Localism of Daoxue in North China during the Yuan Dynasty: A Case Study of An Xi (1270–1311)

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Abstract: The transmission of Daoxue, or Neo-Confucianism, during the Yuan Dynasty cannot be understood as a sharp dichotomy between reliance on state-sponsored institutions in North China and private ones in the south. Through the study of An Xi, who was a student and teacher of Daoxue, and his family from modern day Hebei, this article shows that private intellectual activities of Yuan Daoxue masters were influential locally in the north. Although An Xi has traditionally been recognized as a member of the Daoxue scholar Liu Yin's tradition, this article further argues that An Xi developed his own independent thinking and was not simply a follower of Liu Yin. An Xi was a self-taught Daoxue master who idolized Zhu Xi and took his teaching as the only standard. This self-taught model would later become more common in North China during the Ming Dynasty.

Keywords: Daoxue, Confucianism, An Xi, Yuan Dynasty, North China

Introduction: Daoxue and Yuan Society

Two edited volumes have greatly impacted the scholarship on Yuan thought and philosophy in the English world: *China under Mongol Rule* (Langlois 1981) and *Yuan Thought: Chinese Thought and Religion under the Mongols* (Chan and de Bary 1982). These works laid the foundation for our understanding of Daoxue 道學, or Neo-Confucianism, during the Yuan Dynasty, and the research from that era inclined heavily toward the study of Daoxue in the south (Lao 1981; Langlois 1981: 137–85; Gedalecia 1981, 1982: 279–326; 1999). Scholars also presented a division of Daoxue among the masters from North and South China. For example, the major Daoxue master from Jiangxi 江西, Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249–1333), had criticized his colleagues at the Imperial College, where he briefly served. These colleagues were followers of the most prominent Daoxue master in North China, Xu Heng 許衡 (1209–81) (Gedalecia 1982: 296–98).

According to Chan Wing-tsit (1982), Xu Heng did not add any new dimensions to the discussion on the real nature of Taiji 太極 or Wuji 無極 or their relationship. Xu's almost exclusive concern was practical matters. In fact, Xu made the study of things on the lower level the chief and almost exclusive goal of learning. While he made a few remarks on the investigation of things and principle, his work was almost entirely on moral cultivation and human relations. This determined the landscape of Yuan philosophy, especially in North China. To some later

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Confucians, Xu continued the true transmission of Daoxue after Zhu Xi. However, his greatest contribution was nonetheless the promotion of Zhu Xi's *Four Books* throughout the country (Chan 1982: 197–231).

Another major Yuan thinker is Liu Yin 劉因 (1249–93) from North China. He refused official appointments from the Yuan court and chose a life of eremitism. He was understood as being not only different from, but also an adversary to Xu. The two thinkers represented two radically different but equally acceptable modes of life faced by all eminent Yuan Confucians. Studying Liu's poems, Tu Wei-ming (1982) has argued that Liu's eremitism was not based on his loyalty to the conquered Jin Dynasty but was due to the devastation experienced by the general population during the Mongol conquest, as well as to the harshness endured by the literati under Mongol governance. His writings therefore reflect a nostalgic identification with a faded cultural world that was still meaningful to him (242–49).

In David Gedalecia's (1982: 280–81) work, we see the Jiangxi scholar Wu Cheng, who served the Yuan court but was discontent from learning of Xu's followers in the Imperial College. Neither serving under an alien regime nor participating in politics was an issue. However, Liu, a northern scholar born in the same year as Wu, refused to establish any link to contemporary politics. Tu (1982: 264) presented Liu's purpose in life as becoming an exemplary teacher and a cultural transmitter through self-realization efforts.

We should not be misled into thinking that Liu's eremitism defined the landscape of Daoxue learning in North China during the Yuan. Conventional scholarship continues to believe that Daoxue Confucians from North China relied more heavily on the state apparatus to support their activities. For example, when studying Neo-Confucianism in South and North China during the Yuan, Peter Bol argued that "southern Neo-Confucians had learned that they could rely on local resources, whereas northern Neo-Confucians looked to the state." Xu, Bol continued, "thought in terms of order imposed from above," and "saw in Neo-Confucianism a justification for the greater centralization of bureaucratic authority in a regime given to ad hoc procedures and personal favoritism." In short, southern literati since the Southern Song Dynasty had two options: "They could develop contacts and gain fame through their involvement in local traditions, or they could pursue a state-oriented career." However, there was only one possibility for northern literati, for whom, "absent local traditions, there was only the state" (Bol 2008: 93–94). Linda Walton (1989: 489–91) also saw the academies in Mingzhou as reflections of local interests and potential alternative sources of ideological authority, albeit diverse in their characteristics. The institutionalization of the academies and the rise of Daoxue dominance in Mingzhou are also well documented (Walton 1979: 220–37).

The centrality of belles lettres in the examination system lasted centuries, but it was not uncontested. Jin rulers continued to emphasize poetry and rhymed prose on examinations from 1115 to 1150. Although the classical essay was restored to parity with poetry and rhymed prose, the latter's importance continued (Elman 2000: 5–29). Han literati and Jin rulers found common ground in ideals

and practices associated with their idea of *wen* 文, and poetry writing was central to it (Bol 1987). This culture that was so strongly literary and aesthetic in flavor was particularly strong in the Dongping 東平 region in Northeast China (de Bary 1981: 19–20).

The story of Daoxue's victory in the examination curriculum during the Yuan is already well established, and Xu's central role has long been acknowledged (de Bary 1981: 20–62).[1] Xu's influences over Confucian circles in North China (e.g., in the Guanzhong 關中 region) is also well studied. According to Ong Chang Woei (2008), Yang Tiande 楊天德 (1180–1258) and his son Yang Gongyi 楊恭懿 (1225–94) were the first two literati from the Guanzhong region who could be clearly identified as Daoxue scholars. Yang Gongyi met Xu in 1254 when the latter was appointed as the supervisor of education for the region. Both men cooperated in promoting Daoxue learning in the region, and Xu later recommended Yang to the court. Among the first recommendations made to the court by Yang was to reintroduce civil service examinations that centered on the candidates' knowledge of the core Daoxue canon—the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics*—instead of literary skills. Xiao Ju 蕭斢 (1241–1318) would later credit Yang and Xu for being the only two northerners who were true practitioners and transmitters of Zhu Xi's teachings (Ong 2008: 114–16).

Xiao Ju, together with Tong Shu 同恕 (1254–1331), were the leading Daoxue scholars in Guanzhong in the next generation. Both declined official appointments at the court, although Tong did take part in the compilation of Khubilai's *Veritable Records*. Moreover, they did accept the duty of examiners when examination was reintroduced in 1313 with a heavy Daoxue flavor. Ong pointed out that both Xiao and Tong "spent a substantial part of their lives detached from court politics and devoted instead to the transmission of *Daoxue*." However, it is also important to note that "they apparently did not desire to promote a unique, local tradition of *Daoxue*." Ong also observed that Daoxue scholars from the Guanzhong region during the Yuan "generally chose to identify themselves with the Cheng-Zhu tradition through their affiliation with Xu Heng" (Ong 2008: 117–19). In short, Ong concluded that Guanzhong Daoxue scholars "did not see a need to promote a local tradition of *Daoxue*," "believing that institutional measures were best undertaken by the state, not the local community" (130).

When viewing the Daoxue as a movement, we see clearly how Peter Bol has successfully argued the cycles of the rise and fall of the movement in the Zhejiang Jinhua region from the Southern Song through the middle of the Ming Dynasty. One foundation of that narrative is the active leadership roles played by Daoxue scholars in the realms of education, religion, and charity in Jinhua (Bol 2003).

