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# Classical Reasoning in Late Imperial Chinese Civil Examination Essays

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## Outline

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2. The 8-Legged Essay and Literary Formalism After 1475
3. Competing Literati Opinions Outside the Examination Compound



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## Abstract

This paper describes how the imperial Chinese civil service created a culturally defined status group of degree-holders that hermeneutically shared: 1) a common classical language; 2) memorization of a shared canon of Classics; and 3) a literary style of writing known as the 8-legged essay. Internalization of elite literary culture was in part defined by the civil examination curriculum, but that curriculum also showed the impact of literati opinion on imperial interests. Classical literacy, the mastery of *Tao-hsueh* 道學 (Tao Learning, i.e., Neo-Confucianism), and the ability to write terse but elegant examination essays together publicly marked the educated literatus. In addition to its political and social functions, the civil service competition successfully consolidated gentry, military, and merchant families empire-wide into a culturally defined status group of degree-holders, who shared a common mental grid for classical reasoning and textual hermeneutics.

The grammar, rhetoric, and balanced phraseology of the examination essay contained rules of prosody that turned classical learning into a literary contest. Both the orthodox interpretation of Tao Learning and the prescribed chain-argument for moral rhetoric were screened through the classical style favored by examiners, who were not only representatives of the court and its bureaucracy but also were participants in literati culture and in tune with its classical vicissitudes. The interpretive style then in effect often narrowed the classical language, filtered the prescribed conceptualization, and constricted the stylistic genres that were favored and left some like

poetry out altogether from 1371 to 1756. The internalization of literary culture, which was in part defined by the civil examination curriculum, also influenced the literatus' public and private definition of his moral character and social conscience. A view of government, society, and the individual's role as an elite servant of the dynasty was continually reinforced in the memorization process leading up to the examinations themselves. For the literatus, it was important that the dynasty conformed to classical ideals and upheld the Ch'eng-Chu 程朱 orthodoxy that literati themselves had formulated. Reproduction of classical values and historical mind-sets among candidates for public office meant that gentry, military, and merchant families from all over the empire had more in common culturally, hermeneutically, and linguistically with each other than did lower social groups in their native areas, who remained tied to local traditions, temples, and dialects that did not transcend local life.

**Key words :** Examination Essays, classical writings.



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## 1. Language, Classicism, Calligraphy, and Cultural Reproduction

The linguistic aspects of classical Chinese as an empowering language in the civil service selection process should be added to any social and political analysis of the "ladder of success" in late imperial Chinese state and society. The moral reasoning and philosophical significance of Ch'eng-Chu *Tao-hsueh* was accompanied by the social value and political power that resulted from mastery of the classical language of imperial orthodoxy by candidates for officialdom. By bringing language into the discussion of civil examinations, we are able to analyze an authorized classical language as a linguistic instrument of social and political policy, which also functioned as the lingua franca of an classically educated literati elite.<sup>1</sup>

Given the absence of public schools in late imperial China before 1898, most male commoners (particularly rural peasants, artisans, and traders whose families could not provide private schooling) were linguistically and thus culturally excluded from the examination market. Unequal social distribution of linguistic and cultural resources meant that those from families with limited traditions of literacy were unlikely to compete successfully in the degree market with those whose family traditions included classical literacy. Indeed, the civil examinations were meant to be exclusive by choosing members of the local elite to join in partnership with the dynasty to maintain order in society.<sup>2</sup>

Moral values such as filial piety and ancestor worship certainly transcended class and cultural barriers in imperial China. Even the *Thousand Character Text*, *Hundred Surnames*, and *Three Character Classic* reading primers, which almost all families and local schools used to train children to read and write the fifteen hundred different characters needed for functional literacy, were encoded with classical values that the society upheld. Popular literacy in vernacular Chinese was widely prevalent among non-elites,<sup>3</sup> but such cultural levels were not as politically empowering as full, classical literacy. Since the early and middle empires in China, the linguistic chasms between vernacular, semi-classical, and classical Chinese ensured that fully classically literate scholar-officials were entering a world of written discourse that few in local society could understand or participate in.<sup>4</sup>

Similar to the Latin-vernacular divide that demarcated secondary from primary education in early modern Europe,<sup>5</sup> the spoken (Mandarin) and written (classical) languages of higher education in late imperial China were more or less different from everyday speech outside of north China after 1415-21, when Peking became the capital, and taught to a minority as elite disciplines. After 1787 over 500 thousand characters of textual material had to be memorized to master the examination curriculum of the Four Books and Five Classics. This count does not include the voluminous pages in the Dynastic Histories (by the Sung there were seventeen, by the Ch'ing twenty-two "legitimate" dynasties) and, after 1756, T'ang poetry, mastery of which was also expected of examination candidates. Frederic Wakeman has noted: "A better-than-average apprenticeship for the examinations meant beginning to learn to write characters at the age of 5, memorizing the Four Books and the Five Classics by the age of 11, mastering poetry composition at age 12, and studying *pa-ku* [8-legged] essay style thereafter."<sup>6</sup>

Beginning in the early Ming (1368-1644), the dominant values, ideas, questions, and debates that prevailed in court and among officials were translated into a terse classical language whose pronunciation was based on the standard

Mandarin dialect of the court (*kuan-hua* 官話) in the capital region in north China (after the Mongol invasion and after the Ming transfer of the primary capital from Nanking) and not on the dialects of the more populous and prosperous south, although a form of "southern" *kuan-hua* remained in use during the Ming in the parallel ministries that were maintained in Nanking as the southern capital. This policy represented a precocious form of "linguistic gerrymandering" whereby after 1425 China was divided into geographical *cum* linguistic units to try to limit the economic advantages of the south. The authorized official languages under the Ming, known as "northern" and "southern" *kuan-hua* required written and spoken forms of non-residents that only privileged outsiders, who through education and social contacts, could fully grasp after years of training. Even later, when during the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1911), Manchu and Mongolian were added as the official languages of warrior elites, the classical language of literati remained the dominant public voice of the bureaucracy. Without a competing capital such as Nanking, Peking alone during the Ch'ing dynasty provided the standard language for officials.<sup>7</sup>

Such policies condemned most, who traveled little, spoke only local or regional dialects outside the capital(s), or were "primer-literate," to classical illiteracy. They could perhaps become scribes, woodblock carvers, and even writers of local legal complaints, but as non-degree-holding primer-literates they were ineligible to enter the civil examination compounds where the political elite was chosen from the social elite.<sup>8</sup> To acquire the legitimate cultural training necessary to qualify for the civil service, most students preparing for the examinations (especially those in the south) were essentially mastering a new spoken dialect (northern or southern Mandarin) as a second language and a written language (classical Chinese) whose linguistic terseness, thousands of unusual written graphs, and archaic grammatical forms required memorization and constant attention from childhood to adulthood.<sup>9</sup>

Southern and southeastern Chinese, with different dialects, were able to overcome their initial linguistic disadvantages vis-à-vis northern spoken Chinese through the translation of their greater wealth into wider social contacts and superior educational resources and facilities, but at the price of admitting the limitations of their native tongue and identifying with a broader, empire-wide linguistic elite. Reproduction of classical values and historical mind-sets among candidates for public office meant that gentry, military, and merchant families from all over the empire had more in common culturally and linguistically with each other than did lower social groups in their native areas, who remained tied to local traditions, temples, and dialects that did not transcend local life. Elites therefore could move effectively in local, provincial, and capital circles, while non-elites were limited to local groups that spoke the same dialect and shared the same traditions. Preparation for the civil service thus entailed mental mastery of orthodox and regionalized schemes of classical language, thought, perception, appreciation, and action. In class and individual terms, social and political reproduction influenced some of the character of both "literati culture" and the literatus as a "man of culture" (*wen-jen* 文人), although the civil examinations themselves existed in a world of local and regional, religious and intellectual, life that humanized and individualized the literatus.

In unforeseen ways, the institutionalization of the Mandarin dialect used in the Peking court after 1415-21 as the official spoken language and the requirement of ancient classical texts in the civil service examination process had generated linguistic cleavages between classically literate, Mandarin-speaking elites, who served as "outsider" officials in counties, townships, prefectures, and provinces, and the non-elite, sometimes semi-literate, natives who spoke a different dialect. Gentry and merchants were conceptually operating in diverse although often overlapping linguistic traditions, one local, rich in popular culture and lineage traditions, and one empire-wide, embodying the written classical language and the



official tongue of political power. A literatus from Shan-hsi in the northwest would have little trouble bridging the vernacular gap with his southeastern Cantonese colleague, even if spoken communication between them was possible only in written form using a brush (*pi-hua* 筆畫).<sup>10</sup>

Political and social reproduction through the civil service examinations entailed a degree of cultural and linguistic uniformity among elites that only a classical education could provide. Such general linguistic uniformity, however, permitted a wide range of regional textual traditions and local "schools" of scholarship, which could use the civil examinations to wage ideological and political battles at home and in the bureaucracy.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the Tao Learning curriculum chosen by the literati for the Ming and Ch'ing civil service represented a cultural repertoire of linguistic signs (over 500 thousand repeating graphs), stylistic categories (8-legged essay rhetorical forms), and moral concepts (Tao Learning theory) that ensured that elite political power and social status throughout the late imperial period would be defined in shared terms acceptable to the government and its literati. Sung Tao Learning provided the classical guidelines for political and cultural legitimation of the dynasty and enhancement of the social prestige of its dominant status group. Literati had been full participants in the cultural construction of the classical canon, and because they remained involved in its reform and operation, the civil examination system had both political and social support for its maintenance as an educational institution.

Proficiency in spoken Mandarin and classical literacy was a vital element for elite kinship strategies, as was "primer-literacy" for many other commoners. Compilation of genealogies, preparation of deeds or legal complaints, and settlements for adoption contracts and mortgages required linguistic expertise and political contacts that only the elite within a descent group could provide. A classical education became a seal of cultural approval. Like European elites in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who crossed over from their vernacular to classical Latin as

the language of instruction in secondary education, most Ming and Ch'ing Chinese, Manchus, and Mongols subordinated their native tongues in favor of Mandarin and classical Chinese if they entered higher education and passed on to the examination halls.<sup>12</sup>

Merchants, like gentry families in late imperial China, also became cultured patrons of classical scholarship. In fact, such merchants were almost indistinguishable from the gentry elite, although Ming hereditary designations as "merchant families" remained in use if not in practice. In the Yangtzu delta, for instance, they supplied resources for establishing local schools and private academies.<sup>13</sup> The result was a merging of literati and merchant social strategies and interests. Merchant success in local society, particularly in urban centers pointed to the correlation between profits from trade and high social status. Classical scholarship flourished due to merchant patronage, and books were printed and collected in larger numbers than ever before.<sup>14</sup>

During the Ming and Ch'ing, subordination of the content of the civil service examinations to elite literary culture was further cemented through strict enforcement of requirements that all candidates' essays must be composed in what eventually became rigid parallel-prose styles known as "8-legged essays," a genre infamous among examination candidates and baffling for "primer-literate" merchants, peasants, and artisans unschooled in elite discourse.<sup>15</sup> Such cultural expectations were heightened by the gentlemanly requirements that candidates be adept in the art of calligraphy (*shu-fa* 書法), one of the most esoteric and characteristic cultural forms of training to master written classical Chinese.

