly currying favor with Zhang Yong to keep their position and power. "Beijing had become a cesspool of corruption," Israel (2017: 69) states. His disappointment in Ming politics and the impulse to improve it by launching an ideological movement had always defined Wang Yangming.

From its inception, Neo-Confucianism was a set of theories that aimed to restore the social order to an ideal state envisioned by its theorists, with self-cultivation as the foundation. The eight steps listed in the *Great Learning* 大學—one of the major classical texts required to engage in Neo-Confucian scholarship—begin with the investigation of things (*gewu* 格物) and end with the state being properly governed and the whole world made tranquil, indicating that those who undertake the Way (*dao* 道) are eventually responsible for good politics.

Wang Yangming was no exception to this tradition. As he saw it, the disillusioning political environment he confronted was rooted in moral crisis. The literati officials' failure to cultivate virtue was at the root of Ming political chaos and corruption. In the eyes of Wang Yangming and his followers, "the literati class was superficial, inauthentic, and obsessed with power and prestige" (Israel 2017: 80). As Wang Yangming would state many years later in a letter to his friend Gu Lin 顧璘 (1476–1545), the literati of their time were so habituated to "the poison of hankering after personal gain" (*gongli zhi du* 功利之毒) that it had "become their nature" (*xi yi cheng xing* 習以成性).[1] This was completely contrary to the spirit of the learning of the sages.[2]

In fact, Wang Yangming himself as a young official eagerly sought opportunities for career advancement. He actively participated in the literary society presided over by Li Dongyang, who was then serving as a grand secretary, one of very few top officials. Wang was also happy to display his righteousness by getting involved in political confrontations at court, just as he had at the beginning of the Zhengde reign. Wang Yangming's enlightenment at Longchang was based on his deep reflection on his political career to date (Jiao 2015: 97–115). As Yu Ying-shih (2008: 185) has stated, Wang Yangming "for the most part stayed silent about the affairs at court after his enlightenment." Yet, his concern with improving Ming politics never ceased, as is shown in his correspondence with students and friends during the so-called Great Rites Controversy, which transpired during the beginning of the reign of the Jiajing 嘉靖 emperor (Zhu Houcong 朱厚熜, 1507–67; r. 1522–66) (Jiao 2012: 36–68).

Thus, Wang Yangming believed that to restore political order, the first and most important step was to restore the literati's morality by introducing them to the one and only true learning that matters to one's moral cultivation. Only with

the right moral knowledge and practice could the literati conduct politics rightly as officials, as well as advise and influence their ruler properly so his conduct would also be consistent with the Way. Thus, Wang Yangming devoted the rest of his life to finding and fostering those who identified with his ideals.

### Wang Yangming's Ming Predecessors: Xue Xuan 薛瑄 (1389–1464) and Wu Yubi 吳與弼 (1391–1469)

Before Wang Yangming became the most prominent Ming Neo-Confucian master, Neo-Confucianism had undergone a long period of development throughout the preceding Ming years. Several scholars succeeded in amassing substantial followings and establishing influential schools before Wang Yangming did. Comparing these schools with Wang Yangming's shows that these masters used different strategies to build and maintain them.

With the bloody execution of the scholar-official Fang Xiaoru 方孝孺 (1357–1402) and his students by the Yongle 永樂 emperor (Zhu Di 朱棣, 1360–1424; r. 1402–24), the Ming lost its "spokesman for the Neo-Confucians" (Bol 2008: 96), witnessing the termination of the most influential Neo-Confucian school in the early Ming. But the tradition of Neo-Confucian learning did not fall into abeyance. A new generation of Neo-Confucians soon made its debut, attracting followers in considerable numbers. Among these, two major figures stand out, both for the respect they later received and the size of their following: Xue Xuan in the north, who formed the Hedong 河東 school, and in the south, Wu Yubi, founder of the Chongren 崇仁 school. Both were born about a century before Wang Yangming, and their schools both lasted into Wang Yangming's lifetime. Among Wu's students were the renowned Neo-Confucians Hu Juren 胡居仁 (1434–84) and Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428–1500), to whom the Ming court granted the honor of being worshiped at the Confucius temple. Although Xue Xuan was also granted this honor, none of his students achieved the same. Chen Xianzhang's most prominent student, Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 (1466–1560), was a contemporary of Wang Yangming whose following was so large as to rival Wang's.

Though they lived in the same period, Xue Xuan and Wu Yubi chose completely different careers. Their brands of Neo-Confucian thought differed, but more importantly, they adopted different approaches to building their schools. As predecessors of the Yangming school, the Hedong and Chongren schools showed notable differences, including remaining more circumscribed according to some important measures.

Xue Xuan became a metropolitan graduate (*jinshi* 進士) at the age of thirty-two, after which he launched a rocky political career. Although once forced into retirement for refusing to serve as a henchman to the powerful eunuch Wang Zhen 王振 (?–1449), he was later summoned back to the court and eventually became a grand secretary. Thereafter, he decided to retire permanently. He returned to his hometown of Hedong County in Shanxi 山西 Province and died a few years later.[3]

While pursuing a career as an official, Xue became devoted to the learning and practicing of Neo-Confucianism at a very young age. Yet, according to Khee Heong Koh (2011: 105), he "did not receive any private students until his first retirement."