Taking a different perspective, Sun Kekuan (1905–93), in his study of the history of Daoxue, has emphasized the significance of the Daoxue canon becoming the standard of the state-sponsored civil service examination, underscoring in particular the critical contributions of the Daoxue scholars in this development. As he points out, in Chinese intellectual history the transition period between the Southern Song, Jin, and Yuan dynasties saw Daoxue learning at its influential height. However, he was also quick to highlight that, although the Daoxue canon

was published during the Northern and Southern Song dynasties, and was elevated during the reigns of emperors Lizong 理宗 (r. 1224–64) and Duzong 度宗 (r. 1264–74) of Southern Song, it was the Yuan Daoxue scholars who played the most crucial role. It was they who steadfastly adhered to the learning and persuaded the Yuan court to legalize it as the only standard of examination, thus making Daoxue the only orthodox Confucian school ever since. Sun underscored that the Yuan Daoxue scholars, especially the northern scholars, had made an everlasting contribution. The details of how Xu made suggestions to Khubilai to reestablish and define the curriculum for state sponsored schools, as well as the content of the examinations, are all well studied and widely known (Sun 2015: 210).

Concerning social power and structural dimensions, Wang Jinping (Wang 2018: 18) has argued that, when compared to the south, Confucian households in Yuan North China were relatively weaker, and the core social institutions in North China were predominantly religious organizations at that time. Confucian influence over the local community only began to be revived in the fourteenth century. For example, in the North Huo Canal Association, which supervised an irrigation project at Zhaocheng 趙城 in the southern Shanxi 山西 region, we see for the first time a director of the Mt. Jin Academy acting as a ditch head for the Dong village. The director was probably from a Confucian household. Irrigation projects in Shanxi during the Yuan Dynasty were dominated by Buddhist and Taoist organizations in the early fourteenth century. Among the two hundred nine irrigation association leaders recorded in a 1319 list, only one was a Confucian scholar (207–9). However, there were multiple avenues to appointments and power during the Yuan. Some individuals were retainers of Mongol princes and other nobles, some were from the *huja'ur* (families that enjoyed close connections with the ruling house), some distinguished themselves through military achievements, and others began their careers as clerks (6–14). Iiyama Tomoyasu's (2014) case study of Guo Yu 郭郁 (ca. 1259) demonstrates a classic case of great career advancement by a clerk after receiving patronage from a Mongol nobleman, followed by his helplessness after the fall of his patron (471–501). The abolished civil service examination was officially reinstated in 1313 and the state awarded fifty-six *jinshi* degrees in the 1315 exam (Liu and Li 2006: 252–9). As a new avenue for officialdom, the revived examinations had an impact on advancement through clerkship (Iiyama 2011: 292–306). However, while there were individuals who took the examination avenue and reached high positions, this route remained a minor one in official recruitment during the Yuan. The main significance of the revived examination was the confirmation of the Zhu Xi style of Daoxue as the core curriculum and standard (Liu and Li 2006: 263–71). Furthermore, the quota system of examination for graduates from North and South China also inspired the rise of academies in North China (Deng 2013: 231–32). With changed attitudes, more elite Chinese families were also sending their sons into the medical profession as an alternative career choice (Hymes 1987: 64–66).

Although Daoxue gained its importance when the examination was reinstated in 1313, Han Chinese scholars were not alone in reaping the benefits. In fact, they might even have gotten a smaller share. For example, Benjamin Elman (2000:

34–35) has pointed out that in 1333, the one hundred *jinshi* degrees were equally divided among the four ethnic groups, and the Mongol and *semu* 色目 candidates answered different and shorter policy questions than did their Han counterparts. Other than the quotas, the Yuan court's discriminatory stance toward Han Chinese *jinshi* is also clearly evidenced in the posts appointed (Liu and Li 2006: 265–67). Despite these imperfections, the momentum of Daoxue proliferation did not slow.

Who Was An Xi?

Other than civil service examinations and related government schools and academies, there were also private educational initiatives being taken in the period. Daoxue education relied on private academies in South China and state-sponsored institutions in the north. How true was this dichotomy? From the late thirteenth century to the early fourteenth century before the reinstatement of the civil service examination, in a city named Gaocheng, located not far from Bazhou, An Xi 安熙 (1270–1311) was active locally as a teacher and scholar. An was the teacher of the renowned Yuan scholar Su Tianjue 蘇天爵 (1294–1352) and is often portrayed as a self-proclaimed student of the famous Yuan Daoxue master Liu Yin (Tu 1982: 242; Sun 2015: 211–17). In this article I argue that the significance of An's intellectual activities in the Gaocheng area, as well as its importance for our understanding of Daoxue learning in North China during the Yuan, is far more critical than the conventional treatment of An's intermediary role between Liu and Su.

An's biography was collected in the "Confucians section" of the *Yuanshi* 元史. The chief editor of the *Yuanshi* was Song Lian 宋濂 (1310–81), the leading Jinhua Daoxue master during the early Ming. He placed his agenda for enlisting Yuan scholars, such as Liu Yin and Wu Cheng, in chapter 58 of the biographies instead of in the "Confucians section." This section includes chapters 76 and 77. The former chapter includes biographies of the following scholars: Zhao Fu 趙復 (n.d.), who played a crucial role in transmitting Daoxue to North China; Zhang Xu 張㪺 (1236–1302), who was a student of one of the four masters of Jinhua, Wang Bo 王柏 (1197–1274); Jin Luxiang 金履祥 (1232–1302) and Xu Qian 許謙 (1269–1337), two other members of the Jinhua four masters; Chen Li 陳櫟 (1252–1334), lauded for illuminating Zhu Xi's teachings to the world; Hu Yigui 胡一桂 (1247–?) from Wuyuan 婺源, who was understood as having inherited learning on the *Yijing* 易經 from Huang Gan 黃榦 (1152–2210); and Huang Ze 黃澤 (1259–1346) from Jiujiang 九江, who was remembered as a steadfast upholder of ChengZhu philosophy. These were all Daoxue masters from South China. Six Daoxue masters from North China are also included in the same chapter: Xiao Ju from Shaanxi 陝西; Han Ze 韓擇 (n.d.); Hou Jun 侯均 (n.d.); Tong Su; Tong Su's student Diwu Juren 第五居仁 (n.d.); and An Xi. Since An Xi is undervalued and understudied, his short biography is worth reading closely.