The well-publicized rituals for properly writing Chinese graphs, learned from childhood as students traced the characters in their primers, included cultural paraphernalia long associated with literati culture: the writing brush, ink-stick, ink-slab, stone monuments, fine silk, and special paper. The brush, ink, inkstone,

and paper were known as the "four treasures of the scholar's studio" (*wen-fang ssu-pao* 文房四寶). Chinese high culture demanded both mastery of literary forms and artistic training to write those forms beautifully.<sup>16</sup> State examinations required acceptably written "regular" calligraphy (*k'ai-shu* 楷書) on special paper free of smudges or cut-and-paste graphs. In local examinations, a student's papers were not anonymous, and the county, township, and prefectural examiners evaluated a *t'ung-sheng* 童生 candidate's penmanship as well as his essays. Similarly, in the palace and court (since 1723) examinations, where there were no copyists, calligraphy was an important element in the final ranking of *chin-shih* 進士, a procedure that continued for the evaluation of those few who entered the Hanlin Academy, where literary examinations for compilers were regularly held.<sup>17</sup>

Students prepared calligraphically acceptable answers using the officially recognized "regular" script, but the man of culture also mastered "cursive" (*ts'ao-shu* 草書), "running" (*hsing-shu* 行書), and by the Ch'ing even ancient "seal" (*chuan-shu* 磚書) forms of writing. Seal and cursive script were unintelligible to all but the most erudite. Accordingly, at the higher levels, reading and writing classical Chinese was further mystified by its time-honored rituals of writing. Sun Hsing-yen 孫星衍 (1753-1818), for example, gained reverse prestige from his literati friends when the Manchu official Ho-shen 和珅 (1750-99) failed him for using, correctly, a seal character that Ho-shen did not recognize on a court examination to determine the level of Sun's appointment to the Bureau of Punishments.<sup>18</sup>

An "amateur" literati ideal (and an "ideal" is all it was!), which equated classical, literary, and calligraphic forms of cultural expression with social status, did take rhetorical precedence among elites, particularly when young men were students and had not yet held public office. This much-heralded ideal of the "gentleman" and his literary and aesthetic sensibilities precluded somewhat non-elite participation in the ways of conspicuous leisure (painting, calligraphy,

poetry, etc.) as defined in higher culture. Although legal, medical, institutional and fiscal specialties were tested as policy questions on Ming civil examinations, the end of most specialty examinations in the civil service selection process after the Southern Sung marked the imperial withdrawal of social and political prestige from technical subjects.<sup>19</sup> This did not automatically doom these technical fields to oblivion, as Joseph Levenson incorrectly thought, but thereafter, training in law, medicine, astronomy, and fiscal affairs frequently became the preserve of commoner clerks, yamen secretaries, official aides, and even Muslims and Europeans, who staffed the technically-oriented yamens of the Ming-Ch'ing bureaucracy. Only when faced with alien rule under the Manchus in the seventeenth century, demographic revolution in the eighteenth, and western capitalism in the nineteenth did significant numbers of literati again turn to occupations outside the civil service as they had under the Mongols during the Yuan dynasty.<sup>20</sup>

During the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties in particular, cultural reproduction conveniently supported the political aims of the government, although such reproduction was voluntarily monopolized by social elites and not the dynasty itself. Rote memorization of the Four Books and one of the Five Classics (before 1787) in Mandarin pronunciation by examination candidates, constantly deplored but never resolved, was a cultural act of great meaning for Han Chinese. As in early modern Europe, where stress on order and conformity ensured that rote learning (e.g., the catechism) played a fundamental role in the educational process,<sup>21</sup> late imperial Chinese educators prized orthodoxy and the rote reception of that orthodoxy. The civil examinations were a fundamental factor, among many others, in influencing cultural consensus and conditioning the forms of reasoning and rhetoric that prevailed in elite society.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. The 8-Legged Essay and Literary Formalism After 1475

Most accounts of the development of the late imperial examination essay begin with modernist apologies. The twentieth century cultural assault on the infamous 8-legged essay (*pa-ku-wen* 八股文), as the classical essay on the Four Books and Five Classics was called since mid-Ming times, has included accusations that the 8-legged essay became a "byword for petrification" in Chinese literature or that the essay itself was one of the reasons for China's cultural stagnation and economic backwardness in the nineteenth century. Consequently, most works on the history of Chinese literature have ignored the examination essay as a literary form or written about it with unconcealed modern contempt.<sup>23</sup>

Whatever the literary verdict, which we will leave to the literary critics, the late imperial examination essay had its most immediate roots conceptually in the epochal transition from T'ang-Sung *belles-lettres* to the classical essay (*ching-i* 經義) championed by Wang An-shih 王安石 (1021-86) in the eleventh century. The classical essay, however, was not firmly in place in civil examinations as the key literary form empire-wide until the early Ming. When the 8-legged essay was still the rage, before 1850, there were many efforts to trace a history of ideas about its literary pedigree.

Most Ming-Ch'ing literati traced the essay form back to the 1057-71 Northern Sung debates for and against replacing poetry and rhyme-prose (*shih-fu* 詩賦) on civil examinations with *ching-i* essays.<sup>24</sup> Some simply saw the form as the equivalent of applying the literary rules of regulated verse (*lü-fu* 律賦) in T'ang dynasty civil examinations to the new essay form. Others thought the selection of quotations for an essay was indirectly derived from the *t'ieh-ching* 帖經 tradition in T'ang times, when candidates had to recite a classical passage from memory after seeing only one phrase from that passage. Still others saw the style

influenced by the development of a drama persona (*k'ou-ch'i* 口氣) in Chin and Yuan dynasty theatrical writings.<sup>25</sup>

There is some truth in each position, but the history of the classical essay form in examinations actually dates from the policy essay used in Han (206 B.C. - A.D. 220) times, the parallel prose (*p'ien-t'i-wen* 駢體文) of T'ang (618-906) essays for the *ming-ching* 明經 degree, and the ancient-style prose (*ku-wen* 古文) styles of the Northern Sung that Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修 (1007-72) and Wang An-shih championed in different ways. In fact, when it was still fashionable to do so, champions of both parallel- and ancient-style prose essays each claimed the 8-legged essay as a kindred genre to legitimate their competing literary traditions in the late nineteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, the "legs" (*ku* 股) of the classical essay were thought to refer to the parallel and balanced lines that made up the structure of both literary genres (see below).

The Ch'ing Han Learning scholars Li Chao-lo 李兆洛 (1769-1849) and Juan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849), for instance, both claimed that the "contemporary-style essay" in 8-legged form derived directly from parallel prose styles requiring balanced phrases and arguments in a series of four and six characters (*ssu-liu chih lu-p'ai* 四六之流派). To gainsay this Han Learning position, T'ung-ch'eng scholars such as Fang Pao 方苞 (1668-1749), who compiled the *Ch'in-ting ssu-shu wen* 欽定四書文 (Imperially authorized essays on the Four Books) collection of model 8-legged essays for the Ch'ien-lung emperor, and Yao Nai 姚鼐 (1731-1815) linked the 8-legged essay to ancient-style prose and Ch'eng-Chu Sung Learning.<sup>26</sup>

Historically, however, that the appearance of an examination essay style that was specifically called the "8-legged" style appeared for the first time in the early years of the Ming Ch'eng-hua 成化 reign, 1465-87. Consequently, the tendency to construct the historical genealogy of the 8-legged essay backwards from the Han,

T'ang, or Sung dynasties, which we have summarized, tends to elide its sudden appearance in the 1480s as the accepted form for an examination essay. Without denying that the 8-legged form had its roots in earlier dynasties, we will nonetheless focus on its first, conscious appearance in the mid-Ming and try to unravel the cultural significance of the form among literati writers. Indeed, claims that the form derived from earlier styles served to legitimate the 8-legged essay as the proper harvest of past literature and classical learning. And, as in earlier such cases, it was the literati themselves, and not the imperial court, that initially produced this new trend in classical writing.

While detractors of the 8-legged essay genre have received a more sympathetic hearing in the twentieth century, its late imperial advocates were numerous and came from a broad spectrum of Ming-Ch'ing literati. Li Chih 李贄 (1527-1602), a late Ming iconoclast on so many issues,<sup>27</sup> saw in the evolution of classical essay genres a cultural dynamic that was commentary to the ongoing literati search for values in antiquity. The contemporary-style essay, for Li, was a bonafide genre that had proven its worth in producing famous officials. Their moral achievements, he thought, were due to its use as the orthodox genre for the classical essay in civil examinations.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, late Ming literati such as Yuan Hung-tao 袁宏道 (1568-1610) and Li Yü 李玉 (1611-80), known for their unconventional literary traditions, saw 8-legged essays as reliable mirrors of the literary currents in their times. For such writers, the 8-legged essay had transcended its requirement as a formal exercise and become an important literary genre of prose-writing in its own right. It was not merely an examination requirement but a cultural form that existed inside and outside the examination compound and was written by all classically literate men, young and old.<sup>29</sup>

The Hanlin academician Liang Chang-chü's 梁章鉅 (1775-1849) early

nineteenth century work entitled *Chih-i-ts'ung-hua* 制義叢話 (Collected comments on the crafting of 8-legged civil examination essays), while mentioning the accruing flaws in the selection process, praised the artistic and cultural levels the examination essays fostered in Chinese life. Liang noted that no one to date had come up with an acceptable alternative.<sup>30</sup> Ch'ing literati who prepared prefaces for the work, which was designed to place the examination essay in full cultural relief, wrote in praise of Ch'ing contributions to the further evolution of the Ming genre.<sup>31</sup>

### ● Origins of the 8-Legged Essay "Grid"

In his preface to Liang Chang-chü's influential collection *Chih-i-ts'ung-hua*, Yang Wen-sun 楊文蓀 (1782-1853), a Che-chiang bibliophile, noted that the 8-legged genre dated from the Sung classical essay but took its final form in the early Ming when the *ching-i* essay irrevocably replaced poetry and rhyme-prose.<sup>32</sup> This claim is not unreasonable because the tradition of *belles lettres* as literary questions in civil examinations had continued in the Sung, Chin, and Yuan dynasties. *Ching-i* style essays began in 1071 reforms, when poetry was briefly relegated in importance in civil examinations. Works such as such as Lü Tsu-ch'ien's 呂祖謙 (1137-81) *Ku-wen kuan-chien* 古文關鍵 (Pivotal points in ancient-style prose) were widely used after the Sung to study prose technique.<sup>33</sup>

The evolution of the 8-legged essay form certainly is complicated, but the discussion suggests some significant continuities between Sung and Ming dynasty examination essay styles. Aspects of the Ming structure were in evidence during the Sung.<sup>34</sup> To claim, however, that the 8-legged essay itself took its final form in the early Ming is excessive. We have two opposite views on the Ming origins of the genre that became known as *pa-ku-wen*. The authors of the *Ming-shih* 明史 (Dynastic history of the Ming) dated it from the early Ming reign of Emperor T'ai-tsu 太祖: "The essay for the examination curriculum was generally patterned on the Sung classical essay. However, it now had to be articulated in words in the



name of the sages, and its literary form had to be strictly parallel. Hence it was called '8-legged' or more generally 'crafted essays' (*chih-i*).<sup>35</sup>

Following this somewhat premature view, as Ching-i Tu does, scholars have singled out Huang Tzu-ch'eng's 黃子澄 (d. 1402) classical essays for the 1385 metropolitan examination, on which he finished first (he was third on the palace examination), particularly his first essay on the quotation from the *Analects*, "When the Way prevails in the empire, the rites and music and punitive expeditions are initiated by the emperor" (天下有道，則禮樂征伐，自天子出。), as the first essays that embodied some of the structural parts and rhetorical style of the 8-legged essay format.<sup>36</sup> Writing his account of Ming examinations in the late seventeenth century, Ku Yen-wu 顧炎武 (1613-82, however, dated the 8-legged essay with more historical precision to the late fifteenth century:

The popular tradition of calling classical essays "8-legged" probably began from the Ch'eng-hua emperor's reign (1465-88). The term "leg" (*ku* 股) is the term for "parallel wording" (*tui-ou* 對偶). Before the T'ien-shun emperor's reign (1457-65), writing in the classical essay was nothing more than an extension of classical scholia. They were sometimes parallel, sometimes varied, but without any fixed form... In the 1487 metropolitan examination, the essay topic was "He who delights in heaven will continue to possess the empire" (樂天者保天下).<sup>37</sup> The essay for this quotation began with three sentences on the topic (*ch'i-chiang* 起講), which were followed by four legs on "delights in heaven." The next four sentences served as a middle transition, while the final four legs dealt with "possess the empire." Another four sentences recapitulated, and then the candidate wrote a conclusion (*ta-chieh* 大結).

In the 1496 metropolitan examination, the essay on the passage "To take one's prince to task is respect" (責難于君謂之恭)<sup>38</sup> began with three

sentences, and then presented the passage "to take one's prince to task" in four legs. In the middle transition there were two sentences followed by four legs on "respect." After a two-sentence recapitulation, the writer presented his conclusion. In every four legs there were two balanced propositions, one empty, the other solid, one shallow, one deep. Thus in each section there were four legs, which all followed in strict order. Consequently, people called this form "8-legged".... Since the Chia-ching emperor's reign (1522-67), the essay style has continually changed, and if you ask a *Ju* 儒 candidate, none of them know why such essays are called "8-legged."<sup>39</sup>

### ● Wang Ao's Formative Role

What is interesting about Ku Yen-wu's account is his dating of the first 8-legged essay in the Ch'eng-hua reign, and his failure to attribute the form to any particular literatus writer. One of the most renowned early composers of 8-legged essays was the distinguished scholar-official Wang Ao 王鏊 (1450-1524), who passed the Ying-t'ien 應天 provincial examination ranked number one out of 2300 candidates and 135 graduates in 1474.<sup>40</sup> Ao then passed the 1477 metropolitan examination also ranked number one.<sup>41</sup> Both examinations were held during the Ch'eng-hua reign.