In fact, there is no record of Xue taking private students while holding office, or that he took incumbent officials as students. Both when serving the court and while on leave, he repeatedly turned down his colleague and future grand secretary Li Xian's 李賢 (1409–67) request to become his student (Koh 2011: 99–105). Koh also found that Xue Xuan was uninterested in private academies (*shuyuan* 書院), which had been the main force in spreading Neo-Confucian thought in Song times and would soon regain that role (Koh 2011: 117). He had never taught at an academy, nor written an article for one. Xue did however put great emphasis on the role of official Confucian schools in transmitting the Way. The official school system had been restored by Taizu 太祖 (Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, 1328–98; r. 1368–98), the founding Ming emperor, and reached its greatest scale by Xue's time.[4] A Neo-Confucian curriculum was introduced into the official school system to train students to serve as qualified officials. Nevertheless, Xue Xuan also believed that these official schools could serve as incubators of genuine students of the learning of the Way. As Koh puts it, "The state's objective of training agents (implying the need to take the examinations), and the personal goal of a Neo-Confucian to engage in correct learning for personal cultivation converge harmoniously in Xue Xuan's perspective on government schools" (Koh 2011: 112). Such an attitude on the part of Xue Xuan, however, surely "had a limiting impact on the development of the Hedong school" (Koh 2011: 105).

Xue Xuan's southern counterpart, Wu Yubi, chose a very different approach to the mission of spreading the Way. Born to an official who served at the Hanlin academy 翰林院, Wu Yubi made the surprising decision at the age of seventeen to give up his potential political career. Instead, he resolved to engage in the learning of principle. For the rest of his life, Wu devoted himself to pursuing sagehood and teaching students at his hometown of Chongren County, Jiangxi 江西 Province, never seeking to enter the political world.[5]

Wu Yubi's attitude toward his potential political career contrasted sharply with Xue Xuan's, who served in a series of middle- and high-ranking positions. Though he experienced the viciousness of Ming politics, Xue still held a positive attitude toward becoming a part of the state power apparatus. In analyzing Xue's writings on the role of genealogies, Koh points out that "in Xue Xuan's mind, the core value of a genealogy was closely linked to the achievements of kinsmen in their official careers" (Koh 2011: 87). This belief in the value of holding office, together with Xue's attitude toward the official schools, indicates that Xue Xuan was much more cooperative with the state than Wu Yubi.

While Xue Xuan was reluctant to form private master-disciple relations, Wu Yubi showed great enthusiasm for taking private students from different regions. Wu's prominent students also showed as much of a predilection for remaining independent of state power as their master did. Kelleher (1982: 262) noted that none of Wu's students actively engaged in government service because they chose instead to serve as local teachers. In contrast, Koh estimates, all but approximately 9 percent of Xue Xuan's students "were competing for degrees and official titles" (Koh 2011: 113).

According to Koh, Wu Yubi attracted many students who refrained from serving the Ming court, much as he did, because "Wu's approach answered a

real need for many of his contemporaries who sought a meaningful alternative to government service" (Koh 2011: 262). Much more than Xue Xuan, and in inverse proportion to their distance from the state, Wu Yubi and his students, a group of active teachers of morality, valued private educational institutions, primarily the academy. Wu Yubi himself used to teach at the Xiaobei 小陂 academy, and Koh found that although "the private nature of Wu Yubi's academy seems similar to Xue Xuan's teaching career at home" (Koh 2011: 116), in fact, "Wu's academy was more institutionalized because he drew up a set of rules for students to follow, reminding us of the private but organized academies in existence since the Song dynasty" (Koh 2011: 116). Koh also notes that Wu Yubi's most important students, Hu Juren and Chen Xianzhang, actively supported and taught at several academies (Koh 2011: 116–17).

Thus, Xue Xuan and Wu Yubi, the two leading Neo-Confucians of their time, managed to form their own schools using different approaches. The ideological movements they launched were the most influential ones since the establishment of the Ming, yet in terms of scale, both were quite circumscribed. As mentioned above, Xue Xuan's lack of interest in private intellectual lineages and educational institutions negatively affected the development of his school. As for Wu Yubi, his followers were largely restricted to those who shared his tendency to avoid state power. Moreover, although Wu and some of his students were actively involved in private institutions' educational activities, their ability to sponsor these institutions was significantly limited by their lack of political resources, something that becomes clearer when compared to the results obtained by Wang Yangming. At this point in Ming history, Neo-Confucianism was on its way toward thriving; yet, it would require another generation of masters to break through the barriers faced by their forerunners and bring about a full-fledged moral campaign. The leader of that generation was Wang Yangming.

**The Third Approach: Disseminating the Way as a Sitting Official**

In November 1510, Wang Yangming was waiting in Beijing for his new appointment. He had just finished his term as magistrate of Luling 廬陵 County, Jiangxi Province, and was to be evaluated on his performance and accordingly reassigned. However, at the time, he was not so enthusiastic about promotion to higher office. Rather, he wished to disseminate the way by launching another Confucian movement.

By then, Wang Yangming had already started his career as a Neo-Confucian evangelist. The *Chronological Biography* (Nianpu 年譜) compiled by Wang's disciples tells us that as early as 1505, Wang Yangming decided to devote himself to teaching the path to sagehood. But very few students from this period can be identified. At the end of 1506, Wang Yangming joined the mass protest against the powerful eunuch Liu Jin. He was beaten, thrown into the imperial prison, and eventually exiled to the remote Guizhou 貴州 Province to serve as a postal station manager. There he experienced his well-known enlightenment, which led to the establishment of his learning of the mind and attracted some students, mainly from among local literati (Jiao 2018: 35–42). Two years later, he was transferred to Luling, and then summoned back to the capital after the fall of Liu Jin. Apparently,

Wang Yangming was not satisfied with the small-scale following he had managed to gather during his days of exile. Now convinced that he was the only one who could transmit the Way as the ancient sages had intended, he put almost all his energy into expanding his own school.

Wang was finally reassigned to a new post and stayed in Beijing until 1512. While residing there he reunited with Zhan Ruoshui, who had been his close friend since 1505.[6] The two friends soon became the core of Beijing's community of Neo-Confucian learning. During this period in the capital, Israel states, "Wang Yangming embraced the role of teacher, for both friends and students" (Israel 2017: 91). Israel has compiled a list of about thirty men who counted as friends and students and divided them into two groups: incumbent or former officials who could be considered Wang's social equals, and those who had just became a *jinshi* 進士, namely a "presented scholar," or were in Beijing for the metropolitan exam (Israel 2017: 70).