> An Xi, whose courtesy name was Jingzhong 敬仲, was from Gaocheng 藁城 of Zhending 真定. His grandfather was An Tao 安滔 (1199–1276), and his father was An Song 安松 (?–1322); both benefited their fellow neighbors with their learning and practice. An Xi

> inherited the family learning, and when he heard about the teaching of Liu Yin from Baoding 保定, his heart longed for it. An Xi lived only a few hundred *li* away from Liu Yin, and the latter also learned about An Xi's effort in the learning for oneself, and greatly endorsed it. An Xi was about to pay Liu Yin a visit, but the latter had passed away. An Xi thus learned about Liu Yin's teaching from Yin's student Wu Shubei 烏叔備 (n.d.). As Liu Yin accepted and practiced the teaching of the Song master Zhu Xi after getting hold of the latter's books, he absolutely upheld Zhu's teachings and taught others. However, Liu Yin was intelligent and demanding of others, making him rather unapproachable. However, An Xi was simple, straightforward and easy going, and emphasized practicing the learning amidst one's daily routine. In his essay "Tribute to Confucius," An Xi mentioned: "Recalling what I have learned before, and contemplating that learning, (it is all but) cleaning, sweeping, and conducting oneself properly in interactions with others; carefully following trustworthy teachings; engaging in learning when one's practice is refined; and illuminating the principle (*li* 理) and manifesting human nature (*xing* 性). Do these according to the prescribed steps and embark on the journey to sagehood, so as to safeguard the heart, practice in accord with one's true self, extend it to all things, and purify one's native place." His cultivation was practical and relevant. He was indeed a good learner of Zhu Xi's teachings.
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> An Xi lived in a peaceful age, and despised the idea of advancing an official career. He stayed at home and taught students for a few decades, many of whom came from different places in order to learn from him and were successful in their lives. After he died, his confreres built a shrine in his honor at Xiguan 西筦 town in Gaocheng. His disciple, Su Tianjue, compiled his writings, and Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348) wrote in the preface that "if An Xi had met Liu Yin, (Liu would have) broadened his brightness and further inspired him to work hard, while Liu's teachings would have flourished further at that time." (Song 1976: 4328–29)

The Records of Song-Yuan Scholars (SongYuan Xue An 宋元學案) was another influential source on our study of Confucianism, and it also carries an entry for An Xi, titled "The recluse gentleman, master An Mo-an 默庵, Xi," which was literally a shortened version of the account in the *Yuanshi*. However, it listed An's biography under the chapter of Liu Yin's school and identified the section as "Liu Yin's self-proclaimed students." Under An Xi, there is a subsection called "Mo-an's family learning" that includes An's younger brother, An Xu 安煦 (n.d.). In addition, there is a second subsection called "Mo-an's students," which lists Li Shixing 李士興 (n.d.), Su Tianjue, and Yang Junmin 楊俊民 (n.d.) (Huang and Quan 2018: 3028–31). As a result of this arrangement, *The Records of Song-Yuan Scholars* created a transmission chart for Liu Yin, An Xi, An Xu, and Li Shixing et al., under the Liu Yin school (Huang and Quan 2018: 3019). This is the main reason that later scholars would simply understand An Xi as a member of the Liu Yin school, or only mention An Xi's intermediate role when discussing Su Tianjue. An Xi's scholarly activities were largely ignored.

When discussing An Xi, scholars tend to focus on how An admired Liu's scholarship but did not have the chance to learn from him and so inquired about Liu's learning from Wu Shubei. However, if we read the *Yuanshi* carefully, it was in

fact An's devoted adherence to and transmission of Zhu Xi's learning that earned him a place in the Daoxue section. The *Yuanshi* then highlighted the differences in terms of learning and personalities of the two men in order to underscore An as "indeed a good learner of Zhu Xi's teachings." In elevating An, it was also a minor attempt to discount Liu.

More interesting was the reference that An Xi's father and grandfather "benefited their fellow neighbors with their learning and practice." Additionally, when it says that An Xi "inherited the family learning," what kind of learning would this have been? We knew that An was influential as a teacher for decades, but how should his private educational activities be understood? After a shrine was built in his honor after his demise, what legacy did he leave behind in his local community? Was his learning inherited locally, if at all? When Yu Ji posted the hypothetical statement that "if An Xi had met Liu Yin, (Liu would have) broadened his brightness and further inspired him to work hard, while Liu's teachings would have flourished further at that time," what exactly did he mean?

The An Family of Gaocheng

An Tao's Forced Migration from Shaanxi to Zhending

The relative peace in Southern Song, the rule of North China by the Jin 金 Dynasty, and the devastated economic and social life in North China resulting from the war between the Jin Dynasty and the Mongols resulted in huge developmental differences in the social, economic, and cultural spectrums of North and South China (Xiao 2008: 1–22). Compared to decades of relative peace and social order in the Southern Song that provided the historical background for local elites to grow their wealth and build their networks, elite families in North China were uprooted, if not decimated. Those that survived were forced into fast adaptations to the new political, cultural, and social order to secure their survival. We learn about An Tao, who was An Xi's grandfather, from the *Record of Conduct* that An Xi wrote about his grandfather on behalf of An Xi's father. The *Record* provides many details of An Tao's life, and allows us to learn about the An family through An Tao, who lived in an age when the war between the Jin Dynasty and the Mongols was at its height. An Tao's courtesy name was Juyuan 巨源, and he was originally a native of Lishi 離石 in Taiyuan 太原. An Xi claimed that the family had been Confucian for generations. His account of the family history starts with An Tao's great grandfather, An Jie 安玠 (n.d.), who held a low military rank. An Tao's grandfather, An Quanguang 安全廣 (n.d.), was instrumental in changing the family's fortune. He amassed great wealth through trade and had a huge collection of books amounting to tens of thousands of volumes. An Tao's father, An Sheng 安昇 (n.d.), like An Quanguang, did not take up office. It was in the environment created by his forebears that An Tao "studied at the family school since he was young, coached by his grandfather personally." He passed the lower level local examination at the age of nine *sui* 歲 and also practiced poetry writing.

The Mongols attacked the Jin Dynasty during the Zhenyou 貞祐 years (1213–17), after which the Jin court relocated to Kaifeng 開封, followed by many elite families loyal to the Jin. The Jin court, although reduced in territory, continued

its civil service examinations. At that time, a handful of prefectures in Shaanxi province became highly contested. When the Mongols attacked, the people would escape to the mountains and valleys; when the Mongols left, they would return. Thus, many in Shaanxi still felt safe. This was the reason that An Tao decided to stay behind in Shaanxi, instead of following the Jin court that had relocated to Kaifeng. As a result, he was unable to take the higher-level examination. In 1217, the An clan once again took refuge in the mountain caves, but this time the Mongols attacked them with fire. The entire clan, save An Tao, perished, and he was taken prisoner by the Mongols. Earlier, the Mongol general Muqali 木華黎 (1170–1223) had ordered that all captives be executed, and noncompliance by his soldiers incurred military punishment. This was a response to the prolonged resistance by the Shaanxi prefectures. There was a certain military intendant, Shimo Chennu 石抹陳奴 (n.d.), who learned about the capture of a Confucian scholar. Shimo immediately sent for An Tao and "changed his clothing, fabricated his origins, and ordered him to serve him closely." An Tao, who had "encountered such a major catastrophe whereby his entire clan perished and he alone survived," thus pledged his allegiance to Shimo.

An Tao followed Shimo in the latter's various tours of duty, and arrived at Gaocheng in Zhending in 1232. Shimo bestowed lodgings and land upon An Tao, so that he could settle down and take up the responsibility of teaching Shimo's children. By the year 1238, the Mongols had restored the examinations and offered to release the tax obligations of those who passed. An Tao did well in the examination with his poetry skills and started to make a living through teaching. During household registration exercises in 1252, An Tao finally registered himself as a Confucian household in Zhending (An 1984: 153). Following Jin Dynasty precedents, the examinations to determine Confucian households from 1237–38 onward tested both the Classics and belles lettres, a curriculum opposed by Daoxue followers (Elman 2000: 32).

An Tao, a young man who had inherited his family's tradition of learning, was captured by the Mongols and almost died. However, he was rescued by a member of the Mongol forces by virtue of his intellectual ability and was later able to exert his influence in another location. An Tao's story, while not as significant as that of Zhao Fu in Chinese intellectual history, closely resembled Zhao's basic storyline—captured by Mongol elites and relocated to North China, he was claimed to be the Daoxue master responsible for introducing Zhu Xi's style Daoxue to the north. These were the unexpected outcomes of the forced movement of people during the Mongol invasion, which also resulted in the relocation of scholars and the proliferation of their learning.