In the palace examination, however, Wang Ao had the misfortune of having as his chief reader Shang Lu 商輅 (1414-86), who was to that point the only Ming literatus who had achieved "three firsts" (*san-yuan* 三元) on the Ming civil examinations. He made sure that Wang would not be the second by ranking Ao's final policy answer third overall, after others had initially ranked it first.<sup>42</sup> Shang Lu could identify Wang Ao's paper because the palace examination, unlike the provincial and metropolitan examinations, was not graded anonymously. Hsieh Ch'ien 謝遷 (1450-1531), who had also finished first on the 1474 Che-chiang

provincial examination, Shang Lu's home province, was chosen the 1475 *optimus*. In this way, Wang Ao's achievement was also overshadowed by the eight Ming "two firsts" (*erh-yuan* 二元), who had finished first on the metropolitan and palace examinations, and the *erh-yuan*, such as Hsieh Ch'ien, on the provincial and palace examinations. Wang Ao's "two firsts" on only the provincial and metropolitan examinations placed him in the third tier.<sup>43</sup>

Despite this downclassing, Wang Ao's classical essays won the day outside the examination compound and beyond the reach of the Hanlin Academy. It was said that "in terms of essays, victory was conceded Wang Ao; in terms of appearances, victory was conceded Hsieh Ch'ien" (文讓王鏊，貌讓謝遷). Although official rankings could be tampered with by jealous men such as Shang Lu, the latter's writings never measured up to Wang Ao's in the evolution of the genre that would become the "8-legged" essay grid.<sup>44</sup>

Although from Che-chiang, Wang Yang-ming 王陽明 (1472-1528), for example, greatly admired Wang Ao's on essay on "nature" (*hsing* 性), which was based on Ao's metropolitan policy answer that had been selected as the best essay for the second metropolitan policy question in 1475. In Wang Yang-ming's biography for Wang Ao, he noted that the Nanking provincial examiners had been astonished at Ao's 1474 provincial examination essays, which they compared to the great Sung *litterateur* Su Shih 蘇軾 (1036-1101). The provincial examiners recorded Ao's discourse and policy essays verbatim in the final report, not daring to change a single character.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, Wang Ao, unlike Shang Lu who retired in 1477, frequently served as a metropolitan examiner in the late fifteenth century, occasions on which his classical essays served as models for thousands of candidates in the compounds he supervised. Indeed, Wang Ao was an associate examiner for the 1487 metropolitan (with 4000 candidates) and one of the two chief examiners for the 1496

metropolitan examinations. Ku Yen-wu has contended that the 8-legged model was first consciously used to rank examination essays in these two examinations. In 1490, Wang Ao was also an associate metropolitan examiner, and he was appointed chief metropolitan examiner again in 1508.<sup>46</sup> In fact, on the 1759 Ho-nan provincial examination, the third policy question on examination essays (*chih-i* 制藝) pointedly asked if Wang Ao's essays were the forerunners of the 8-legged essay.<sup>47</sup>

Accordingly, the first glimpse we have of the early emergence of the 8-legged form of the classical essay, before its explicit declaration as the official examination style in 1487, can be traced back to Wang Ao's 1475 *ching-i* essay on a session one passage from the *Mencius*: "The Duke of Chou subjugated the northern and southern barbarians, drove away the wild animals, and brought security to the people" (周公兼夷狄，驅猛獸，而百姓寧).<sup>48</sup> In that metropolitan examination, Wang's classical essays on two of the three quotations from the *Poetry Classic*, his memorial (*piao* 表), and two of his policy answers were also singled out by the examiners for their literary style and substantive excellence (*li-ming tz'u-ta* 理明辭達). Ch'iu Ch 丘濬 (1420-95), one of the chief examiners and a distinguished Hanlin academician since 1454, described Wang Ao's essay on the *Mencius* as "profoundly crafted and to the point" (*hsiu-tz'u shen erh i-ta* 修辭深而意達). We should add here that Wang's session three policy essays were also praised for their "basis in what can be ascertained" (*yu k'ao-chü* 有考據), a telling examiner comment discussed in more detail elsewhere.<sup>49</sup>

Wang Ao's central role in the formation of the 8-legged essay style was recognized in the Ch'ing by Yü Ch'ang-ch'eng 俞長城, who compared Wang's position to that of Ssu-ma Ch'ien 司馬遷 (145-90? B.C.) in history, Tu Fu 杜甫 (712-70) in poetry, and Wang Hsi-chih 王羲之 (307-65) in calligraphy. Yü added: "Before Wang's time the 8-legged essay had not developed fully, but his essays contained everything that had not appeared earlier. After his time, the

8-legged essay went through many changes, but Wang's essays had already included what came later."<sup>50</sup>

We will look at two of Wang Ao's 8-legged essays, which were later cited in Ch'ing collections as models for the form. In the first, based on a passage in the *Analects* "When the people have enough, how can the ruler alone have too little?" (百姓足，君孰不足), the essay deals with the ruler's responsibilities to provide a livelihood for his people.<sup>51</sup> The second, based on the famous opening passage from the *Analects* "Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar?" (有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎?), focused on moral cultivation in Tao Learning terms.<sup>52</sup> Each was copied, printed, and studied by generations of civil examination candidates.<sup>53</sup>

[1. Break open the topic (*p'o-t'i* 破題)]: 百姓足，君孰不足

When the people below are prosperous, the ruler above will be prosperous.  
民即富於下，君自富於上。

[2. Receiving the topic (*ch'eng-t'i* 承題)]:

The wealth of the ruler is stored among the people. If the people are prosperous, why should the ruler alone be poor?  
蓋君之富藏於民者也。民即富矣，君豈有獨貧之理哉？

[3. Beginning discussion (*ch'i-chiang* 起講)]:

In giving advice to Duke Ai, Yu Jo said profoundly that the people and the ruler were one.<sup>54</sup> He implied that the Duke had increased taxation because he lacked resources. To ensure his resources, the Duke should have first satisfied his people.

有若深言君民一體之意以告哀公，蓋謂公之加賦以用之不足也。欲足其用，蓋先足其民乎。

[4. Initial leg (*ch'i-ku* 起股)]:

If one can honestly

tithe one hundred mou with a mind to stay frugal and love the people, and the one-tenth tax is not levied so the people provide his livelihood,

then

what the people would produce would not be for tax levies,  
what resources they have would not all be for tax collection,  
there would be accumulation and surplus in village households,  
and no worries in caring for parents or raising children,  
there would be abundant grain and millet in the fields,  
and no anxiety about nurturing the living or seeing off the dead.

誠能

百畝而徹，愴存節用愛人之心，  
什一而征，不為厲民自養之計，

則

民力所出，不因於征求，  
民財所有，不盡於聚斂。  
閭閻之內，乃積乃倉，  
而所謂仰事俯育者無憂矣。  
田野之間，如茨如梁，  
而所謂養生送死者無憾矣。

[5. Transition leg (*hsu-ku* 續股)]:

If the people have enough, how can the ruler alone be poor?  
百姓既足，君何為而獨貧乎？

[6. Middle leg (*chung-ku* 中股)]:

I know that

The ruler could have everything if it were stored in village households,  
with no need to hoard it in his treasury as his goods.

The ruler could use everything if it were placed in the fields,  
with no need to accumulate it in his vaults as his possessions.

With unlimited access, why worry that requests would not be honored?

With unlimited resources, why fret over unpreparedness in an emergency?

吾知

藏之閭閻者，君皆得而有之，  
不必歸之府庫而後為吾財也。  
畜之田野者，君皆得而用之，  
不必積之倉廩而後為吾有也。

取之無窮，何憂乎有求而不得？

用之不竭，何患乎有事而無備？

[7. Later leg (*hou-ku* 後股)]:

Sacrificial animals and ritual grains would be sufficient for religious offerings; jades and silks would be abundant as gifts for tribute and audiences.

Even if insufficient, the people would supply what they have, so what shortage would there be?

Foods and delicacies, beef and drinks would be sufficient for the needs of official guests; carriages and horses, weapons and armor would be sufficient for wartime preparations.

Even if insufficient, the people would respond with what they have, so what shortage would there be?

犧牲粢盛，足以為祭祀之供；玉帛筐篚，足以資朝聘之費。  
借曰不足，百姓自有以給之也，其孰與不足乎？

饗飧牢醴，足以供賓客之需；車馬器械，足以備征伐之用。  
借曰不足，百姓自有以應之也，其孰與不足乎？

[8. Conclusion (ta-chieh 大結 )]:

Oh! Tithing originally was for the benefit of the people, and the sufficiency of the dynasty's resources arose in this way. Why should one raise taxes to seek prosperity?

吁！徵法之立，本以為民，而國之用之足乃由於此，何必加賦以求富哉？

Wang's essay was included in Fang Pao's early Ch'ien-lung era collection of outstanding Ming-Ch'ing 8-legged essays, entitled *Imperially Authorized Essays on the Four Books*. Fang said of this Wang Ao piece: "The levels and sequence are refined and clear, moving from the shallow to the profound. When the meaning of the passage is completed, the essay's form also ends. This shows how our predecessors were truthful, concrete, and showed the way themselves. Those that came later, although their openings and closings, followings and reflections, were brought to completion and included ingenious changes, none could carry on the task."<sup>55</sup>

### ● Cognitive Issues in 8-Legged Essays

What immediately strikes us about Wang Ao's first essay is its exaggerated structural commitment to formal parallelism and thinking by analogy. Strict adherence to balanced clauses (*tui-chü* 對句) and balanced pairs of characters (*shu-tui* 屬對) was required throughout the essay, but this feature becomes particularly rule-like in Wang's framing of the argument by building the three major legs of his essay.<sup>56</sup> As the classical essay's length requirement increased from the five hundred characters common in late Ming times to over seven hundred during the mid-Ch'ing, the basic structure of the essay remained unchanged. During the Chia-ching 嘉靖 emperor's reign, however, a dispute in the 1543 Shan-tung provincial examination over the veiled criticism of the throne in the "conclusion" in an 8-legged essay led to a decline in the practice of ending the essay with rhetorical



flourish.<sup>57</sup> In the K'ang-hsi 康熙 era, the *ta-chieh* section was dropped from the essay form and replaced by a lesser summary (*shou-chieh* 收結 or *lo-hsia* 落下).<sup>58</sup> An additional leg was frequently added to the Ch'ing essay, which meant there could be four perfectly parallel and numerically balanced paragraphs building the theme of the quotation assigned.<sup>59</sup>

The form of chain arguments used in such essays were built around pairs of complementary propositions, which derived their cogency from rich literary traditions that over the centuries had drawn on both the parallel-prose and ancient-style prose traditions of early and medieval China.<sup>60</sup> Balanced prose presupposed that an argument should advance via pairs of complementary clauses and sections, which, when formalized and disciplined by analogies, avoided a wandering, unfocused narrative. Accordingly, the 8-legged essay represented an effort to confirm the vision of the sages in the Four Books and Five Classics from a "double angle of vision" that strictly correlated with the parallel syntax of the legs of the examination essay.<sup>61</sup>

In the first leg of Wang Ao's above essay, the ruler's actions were directly related to a series of economic consequences that would ensue if he followed the way of sagely governance. In the middle leg, Wang Ao's personal assessment was delivered within a balanced sequence that analogized the households of farmers to the prince's treasury in the first half, and compared the farmers' fields to the prince's vaults in the second half. The final leg presented the same conclusion in light of the lord's ritual and culinary needs, all the while stressing the priority of the people in any equation between taxes and wealth. From these three balanced legs, it therefore followed that raising taxes of itself was not the sage's method for governance.

The first leg was almost Aristotelian in its explicit rhetorical linkage of cause (low taxes) and effect (the people's prosperity).<sup>62</sup> Leg two elaborated on the first

by showing how low taxes would increase the overall wealth of the realm, if it remained in the hands of the people. And the final leg clinched the argument by responding to questions of how low taxes would directly benefit the dynasty and not just the people. In this manner, a conclusion that ran counter-intuitively to statist discourse about the wealth and power of the dynasty, which drew on Legalist traditions, was successfully channeled into a literati discourse built around Confucius' vision of a polity pegged to the interests of the people.