In 1513, Wang Yangming moved to Chuzhou 滁州, a town right next to Nanjing 南京, the second capital, to serve as the vice minister of the Nanjing Court of the Imperial Stud (Nanjing taipusi shaoqing 南京太僕寺少卿). Of course, he carried on his mission of awakening others, and was warmly welcomed by local *shengyuan* 生員 (government students) as well as old disciples who followed him there. According to his *Chronological Biography*, "from the time he was in Chuzhou, Wang began to accrue a large group of followers."[7] In the next year, Wang Yangming transferred to Nanjing proper to serve as the chief minister of the Nanjing Court for Dependencies (Nanjing honglusi qing 南京鴻臚寺卿) for two years. Israel has identified forty-one disciples of Wang Yangming during the Chuzhou and Nanjing years (Israel 2018: 203–4). In fact, for the rest of his life, Wang Yangming was able to attract a cohort of followers. Even when he conducted military campaigns in Jiangxi after leaving Nanjing, many disciples gathered to study under him, so many that he had to rebuild the Lianxi 濂溪 academy in Ganzhou 贛州 to provide accommodations for them.[8]

After successfully suppressing the rebellion of the prince of Ning, Zhu Chenhao 朱宸濠 (1479–1520), Wang Yangming moved to Nanchang 南昌, the capital of Jiangxi, where he continued to discuss learning with followers, including demoted or deposed officials.[9] Before returning home from Jiangxi, he held a gathering at the famous Bailudong 白鹿洞 academy.[10] After retiring to his hometown of Shaoxing 紹興, he attracted even more followers from various regions, including Nan Daji 南大吉 (1487–1541), the prefect of Shaoxing. It is said that in the Jishan 稽山 academy in Shaoxing, which had been rebuilt by this prefect, more than three hundred students gathered to listen to Wang Yangming's discourses.[11]

In the last two years of his life Wang was recalled by the court to pacify unrest in Guangxi 廣西. While there, he ordered the establishment of the Fuwen 敷文 academy in Nanning 南寧 and put his student Ji Ben 季本 (1485–1563) in charge of it.[12] Wang insisted that Ji gather with the students daily and "make sure that the learning of the sages and worthies prevail among them."[13] Wang Yangming died in 1529, before he could make his way from Guangxi back to his home.

As we can see, during his career as a Neo-Confucian master and while serving as an official, Wang Yangming tried to maintain and enlarge his following of

students. Like Xue Xuan, he left a long record of public service, but unlike Xue, he did not avoid taking students while holding office. The constant enthusiasm he showed toward teaching and his positive attitude toward academies resembled those of Wu Yubi, but he did not cut himself off from the world of power in order to focus solely on spreading the Way. Wang Yangming's choice to remain active in politics as an official while also teaching his ideas, and indeed to intertwine the two, diverged from the paths of his major Ming predecessors.

Nevertheless, it is hard to say if Wang Yangming was the first to come up with this strategy. Some of his contemporaries clearly followed a similar path. Zhan Ruoshui, who formed a school that rivaled Wang Yangming's in both size and influence, remained an official until he was seventy-five years old. According to an epitaph penned by Luo Hongxian 羅洪先 (1504–64), no matter where he went, Zhan provided academies and land for those who came to study under him. Wei Jiao 魏校 (1483–1543) is another example of a Neo-Confucian from this period who enjoyed a long political career while promoting his thought among disciples. Thus, other scholars of Wang Yangming's generation did in fact use similar tactics to foster a following. Although one among them might have been more innovative in a particular approach, and thus inspirational to others, sources do not make it obvious that this is the case, and a separate paper might be devoted to further exploration. Regardless, historical factors paved the way for all of them to choose similar approaches. In this sense, Wang Yangming can be regarded as one among them who most successfully exploited the favorable social conditions. Prior to considering those factors that led all of them to adopt the new strategies they did in promoting an ideological movement, I first investigate how Wang Yangming's strategy unfolded and how well it succeeded.

**Social Status of Wang Yangming's Followers**

As novel and appealing as Wang Yangming's ideas were, it seems that a scholar's social status also had much to do with his attitude toward Wang's teaching. During his second official stint in Beijing, Wang discussed his ideas with several other court officials whom Israel found to be roughly his social equals. Some of these men became Wang's disciples, while others simply exchanged opinions with Wang as friends or acquaintances. On the basis of the list provided by Israel and records from the *Chronological Biography*, we can construct table 1 regarding these men's relationship to Wang Yangming.

As table 1 shows, only nine of these sixteen men became Wang's students. Those who were older than Wang Yangming or earned the *jinshi* title earlier than he were generally less willing to become his followers. In other words, those who were younger or of lower social status were more devoted to his teaching. Among the fourteen junior men identified by Israel as having scholarly interactions with Wang Yangming during the same period—namely, those newly minted or future *jinshi*—twelve can be confirmed as Wang's students (Israel 2017: 70). The remaining two were Ma Mingheng 馬明衡 (1491–1557) and Xiao Mingfeng 蕭鳴鳳 (1488–1572), and Ma later appeared in the student list recorded in the *Chronological Biography* when Wang Yangming was in Nanjing.[14] The much greater enthusi-