After settling down in Zhending, An Tao was employed by the local Chinese military leader Zhang Dehui 張德輝 (1195–1274) in 1261. Thus, his patronage expanded from Shimo to Zhang. In 1265, there was a call to recommend an instructor for the prefectural school, and Zhang recommended that An Tao serve as deputy instructor. His teaching career was closely related to the changes in his network and status. From initially serving Shimo and teaching his children, his work eventually expanded to officially instructing at the local government school. This

expansion was made possible because he passed the examination, because he had registered as a Confucian household, and because he received sponsorship from Zhang Dehui. His was a process of deeper entrenchment into the web of state institutions and agents.

As with most literati during the Jin-Yuan transition period, An Tao's scholarly talent was in poetry.[2] While An Xi claimed that his grandfather had learned the *Book of Changes* at an advanced age, and was so deeply attracted by Cheng Yi's 程頤 (1033–1107) commentary on it that it never left his hand, there is no other evidence to suggest that An Tao was familiar with Daoxue learning. Thus, the mention of Cheng Yi's commentary seems to be an attempt to create a link between An Tao's learning and one of the founding masters of Daoxue.

An Tao was content with his teaching career, which lasted over three decades, and did not seek further advancement. All three of his sons participated in the examination. The eldest, An Zhi 安芝 (n.d.), was once recruited by Zhang Dehui to serve as a government clerk at the Shandong 山東 provincial office. The second son, An Song, had a rank 8a title of "court gentleman for ceremonial services." Additionally, An Jun 安筠 (1232–96) was the deputy prefect of Mian 緜 prefecture, holding a rank 7a title of "gentleman for managing affairs."[3]

In fact, all three sons began their official careers through recruitment or by a recommendation to clerkship by powerful patrons. An Song was recommended by a famous official to the position of administrative clerk at the Fiscal Commission of Jianghuai 江淮 in the year 1283. He then took up the appointments of district defender of Qianjiang 潛江 county, warden of Xia 峽 prefecture, and recordkeeper at the Pacification Commission of Jiangdong 江東. After he left office and returned home, he was appointed as the magistrate of Jianning 建寧 but did not take up the offer (Su 1994: 674). An Jun started his career when he was recruited to a clerkship by the Surveillance Commissioner of Yannan 燕南 and Hebei 河北. Next, he was recommended to take up an administrative clerk position at the Surveillance Commission of Hedong 河東 and Shanxi by the powerful deputy chief censor Shi Bin 史彬 (n.d.). An Jun was then transferred to the same commission for Shanbei 山北 and Liaodong 遼東 and was later promoted to registrar of the Surveillance Commission for Hexi 河西 and Longbei 隴北. He experienced another transfer, this time to the same commission for Shaanxi and Hanzhong 漢中. His last appointment was to deputy prefect of Mian prefecture, and he died while in office.[4] The paths of their career advancements, especially the clerkships as a spring board, and their reliance on strong sponsorship from powerful patrons, was typical of literati with such connections during the Yuan.

While An Xi deliberately highlighted his grandfather's learning of the *Book of Changes* and his devotion to Cheng Yi, poetry played a much more significant role throughout his life. In fact, we can see traces of the transmission of family learning from An Tao to An Song. Su Tianjue claimed that An Song learned at home when he was young and had been lauded for his action and knowledge. After returning to his native place, An Song taught at home and led by example by following the strict rules he established. Su also mentioned that as many as a hundred students came to learn from An Song and that he taught clearly without beating around the

bush when explaining the standard annotations. More significantly, An Song "was particularly good at composing poems; his poems were mild-mannered and peaceful, realizing the intention of the *Book of Songs*" (Su 1994: 674).

In short, both An Tao and An Song were especially skilled at poetry composition. An Xi wrote a funeral inscription for An Song's younger brother, An Jun. In it, when An Xi spoke of his uncle's education, he mentioned the importance of the government school, since An Jun had studied with a scholar that served there as a school intendent. However, An Xi also praised his uncle for being an expert in writing rhythmic poetry in the Tang style. Ever since his youth An Jun was able to awe his readers whenever he composed a line because his language was masculine and powerful. It remained so until he was old. An Jun was also known to have mastered the recent style of *yuefu* 樂府 poetry. Thus, it was evident that all three generations had exceptional poetry skills. However, An Xi then added that, in An Jun's "old age, he heard of the learning on rituality and propriety, and was deeply devoted to it," so much so that he named his studio "reduction 損" from the philosophy found in the *Book of Changes* (An 1984: 154).

How should one comprehend this apparent contradiction between expertise in poetry composition and devotion to the newly contacted philosophy? It was clearly An Xi's deliberate writing strategy to establish a family history of learning inclined to Daoxue. However, why did he feel it necessary to do so? Was this an experience shared by many Confucian households during the Yuan, especially in North China in the transition from the old emphasis on poetry to the new trend of learning?

An Xi's Learning and Scholarship

An Xi's biography in the *Yuanshi*, especially the description of An's learning history, was largely based on the preface Yu Ji wrote for An's collected works. Yu quoted Su in that preface, claiming that "Master Liu Jingxiu 劉靜修 (Liu Yin) of Rongcheng 容城 came upon Zhu Xi's writings when he was in Jiangnan 江南, and through those he was able to trace the transmission of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–73), Shao Yong 邵雍 (1012–77), the Cheng brothers [Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–85) and Cheng Yi], and Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–77), hoping to comprehend the words of the *Analects*, *The Great Learning*, *The Mean*, and *Mencius*. Was he not what the ancients referred to as "one who learned and mastered?" Jingzhong (An Xi) heard about Liu and admired him. He lived a few hundred *li* away but had never met Liu. An merely learned from Liu's teachings through the latter's disciple, Wu Shubei. Thus, in relation to Liu, An was also "one who learned and mastered."

According to Yu Ji, Yu himself had a colleague at the Imperial College who was Liu's disciple. However, when he enquired about Liu's learning, the colleague could not comment. By comparison, An admired Liu as his teacher throughout his entire life, and Yu asked rhetorically, "Could what An Xi has learned be measured?" Yu further commented that, in the early years when the Yuan Dynasty was founded, there were no scholars in North China that could surpass Liu's insights and determination. Yu was confident that, if Liu had lived longer, he would have fulfilled his wish and attained sagehood. Should Liu have had the chance to learn

from Zhu Xi personally, he would have been able to fully master the wonders of change and extension. An's mastering of Zhu's learning was an echo of Liu, and Yu hypothesized that "if An Xi had met Liu Yin, (Liu would have) broadened his brightness and further inspired him to work hard, while Liu's teachings would have flourished further at that time." However, Yu could only lament that "Liu Yin did not meet Zhu Xi, and An Xi in turn did not learn from Liu Yin personally" (An 1984: 145).

It was true that An admired Liu greatly. He even named his studio "Yuanyou" 遠游, citing Liu's poem directly. After Liu's death, An mentioned in a letter to Wu that "I began my learning journey late and was ignorant; I was lucky to privately proclaim myself as Liu Yin's student, and with your supervision, I feel that I have made some progress." An also mentioned that "for the past year or two, I had lived in insolation, as if I was lazy. However, I dare not forget my urge to meet the master (Liu Yin) even for a second. In and out of my dreams, I felt that I had met him." In fact, An's relation to Liu was more than mere admiration. An mentioned to Wu that "the master had also answered my questions in letters on several occasions—his wish to teach me was strong." Nevertheless, for reasons unknown, An did not meet Liu in person, despite his strong admiration and desire. An lamented Liu's demise and swore to dedicate his life to learning so as not to let down either Liu, who had taught him informally, or Wu Shubei, who had great expectations of him (An 1984: 150–51).