A great deal of print has been wasted on the role (or "lack") of reason in Chinese cultural history. Understanding the cognitive aspects of a literary genre as fundamental and as widely used as the 8-legged essay, allows us to see the rhetorical forms of argumentation that millions of elite Chinese males empire-wide learned as young adults while preparing for local civil examinations. Whether or not the 8-legged essay can be compared to the Aristotelian syllogism, deductive or inductive in form, is an exercise for armchair philosophers. It is more useful historically to engage in what E. R. Hughes has called "comparative epistemology"<sup>63</sup> and thereby to grasp the "legs" of the late imperial classical essay as a rhetorical style of persuasion that had evolved since antiquity in China. In the proper climate of full classical literacy, the classical essay detailed how literati organized, presented, and defended their views within the context of civil examinations, in public literary discourse, and in related fields such as law.<sup>64</sup> Late imperial medical examinations required the 8-legged format, as did the Taiping examinations when the Taipings changed the topics of the essays to Sino-Christian themes.<sup>65</sup>

Catholic missionaries teaching in China in the nineteenth century clearly saw the rhetorical properties of the 8-legged essay in light of medieval and renaissance forms of reasoning prominent in Latin discourse in Europe before the rise of the vernaculars there. Hence, when they translated such essays into Latin, they respected the literary devices in them and explored how those devices persuaded

literati of conclusions that derived from the oratorical and poetic skills required in classical Chinese.<sup>66</sup>

While their 1882 views are subject to the obvious cultural limits of equating Latin and classical Chinese rhetoric, their "pre-modernist" analysis, ironically, turns out to be far superior to twentieth century studies composed in a "post-May-Fourth" era when enlightened "modernists" in China and the West have surgically elided the cultural sophistication of the 8-legged essay and translated its lifeless residues into a mindless literary genre. Below we give the latinized versions of the rhetorical forms in the 8-legged essay to restore some of the respect the 8-legged genre had among earlier Westerners who were more fluent in classical Chinese than most scholars today:<sup>67</sup>

1. "Break open the topic" (*p'o-t'i* 破題): *Apertura*
2. "Receiving the topic" (*ch'eng-t'i* 承題): *Continuatio*
3. "Beginning discussion" (*ch'i-chiang* 起講): *Exordium*
4. "Initial leg" (*ch'i-ku* 起股): *Anterior pars*
5. "Transition leg" (*hsu-ku* 續股): *Propositio*
6. "Middle leg" (*chung-ku* 中股): *Media pars*
7. "Later leg" (*hou-ku* 後股): *Posterior pars*
8. "Conclusion" (*ta-chieh* 大結): *Conclusio*

The epistemological significance of strict parallelism in a Chinese classical essay, whether *p'ien-t'i*, *ku-wen*, or *pa-ku* must be recognized if we are to grasp the historical significance of a cognitive system as longlived in literati cultural life as that of the 8-legged essay. Literature, rhetoric, and argumentation were all of a piece in the formalized 8-legged "grid" that emerged in the 1470s, and that unity yielded a very precise literary measure of the linguistic talents of thousands of men locked into the examination compounds, physically, and locked into the 8-legged essay, cognitively. I use "grid" here rather than "genre," which assumes

continuities in examination essays since the Sung dynasty, to describe the more formalized 8-legged categories of rhetoric during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties after 1475. The notion of a "grid" allows us to see how earlier literary "genres" for examination essays had changed over time and were then formalized in the late fifteenth century into the technical rhetorical features that were used by Ming-Ch'ing examiners to grade and rank actual examination essays. Provincial and metropolitan examiners scrutinized such anonymous products for their power of abstract thinking, persuasiveness, and prosodic form.<sup>68</sup>

Based on the specific "8-legged grid" of formal parallelism, examiners and tutors would literally follow the number of legs and count the number of characters in an essay based on the requirements of balanced clauses, phrases, and characters. In marked up examination essays that have survived, we always find numerous small circles marking exactly the balanced and antithetical clauses in each of the legs of the essay.<sup>69</sup> Even in third session policy answers on the metropolitan and provincial civil examinations, which were not required to follow the 8-legged essay grid, examiners used a set pattern of markings to demarcate the main points (*ta-chih* 大旨: long, double lines 字字), ends of sections (*tuan-luo* 段落: — or)), important characters (*yao-tzu* 要字 : small triangles△△△), and parallel clauses (*t'iao-tui* 條對: small circles ° ° ° and filled in drop-like markings ‘ ‘ ‘).<sup>70</sup>

This classical grid provided examiners with a simple, impartial standard for ranking essays, which Ch'ien Mu has rightly labeled "a kind of stylistically formalized classicism."<sup>71</sup> The grid also included rules for presentation of the essay form on paper that necessitated proper spacing of characters from top-to-bottom and left-to-right. References to the reigning emperor, for instance, had to be highlighted by raising that column of characters higher and avoiding taboo names, while the body of the essay began at a lower level in each column. Essay drafts that survive from the early Ch'ing reveal that 8-legged essays were copied onto paper, which was divided into columns and rows to make it easier for

examiners to keep track of the rule-like grid for the parallel legs of the essay.<sup>72</sup>

If a candidate could not follow these strict rules of length, balance, and complementarity, then his essay was judged inferior.<sup>73</sup> One misplaced character, or one character too many or too few, in building a clause in one of the legs of the essay could result in failure. Given the tens of thousands of civil candidates in the yamens and compounds where local and provincial examinations were held, the official examiners rightly felt that with a stylized and formulaic 8-legged grid as a requirement, their job of reading and evaluating thousands of essays in a brief time was made easier and more impartial.

Such requirements could backfire, however. The 1745 *secundus* Chuang Ts'un-yü 莊存與 (1719-88), when he served as the Hanlin provincial examiner in Che-chiang in 1756, for example, favored short 8-legged essays modeled on the early Ming dynasty, but he made the mistake of choosing as the top paper one that had only two of the required legs. When the final rankings were announced, it became clear that the essay had been prepared by a dynastic school student whose classical literacy and essay ability were limited.<sup>74</sup> By the late Ming, many literati felt as Ku Yen-wu and Fang I-chih 方以智 (1611-71) did that, despite the stiff requirements, candidates could study the essays of recent graduates and produce passable essays on almost any quotation. In 1637, Fang wrote in his "Seven Solutions" ("Ch'i-chieh 七解), which presented career options for a young man from a family of means: "One may have mumbled only one chapter and memorized several thousand examination essays, but after a year goes by these essays become unsuited. Then once again one must collect and memorize the essays of those who have newly achieved rank."<sup>75</sup>

What was fascinating about this 8-legged grid, however, was that although its structure was limited to five hundred characters in the Ming and seven hundred in the Ch'ing, the parallel form required candidates rhetorically to "speak in the place

of the sages" (*tai sheng-jen li-yen* 代聖人立言).<sup>76</sup> Without resorting to mediating commentaries and erudition, candidates were expected to interpret a passage as if each spoke for the sage who had authored the canon. This "speaking in the place of a sage" form reminded Ch'ing scholars such as Ch'ien Ta-hsin 錢大昕(1728-1804) and Chiao Hsun 焦循 (1763-1820) of Chin and Yuan dynasty vernacular drama (*tsa-chü* 雜劇 or *ch'ü-chü* 曲劇). The rhetorical form of the essay also required the use of exclamatory particles and single-character conjunctions (called *hsu-yen* 虛言), which captured the supposed diction and emotive force of the ancient sages. In other words, the written essay was encoded with oratorical elements, which also played out in the tonal musicality of the parallel phrases and clauses.<sup>77</sup>

In the first essay on "When the people have enough, how can the ruler alone have too little?" Wang Ao was able to use the rigorous parallel structures in his essay to chide the ruler about raising taxes by invoking the name of Confucius's disciple Yu Jo, who had spoken of the unity between the interests of the people and the lord. This pre-Mencian voice of the priority of the people over the ruler (*min wei kuei* 民爲貴) allowed Wang Ao to frame the dramatic legs of the argument in such a way that the ruler was repeatedly told to think counter-intuitively. If the people are prosperous, then the ruler has no lack, no want, no worries. Raising taxes, the intuitive thing to do if the ruler sought to enhance imperial wealth, was rhetorically defeated in favor of improving the people's benefit. Within a formulaic 8-legged grid, Wang Ao had presented in his essay the longstanding literati (read as "sages") role of remonstrating with the ruler.

The second essay on "Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar?" allowed Wang Ao to transmit Ch'eng-Chu views of human commonality (*t'ung-lei* 同類=*p'eng* 朋)<sup>78</sup> through the voice of Confucius in the *Analects* and celebrate the literati intellectual community. Again, the 8-legged essay grid, far from constricting such views into a lifeless collection of empty words (the usual view of

such essays), permitted Wang Ao to play out the piece as a musician plays out the notes of a required score with virtuoso force and power.<sup>79</sup>

[1. Break open the topic (*p'o-t'i* 破題)]: 有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎？

Believing in and then studying commonalities, we can know how things are brought to completion.

即同類之信，從而學之，成物可知矣。

[2. Receiving the topic (*ch'eng-t'i* 承題)]:

Study is the way to complete ourselves and to complete things. When friends come from afar and we gather with them, can we not authenticate their accomplishments?

夫學所以成己而成物也。遠方之朋而有以來之，不可以驗其所得乎？

[3. Beginning discussion (*ch'i-chiang* 起講)]:

Moreover, virtue in the world by definition does not stand alone. Our studies contain the impulses of commonality. When after study we reach happiness, then we achieve self-completion. Is this not also the way things are brought to completion?

且天下之德無孤立之理。吾人之學有類應之機。

學而至於說，則所以成己者至矣。豈無所以及物者乎？

[4. Initial leg (*ch'i-ku* 起股)]:

Indeed

There are many in the world who have humbly and earnestly responded to the times. Their thoughts of those enlightened earlier are similar to mine. It is just that they cannot illuminate them and have no way to express the ardor of their faith and commitment.

There are many in the world who bravely follow the Way. Their search for like-minded people is similar to mine. It is just that

they cannot complete this in themselves and lack the heart to motivate themselves to return to the Way.

蓋

天下之遜志時敏者眾矣。其先覺之思猶之吾也。

惟不能自淑斯，無以發其信從之志耳。

天下之勇往從道者多矣。其同志之求猶之吾也。

惟不能自成斯，無以動其歸向之心耳。

[5. Transition leg (*hsu-ku* 續股)]:

Now, to discuss it only in light of study, then

Those who study what I study, and whose ardor for emulation has no thought of distance, come and share the same feelings with me.

Those who say what I say, and who do not leave far behind the sounds of the drum-dance, come and share the same response.

今唯學而說也，則

意氣之所招徠不禦於遠，而學吾之學者，自相感而來焉。

風聲之所鼓舞不遺於遠，而說吾之說者，自相應而來焉。

[6. Middle leg (*chung-ku* 中股)]:

Although living as if fenced off in a far frontier, he can still make light of it if buoyed by the presence of those enlightened earlier and if moved by memories of warm intimacy and the ardor of solidarity.

Although hemmed in by the danger of peaks and gorges, he can still yearn for return if he calls for help from like-minded people, and if he harbors the hope for reunion.

雖封疆之界若有以域之也，然彼方辛先覺之有人，而興親炙之念涉履之勞，固其所輕者矣。

雖山谿之險若有以限之也，然彼方謂同志之多助，而有聚首之思往還之煩，固其所願者矣。



[7. Later leg (*hou-ku* 後股)]:

This is not a matter of my seeking something from them. The goodness of human nature resides in my friend as it does in me. I make sincerity clear for myself. Even those living a hundred generations later will still be moved by this. How much more so those that live in this age!

Nor is it a matter of someone else gaining selfishly from me. The sameness of peoples' minds holds when they are far off just as when they were close by. My sincerity is completed by myself. Even those who lived a hundred generations earlier are still revered as friends. How much more so those that live in this age!

是非吾之有求於彼也。人性之善在朋也，

猶夫己也。吾誠自淑矣。雖在百世之下，猶興起焉，而況生同斯世者乎。

亦非彼之有私於吾也。人心之同其遠也，

猶夫近也。吾誠自成矣。雖在百世之上，將尚友焉。而況生同斯世者乎。

[8. Conclusion (*ta-chieh* 大結)]:

Oh! When study reaches this point,

then it reaches many people,

and one can authenticate the achievement of their self-completion.

Those who were happy with this in the past all have been joyous and pleased. Can a student afford not to apply himself in study?

吁！學至於此，

則即其及人之眾，

而驗其成己之功。

向之說者，有不能不暢然而樂矣。學者可不勉哉。

A celebration of contemporary literati and their solidarity with past sages, even though some now lived on the borders or in exile, was a key element in Wang Ao's essay. It suggests the degree to which Ming literati remained committed to the Tao Learning dictum that the human mind was the same for all literati and human nature was in its original form good for everyone. This sort of universalist moral vision was even more germane under conquest dynasties such as the Yuan and Ch'ing and helps us to understand why both the Mongols and Manchus could approve of an educational regime that was based on classical literacy and the production of 8-legged essays that only a few in society, mainly Han Chinese elites, fully mastered. That it remained orthodox under the Ming, when Han Chinese were the masters of their fate, is all the more remarkable.

### 3. Competing Literati Opinions Outside the Examination Compound

The growth of a "writing" cum reading public catered to by private publishing enterprises created intellectual space for others, less successful in the examination process, to publish their own essays and gain public recognition.<sup>80</sup> For example, Kuei Yu-kuang 歸有光 (1506-71), who failed the provincial examinations six times before finally passing in 1540, built a wide reputation during this time for his ancient-style prose essays, enough so that he developed a bitter rivalry with Wang Shih-chen 王世貞 (1526-90), even though Kuei did not receive his *chin-shih* degree until the age of sixty in 1565, and then only ranked near the bottom of the 394 graduates.<sup>81</sup>

Ai Nan-ying 艾南英 (1583-1646), whose famous 8-legged essay at the 1624 Chiang-hsi provincial examination provoked so much controversy because it contained a veiled attack on eunuch power that he was barred from the metropolitan examinations for nine years, became an acknowledged master of the

8-legged essay style despite never gaining the *chin-shih* degree.<sup>82</sup> His annotated collection of his own examination essays was the most widely heralded of the late Ming and became the model for late Ming and early Ch'ing collections.<sup>83</sup> Later many of his essays, including the politically charged essay on the "The people should be valued most" (*min wei kuei* 民爲貴) from the *Mencius*, was included in Fang Pao's imperially authorized collection.<sup>84</sup> Fang Pao said of Ai's essay: "Ai Nan-ying's natural talent was limited, ...but the essay comes from wide reading and hardwork" (艾之天分有限，...則讀書多用功深之效。)<sup>85</sup> Its political message was unequivocal in tone and seriousness, and its historical account was prophetic.