**Table 1.** Followers of Wang Yangming in Beijing

| Name | Year of becoming a *jinshi* | Student of Wang Yangming |
|---|---|---|
| Wang Yangming (1472–1529) | 1499 | n/a |
| Huang Wan 黃綰 (1477–1551) | n/a | yes |
| Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 (1466–1560) | 1505 | no |
| Mu Konghui 穆孔暉 (1479–1539) | 1505 | yes |
| Chen Ding 陳鼎 (?–?) | 1505 | yes |
| Tang Peng 唐鵬 (?–?) | 1508 | yes |
| Fang Xianfu 方獻夫 (1485–1544) | 1505 | yes |
| Xu Ai 徐愛 (1487–1517) | 1508 | yes |
| Wang Yunfeng 王雲鳳 (1465–1518) | 1484 | no |
| Qiao Yu 喬宇 (1464–1531) | 1484 | no |
| Chu Quan 儲巏 (1457–1513) | 1484 | no |
| He Mengchun 何孟春 (1474–1536) | 1493 | no |
| Lu Ying 路迎 (1483–1562) | 1508 | yes |
| Wang Jun 汪俊 (?–?) | 1493 | no |
| Zheng Yichu 鄭一初 (1476–1513) | 1505 | yes |
| Zhang Bangqi 張邦奇 (1484–1544) | 1505 | no |
| Gu Yingxiang 顧應祥 (1483–1565) | 1505 | yes |

The dates for Wang Yangming, Huang Wan, Zhan Ruoshui, Xu Ai, and Chu Quan come from Central Library of Taiwan 1987; the rest come from Israel 2017: 70.

asm for Wang Yangming among his juniors could be due to their youth and lack of mature thought but was more likely the result of Wang Yangming's status among officialdom. Wang obtained his *jinshi* degree more than ten years before these young men had. Adding to this, Wang had established his reputation as a righteous official by confronting Liu Jin and had become a mid-ranking court official. For both political and social reasons, these young men looked up to Wang Yangming.

Wang also eventually moved to higher posts, further adding to his appeal. At the end of 1512, Wang Yangming left Beijing, never to return. After spending nearly a year in his hometown, he began serving in the Nanjing court. It is from this point, in the southeast—Nanjing, Jiangxi, and his hometown Shaoxing—that his career as a Neo-Confucian missionary began to bloom.

The *Chronological Biography* provides a list of twenty-five disciples who followed Wang Yangming in Nanjing.[15] Among them four can be confirmed as *jinshi* degree holders serving as officials in Nanjing; thirteen were provincial graduates (*juren* 舉人). The rest of them, except for one man for whom I found no record, were at best *juren*, or of lower status, namely, *shengyuan* or even commoners, as shown in table 2.

**Table 2.** Followers of Wang Yangming in Nanjing

| Name | Social Status | Hometown |
|---|---|---|
| Xu Ai 徐愛 (1487–1517) | *jinshi* (1508) | Yuyao 餘姚, Zhejiang 浙江 |
| Huang Zongming 黃宗明 (?–1536) | *jinshi* (1514) | Yinxian 鄞縣, Zhejiang |
| Xue Kan 薛侃 (1486–1546) | *juren* | Jieyang 揭陽, Guangdong 廣東 |
| Ma Mingheng 馬明衡 (1491–1557) | *juren* | Putian 莆田, Fujian 福建 |
| Lu Cheng 陸澄 (?–?) | *juren* | Guian 歸安, Zhejiang |
| Ji Ben 季本 (1485–1563) | *juren* | Kuaiji 會稽, Zhejiang |
| Xu Xiangqing 許相卿 (1479–1557) | *juren* | Haining 海寧, Zhejiang |
| Wang Ji 王激 (1479–1537) | *juren* | Yongjia 永嘉, Zhejiang |
| Zhu Cheng 諸俈 (1477–1543) | *juren* | Xiushui 秀水, Zhejiang |
| Lin Da 林達 (?–?) | *jinshi* (1514) | Putian, Fujian |
| Zhang Huan 張寰 (1486–1581) | *juren* | Kunshan 崑山, Southern Zhili 南直隸 |
| Tang Yuxian 唐愈賢 (?–?) | *juren* or *shengyuan* | Yuanling 沅陵, Huguang 湖廣 |
| Rao Wenbi 饒文璧 (?–?) | *juren* | Linchuan 臨川, Jiangxi |
| Liu Guanshi 劉觀時 (?–?) | *shengyuan* | Yuanling, Huguang |
| Zheng Liu 鄭騮 (?–?) | *juren* | Jiangshan 江山, Zhejiang |
| Zhou Ji 周積 (1483–1565) | *juren* | Jiangshan, Zhejiang |
| Guo Qing 郭慶 (?–?) | *juren* or below | Huanggang 黃岡, Huguang |
| Luan Hui 欒惠 (?–?) | *shengyuan* or below | Xi'an 西安, Zhejiang |
| Liu Xiao 劉曉 (?–?) | *juren* | Anfu 安福, Jiangxi |
| He Ao 何鰲 (1497–1559) | *juren* | Shanyin 山陰, Zhejiang |
| Chen Jie 陳傑 (?–?) | *jinshi* (1508) | Putian, Fujian |
| Yang Biao 楊杓 (?–?) | unclear | unclear |
| Bai Yue 白説/白悅 (1498–1551) | commoner | Wujin 武進, Southern Zhili |
| Peng Yizhi 彭一之 (?–?) | *juren* | Anfu, Jiangxi |
| Zhu Chi 朱箎 (1493–1546) | *juren* | Shanyin, Zhejiang |