An and Wu had been friends for many years, and the latter became Liu's disciple in 1287. After that, Wu often shared his master's teaching with An. An recalled that, because of this, "I was able to learn a thing or two from the refined and subtle teachings of Liu Yin. I therefore was determined to study the correct learning and not lose direction. All this was inspired by the words of Liu Yin." An then claimed that he had wished to lead his fellow students to embark on a learning journey for seven years (An 1984: 150). Seven years passed, and Liu was dead.

An's learning was based on ChengZhu Daoxue, or so the *Yuanshi* compiler claimed. However, for An, Liu's personal example and inspiration was far more significant than any actual transmission of scholarship. In his letter to An Jun, An Xi mentioned that "because I have heard since my youth about Master Liu Yin who was a disciple of *Daoxue*, my heart adored it and I sincerely submitted to it. I thus was inspired to acquire the Way, for if one learned and did not see the Way, he could be said to have lived in vain" (151). It is apparent that Liu played a pivotal role in An Xi's determination to embark on his Daoxue quest. However, there is no evidence to show that, other than holding steadfastly to the ChengZhu position, there was a direct influence from Liu philosophically. An had composed poems that reflected his great admiration of the ChengZhu masters. For example, "I read the *Four Books* in a quiet setting, and admired Zhu Xi when I closed the book"; "In this life, my wish is to learn from Master Cheng; it would bring shame to the Spring breeze throughout the seated audience;" and "the transmission of the heart after a thousand years is the Master of a hundred generations; I imagined the instance when Zhou Dunyi transmitted the learning to the Cheng brothers" (148–49). While these poems could be discounted as common expressions of Daoxue

learners, another letter that An wrote to Wu carries important information about the nature of An's scholarship.

Wu once sent An a copy of Liu's manuscript on *Sishu Jiyi Jingyao* 四書集義精要 (Concise Expositions of the Four Book Commentaries, hereafter *Jingyao*). An mentioned that he was reading Zhu Xi's collected works, and thus checked through the *Jingyao*. It is apparent that An was using Zhu's work as a yardstick to measure the validity of the *Jingyao*. Indeed, An replied that there were still many points about which he had reservations, and found several mistakes, thus warranting detailed mention of those points in another letter. Unfortunately, that letter is no longer extant. Nonetheless, An politely highlighted that he "suspected that this book is an early draft, and Master Liu Yin had yet to engage scholars in editing it, therefore there are many mistakes. Although they may not hinder the major philosophical thoughts, they should not go unchecked." Taking Zhu as the reference in his criticism of Liu's work reflected An's core philosophical stand.

As for his own writing, An went on to share two writing projects with Wu. The first was the *Book of Songs*. An wrote, "I am reading Zhu Xi's commentary on the *Book of Songs* recently. I am also thinking of extracting related passages from Zhu Xi's *Collected Writings* as well as his *Recorded Sayings* that are related to the discourses on poems and can be referenced against his commentary. I will imitate the format of the *Jingyao*, and convenience new learners. This seems to be constructive too." As we have seen, An's forebears were skilled in poetry, and thus it was quite natural that the discourses on poems caught his attention. The important points to note here are the content and format of this writing project. An intended to base his work on the commentaries and opinions of Zhu, and Liu's *Jingyao* only provided a template for the structure. There is no doubt that An was evidently pursuing Zhu's teachings, and that Liu was merely a recent motivational figure. However, An (1984: 151) mentioned in a letter that he had yet to write it. Su (1994: 738) listed a *Shijing Jingyao* among An's works, but it is no longer extant.

An Xi's second writing project involved the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. An "once faulted readers of the *Annals* for only reading the *Zuo Commentary* without reading the main classic." Therefore, he felt it important to "extract the comments, narrative, and complete stories from the *Zuo Commentary* and, imitating (Zhu Xi's) *Tongjian Gangmu* 通鑒綱目, use small fonts to annotate the main text, following each category and attaching them under each entry. However, overstatement and unconventional comments from the *Zuo Commentary* will be excluded." An also planned to "attach the opinions of great Confucian masters since the Qin and Han dynasties, as well as remarks that are worth studying from the various schools, in simplified abstracts after the entries." If this were done, An (1984: 151) argued, "readers of the *Annals* would have the commentary as reference, and readers of the *Zuo Commentary* could learn about the classic." Most important of all, the book's "main principle will strictly adhere to Zhu Xi, and from here reach the teachings of Zhang Zai and the Cheng brothers, thus seeking the intentions of the sages." Therefore, this newly structured *Annals* took the format of Zhu Xi's *Tongjian Gangmu*, and the content strictly followed Zhu's position. It must have been a work thoroughly in line with Zhu in both

substance and form. According to Su (1994: 738), the last entry was the twelfth year of Duke Zhuang 莊公.

But these books are no longer extant. The next best avenue for studying An Xi's position on Daoxue and the insistence on Zhu Xi teaching is through a close reading of an essay titled "Questions and Answers in a Studio." The text itself does not reveal the target of An's critique. However, in the "Record of Conduct" Su composed for his teacher, this was much more explicit. Su informed his readers that An's fellow townsman from Gaocheng, the renowned literary giant from the earlier Jin Dynasty Wang Ruoxu 王若虛 (1174–1243), composed a rebuttal that attacked Zhu Xi when the latter's *Commentaries on the Four Books* was first introduced into North China during the early Yuan. Then there was an official from Zhaojun 趙郡 surnamed Chen who admired Wang's rebuttal and added to it. Chen was then posted as a surveillance commissioner to Zhending prefecture and showed his work to others. These attacks on Zhu shocked An, and he penned his defense (Su 1994: 737–38).

An adopted the common writing strategy of an imagined conversation. To establish his pedigree and to defend Zhu, the imagined guest asks how An's learning was different from others, and why he was isolated from students. An replies that, since he started learning, he has read the *Six Classics* and the books of Confucius and Mencius as a daily routine. He further learned about the teachings of the Daoxue masters from friends and people whom he privately acknowledged as teachers. For him, the works of Zhou Dunyi, the Cheng brothers, and Zhu Xi were ones that inherited learning from the sages and inspired future learners. Thus, An was determined to seek the *Dao*, which had lost its transmission for a thousand years, so as to nurture his heart and cultivate his body.

"Questions and Answers in a Studio" was composed in 1294. Liu had passed away, and Wang's "Rebuttal," written by a famous local personality, was circulated by an official serving in the region. A strong sense of anxiety over the transmission of Daoxue prompted An to remind readers of the genealogy of Daoxue and the importance of studying Zhu's *Commentaries on the Four Books*. The guest then asks whether An was learning so-called Daoxue. "Most definitely," An replied, and further elaborated:

> The *Dao* was magnificent, as it originated from Heaven, and the sages and worthies transmitted it. (The legendary emperors) Fuxi 伏羲, Shennong 神農, and Huangdi 黃帝 inherited it from Heaven and established the norms, after which it was then passed down through (the sage kings) Yao 堯, Shun 舜, and Yu 禹. (The rulers and ministers) Tang 湯, Wen 文, Wu 武, Gaoyao 皋陶, Yi 伊 and Fu 傅 carried out their duties as monarchs and officials the way they did based on the same *Dao*. Confucius was not in a position as ruler-teacher to promote it; he could only transmit what the past sages had transmitted in books, so as to pass it down for centuries. Zengzi 曾子 (546 BCE–?) transmitted it to Zisi 子思 (483 BCE–402 BCE), Zisi passed it on to Mencius, but the transmission was lost with the death of Mencius. For a thousand years since, scholars were immersed in memorialization and annotations, as well as poetry, so as to gain material benefits, and were no longer aware of the sages' learning. The situation was worsened by heterodoxy.