The Ming loyalist Lü Liu-liang's 呂留良 (1629-83) editions of 8-legged essays eventually surpassed Ai Nan-ying's in popularity among literati in the early Ch'ing, although Lü first annotated Ai's own collection of essays. Lü was said to be able to write 8-legged essays at the age of eight *sui*, but he never could get past the formidable hurdle of the Che-chiang provincial examination and withdrew in 1666 to become a physician. In addition, he became an editor of popular collections of 8-legged essays, to which he added his own views of the official rankings by examiners and at times included disparaging comments about barbarian rule in China, which posthumously caused a scandal during the succeeding Yung-cheng reign.<sup>86</sup>

Lü Liu-liang's classical scholarship was widely recognized despite his examination failures, and he was invited by the K'ang-hsi emperor to take the special 1679 *po-hsueh hung-tz'u* 博學宏詞 examination in Peking, which he declined to do. Such autonomy permitted Lü to write critically about current examination trends and to gainsay the standards used by the official examiners who passed and failed men like him. In a 1658 preface to a bookstore collection of essays, for instance Lü charged that official corruption was the real reason why the civil examinations had become purely literary exercises and no longer were a real

measure of literati talent. Rather than blame the 8-legged essay for the sterile intellectual climate, which so many of his contemporaries such as Ku Yen-wu did, Lü defended the genre and supplemented his living by preparing collections of outstanding essays that he thought fulfilled the ideals of Tao Learning.<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, Tai Ming-shih 戴名世 (1653-1713) made a reputation for himself as an expert writer of classical essays, despite his initial examination failures in the 1680s on the Chiang-nan provincial examination. His editions of 8-legged essays, complete with comments and analysis, were widely read and emulated, even though he failed the provincial examination several times again. His own essays on a wide variety of subjects were published in 1701, four years before he finally took his *chü-jen* degree. Normally, a scholar of note achieved examination success first, before his own essays were published. When Tai passed the metropolitan examination in 1709 ranked first and the palace examination ranked second, he entered the Hanlin Academy as a compiler. Such success confirmed his reputation as a great essayist, but he lost his cultural autonomy by entering the court. Two years later, accused of sedition in 1711 for using late Ming reign titles in his writings on the history of the Southern Ming dynasty after 1644, Tai was executed in 1713 and all his worked destroyed.<sup>88</sup>

In prefaces to several bookstore publications of examination essays, Tai presented his public evaluation of examination essays. Tai blamed the examiners for the decline of the 8-legged essay. Outside the petty competitions in the examination compound, where only careerism mattered for most of the candidates, the essay, he thought, could still retain its central role as an arbiter of culture and Tao Learning. Tai saw his task in light of restoring the examination essay to its cultural roots in the the great ancient-style prose styles of T'ang and Sung. As a native of T'ung-ch'eng in An-hui province, Tai Ming-shih was effectively retracing the tradition of *ku-wen* writing, that would be championed by Fang Pao

(who was later implicated in Tai's sedition) and later Yao Nai in northern An-hui. The split between the Ming 8-legged essay and Sung ancient-style prose was the cause for the decline of literati writing (文章風氣之衰也，由於區古文時文而二之也。).<sup>89</sup>

Lü Liu-liang, Tai Ming-shih, and others such as Li Fu 李紱 (1673-1750) effectively turned the official rankings of 8-legged essays by the examiners inside out. In effect, there were now two public tribunals for the genre. One derived from the official rankings of candidates. The other represented the views of literati outside the official compounds, whose criticisms of both successful essays and the examiners reflected the more pervasive public taste for the 8-legged essay in literati life and the fact that there were many times more losers than winners. Losers tended to sympathize with the views of literati posing as cultural arbiters outside examination compounds, which usually condemned the examiners as poor judges of the 8-legged essay genre. Tai Ming-shih writing in 1702 about examination essays ranked that year said as much: "Those who set the standards are out there in the empire; those who do not set the standards are there among the examiners!" (有定者在天下，而無定者則在主司而已矣).<sup>90</sup>

Such criticisms of examiner standards, however, were not the work of "professional critics." The "professionalization" of literati cultural pursuits certainly included those who made a living by compiling, editing, and commenting on prize-winning examination essays, but their diffuse occupational concerns were not yet established as formalized positions in the cultural economy of pre-modern China.<sup>91</sup>

### • Struggles Over Imperial Orthodoxy

Noted literary stylists such as the ancient-style prose writer Li P'an-lung 李攀龍 (1514-70), who along with Li Meng-yang 李夢陽 (1472-1529) and others were known as the "Former Seven Masters" of the Ming because they tried to

emulate Han and T'ang styles of prose-writing, compiled works on the Four Books to spread their views. The Four Books, after all, were seen as quintessentially Han literary works whose terseness and balance were the sine qua non of *ku-wen* prose. Li P'an-lung's *Ssu-shu cheng-pien* 四書正辯 (Corrections and defenses of the Four Books), for instance, appeared in an era when Wang Yang-ming had refuted Chu Hsi's views of the Great Learning and forgeries by Feng Fang 豐坊 (1523 *chin-shih*) and others were appearing on the purported "Old Text" versions of the Great Learning allegedly derived from recently discovered stone relics.<sup>92</sup>

In addition, Buddhism and Taoism were influential in this period, and literati-scholars such as Wang Yang-ming were increasingly sympathetic with the popular "three teachings are one" (*san-chiao ho-i* 三教合一) tenor of the time. Lin Chao-en 林兆恩 (1517-98), for instance, turned his back on examination studies in 1551, and although he was a licentiate sought to teach students his own method of mind cultivation. Yuan Huang 袁黃 (1533-1606), one of the leaders of late Ming syncretic tendencies, thought his use of moral ledger books (*shan-shu* 善書) compatible with Ch'eng-Chu studies. To this end he compiled the *Ssu-shu shan-cheng* 四書刪正 (Cutting to the correct in the Four Books). Buddhism and Taoism were creeping into the civil examinations<sup>93</sup>

The degree to which Wang Yang-ming's views on the Great Learning had influenced literati life are clear from both collections on the Four Books and examination essays that reflected his teachings. In his own reconstitution of the "Old Text" version of the Great Learning, Wang claimed that Chu Hsi had misrepresented the original version of the Great Learning by adding Chu's own commentary to the "investigation of things" (*ko-wu* 格物) passage and passing it off as canonical because the original commentaries had not stressed this passage. We will see in chapter eight that this textual debate, as Yü Ying-shih has rightly argued, became one of the sources in late Ming times for the popularity of

philology and evidential research to resolve such puzzles.<sup>94</sup>

During the 1516 Che-chiang provincial examination in Wang Yang-ming's home province, where he received the *chü-jen* degree in 1492, 2200 candidates were directed to deal on their second policy answer with the "orthodox transmission of the Way" (*tao-t'ung* 道統) and the role of the "transmission of the mind" (*hsin-fa chih ch'uan* 心法之傳). The best policy answer by Wu Chin 吾謹 (fl. ca. 1516-17) effectively did this, but his essay concluded with a twin assault on the Taoist doctrine of "emptiness" (*hsu-wu* 虛無) and the Buddhist notion of "extinction" (*chi-mieh* 寂滅). In addition, the literati's scholarly predelection for the arid textual fields of etymology (*hsun-ku* 訓詁) and grammar-punctuation exercises (*tz'u-chang* 詞章) was singled out. Wu's attack on Buddhism, Taoism, and classical philology indicated that literati trends counter to the Ch'eng-Chu persuasion were already brewing in Hang-chou early in the sixteenth century.<sup>95</sup>

As Ai Nan-ying, a staunch defender of Ch'eng-Chu orthodoxy in the last years of the Ming, noted in his introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Li-k'o Ssu-shu ch'eng-mo hsuan* 歷科四書程墨選 (Selections from model essays on the Four Books from several examinations), Wang Yang-ming's views had not yet taken hold among examination candidates before the Chia-ching reign commenced in 1522. Essays might indirectly attack such positions, as in 1516, but their affirmation was still anathema for the examiners. In the 1523 metropolitan examination, however, examiners composed a policy question meant to be critical of Wang Yang-ming's teachings, and several of Wang's many disciples from Chiang-hsi province who took the examination walked out of the hall in protest. Another of them, Ou-yang Te 歐陽德 (1496-1554), used the occasion to celebrate his master's teachings and was rewarded with a *chin-shih* degree. Other graduates were duly impressed with Ou-yang's essays on Wang Yang-ming's teachings, especially the eventual third-place finisher on the palace examination, Hsu Chieh

徐階 (1503-83), who entered the Hanlin academy and later became a grand secretary. The anti-Wang atmosphere among examiners thus lessened during Hsu's period of service. According to Ai Nan-ying, during the Lung-ch'ing reign (1567-72) the 1568 examiners for the metropolitan examination actually were disciples of Wang Yang-ming and passed 8-legged essays on the *Analects* quotations that favored Wang's interpretations. Thereafter, what Ai and others considered "heterodox studies" (*hsieh-hsueh* 邪學) steadily penetrated the civil examinations.<sup>96</sup>

Chia-ching era commentaries on the Four Books also reveal this partial turn from orthodox Ch'eng-Chu interpretations to newer views drawn from Wang Yang-ming and his disciples.<sup>97</sup> A 1563 compilation entitled *Ssu-shu ch'u-wen* 四書初聞 (Preliminary questions on the Four Books) by Hsu Kuang 徐曠, for example, highlighted Wang Yang-ming's interpretations as guides to the canon. Wang's doctrine of innate moral knowledge (*liang-chih* 良知) became the key to the Four Books, in Hsu Kuang's commentary. The doctrine of "transmission of the mind" was explained by drawing on what was then called Wang's "school of mind" (*hsin-hsueh* 心學): "The mind equals the way, the way equals the mind. Mind is the ruler of this way" (心即道，道即心。心是道之主宰。)<sup>98</sup>

In the same vein, Chiao Hung 焦竑 (1541-1620), who was the 1589 *optimus* and entered the Hanlin Academy, was ecumenical in his classical scholarship. In a 1594 collection on the Four Books honoring the best one hundred Ming literati-scholars, Chiao included both Wang Yang-ming and his followers, as well as those who upheld the Ch'eng-Chu orthodoxy, to highlight Ming interpretations of moral principle.<sup>99</sup> Such ecumenism was not unusual even among Ch'eng-Chu loyalists, such as the Tung-lin founder Ku Hsien-ch'eng, who were more critical of Wang Yang-ming's most radical disciples in the early seventeenth century than of Wang himself. Classical ecumenism in a collection also drew a larger audience of



buyers and readers in the examination market.

Tao Learning orthodoxy was generally upheld by most of the Four Books compilations that have survived, such as T'ang Pin-yin's 湯賓尹 (b. 1568; 1595 *chin-shih* and *hui-yuan* 會元) *Ssu-shu yen-ming chi-chu* 四書衍明集註 (Collected notes amplifying the Four Books), in which T'ang claimed to include what Chu Hsi would have included if he were still alive, and Hsu Hsieh's 許癡 (1601 *chin-shih* and *hui-yuan*) *Ssu-shu ch'ung-Hsi chu-chieh* 四書崇喜註解 (Notes to the Four Books honoring Chu Hsi).<sup>100</sup> But few were left unaffected by the Wang Yang-ming movement. The Ch'eng-Chu school of the late Ming and early Ch'ing was in many respects a post-Wang Yang-ming revival of Ch'eng-Chu learning that affected the interpretation of Tao Learning in examinations and in collections on the Four Books. As more and more such collections publicly incorporated Wang's views in the Wan-li era (1573-1619), it also opened the door to examination essays and commentaries that included Buddhist or Taoist interpretations.<sup>101</sup>

Looking back at Ming 8-legged essays from the vantage of the Ch'ing dynasty, Yü Ch'ang-ch'eng (T'ung-ch'uan 俞桐川), for example, blamed Wang Chi 王畿 (1498-1583), a direct disciple of Wang Yang-ming, for the beginning of Ch'an Buddhist doctrine entering literati thought, and traced the first such 8-legged essay to Yang Ch'i-yuan 楊起元 (1547-99). As his source, Yü cited Ai Nan-ying, who in the late Ming wrote that Yang's Ch'an influence came from his teacher Lo Ju-fang 羅汝芳 (1515-88). In his quest for enlightenment, Lo had sought refuge in both Taoism and Buddhism before passing the 1543 provincial examination in Chiang-hsi and the palace examination in 1553. Yang Ch'i-yuan himself took his *chü- jen* degree in Kuang-tung and his *chin-shih* in 1577. Both Ai Nan-ying and Ku Yen-wu attacked Yang's 1577 metropolitan examination 8-legged essays for being filled with Ch'an doctrine.<sup>102</sup>

In addition to heterodox elements entering the 8-legged essays on the Four Books by literati influenced by Taoism and Buddhism, another scholarly trend in such studies in the late Ming was the revival of Han and T'ang dynasty scholia that had been dropped from the official classical curriculum in the early Ming. Some Ming scholars were increasingly critical of the Ta-ch'üan 大全 trilogy compiled in the Yung-lo 永樂 era and sought instead to revive classical studies by combining evidential research with studies of the Four Books. Already in the 1516 Che-chiang provincial examination, one of the policy essays had criticized this trend of "learning based on what can be ascertained" (*k'ao-ch'ü-hsueh* 考據學) in Ming civil examinations, which began in the fifteenth century. Even Fang Pao was critical of mid-Ming 8-legged essays for their weak grasp of Han-T'ang commentaries.<sup>103</sup>

In this vein, Chang P'u's *Ssu-shu k'ao-pei* 四書考備 (Search for completeness in the Four Books), which he completed while heading the Fu-she in the last years of the Ming, was an evidential study of persons (*jen-wu* 人物) mentioned in or associated with the Four Books. It represented a 1642 follow-up to Hsueh Ying-ch'i's 薛應旂 (1500-73?) *Ssu-shu jen-wu k'ao* 四書人物考 (Study of persons in the Four Books) published in 1557. Later in the early Ch'ing, the evidential research scholar Yen Jo-ch'ü 閻若璩 (1636-1704) prepared a geographical study entitled *Ssu-shu shih-ti* 四書釋地 (Explanations of place-names in the Four Books).<sup>104</sup> Evidence and analysis were now applied to the canonical Four Books.