For Xu Ai, see Jiao Hong, *Jiao taishi bianji guochao xianzheng lu*, 53.754; for Huang Zongming, see *Ming shi*, 197.5217; for Xue Kan, see *Xue Kan ji*, *fulu* 3.421; for Ma Mingheng, see Jin Hong et al., *Kangxi Fujian tongzhi*, 38.165; for Lu Cheng, see Ji Zengyun et al., *Yongzheng Zhejiang tongzhi*, 137.810; for Ji Ben, see Jiao Hong, *Jiao taishi bianji guochao xianzheng lu*, 89.78; for Xu Xiangqing, see Jiao Hong, *Jiao taishi bianji guochao xianzheng lu*, 80.400; for Wang Ji, see Ji Zengyun et al., *Yongzheng Zhejiang tongzhi*, 137.807; for Zhu Cheng, see Ji Zengyun et al., *Yongzheng Zhejiang tongzhi*, 137.811; for Lin Da, see *Ming shi*, 194.5140; for Zhang Huan, see Huang Zhijun et al., *Qianlong Jiangnan tongzhi*, 127.460, 122.353; for Tang Yuxian, see Deng Xianhe, *Yuanxiang qijiu ji*, 17.648; for Rao Wenbi, see Xie Min et al., *(Yongzheng) Jiangxi tongzhi*, 54.761; for Liu Guanshi, see Li Hanzhang et al., *Guangxu Hunan tongzhi*, 172.276, and Wang Yangming, *Wang Yangming quanji (xin bianben)*, 4.156–57; for Zheng Liu, see Ji Zengyun et al., *Yongzheng Zhejiang tongzhi*, 137.809; for Zhou Ji, see Jiao Hong, *Jiao taishi bianji guochao xianzheng lu*, 105.173; for Guo Qing, see Muzhang'a et al., *(Jiaqing) Daqing yitong zhi*, 341.148; for Luan Hui, see Xu Xiangmei, *Liangzhe mingxian lu*, 6.196; for Liu Xiao, see Xie Min et al., *(Yongzheng) Jiangxi tongzhi*, 79.701; for He Ao, see Jiao Hong, *Jiao taishi bianji guochao xianzheng lu*, 45.369, and Xiao Lianggan et al., *Wanli Shaoxing fu zhi*, 32.617; for Chen Jie, see Jiao Hong, *Jiao taishi bianji guochao xianzheng lu*, 66.645, and Xu Bida et al., *Nanjing duchayuan zhi*, 6.621; for Bai Yue, see Xu Jie, *Shijing tang ji*, 16.704; for Peng Yizhi, see Xie Min et al., *(Yongzheng) Jiangxi tongzhi*, 54.761; for Zhu Chi, see Ji Zengyun et al., *Yongzheng Zhejiang tongzhi*, 137.810. I have yet to locate any information about Yang Biao.

As we can see, most members of this group were of lower social status than Wang Yangming. The four *jinshi* officials obtained their highest degree much later than Wang. None of these followers were natives of Nanjing; those who were not serving as officials came from both nearby places and distant provinces. Some of them, like Zhou Ji,[16] may have been studying at the Nanjing National University as *juren* or *gongsheng* 貢生 (tribute students), but others came to Nanjing specifically to study privately under Wang Yangming. For instance, after hearing that Wang Yangming was spreading his message in Nanjing, Guo Qing "traveled by foot to accompany him, returning only after three years."[17] Liu Guanshi traveled to Chuzhou to study under Wang Yangming and must have further followed Wang to Nanjing (Qian 2009: 287). After leaving the capital, Wang Yangming shifted from developing a following within officialdom to attracting humble literati from the localities. This strategy turned out to be very successful.

The *Chronological Biography* also provides another list of students who studied under Wang Yangming while he was leading military actions in southern Jiangxi. This list (dating to July 1518) contains twenty-six names.[18] Analyzing these men's social status reveals a group with characteristics similar to the one in Nanjing (see table 3).

It seems safe to conclude that after leaving Beijing, Wang Yangming was warmly welcomed and followed by the local literati who were generally younger and of lower social status. In fact, Wang's earliest public audiences while in exile were also literati of such kind. Most of these followers held only the *juren* or even lower degrees when they studied under him, meaning that most of them had yet to find their way into officialdom. These students showed great enthusiasm for Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucian thought and were sometimes willing to travel across provinces to study under him. They also in some sense gave him the authority to introduce a full-blown ideological movement. Many years later, Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–82), one of the most renowned politicians in the history of the Ming dynasty, reflected on Wang Yangming's career as a Neo-Confucian master, concluding that "in the past, Master Yangming promoted his style of pedagogy in the southeast. Many of the renowned scholars and officials refused to believe in it. Yet, literati from humble neighborhoods converted to his teaching without hesitation."[19]

As we have seen, Wang Yangming's enthusiasm for transmitting the Way was largely generated by the malicious political environment he faced. In launching an ideological movement, he hoped to improve the morality of those who held the power of state in their hands. However, he found it much more difficult to turn officials who possessed significant social status into his followers. Accordingly, he eventually directed his attention to the younger literati of lower social status from the localities. Those recruits may have been struggling to make their names then, but some of them would eventually become part of the state power apparatus and even key figures at the court.

**Supporting and Institutionalizing the Ideological Movement**

Wang Yangming used every tool available to him to nurture the Neo-Confucian campaign he started. In addition to enthusiastically recruiting and teaching