> Without the emergence of a true Confucian, who could illuminate the *Dao* after it was obscured, and inspire (the world) after the way had been lost for a hundred generations?" (An 1984: 149)

The answer to this rhetorical question was none other than the Daoxue masters Zhou Dunyi, the Cheng brothers, and finally Zhu Xi, who was the focus of An's elaboration. According to An, Zhu illuminated the *Dao* as he was able to integrate the teachings of Zhou and the Cheng brothers. "He believed that the *Dao* was obscured because the commentators had failed to understand the sages' message," An continued, "thus, Zhu Xi exhausted his energy in studying the sagely classics, and annotated them to bring forth the messages" (149–50). Referring to Zhu's *Commentaries on the Four Books*, An then lauded Zhu who had worked tirelessly on the details. The end product was commentaries that manifested the principle and flowed smoothly in every subtle detail of all the chapters and words, and these were easy to comprehend and practice. For An, the *Commentaries* on the *Four Books* had exhausted all the important messages of the ancient sages.

Another major contribution was to "deliberate over the sequence for scholars to enter the *Dao*." An continued that

> he advised scholars to first read *The Great Learning* to set the parameters, followed by the *Analects* and *Mencius* to cover all the deep meanings, and ending with *The Mean* that ties everything up. Once the metric was established (by the *Four Books*), one could use it as a reference to study all the classics, and comment on the various history books and myriad writings from a hundred generations; there would be no principle that one could not comprehend, and no situations that one could not handle. (150)

An emphasized that

> this was how Master Zhu inherited (the Dao) from past sages and inspired scholarship in the future, and thus contributed great merit to posterity. It was only because the world was in decay and the Dao lost, and only a small number of scholars knew about this; and because the world has produced ill-informed scholars restricted to their (narrow) understanding and feeling at ease with their uncultivated practices; thus, they have been unable to participate in this (learning), and further viewed it as heterodoxy. (150)

"Your deliberation is eloquent," the imagined guest continues,

> but there was a famous official who was proud of his literary writings and also said that these did not hinder him from mastering the Daoxue. (There was also one who) believed that he had truly understood the sages' meaning, and charged that Zhu Xi's explanations of the classics had diverted into heterodoxy and misled the people without himself realizing it. He then composed a book to debate it, and was widely welcomed by all scholars. Why is it so? (150)

Such a blatant attack on Zhu was what inspired An to pen his essay. Thus it does not surprise readers when An counters both claims.

According to An, "both are false. The damages of the former are shallow and small, the damages of the latter are deep and great. The reason for the man who was proud of his literary writings to claim that these did not hinder his mastering of the Daoxue, was because he was worried that people who knew the *Dao* would criticize him, and thus he made this claim to camouflage it" (150). Since this is only an attempt to save one's standing, the damage is small. An then charged that the latter who "thought that he had truly understood the sages' meaning, looked down on the former worthies and falsely defamed them, was vulgar and unrefined, superficial and irrational, (yet) made high speeches and huge claims as if he had no equal. He was using this to meet his private agenda, and as a plot to earn himself a reputation" (150).

Meanwhile, "scholars are still unenlightened and do not know the way, and so their hearts are led astray; are the damages caused thereby small and shallow? This is why I am deeply worried day and night, and do not know how to rectify the situation. Yet you are still believing these claims and raising questions?" (150).

An's anxiety was apparent. Although An was a member of a Confucian household, no evidence suggests that he had taken the civil service examination, and he definitely never held any official appointment. Thus, as a scholar who could not claim any place in the Daoxue genealogy, as well as a commoner without official appointment, was An in an adequate position to defend Zhu? The imagined guest challenged that

> it is said that ever since the Zhongtong reign of our dynasty, the great Confucian masters passed down the *Dao* and promoted it to the world. They were either accomplished in their official careers and moved around in high society, able to educate the monarchs to practice it; or they were less successful and lived among the common folk, but illuminated the meanings of former sages and latter worthies. Both could benefit the people and transmit the *Dao* to posterity. They were steadfast like pillars and majestic as cliffs. Now that you, in your low social status, claim to be engaged in this learning, it would be rare if you did not invite attacks upon and cause harm to yourself. Have you also given this consideration? (150)

An was quite candid in his response to this imagined criticism and provided an answer that would become a common position among northern Daoxue masters in later years. He countered,

> That is not true. The *Dao* never becomes more or less depending on one's success in one's career; nor do we become different because of our levels of success and wisdom. There was indeed a genealogy of scholars who had directly inherited the Mind-heart and learned about the subtle meaning, and then supported This Culture of Ours (*siwen* 斯文). However, when we learn, we should all take (the *Dao*) as the goal and seek it. We probably will not miss it, and can reach the highest level of the *Dao*. Thus, how could we be

> concerned with the criticisms of the common world and be intimidated by the distorted accusations from crude Confucians, or to compromise ourselves to follow the rest and to adapt twisted views, and yet not lose our direction? (150).

An had Zhu's direct students and their schools in mind when he spoke of direct inheritance. But northern scholars like himself needed to place their faith in the basic Confucian position that all humans are capable of learning the sagely way.[5]

The final question posed by the imagined guest is why, if he disapproved of the book, An did not retort publicly so as to educate his audience. An then points out that from his reading of the book, he had realized that the surveillance commissioner had not even understood Zhu's text, let alone the context and archeology of Zhu's position. He asserts his conviction that, with advancement in age and learning, the commissioner will one day regret his actions. On the one hand, An did not find it necessary to seek a temporary victory over the official, since the book was shallow and full of contradictions; on the other hand, he also felt obliged to call out the mistakes. Thus, An wrote this essay as a reminder to himself as part of his project to "analyze the questions and rebut the challenges, so as to illuminate the subtle teachings that master Zhu Xi has passed down" (150).

An's efforts paid off, because according to Su, the surveillance commissioner later felt "deep remorse and burned his book." It was only then that the younger scholars saw clearly the sophistication of An's learning and insights. More importantly, Su (1994: 737) presented this episode as one that "had merits for the teachings of Zhu Xi." These merits lay in the steadfast defense of Zhu's teachings against criticism from leading literati from an earlier generation that represented a different brand of learning. The challenge was even more critical because it originated from a towering figure in the local community and was circulated by an official posted to the region. Thus, adversaries came in the dual form of local cultural authority and state political authority. An took great pains to write a lengthy rebuttal, which was collected in his works. Su understood the significance of the defense and his teacher's intention. He thus highlighted the episode in his account and portrayed his teacher as a zealous defender of Zhu's Daoxue and thus a guardian of that tradition.

An's scholarship was rooted in Zhu's teachings and demonstrated no preference to either a northern or southern tradition; nor was it limited to Liu. In fact, An was also attracted to southern scholarship. He had wished to visit Liu, who was the leading master in North China, but he had also wanted to visit the Daoxue masters in South China. He had "heard that the south is where music and rites, where This Culture of Ours is still present, and where established teachers and accomplished scholars are still extant. He was on his way there, but stopped half-way because of illness" (Su 1994: 737).