Looking back on these Ming to Ch'ing developments in Four Books' studies, the 1780s editors of the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* 四庫全書 (Complete collection of the Four Treasuries) commented on how much had changed since the sixteenth century: "In the Ming period, literati emphasized the 8-legged essays. These essays in turn stressed the Four Books. As a result, we have authoritative works like this one

[that is, the *Ssu-shu jen-wu k'ao* by Hsueh Ying-ch'i]. They patch together and rip apart sources to allow candidates to impress examiners. This approach represents an extreme in the corruption of classical techniques."<sup>105</sup> Such Ch'ing haughtiness, if little else, described how far studies of the Four Books were moving in their Ming drift away from Ch'eng-Chu orthodoxy toward first Wang Yang-ming studies and then evidential research.

Early Ch'ing commentaries to the Four Books followed this late Ming current. In 1645, the Ch'ing decreed the order of the three quotations from the Four Books on provincial and metropolitan examinations. Either the Great Learning or the Doctrine of the Mean had to be the source of one of the three quotations. The other two were mandated from the *Analectis* and the *Mencius*. In 1658, the emperor himself selected the Four Books quotations for the metropolitan examination.<sup>106</sup> The collections prepared by Lü Liu-liang and Tai Ming-shih, cited above, differed from those of Ai Nan-ying, for example, because of the formers' care in supplementing Ch'eng-Chu studies with Han and T'ang scholia. In the eighteenth century, during the height of Han Learning, the use of pre-Sung scholia in 8-legged essays peaked. For example, in 1779 the Ch'ien-lung emperor personally reviewed essays on a quotation from the *Analectis* in the Shun-t'ien provincial examinations and accused them of being at variance with Han and T'ang classical commentaries.<sup>107</sup>

The turn to "ancient studies" (*ku-hsueh* 古學), begun in the Ming but climaxing in the Ch'ing, impacted both classical studies and the civil examination essays. Mao Ch'i-ling 毛奇齡 (1623-1716) and others who emphasized the importance of Han-T'ang scholia for Four Books' studies influenced later literati such as Tai Chen 戴震 (1723-77), who would gainsay Ch'eng-Chu Tao Learning interpretations. Subsequently, Juan Yuan, a distinguished Han Learning scholar, compiled a definitive work on the history of the Four Books and its commentaries

in the civil examinations. Entitled *Ssu-shu wen-hua* 四書文話 (Comments on examination essays on the Four Books), Juan's collection paralleled the 1843 publication of the influential *Chih-i ts'ung-hua*, compiled by Liang Chang-chü, which also detailed the literary content and institutional machinery of the 8-legged essay for a wider audience of scholar-literati and officials.<sup>108</sup>

### ● Officializing Literary Taste

Ch'ing imperial collections of examination essays were modeled on the Ming. Ming and early Ch'ing models for such essays based on ancient-style prose (*ku-wen* 古文) principles were collected together under imperial auspices in 1737 by the Sung Learning (*Sung-hsueh* 宋學) partisan and T'ung-ch'eng classicist Fang Pao and entitled *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*. Kai-wing Chow has noted that between 1704 and 1750, numerous anthologies of ancient-style prose had already been published. Fang Pao, himself implicated in the Tai Ming-shih treason case, after his political rehabilitation sought to unify Ch'eng-Chu learning with the *ku-wen* literary tradition and reinvigorate the 8-legged essay with new life and relevance in an age of increasing Han Learning oriented evidential research.<sup>109</sup>

R. Kent Guy has described how Fang Pao's collection was subdivided into four collections of Ming essays (486 total) and one collection of Ch'ing essays (297 total) through the end of the preceding Yung-cheng reign. In addition, Fang Pao delineated in his preface a brief literary account of how the 8-legged essay had evolved during the Ming dynasty after 1465. During the Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns (1465-1506), in a tradition that dated from the early Ming, examination candidates, according to Fang Pao, stayed close to text of the Four Books and Five Classics and followed the commentaries. Their language was constrained and followed the rules of the form exactly, but they often misconstrued the commentaries in their writings.<sup>110</sup>

In the second age from 1506 to 1567, which encompassed the Cheng-te and Chia-ching reigns, Fang Pao contended that outstanding writers such as T'ang Shun-chih 唐順之 (1507-60) and Kuei Yu-kuang were able to equate ancient-style prose with contemporary-style essays (以古文爲時文) and thereby brought Ming essays to their height. Fang believed that during the third period, covering the Lung-ch'ing and Wan-li reigns (1567-1620), the 8-legged essay declined because writers became overly concerned with literary devices and as a consequence classical substance was lost. Similarly, according to Fang, the essays from the fourth period covering the T'ien-ch'i and Ch'ung-chen reigns (1621-44) declined into a subjective account of personal concerns that were then read into the quotations (凡胸中所欲者皆借題以發之). Despite these caveats, Fang included more essays from the fourth period in his collection than any other.<sup>111</sup>

Fang Pao was more discreet about rating the Ch'ing essays he included. His own experiences of exile under Manchu rule taught him that literature and politics were an explosive mix. To include Ming essays such as Ai Nan-ying's critique of the T'ien-ch'i reign (1621-28) was as far as he dared go within the limits of his time. Instead, for the Ch'ing essays, Fang appealed rhetorically to their synthesis of the finest points in Ming essays of all four periods and concluded his account with the summation that all Ch'ing essays included in the collection "illuminated the meanings and principles" (*fa-ming i-li* 發明義理) of "orthodox learning" (*cheng-hsueh* 正學), which of course was a reference to Tao Learning. His intent, after all, was to draw the examination essay into a defense of Sung Learning at a time when Han Learning and parallel-prose were challenging such pretensions by associating the 8-legged essay with pre-Sung forms of *p'ien-t'i-wen*.<sup>112</sup>

What Fang Pao succeeded in doing, however, was to augment the 8-legged essay's distinguished place in China's literary history beyond what Kuei Yu-kuang and other Ming literati, as official outsiders but masters of the genre, had already

done. To that point, individuals such as Ai Nan-ying, Lü Liu-liang, and Tai Ming-shih had rescued the 8-legged essay grid from its dismal cultural prisons and made it into a viable genre that could stand on its own in the publishing world. Their literary pedigree was limited to literati life outside the official examinations, which gained the grid a measure of literary autonomy. Fang Pao brought that pedigree into the Ch'ing imperial court and gave the essay an encomium that balanced and challenged the ongoing machinery in the biennial and triennial civil examinations. Some, whose essays had been included in Fang's collection, for instance, had not been successes in the examinations.<sup>113</sup> The grid now encompassed civil examinations and literati taste in genres, both of which the Manchu dynasty was happy to coopt.

Moreover, Fang Pao's collection gainsaid the Ming-Ch'ing tradition of criticism of the 8-legged essay by seventeenth century literati such as Ku Yen-wu, which modern scholarship mistakenly cites as the rule rather than the exception. In the midst of a period of significant reform of the examination curriculum that lasted from 1740 to 1793, Fang Pao's collection was granted imperial support. The 8-legged essay thereby survived its critics and became an accepted genre for both civil examinations and literati collections of writings (*chi-pu* 集部). In 1781, and again in 1814, officials asked that model examination essays prepared since Fang Pao's collection be reissued to the public.<sup>114</sup> Late-Ch'ing attacks on the 8-legged essay, which climaxed in the 1898 reforms, conveniently elided this cultural pedigree and stripped the genre of its meaning and significance in literati life.

Writing in the late eighteenth century, Li T'iao-yuan 李調元 (1734-1803), for example, spoke in praise of the longevity and the vital role played by the civil examination process in selecting officials for over five centuries from the early Ming. Li's pioneering study of Ming-Ch'ing civil examinations entitled *Chih-i*

*k'o-so-chi* 制義科瑣記 (Collection of items about the crafted 8-legged essays for civil examinations) took stock of their influence on the daily lives of the people and represented the late eighteenth century view of the examinations as a positive influence overall, despite the many inadequacies he also described. This positive assessment carried over to the literati role as examiners. Serving on such staffs, they shared responsibility with the court for setting the literary and scholarly standards acceptable in examination essays and for periodically changing the the scope of knowledge tested in the official curriculum.

Classical literacy, the mastery of *Tao-hsueh* learning, and the ability to write terse but elegant examination essays together publicly marked the educated literati whose names appeared on the final lists of graduates. The internalization of a literary culture that was in part defined by the civil examination curriculum influenced the literatus' public and private definition of his moral character and social conscience. A view of government, society, and the individual's role as an elite servant of the dynasty was continually reinforced in the memorization process leading up to the examinations themselves. The moral cultivation of the literatus (*shih-hsi* 士習) was a perennial concern of the imperial court as it sought to ensure that the officials it chose in the examination market would serve the people in the name of the ruling family. Literati as the highest social group were expected to be partners of the dynasty and serve as models (*ssu-min chih shou* 四民之首) for those beneath them politically and socially. For the literatus, it was important that the dynasty conformed to classical ideals and upheld the Ch'eng-Chu orthodoxy that literati themselves had formulated in the Sung-Yuan-Ming transition. The cultural reproduction of Tao Learning classical hermeneutics, thus, was also about the cultural transformation of the literatus into a political servant of the people and the ruler.

## NOTES

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- 2 David Johnson, "Communication, Class, and Consciousness in Late Imperial China," in Johnson, Andrew Nathan, and Evelyn Rawski, eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 59, estimates there were at least 5 million classically educated male commoners in Ch'ing times, or roughly 5% of adult male population in 1800, 10% in 1700.
- 3 Angela Ki Che Leung, "Elementary Education in the Lower Yangtzu Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, in Elman and Woodside, eds., *Education and Society in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 391-96.
- 4 Evelyn Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), pp. 1-23.
- 5 R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education 1500-1800* (N.Y.: Longman, 1988), pp. 23-24.
- 6 Ichisada Miyazaki, *China's Examination Hell*, translated by Conrad Schirokauer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 16-17, and Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China* (N.Y.: Free Press, 1975), p. 23.
- 7 See Pamela Kyle Crossley, "Manchu Education," in Elman and Woodside, eds., *Education and Society in Late Imperial China*, pp. 340-48. See also Man-kam Leung, "Mongolian Language and Examinations in Peking and Other Metropolitan Areas During the Manchu Dynasty in China (1644-1911)," *The Canada-Mongolia Review* 1 (1975): 29-44.
- 8 See Fuma Susumu 夫馬進, "Sôshi hihon no sekai" 訟師秘本の世紀, in Ono Kazuko 小野和子, ed., *Mimmatsu Shinsho no shakai to bunka* 明末清初の社會と文化 (Kyoto: Ming-wen Press, 1996), pp. 189-238, who shows that many legal complaints were written by local licentiates.
- 9 Hsiao-tung Fei, *China's Gentry Essays on Rural-Urban Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 71-72.