**Table 3.** Followers of Wang Yangming in Jiangxi

| Name | Social Status | Hometown |
|---|---|---|
| Xue Kan 薛侃 (1486–1546) | *jinshi* (1517) | Jieyang, Guangdong |
| Ouyang De 歐陽德 (1496–1554) | *juren* | Taihe 泰和, Jiangxi |
| Liang Zhuo 梁焯 (1482–1528) | *jinshi* (1511) | Nanhai 南海, Guangdong |
| He Tingren 何廷仁 (1483–1551) | *shengyuan* or below | Yudu 雩都, Jiangxi |
| Huang Honggang 黃弘綱 (1492–1561) | *juren* | Yudu, Jiangxi |
| Xue Jun 薛俊 (1474–1524) | *juren* | Jieyang, Guangdong |
| Yang Ji 楊驥 (?–?) | *juren* | Raoping 饒平, Guangdong |
| Guo Zhi 郭治 (?–?) | *juren* | Taihe, Jiangxi |
| Zhou Zhong 周仲 (?–?) | *juren* | Jishui 吉水, Jiangxi |
| Zhou Chong 周衝 (1485–1532) | *juren* | Yixing 宜興, Southern Zhili |
| Zhou Kui 周魁 (?–?) | unclear | unclear |
| Guo Chiping 郭持平 (?–?) | *jinshi* (1517) | Wan'an 萬安, Jiangxi |
| Liu Dao 劉道 (?–?) | *juren* | Wan'an, Jiangxi |
| Yuan Menglin 袁夢麟 (?–?) | unclear | unclear |
| Wang Shunpeng 王舜鵬 (?–?) | *shengyuan* or below | Wan'an, Jiangxi |
| Wang Xueyi 王學益(?–1561) | *juren* | Anfu, Jiangxi |
| Yu Guang 余光 (?–?) | *shengyuan* or below | Ganxian 贛縣, Jiangxi |
| Huang Huaimi 黃槐密 (?–?) | unclear | unclear |
| Huang Ying 黃瑩 (?–?) | *shengyuan* or below | Ganxian, Jiangxi |
| Wu Lun 吳倫 (?–?) | *shengyuan* or below | Ganxian, Jiangxi |
| Chen Jiliu 陳稷劉 (?–?) | unclear | unclear |
| Lu Fubi 魯扶敝 (?–?) | unclear | unclear |
| Wu He 吳鶴 (?–?) | *shengyuan* | Chenzhou 辰州, Huguang |
| Xue Qiao 薛僑 (?–?) | *shengyuan* or below | Jieyang, Guangdong |
| Xue Zongquan 薛宗銓 (?–?) | unclear | unclear |
| Ouyang Yu 歐陽昱/歐陽瑜 (?–?) | *shengyuan* or below | Anfu, Jiangxi |

For Ouyang De, see *Ming shi*, 283.7276; for Liang Zhuo, see Wan Sitong, *Ming shi*, 301.290; for He Tingren, see *Ming shi*, 283.7282; for Huang Honggang, see Huang Zongxi, *Mingru xuean*, 19.448; for Xue Jun, see Zhou Shuoxun, *Qianlong Chaozhou fu zhi*, 28.576–77, and *Ming shi*, 207.5468; four Yang Ji, see Zhou Shuoxun et al., *Qianlong Chaozhou fu zhi*, 28.577; for Guo Zhi, see Xie Min et al., *(Yongzheng) Jiangxi tongzhi*, 54.758; for Zhou Zhong, see Xie Min et al., *(Yongzheng) Jiangxi tongzhi*, 54.761; for Zhou Chong, see Wan Sitong, *Ming shi*, 274.626; for Guo Chiping, see Lei Li, *Guochao lieqing ji*, 60.655; for Liu Dao, see Xie Min et al., *(Yongzheng) Jiangxi tongzhi*, 54.760, 764; for Wang Shunpeng, see Yu Zhizhen et al., *(Wanli) Ji'an fu zhi*, 25.380; for Wang Xueyi, see Xie Min et al., *(Yongzheng) Jiangxi tongzhi*, 54.761, 769; for Yu Guang, see Xie Min et al., *(Yongzheng) Jiangxi tongzhi*, 54.761, 769; for Huang Ying, see Kang He et al., *(Jiajing) Ganzhou fu zhi*, 9.7b; for Wu Lun, see Kang He et al., *(Jiajing) Ganzhou fu zhi*, 9.15b; for Wu He, see Jiang Qipu et al., *Guangxu Qianzhou ting zhi*, 15.372; for Xue Qiao, see Zhou Shuoxun et al., *Qianlong Chaozhou fu zhi*, 26.487; for Ouyang Yu, see *Ming shi*, 283.7278, and Xie Min et al., *(Yongzheng) Jiangxi tongzhi*, 54.769; no information was located for Zhou Kui, Yuan Menglin, Huang Huaimi, Chen Jiliu, and Lu Fubi. Xue Zongquan may possibly be Xue Zongkai 薛宗鎧 (1498–1535), son of Xue Jun and nephew of Xue Kan. He was at this point a *shengyuan* or of lower social status. See Guo Chunzhen et al., *(Jiajing) Chaozhou fu zhi*, 6.254.

students himself, he also used institutions to disseminate his ideas, including the academies. He personally taught at the Wenming 文明 academy in Guizhou, the Lianxi academy and the Bailudong academy in Jiangxi, and the Jishan academy in his hometown, Shaoxing. As a grand coordinator, he directly ordered the reestablishment of the Lianxi academy. He also ordered the establishment of the Fuwen academy in Nanning shortly before his death. His disciples also built a Yangming academy for him in Shaoxing, where he might have taught.[20]

Wang Yangming lived in a period when academies began to boom nationwide. Bai Xinliang concluded that the Zhengde era witnessed academies being built or rebuilt at almost double the pace of the Hongzhi 弘治 era (1488–1505), and the pace further picked up in the following Jiajing reign (Bai 1995: 70–84). These academies began to thrive in parallel with the decline of official Confucian schools. Thus, it became difficult for activist Neo-Confucians to maintain the same attitude held by Xue Xuan, who insisted that official schools should play a major role in transmitting the Way.

Wang Yangming exemplified this new trend by sponsoring several academies during his lifetime. Six of his prefaces and records dedicated to specific academies have survived. In the record dedicated to the Wansong 萬松 academy, he elaborates on the importance of such institutions. He argues that the academies emphasized the effectiveness of the learning of the ancient sages in truly fostering morality, as opposed to the official Confucian schools' focus on success in civil examinations and thus the students' social and political advancement.[21] This record clarifies Wang Yangming's view of the role of the official schools and the academies, one that clearly differed from what Xue Xuan had envisioned.