An Xi's Activities

On top of taking Zhu's teachings as his core philosophy, An's many intellectual and social activities demonstrated a tendency to promote Daoxue learning and practices outside the state apparatus. Conducting one's intellectual, educational, and

social activities without any reliance on the state system is an important feature of Daoxue localism commonly seen in South China. Such unofficial activities, while relying on the agency and resources of private individuals, were nonetheless public—not only because they involved a larger group of local elites, but also because they impacted the local intellectual and educational scenes, and were visible to the larger local community.[6]

Not far from Gaocheng was the scenic mountain Fenglong 封龍. In the year 1306, An spent three months there escaping the hot summer and recuperating from his illness. He composed a group of poems during that period, *Ten Songs on Fenglong*, and readers can see that other than the beauty of the natural landscape, man-made structures such as Xiuzhen 修真 Taoist Temple, the Zhongxi 中谿 Academy, the ruins of the Xixi 西谿 Academy, and the Jingzhai 敬齋 Shrine were also central to his activities. The Zhongxi Academy was a typical private school that received state patronage in the early Yuan Dynasty. During the reign of Zhongtong 中統 (1260–64), it was renovated and received official recognition (An 1984: 146–47). An, who was then a commoner, was able to lead the students and pay homage to Confucius in the Confucian shrine within the academy on the first and fifteenth day of every lunar month. This reflects his well-respected status as a leading scholar in the local intellectual community.

An's essay, titled "Tribute to Confucius," was composed for the sacrificial rites at the Zhongxi Academy and caught the attention of Yu Ji, the renowned scholar-official who wrote the preface to An's collected writings. It was then quoted in part in the *Yuanshi*. In the first half of the piece, An recounts his learning experience and motivations. He recalls that he was not bright but learned from the writings of many scholars in his early teens and began to hear of the *Dao*. From then, he studied the great works of past Daoxue masters and later based his learning on the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, so as to get a glimpse of Zisi and Mencius in order to seek out the messages in the classics and explore the hearts of the sages. He then lamented that he was not industrious enough and followed with a paragraph on "recalling what I have learned before" (An 1984: 153). This last section was quoted in the *Yuanshi*, and the editors concluded that An was a good learner of Zhu's teachings. It is important to read the quotations in the *Yuanshi* within the context of An's learning.

The An family of Gaocheng was a diasporic family at that time; therefore, surveying how they handled ancestral worship is an important avenue for comprehending their understanding of and negotiations with the Confucian ritual system. As early as 1302, the An family began to build an ancestral shrine. Although the family head was An Song, it was An Xi who both "built the ancestral shrine and moved in the tablets of grandfather and father" and also wrote the "sacrificial prose announcing the moving in of ancestral tablets." Taking An Song as the reference point, the ancestral shrine worshiped four generations of forebears, which included his great-great grandfather, great grandfather, grandfather, and father (An 1984: 152). This was in tandem with the principle of five-generational cycles that was popular among the Daoxue members.

Su pointed out that it was in fact An Xi who led the construction of the ancestral shrine. The ritual activities that the An family carried out were not only based

on Zhu's teachings and in harmony with human sentiments; they also exerted a positive influence on local customs. According to Su, "the ancient rites were lost for a long time. (When) Suzhai (An Song) was relocating, the master (An Xi) was the one influencing this. First, the ancestral shrine was constructed to worship the tablets of four generation of ancestors. The rites of capping, marriage, funeral, and sacrifices, were all based on Wengong's [Zhu Xi's] book on the rites. They were based on affection and respect, explained clearly and practiced thoroughly, and were suitable for and befitting of the occasions. Many local people were touched and changed their ways" (1994: 737).

An did not take the next logical step of actively promoting *localism*, defined as prioritizing local interests, networks, and identities. Perhaps he did not give it enough thought and reflection. Nevertheless, his private actions that produced a public impact outside or alongside state apparatuses had the basic contours of a localist's activism.

Trails of An Xi

What was the nature of An Xi's intellectual activities in the eyes of his contemporaries? What kind of legacy did he leave behind? According to Su, there were "always as many as a hundred students coming and going," and they "all moved and interacted in a proper manner." As a result, people "knew that they were An's students by looking at them." If this was true, then An must have had a set of rules in his pedagogical design, and his students were organized with a certain degree of institutionalization and shared some common traits. If not, onlookers would not have been able to identify them as An's students just by "looking" at them. On top of that, these students who "taught in various regions with what they had learned, and became famous ministers and talented officials were so numerous that they could not be recorded." Therefore, we know that An's students were actively pursuing careers as officials, and that many of them were transmitting his teachings to other regions. While not explicit, the text hints that these students did all this through the state educational system (Su 1994: 737–38). In view of the above evidence, we can deduce that An's intellectual and educational activities were organized.

Since the Southern Song Dynasty, the Daoxue activities in South China had acquired certain characteristics, namely, clearly definable schools of thought and master-student intellectual lineages, as well as the importance of private academies in their activities. As an independent space, academies could have educational, ritual, and library functions.[7] An did not leave behind any evidence that he was directly involved in the building or renovation of any private academy. However, he left us a text related to another educational institution—this piece was requested by his cousin who had been sent to their ancestral hometown as an educational official. He invited An Xi to write "A Record of Shizhou's 石州 Temple-School," referring to the state-built government school in Shizhou. In the "Record," An narrated the hardships involved in renovating the school and emphasized the importance of a Daoxue education, especially the sequence of learning according to Zhu. An's involvement in this text was also partially related to his emotional attachment to his ancestral hometown (An 1984: 150).

An's sole direct activity was the building of "The Hall for Revering the Classics." The Ming Jiajing 嘉靖 edition of the *Gaocheng County Gazetteer* records that the hall was constructed "in the township of Xiguan, by the Yuan recluse An Xi who built it to store the *Six Classics* respectfully. The Yuan Hanlin academician Boshu [recorded incorrectly as Yumu] Luchong recorded the event, Yuan Jue [recorded incorrectly as Yuan Tong] contributed an inscriptional verse, and Liu Wensu composed poems" (Li 1968: 56). This Jiajing edition collected a text titled "Inscription on the Hall for Revering the Classics," which mentioned An Xi and Su Tianjue; thus, it must be the same inscription. The inscription's author is identified as Yuan Jue 袁桷 (1266–1327) (see Yuan 1984), but it cannot be found in *Qingrong jushiji* 清容居士集, Yuan's collected works. By contrast, there is an identical piece in Boshu Luchong's 孛术魯翀 (1279–1338) *Jutanji* 菊潭集, titled "Inscription on An's Hall for Revering the Classics" (Boshu 1994: 373).

The hall was a library built privately by An Xi. It functioned as more than just a storage space for books but also supported An's educational endeavors. Later, in the Kangxi 康熙 edition of the *Gaocheng County Gazetteer* from the Qing period, it was updated as having been absorbed into the state educational system, as it had now been "relocated to the rear of Minglun Hall" (Lai 1968: 427).

What Yuan had written for An was probably a tomb inscription. The Jiajing edition of the *Gaocheng County Gazetteer* records a "tomb of the Yuan recluse Master, An Xi," and that "Yuan Jue from Kuaiji 會稽 composed the tomb inscription" (Li 1968: 71, 242–45). The tomb inscription collected in said gazetteer was almost identical to a piece titled "Tomb Inscription of An Jingzhong from Zhending," which can be found in Yuan's *Qingrong jushiji* (Yuan 1984: 738).