- 10 Teng Ssu-yü, *Chung-kuo k'ao-shih chih-tu shih* 中國考試制度史 (Taipei: Student Bookstore, 1967), pp. 343-47, and John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), pp. 53-66.
- 11 For such regional diversity in classical learning, see my "Ch'ing Schools of Scholarship," *Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i* 4, 6 (December 1979): 51-82.
- 12 Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, p. 31, and James Watson, "Chinese Kinship Reconsidered: Anthropological Perspectives on Historical Research," *China Quarterly* 92 (1982): 601
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- 15 Teng Ssu-yü, *Chung-kuo k'ao-shih chih-tu shih*, pp. 281-82, and Ching-i Tu, "The Chinese Examination Essay: Some Literary Considerations," *Monumenta Serica* 31 (1974-75): 393-406.
- 16 Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), and Ledderose, "An Approach to Chinese Calligraphy," *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 7, 1 (1972): 1-14. See also Marilyn and Shen Fu, *Studies in Connoisseurship: Chinese Paintings from the Arthur M Sackler Collections in New York, Princeton, and Washington, D.C.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 9.
- 17 On the role of calligraphy in Ch'ing civil examinations, see Chiang An-fu 江安傳, *Ch'ing-tai tien-shih k'ao-lueh* 清代殿試考略 (T'ien-chin: Ta-kung Press, 1933), pp. 9b-11b, which indicates that after 1760 calligraphy became the major ranking aspect of the palace examinations, replacing style and content (*wen-li* 文理).
- 18 See my *From Philosophy To Philology: Social and Intellectual Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Council on East Asian Studies, 1984), pp. 191-97, and Arthur Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (Reprint. Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Bookstore, 1972), p. 676.
- 19 See, however, Chang Hung-sheng 張鴻聲, "Ch'ing-tai i-kuan k'ao-shih chi t'i-li" 清

- 代醫官考試及題例, *Chung-hua i-shih tsa-chih* 中華醫史雜誌 25, 2 (April 1995): 95-96, which documents the continuation of medical specialty examinations in the Ming and Ch'ing.
- 20 Cf. Joseph Levenson, "The Amateur Ideal in Ming and Early Ch'ing Society: Evidence from Painting," in John Fairbank, ed., *Chinese Thought & Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 320-41. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when demographic pressure meant that even provincial and metropolitan examination graduates were not guaranteed official appointments, many literati turned to teaching and scholarship as alternative careers. See my *From Philosophy*, pp. 67-137.
- 21 Houston, 56-58.
- 22 Pierre Bourdieu, "Systems of Education and Systems of Thought," in Michael Young, ed., *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1971), pp. 189-207.
- 23 For discussions that gainsay this twentieth-century view of 8-legged essays as a literary malaise, see Teng Yun-hsiang 鄧云鄉, *Ch'ing-tai pa-ku-wen* 清代八股文 (Peking: People's University Press, 1994), pp. 277-301, and the useful articles by Ching-i Tu, "The Chinese Examination Essay: Some Literary Considerations," pp. 393-94. For the stock view, that gives the essay some credit as an "objective standard of measurement," see Ch'ien Mu, *Traditional Government in Imperial China: A Critical Analysis*, translated by Chün-tu Hsueh and George Totten (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982), pp. 112-13.
- 24 See *Wu-li t'ung-k'ao* 五禮通考, compiled by Ch'in Hui-t'ien 秦蕙田 (1761 edition), 174.14a-b.
- 25 On the origins of the genre, see Ch'en Te-yun 陳德芸, "Pa-ku wen-hsueh" 八股文學, *Ling-nan hsueh-pao* 嶺南學報 6, 4 (June 1941): 17-21, who outlines six different positions and presents the Ming-Ch'ing literati who have held each position.
- 26 Ch'en Te-yun, "Pa-ku wen-hsueh," pp. 20-21. For discussion, see my *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship. The Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 290-95. See also *Li Shen-ch'i nien-p'u* 李申耆年譜 (Nan-lin: Chia-yeh-t'ang 嘉業堂, ca. 1831), 2.7a-7b.

- 27 See Wm. Theodore de Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought," in de Bary et al., *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 188-222.
- 28 See Li Chih, "Shih-wen hou-hsu" 時文後序, in *Fen-shu* 焚書 (Peking: Chung-hua Bookstore, 1975), p. 117.
- 29 See Andrew Plaks, "*Pa-ku wen* 八股文", in William Nienhauser, ed., *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 641-43. See also Plaks, "The Prose of Our Time," in *The Power of Culture: Studies in Chinese Cultural History*, edited by W.J. Peterson, A.H. Plaks, and Y.S. Yu (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1994), pp. 206-17.
- 30 Liang Chang-chü, "Li-yen" 例言, in *Chih-i ts'ung-hua* 制藝叢話 (Taipei: Kuang-wen Bookstore reprint of 1859 edition, 1976), pp. 1a-4a, and 1.4b-5a.
- 31 See the 1843 prefaces included in the *Chih-i ts'ung-hua*.
- 32 See Yang's "Hsu" 序 (Preface), p. 3a, in *Chih-i ts'ung-hua*.
- 33 Charles Ridley, "Educational Theory and Practice in Late Imperial China: The Teaching of Writing as a Specific Case" (Stanford University Ph.D. dissertation in Asian Languages, 1973), pp. 419-24.
- 34 *Ch'ang-t'an* 常談, compiled by T'ao Fu-lü 陶福履 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936), pp. 16-17, shows that some of the terms for 8-legged essay sections, such as the *p'o-t'i* 破題 (opening), *chieh-t'i* 接題 (connecting), etc., were used in the Sung.
- 35 *Ming-shih* 明史 (Taipei: Ting-wen Bookstore, 1982), 3/1693.
- 36 See *Ming-tai wei-k'o hsing-shih lu* 明代巍科姓氏錄, compiled by Chang Hui-hsiang 張惟驥 (Taipei: *Ming-wen Bookstore*, *Ming-tai chuan-chi ts'ung-k'an* 1991 reprint of Ch'ing edition), A.1b, and Ch'ien Chi-po 錢基伯, *Ming-tai wen-hsueh* 明代文學 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1939), pp. 109-10. Cf. Ching-i Tu, "The Chinese Examination Essay," p. 396.
- 37 *Meng-tzu yin-te* 孟子引得 (Peking: Harvard-Yenching Publication, 1941), 5/1B/1. See D. C. Lau, translator, *Mencius* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1970), p. 62.
- 38 *Meng-tzu yin-te*, 26/4A/1. See D. C. Lau, translator, *Mencius*, p. 118.
- 39 Ku Yen-wu, *Jih-chih lu* 日知錄 (Taipei: P'ing-p'ing Press, 1974), pp. 479-80 (*chüan* 卷 19) on "Shih-wen ko-shih" 時文格式 (the form for contemporary-style essays).

- 40 See *Chin-shih teng-k'o lu* 進士登科錄, 1475: unpaginated manuscript.
- 41 See *Hui-shih lu* 會試錄, 1475: 18a.
- 42 *Chih-i ts'ung-hua*, 4.6a-b. The *Chin-shih teng-k'o lu*, 1475, gives information that Liu Chien 劉戩, who finished second on the palace examination, had also finished first on an earlier Ying-t'ien provincial examination and an earlier metropolitan examination. Shang Lu was thus preventing two Chiang-nan men from duplicating his achievement.
- 43 See *Nan-kuo hsien-shu* 南國賢書, compiled by Chang Ch'ao-jui 張朝瑞 (1633 edition), 1.6b, and *Yang-ming ch'üan-shu* 陽明全書 (Taipei: Chung-hua Bookstore, *Ssu-pu pei-yao edition*, 1979), 25.12b. There were altogether 45 *erh-yuan* 二元 and 14 *san-yuan* 三元 from the T'ang through Ch'ing dynasties.
- 44 For Shang Lu's examination essays, see *Hui-shih lu*, 1445: 45a-47a, which contains his discourse answer on sincerity (*ch'eng* 誠). For his palace examination policy answer, see *Huang-Ming chuang-yuan ch'üan-ts'e* 皇明狀元全策 (Complete set of policy questions prepared during the Ming dynasty by optimi for the palace civil examination) compiled by Chiang I-k'ui 蔣一葵 (1591 edition), 4.18a-24a. See also *Chih-i ts'ung-hua*, 4.6b.
- 45 *Hui-shih lu*, 1475: 49a. See also *Yang-ming ch'üan-shu*, 25.12a-14b.
- 46 *Hui-shih lu*, 1487: 3a-4a; 1490: unpaginated manuscript; 1496: 2.12a. See also *Hui-shih lu*, 1508, for the "Hsu" 序 by Wang Ao, and *Huang-Ming ch'eng-shih tien-yao lu* 皇明程世典要錄 (Late Ming edition), 2.31b.
- 47 *Ho-nan hsiang-shih lu* 河南鄉試錄, 1759.
- 48 *Hui-shih lu*, 1475: 6b-8b. See also *Meng-tzu yin-te*, 25/3B/9.
- 49 *Hui-shih lu*, 1475: 6b-7a, 21a-b, 40a, 48a-52b, 62b-69a. See also my *A Cultural History of Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 451-59.
- 50 Yü's *Pai-er-shih ming-chia chi* 百二十明家集 is cited in Ching-i Tu, "The Chinese Examination Essay," p. 403.
- 51 *Lun-yu yin-te* 論語引得 (Taipei: Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Center reprint), 1966, 23/12/9, and D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 114.

- 52 *Lun-yu yin-te*, 1/1/1, and Lau, *Confucius*, p. 59.
- 53 The first essay can be found in Fang Pao's *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen* 欽定四書文 (1738; reprint, Taipei, Commercial Press, 1979), 3.3a-4a. See also Sung P'ei-wei 宋佩章, *Ming wen-hsueh shih* 明文學史 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1934), p. 228-30, which is the source for the English translation in Ching-i Tu, "The Chinese Examination Essay," pp. 400-02. Tu follows Ch'en Shou-yi, *Chinese Literature: A Historical Introduction* (N.Y.: Ronald Press, 1961), pp. 506-08. The second was included in *Ming-wen ch'ao* 明文鈔, compiled by Kao Tang 高塘 (1781 edition), "Shang-lun" 上論, and is translated and discussed in Plaks, "The Prose of Our Time," pp. 206-17. I have given my own translation below.
- 54 See *Li-chi yin-te* 禮記引得 (Shanghai: Rare Books Press, 1983), 4/48, 49, and *Ch'un-ch'iu ching-chuan yin-te* 春秋經傳引得 (Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Co., 1966), 478/Ai 哀 8/2 Tso 左. Yu Jo was one of Confucius' immediate disciples.
- 55 See Fang, *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*, vol. 1, 3.3a-4a. For Wang Ao's other essays included in this collection, see volume 1, 2.21a-22a, 3.7a-8b, 4.9a-10b, 6.3a-6b, 6.9a-12b, 6.19a-20b. See also Tu, "The Chinese Examination Essay," p. 402.
- 56 Plaks, "The Prose of Our Time," pp. 206-10.
- 57 *Chih-i k'o-so-chi*, 1.37-38.
- 58 See Shang Yen-liu 商衍鑾, *Ch'ing-tai k'o-chu k'ao-shih shu-lueh* 清代科舉考試述略 (Peking: San-lien Bookstore, 1958), pp. 234, 257.
- 59 See *Chih-i ts'ung-hua*, 2.8a-b. On the changing length of 8-legged essays, see Ch'en Te-yun, "Pa-ku wen-hsueh," pp. 48-49.
- 60 See Yu-shih Chen, *Images and Ideas in Chinese Classical Prose: Studies of Four Masters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 1-13, 109-14.
- 61 See E. R. Hughes, "Epistemological Methods in Chinese Philosophy," in Charles Moore, ed., *The Chinese Mind* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), pp. 28-56.
- 62 Cf. Chung-ying Cheng, "On Implication (*tse* 則) and Inference (*ku* 故) in Chinese Grammar," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 2, 3 (June 1975): 225-43.
- 63 See Hughes, "Epistemological Methods," p. 92.

- 64 For the carry-over of parallelism and analogy from literary prose to legal writing, see Fu-mei Chang Chen, "On Analogy in Ch'ing Law," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 30 (1970): 212-24. See also Wang Ying-t'ing 王蔭庭, "Pan-an yao-lueh" 辦案要略, in *Ju-mu hsu-chih* 入幕須知, compiled by Chang T'ing-hsiang 張廷驥 (Che-chiang Bookstore, 1892), pp. 36a-38a, which describes the explicit overlap in preparing legal documents by legal secretaries and 8-legged essays. At the lower end of the legal process, however, it is likely that "primer literacy" sufficed for the plaintiffs of commoners and rural folk who were not classically literate. For discussion, see Wejen Chang, "Legal Education in Ch'ing China," in Elman and Woodside, eds., *Education and Society in Late Imperial China*, pp. 309-310.
- 65 See my *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, pp. 573-77.
- 66 See Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge & Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 88-92, on scholastic disputation.
- 67 See P. Angelo Zottoli S.J., *Cursus Litteraturae Sinicae*, Vol. V: Pro Rhetorices Classe pars Oratoria et Poetica (Shanghai: Catholic Mission, 1882), pp. 12-44. This work contains the largest number of 8-legged essays ever translated into a foreign language.
- 68 Hughes, "Epistemological Methods," pp. 92, 99.
- 69 See the 8-legged essays included in *Ming-wen ch'ao*, which include punctuation markings and internal notes to make the stages in an 8-legged essay. See also the academy essays marked up in T. C. Lai, *A Scholar in Imperial China* (Hong Kong: Kelly and Walsh Ltd, 1970), pp. 16-18.
- 70 *Chin-k'o ch'üan-t'i hsin-ts'e fa-ch'eng* 近科全題新策法程, compiled and annotated by Liu T'an-chih 劉坦之 (1764 edition), "Fan-li" 凡例, pp. 1a-2a.
- 71 Ch'ien Mu, *Traditional Government in Imperial China*, p. 113.
- 72 On the style-format of writing essays down on paper, see *Lin-wen pien-lan* 臨文便覽 (1875 edition), *t'iao-li* 條例 (regulations), pp. 1a-5b. See also the session one 8-legged essays in *chu-chüan* 硃卷 (vermillion papers) form from the 1661, 1664, 1667, and 1685 metropolitan examinations that survive in the Ming-Ch'ing Archives, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.
- 73 For detailed analysis of the structural parts of an 8-legged essay, see Ch'en Te-yun, "Pa-ku wen-hsueh," pp. 23-48, and Shang Yen-liu, *Ch'ing-tai k'o-chü k'ao-shih shu-lu*, pp. 231-38.