Along with supporting and using the academies, Wang Yangming encouraged his followers to hold gatherings and form associations, such as the meeting at the Zhongtian Pavilion 中天閣 in Yuyao County, Zhejiang,[22] as well as the Xiyin Association 惜陰會 in Anfu County, Jiangxi.[23] After retiring to Shaoxing, Wang Yangming gained a disciple named Yang Ziheng 楊子亨 (?–?), whose father served on the staff of the Shaoxing prefect. He not only treated this humble student as a preeminent disciple, but also publicly praised Yang Ziheng's father's integrity, elevating his status in the eyes of the prefect. Qian Ming argues that Wang did the father a favor in exchange for his support in disseminating Wang's learning (Qian 2009: 252–53). This case indicates that Wang Yangming exercised his political influence for the purpose of growing his student following.

## Why the Differences?

Wang Yangming's decision to remain in the world of politics while pedagogically active, and indeed to intertwine the two, diverged conspicuously from the paths of both Xue Xuan and Wu Yubi. This strategy enabled him to widely disseminate his teachings. Some of his contemporaries, such as Zhan Ruoshui and Wei Jiao, followed the same path, suggesting that similar factors motivated them. What led to the differences between the strategies adopted by two generations of Ming Neo-Confucians? Although it is difficult to answer this question definitively, I will

provide some tentative theories, based in part on ideas put forward by other specialists in Ming intellectual history.

The first step in coming up with an answer is to consider the factors that led to the actions taken by earlier Neo-Confucians regarding the relationship between their roles as possible participants in Ming politics and as advocates for their styles of Confucian pedagogy. Kelleher analyzed Wu Yubi's incentives for living as a recluse and concluded that the Ming founder's "legacy of the precarious nature of service at court no doubt constituted one of the factors of Wu's choice of life away from the center of political power" (Kelleher 1982: 27). Kelleher's conclusion is echoed by Yu Ying-shih, who documented the unprecedented cruelty that Ming rulers, beginning with Taizu, inflicted on the literati and identified Wu Yubi as someone who therefore sought to forego politics (Yu 2008: 160–75).

The despotism of the Ming extended to the field of philosophy. As Yu Ying-shih has explained, Taizu ordered the abridgement of the *Mencius* 孟子, one of the most important Confucian classics, so as to remove the contents he believed challenged his absolute power (Yu 2008: 169–72). The Yongle emperor ordered the compilation of the imperial *Compendia* 大全, which served as a symbol of the state's endorsement and sponsorship of the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism. However, the official affirmation of an orthodoxy came with great intolerance and rigor toward what was deemed heterodox: Zhu Jiyou 朱季友 (?–?), a scholar who submitted work to the court that appeared to be critical of the officially endorsed Song Neo-Confucian masters, was beaten and his books were burned. Dardess (2012) takes this event, along with the Yongle emperor's bloody handling of Fang Xiaoru, as symbols of the end of what little intellectual freedom remained during the reign of Taizu. He also sees Wu Yubi's decision to avoid public service as a response to such intellectual repression (Dardess 2012: 88).[24] De Bary (1981: 169–70) argues that patronage by a despotic system even placed those within the orthodox Neo-Confucian tradition in a great dilemma: they were "faced with the loss of their integrity if they participated in a brutal system and with the seeming default of their obligation to public service if they did not." As a result, de Bary argues, "Confucian consciences showed increasing signs of alienation" (de Bary 1981: 170). Scholars like Wu Yubi and some of his students chose to evade the world of power for the sake of pursuing the purer goal of sagehood. Of course, not all cases were the same: Xue Xuan was interested in pursuing a political career. However, as an incumbent official, his decision to avoid attracting a following as a Neo-Confucian master should also be considered a response to the state's oppressive policies.

Early Ming state violence and ideological coercion thus inhibited the formation of intellectual associations. How was the situation different for Wang Yangming's generation, born nearly a century after Xue Xuan and Wu Yubi? The late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as many scholars have described the period, witnessed dramatic changes in the political and intellectual atmosphere of the Ming. Surely the viciousness of Ming politics persisted and erupted in bloody incidents from time to time, but for the most part officials began to enjoy "the magnanimity of the emperor's grace and leniency in application of laws" (*sheng'en kuanda, fawang shukuo* 聖恩寬大, 法網疏闊), as well as numerous material privileges after

the Chenghua 成化 reign (1465–87).[25] Wang Yangming entered officialdom under the Hongzhi emperor (Zhu Youcheng 朱祐樘, 1470–1505), possibly the most open-minded and benevolent of all the Ming rulers. As a young official, Wang Yangming was full of political ambition, just like those whom he later began to criticize (Jiao 2015: 97–115). The notoriously chaotic and corrupt situation under the next ruler, the Zhengde emperor, led to Wang Yangming's disenchantment with the high politics of the Ming, but not to the extent that he completely forsook his official duties.

The authoritarian ideological policy of the early Ming had disappeared by Wang Yangming's time. Though Wang's ideas were contrary to the primary principles of the orthodox Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism and for that reason often criticized by orthodox thinkers, sometimes even being used as the pretext for political attacks, he was able to pursue his career as a Neo-Confucian master until his death. As for Zhan Ruoshui, whose theories also deviated from the orthodox (Okada 2009, 2:270–324), the Jiajing emperor once ordered the demolition of all academies established by him, but he exempted Zhan himself from punishment.[26] Such handling of heterodox ideas would have been unimaginable in the early Ming. The late Ming and early Qing scholar-official Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (1593–1676) quoted the Wanli 萬曆 (1572–1620) official Wu Yuancui 伍袁萃 (?–?) as saying, "had Wang Yangming lived during the ancestors' reigns, who knows how he would have ended!"[27]