As final evidence of the impact An had, there was a local shrine dedicated to An Xi. The Jiajing *Gaocheng County Gazetteer* mentioned that the editors came across the record of Master An's shrine "in the *Daming Yitongzhi* 大明一統志, located in Xiguan township to the west of the county seat. Built by local men Su Tianjue and Li Shixing during the Yuan, for local master An Xi. An Xi's grandfather An Tao, and An Xi's father An Song, were both enshrined too. Ouyang Xuan [歐陽玄 (1283–1357)] recorded it, but it is no longer extant." It is apparent that the shrine dedicated to An Xi had a ritualistic nature but was not sustainable. This is why when the Ming editors were compiling the county gazetteer they could not make many comments about it but made reference to the *Daming Yitongzhi*. By the time of the Qing Dynasty, the Kangxi edition simply copied the contents from the Jiajing edition (Lai 1968: 442; Li 1968: 63).

Ouyang Xuan, in his "Record of Master An's Shrine," first recounted the moral example a recluse could offer and described the informal intellectual connection between An Xi and Liu Yin. More important, the legitimacy of a local shrine relied heavily on the contributions that the enshrined had made to the community. Ouyang Xuan reminded readers that An Xi's forebears, An Tao and An Song, "had benefited the community with their learning. It had in fact been three generations and spanned over a hundred years" (1929: 22). Therefore, when Su Tianjue proposed to another student of An Xi, Li Shixing, who was a local resident in Xiguan township, to build the shrine, the plan was to build three rooms so as to

pay homage to three An generations. Needless to say, it also bore the objective of "illuminating the merits spanning generations" (23).

Later, Li would lead the students from the local school to perform the necessary rites on the appropriate days of the year, and they dropped whatever they were doing. The significance of An's shrine had far-reaching meaning for Ouyang. He pointed out that

> enshrining the Guzong 瞽宗 at the government school and enshrining the local Master at the *she* 社, such were the ancient rites. The Guzong has been unheard of for a long time, [but] paying homage to the local master began with Su Tianjue and Li Shixing. We thus know that it was not difficult to revive the ancient way; the challenge is with people not wanting to continue it. From now onwards, the customs of Xiguan township will improve daily. The people there respect learning and devalue profit; the scholars there enjoy learning and distance themselves from power. Is there an end to the contributions of the An? (Ouyang 1929: 33)

The significance and merits of the An masters were local.

There were also local reasons why it was Li who led the construction effort and presided over the rites. On top of being a local from Xiguan township, he had studied with An Xi since he was young and was the earliest student that An had accepted and endorsed. It is no coincidence that Li's teaching career was also focused locally. The *Gaocheng County Gazetteer* lauded him as someone who "resided in his hometown and had much to teach; people rushed to learn from him." It is thus apparent that he too was a locally renowned and influential Confucian teacher (Li 1968: 135).

Conclusion

The wars during the dynastic transition from Jin to Yuan, and the recruitment of vassals by Yuan military elites, resulted in the relocation of An Tao from Shaanxi to Zhending in what is now Hebei. The Yuan Dynasty household registration system, especially the exercise of identifying Confucian households, facilitated the incorporation of the An family into the new local elite community. On top of this, several members from two generations of the An family began their official careers through the common system of recommendations, in particular as clerks, during the early Yuan. It can be said that, without the social upheavals of that era and without the unique political structure under the Mongols, the An Xi story would be quite different.

An Xi himself was attracted to Daoxue and devoted himself to its learning and transmission. We can see how, on top of his family's tradition in poetry writing, An attempted to paint the biographies of his direct forebears with an undercurrent of Daoxue teaching. An's mastery of Daoxue did not owe to his membership in any particular school of thought but rather was the result of self-study and self-attainment. Scholars in the past have positioned him as a member of Liu Yin's school, but I have argued here that An's scholarship was inherited directly

through the learning of Zhu Xi's works, and therefore was more self-attained than it was received from Liu. Liu's role as an inspirational figure should not be inflated.

In the study of northern Confucianism during the Yuan, past scholarship has focused on Xu Heng and the Daoxue tradition as it proliferated through state-sponsored educational institutions. An's experience, however, points to a different, nonofficial intellectual and educational space in Yuan's North China. But did it necessarily take the form of the organized intellectual schools that were common in South China? Was working outside the state system also a reflection of the localism exemplified in South China? Since An's Daoxue was self-attained through his study of Zhu's works, and because he consciously carried himself as a steadfast follower of Zhu, there was little room for deviance within his scholarship. Furthermore, we are informed that his students were clearly identifiable by the local population. This leads us to deduce that some form of organization was indeed present.

As for the question of localism, there is no evidence that shows that An Xi promoted local interests, or discussed political, social, economic, and cultural affairs from a local perspective. However, when Ouyang Xuan spoke later of the three generations of An, he was clearly situating them in a localized space and meaning. Concerning their contributions to education, Su Tianjue took a macro perspective and positioned them in the epoch of Jin-Yuan dynasties. According to him, "the Jin dynasty ruled for a century, but scholars who learned were merely engaging in memorialization and poetry composition. Have they produced any writings on human nature and morality? Was it not a continuation of the decay since the Zhenyou reign?" Under such circumstances, the continuation of "human nature and morality" was only possible because of the great effort of private individuals. Thus, Su (1994: 738) claimed, "the sustenance of our *Dao* through the ages has relied on one or two Confucians who transmitted the lost learning. For example, my teacher's family."

The teacher, An Xi, was a self-taught Daoxue master, although he did attempt to inject some Daoxue elements into the accounts of his forebears' learning. Such a self-taught model was more common in North China, compared to the more organized intellectual schools in the South. This trend continued into the early Ming Dynasty, with Daoxue masters such as Xue Xuan 薛瑄 (1389–1464) of Shanxi and Cao Duan 曹端 (1376–1434) of Henan 河南 accomplishing their learning as self-taught scholars. But the northern masters of the Ming differed significantly from An, as their perspectives and activities were state-orientated (Koh 2011: 93–96, 195–98).

This study of An's thought, intellectual activities, and family background has stressed two dimensions. As intellectual history, it has shown that, in contrast to An's traditional characterization as a follower of Liu, An was an independent thinker who attracted his own students and contributed to the transmission of Daoxue learning through his own writings and teaching. From the perspective of social history, the experience of An Xi and his family deepens our understanding of the dynamics of forced migration and its impact on scholarship and the reconfiguration of local society in North China under the Mongols.

I dedicate this article to the late Bruce Tindall (1956–2021), a meticulous and professional copy editor. Although we never met, I knew that he was a friendly and warm person. I am also thankful to the constructive comments offered by the anonymous reader and reviewers.

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NOTES

1 For Daoxue's quest to dominate the civil service examination during the Song Dynasty, see De Weerdt 2007.

2 For discussion of the literati during the period, see Bol 1987; and Wang 2018: 28–62.

3 Information on An Tao and his children is based on An Tao's "Record of conduct," written by An Xi (1984: 153).

4 See An Jun's funerary inscription written by An Xi (1984: 154).

5 On how Ming Confucians argued for the importance of gaining the *Dao* through one's own study rather than membership in an intellectual lineage, see Koh 2011: 45–48.

6 Ong Chang Woei (2008: 17) has proposed to study the local history of Guanzhong through three sets of relations: national/local, "official"/"unofficial," and central/regional.

7 For the relationship between academies and Daoxue, see Chen 2004: 155–95; and Deng 2013: 144–91. For academies as spaces for educated elites to exert control and some degree of autonomy, see Walton 1999: 80–81.

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