- 74 See *Tan-mo lu* 淡墨錄, in *Han-hai* 函海, by Li T'iao-yuan 李調元 (1881 collectanea), 13.12b-13b, and Ch'en Te-yun, "Pa-ku wen-hsueh," p. 48.
- 75 Ku, *Jih-chih lu*, pp. 386-87. Cf. Young, "Ku Yen-wu's Views of the Ming Examination System," p. 51. See also Willard Peterson, *Bitter Gourd: Fang I-chih and the Impetus for Intellectual Change*, p. 47.
- 76 *Chih-i ts'ung-hua*, 1.10b. Interestingly, the *locus classicus* for this ideal is the Kung-yang 公羊 Commentary to the last passage in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, in which Confucius is purported to have announced the capture of a fabulous animal called the lin 麟 (lit., "horned doe," usually translated as "unicorn"). In this commentary, Confucius is said to have compiled the *Annals* to "await a later sage" (制春秋之義以俟聖人). See *Ch'un-ch'iu ching-chuan yin-te*, Vol. 1, p. 487 (哀 14). This sentence is also the source for the use of *chih-i* 制義 to mean "writing an 8-legged essay" to emulate sages like Confucius.
- 77 For discussion, see Ch'en Te-yun, "Pa-ku wen-hsueh," pp.19-20, Shang Yen-liu, *Ch'ing-tai k'o-chü*, p. 230, and Ching-i Tu, "The Chinese Examination Essay," p. 405. On the tonal quality of an 8-legged essay, see Ch'i-kung 啓功, "Shuo pa-ku" 說八股 (On the 8-legged essay), *Pei-ching shih-fan ta-hsueh hsueh-pao* 北京師範大學學報 3 (1991): 56-58.
- 78 See Chu Hsi, *Lun-yü chi-chu* 論語集注, p. 47, in *Chu's Ssu-shu chang-chü chi-chu* 四書章句集注 (Taipei: Ch'ang-an Press, 1991).
- 79 Plaks, "The Prose of Our Time," pp. 211-17, successfully captures the degree of subtle intricacy in this essay, although I differ considerably with his translation.
- 80 See Kai-wing Chow, "Writing for Success: Printing, Examinations, and Intellectual Change in Late Ming China," *Late Imperial China*, 17, 1 (June 1996).
- 81 For Kuei's 8-legged examination essays, see *Kuei Yu-kuang ch'üan-chi* 歸有光全集 (Taipei: P'an-keng Press, 1979), pp. 375-81. Cf. *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, edited by L. C. Goodrich et al. (2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 759-61.
- 82 See my *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, pp. 118, 404-07.
- 83 See Ai Nan-ying, *Ai Ch'ien-tzu hsien-sheng ch'üan-kao* 艾千子先生全稿 (Taipei: Wei-wen t'u-shu Press, 1977 reprint of early Ch'ing edition).

- 84 Fang Pao, *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*, vol. 9, 9.34a-36a.
- 85 Fang Pao, *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*, vol. 9, 9.35b-36a.
- 86 See Jung Chao-tsu 容肇祖, *Lu Lu-liang chi ch'i ssu-hsiang* 呂留良及其思想 (Hong Kong: Ch'ung-wen Bookstore, 1974), pp. 1-18, and *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, p. 551. See also Tai Ming-shih's 戴名世 assessment of Ai's and Lü's collections in *Tai's "Chiu-k'o ta-t'i-wen hsu"* 九科大題文序, in *Ch'ing-tai ch'ien-ch'i chiao-yü lun-chu hsuan* 清代前期教育論著選, edited by Li Kuo-ch 李國鈞 et al. (Peking: People's Education Press, 1990, 3 vols.), 2/226-28.
- 87 See Lü's 1658 preface and other comments in *Ch'ing-tai ch'ien-ch'i chiao-yü lun-chu hsuan*, 2/11-16.
- 88 On Tai Ming-shih's career, see Pierre-Henri Durand, *Lettrés et Pouvoirs: Un procès littéraire dans la Chine impériale* (Paris:École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1992). Cf. *Eminent Chinese*, p. 701.
- 89 See Tai's forwards and comments from his 1694, 1697, 1699, 1700, and 1702 examination collections, in *Ch'ing-tai ch'ien-ch'i chiao-yü lun-chu hsuan*, 2/213-40. Cf. my "Ch'ing Schools of Scholarship," pp. 15-17.
- 90 See Tai, "*Jen-wu mo-chüan hsu*" 壬午墨卷序, in *Ch'ing-tai ch'ien-ch'i chiao-yü lun-chu hsuan*, 2/238. On Li Fu, see *Ch'ing-tai ch'ien-ch'i chiao-yü lun-chu hsuan*, 2/330-33.
- 91 See my *From Philosophy To Philology*, pp. 88-137, for discussion of academic professionalization in late imperial China. Cf. Chow, "Writing for Success: Printing, Examinations, and Intellectual Change in Late Ming China," pp. 128-130, about "professional critics" in the late Ming.
- 92 See Sano Kôji 佐野公治, *Shisho gakushu no kenkyû* 四書學史の研究 (Tokyo: Sôbunsha, 1988), pp. 371-73, and James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 90-92.
- 93 Yuan Huang, "Fan-li" 凡例, in *Ssu-shu shan-cheng* (n.d.), p. 1b, and *Huang-Ming Che-shih teng-k'o k'ao* 皇明浙士登科考 (ca. 1621 edition), "chao-ling" 詔令 (patents and orders), pp. 20a-23a.
- 94 Sano, *Shisho gakushi no kenkyû*, pp. 375-78. See also Yü, "Some Preliminary Observations on the Rise of Ch'ing Confucian Intellectualism," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, New Series 11, 1 and 2 (December 1975): 125, and Lin Ch'ing-chang



- 林慶彰, *Ch'ing-ch'ünte ch'üan-ching pien-wei hsueh* 清初群經辨僞學 (Taipei: Wen-chin Press, 1990), pp. 359-68.
- 95 *Che-chiang hsiang-shih lu* 浙江鄉試錄, 1516: 5/2679-81, and 5/2787-94, in *Ming-tai teng-k'o lu hui-pien* 明代登科錄彙編 (22 vols. Taipei: Hsueh-sheng Bookstore, 1969).
- 96 Ai, *T'ien-yung-tzu chi*, 1.28a-30a. See also Li T'iao-yuan, *Chih-i k'o-so chi*, 2.61, and *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, p. 1103.
- 97 I have relied here on the collection of late Ming and early Ch'ing Four Books' commentaries housed in the National Central Library, Center for Chinese Studies, Taipei, Taiwan.
- 98 *Ssu-shu ch'u-wen*, 3.98b. See also the preface by Chiang Ying-k'uei 蔣應奎, pp. 1b-3a, where he equates the school system of Confucius with "studies of the mind."
- 99 See Chiao Hung's *Hsin-ch'ieh huang-Ming pai-ming chia Ssu-shu li-chieh chi* 新鐫皇明百名家四書理解集 (ca. 1594), A.8b.
- 100 See the "Fan-li" 凡例 to T'ang Pin-yin, *Ssu-shu yen-ming chi-chu* (n.d.). In 1619, T'ang also prepared the *Ssu-shu mo Chiang-i* 四書脈講意. Hsu Hsieh was a co-compiler of the *Ssu-shu ch'ung-Hsi chu-chieh* (1602 edition), which was designed to cash in on his fame as the metropolitan *optimus* the previous year.
- 101 See also the *Ssu-shu chu-i* 四書主意, compiled by Chou Yen-ju 周延儒 (1588-1644), who was the *optimus* in 1613, and others (ca. 1613).
- 102 See Liang Chang-chü, *Chih-i ts'ung-hua*, 5.10b. See also *Chih-i k'o-so-chi*, 1.40, on the 1448 palace examination. Cf. Sano, Shisho gakushi no kenkyü, pp. 406-18, and *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 975-78. For further Ch'an impact on examinations, see Ku Yen-wu, *Jih-chih lu*, 3.111-12.
- 103 See Sano, *Shisho gakushi no kenkyü*, pp. 379-80, 420-24.
- 104 See the "Hsu" 序 to Chang P'u's 張溥 *Ssu-shu k'ao-pei* (ca. 1642), p. 1a. For discussion see my *From Philosophy To Philology*, pp. 47, 103, and 187.
- 105 *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu* 四庫全書總目 (Catalog of the complete collection of the four treasures), compiled by Chi Yun 紀昀 et al. (Taipei: I-wen Press reprint, 1974), 37.14a-b.
- 106 See *Ch'ang-t'an*, pp. 33, 35.

- 107 See Sano, *Shisho gakushi no kenkyū*, pp. 420-22.
- 108 See Yang I-k'un 楊一崑, *Ssu-shu chiao-tzu tsun-ching ch'iu-t'ung lu* 四書教子尊經求通錄 (n.d.), B.17a-b, which cites Mao Ch'i-ling's views. See also Mao Ch'i-ling, *Ssu-shu kai-ts'o* 四書改錯 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, *Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ch'u-pien*, 1936), p. 19.
- 109 See R. Kent Guy, "Fang Pao and the *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*," pp. 168-75, and Kai-wing Chow, "Discourse, Examination, and Local Elite: The Invention of the T'ung-ch'eng School in Ch'ing China," p. 187, both in Elman and Woodside, eds., *Education and Society in Late Imperial China*.
- 110 Fang, *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*, "Fan-li" 凡例, pp. 1a-2a. Fang Pao failed to mention that the commentaries used in the Ming derived from the Yung-lo era *Ta-ch'üan* trilogy and not directly from the Han-T'ang scholia themselves. For discussion see Cheng Pang-chen 鄭邦鎮, "Pa-ku-wen 'shou-ching tsun-chu' te k'ao-ch'a: chü *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen* ssu-t'i pa-p'ien wei li" 八股文守經遵注的考察：舉欽定四書文四題八篇爲例, *Ch'ing-tai hsueh-shu yen-t'ao-hui* 清代學術研討會 (Kao-hsiung: Chung-shan University, first volume, 1989), pp. 219-43.
- 111 Fang Pao, *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*, "Fan-li," pp. 1a-2a. On T'ang Shun-chih and Kuei Yu-kuang, see volume 2, 2.9a.
- 112 Fang, *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*, "Fan-li," pp. 2b-3a. For discussion, see Guy, "Fang Pao and the *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*," pp. 167-68, and Chow, "Discourse, Examination, and Local Elite," pp. 188-90.
- 113 Guy, "Fang Pao and the *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu wen*," pp. 166-67. Guy notes, however, that 98 of 122 Ch'ing authors held the *chin-shih* degree and that Fang's choice of Ch'ing essays did reflect those who were early-Ch'ing models of examination success.
- 114 See *Li-pu t'i-pen* 禮部題本, 1781, 2nd month, for the memorial by Fu-chien censor Tung Chih-ming 董之銘 proposing that a sequel to Fang's earlier collection be compiled. Tung wanted Hanlin compilers to select more Ch'ing examination papers for inclusion than Fang Pao had. This request was repeated in the 3rd month.

## 經典釋傳與明清經義

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### 摘 要

本文旨在敘述明清時代文官體系如何將具科舉功名的文人們塑造成一個文化集團。他們擁有 1.共同的典雅語文；2.相同的儒家經典；3.以及大家都熟悉的八股文。科舉考試的內容界定了知識份子的思想範圍，但也將文人們的見解反映於國政上。一個典型的文人必須會讀文言文、精通理學，和寫出精準典雅的制義文字。除了政治和社會功能外，科舉制度也成功的將來自仕紳、軍人、商人等各種家庭背景的有功名之人，塑造成同一個文化階層。

科舉考試將學習經典變成文筆競賽，主考者透過考試篩選不同主張的應考者。從西元 1371 至 1756 期間，當時風行的經文詮釋形式窄化了文言文的使用、純化了特定的思考模式，同時也限制了文體表達方式，不受科舉時尚垂青的文體如詩歌，便遭到忽視。科舉文化內化的結果，終影響到知識份子的道德人格和社會良心。因為士子們長期為考試教材所限，故他們視將三代理想和程朱學說付諸實施為最重之事。來自各行各業背景的士子們在對

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儒家理想的崇敬方面是一致的，且他們共享相同的文字、文學表達方式，及對儒家學說的瞭解和詮釋。相對於士大夫階層的一致性文化，被他們治理的下層社會則仍被束縛於通俗文化、民間信仰、方言等地方色彩濃厚的生活裡。

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