Along with the loosening of the state's ideological control, the decline of the official school system favored the spread of Wang Yangming's teachings. It is widely acknowledged that after a short period of prosperity, the official Confucian schools degenerated so quickly that they could no longer undertake actual educational activities (Elman 1989: 382). Bai Xinliang cites multiple local gazetteers to show the severe dysfunction of the official schools during the Zhengde and Jiajing reigns (Bai 1995: 69). As the official schools became dysfunctional, the number of *shengyuan* grew rapidly throughout the Ming, a trend identified by Meskill as the trigger for the decline of the official school system (Ho 1962: 172–79; Meskill 1982: 21). This spurred a boom in the construction of academies, which functioned as substitutes for the official schools. Wang Yangming and other thinkers' support for and sponsorship of academies took advantage of the trend. Those who studied at the academies under Wang Yangming not only learned his Neo-Confucian thought but also prepared for the civil examinations. For example, in 1525, two students from the Jishan academy, Qian Pian 錢楩 (?–?) and Wei Liangzheng 魏良政 (?–?), successfully passed the provincial exam.[28] Wei Liangzheng was a disciple of Wang Yangming. When the father of Qian Dehong 錢德洪 (1496–1574), another disciple, worried that studying under Wang Yangming might distract his son from focusing on the examinations, Wang explained to him how his teachings would benefit preparation for the civil examinations.[29]

Taizu forbade the students of official Confucian schools, namely *shengyuan*, from making any form of political speech.[30] The "School Code" (*xuegui* 學規) promulgated by the court also stipulated that students "should exercise restraint and do their best to refrain from going to the government officials unless serious events impact their families."[31] According to Chen Baoliang, the official events that *shengyuan* could take part in were restricted to the community drinking rituals

and sacrificial rituals to Confucius and other worthies (Chen 2005: 366–68). It is plausible that in this spirit, officials who were not directly in charge of educational affairs were expected to avoid socializing with the students of official schools. Other Ming sources testify to this point. For example, Guan Zhidao 管志道 (1536–1608), a scholar-official active during the Wanli reign, recalled that when he was in the official school, the prefect of his hometown never visited the home of a *juren* unless it was to deliver the plaque congratulating him for his success in the provincial examination. *Shengyuan* were never allowed to attend a banquet held by the magistrate or prefect unless it was held for those who were going to sit for a provincial examination.[32]

However, for those officials in positions unrelated to education, taking over part of the responsibility for education seems to have justified personal contact with the students from very early on. Sun Zhen 孫鎮 (?–?), who served under Taizu, is said to have educated local students as the prefect of Weihui 衛輝, Henan 河南.[33] Similar cases occurred as time went on; as a noneducational official, Wang Yangming gave lectures to local students in the Wenming academy when he was in Guizhou. Thus, his gathering many students around him was a continuation of such a tradition, with new developments: these students came from many different localities solely for instruction from Wang Yangming himself, and the centerpiece of Wang's education was moral cultivation rather than acquiring the skills necessary for examination success. Again, Wang Yangming used his political status differently than Xue Xuan and more successfully than Wu Yubi.

The ideological movement launched by Wang Yangming was not just a phenomenon confined to theoretical discourse. It was a social movement with deep concerns about the real-world political order. In this sense, Wang Yangming brought China's Neo-Confucianism back to its traditional role, which was to provide the intellectual resources necessary to guide the government toward realizing its goal of perfecting society. From the beginning of the Ming, or at least from the Yongle era, scholars had been trying to steer their pedagogical activities away from the political world, so that they would not become victims of the state's political and ideological despotism. As that despotism weakened, Neo-Confucianism reentered the political world, thanks to a new generation of Neo-Confucians who were following the lead of Wang Yangming. This trend was facilitated by a set of strategies adopted by Wang and other scholars: using political authority to raise one's profile, shifting to localities to expand one's following, and supporting private institutions with political power. The success of Wang Yangming's learning of the mind was deeply rooted in and intertwined with the social and political realities of the dynasty he lived in and his ability to harness them to advance his cause.

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## NOTES

1. Wang Yangming, *Wang Yangming quanji*, 2.61.
2. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 2.60–61.
3. For Xue's biography, see *Ming shi*, 282.7221–27, and Koh 2011: 25–31.
4. *Ming Taizu shilu*, 46.923–24. See also Meskill 1982: 21.
5. For Wu's biography, see *Ming shi*, 282.7240–41, and Kelleher 1982: 65–103.
6. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 32.1232.
7. 從遊之眾自滁始. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 32.1242.
8. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 32.1263.
9. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 33.1286–88.
10. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 33.1288.
11. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 34.1299.
12. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 34.1328, 18.672–73.
13. 務在興起聖賢之學. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 18.672.
14. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 32.1243.
15. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 32.1243.
16. Jiao Hong, *Jiao taishi bianji guochao xianzheng lu*, 105.173.
17. 徒步往從之，三年始歸. Muzhang'a et al., *(Jiaqing) Daqing yitong zhi*, 341.148.
18. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 32.1261.
19. 昔陽明先生昌學于東南， 學士大夫或頗有棄而不信， 而閭巷之儒油然宗焉. Zhang Juzheng, *Zhang Juzheng ji*, 38.595.
20. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 34.1307.
21. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 7.269–70.
22. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 34.1303–4.
23. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 34.1313–4, 7.285; see also Lü 2017: 98–101.
24. On Zhu Jiyou, see also Kelleher 1982: 26; Yu and Fang 2014: 67–74.
25. Lu Rong, *Shuyuan zaji*, 2.16.
26. *Ming Shizong shilu*, 199.4191.
27. 使陽明生祖宗朝，不知當得何法矣. Sun Chengze, *Tengyin zhaji*, 881.
28. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 34.1302.
29. *Wang Yangming quanji*, 34.1301–2.
30. Shen Shixing et al., *(Wanli) Da Ming huidian*, 78.412.
31. 若非大事， 含情忍性， 毋輕至於公門. Shen Shixing et al., *(Wanli) Da Ming huidian*, 78.412.
32. Guan Zhidao, *Congxian weisu yi*, 3.343.
33. Jiao Hong, *Jiao taishi bianji guochao xianzheng lu*, 93.251.

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