In Pursuit of a Lost Southern Song Stele and Its Maker
Elizabeth Brotherton

Journal of Song-Yuan Studies, Volume 49, 2020, pp. 295-343 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/sys.2020.0007

For additional information about this article
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/775133
In Pursuit of a Lost Southern Song Stele and Its Maker

Elizabeth Brotherton  
State University of New York at New Paltz

Chinese stone stelae and their engraved surfaces have long been fruitful subjects of historical research and connoisseurship.¹ Their potential contributions to multiple areas of historical inquiry are undeniable, due to their roles in preserving and publicizing classical texts, epitaphs, sutras, eulogies, temple certificates, shrine memorials, local landmarks, calligraphic works, and paintings, as well as imperial decrees, legal documents, and monuments to esteemed figures or events, to name most of the types of historical and cultural activity memorialized on stelae. Increased attention of late to stelae

Since beginning as an inquiry into the two portraits under study, this paper has passed through a number of altered states. I presented earlier versions at the 2011 New York Conference on Asian Studies in Buffalo and at the 2017 Second Conference on Middle Period Chinese Humanities in Leiden, benefitting from comments by attendees of both conferences and from various readers since then, some mentioned in footnotes. For advice that substantially improved the manuscript I am grateful to two anonymous JSYS readers. I further acknowledge a grant from SUNY Creative and Research Projects for research in China in fall 2017. Ari Daniel Levine is due additional thanks for his thoughtful guidance in the editing of my manuscript.

Figure 1. *Taibai tuoxue tu bing zan* (Picture with Eulogy of Taibai [Li Bai] Having His Boots Removed), Southern Song dynasty, ca. 1256, ink rubbing from stone stele, Dangtu county, Anhui province (destroyed in 20th century); stele rubbing ca. 18th–19th century, 5.34 × 3.28 ft. (163 × 100 cm.), National Library of China. Reproduction taken from *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang taben huibian* (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1993), 1:80.
Figure 2. *Shangu fanzhao tu bing zan* 山谷返櫂圖并贊碑 (Picture with Eulogy of Shangu [Huang Tingjian] Rowing Back), Southern Song dynasty, ca. 1256, ink rubbing from stone stele, Dangtu county, Anhui province (destroyed in 20th century); stele rubbing ca. 18th–19th century, 5.34 × 3.31 ft. (163 × 101 cm.), National Library of China. Reproduction taken from *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang taben huibian* (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1993), 1:81.
in North American scholarship must be partially inspired by the breadth of human activity they encompass, for, as Patricia Ebrey puts it,

stelae as a topic has the advantage that although the stones were inscribed with words and therefore definitely convey verbal messages, they are at the same time material objects that have a visual presence and that were placed in specific locations.\(^2\)

These words suggest the attractions but also the difficulties of stelae as objects of study: in prompting considerations of their physical placement as well as attribution and function, stelae spur the examination of a wider range of human activity than is common with other types of pre-modern artifacts. For this reason, their reconstruction can present increased logistical and art historical challenges.

Rubbings or “ink squeezes” (\textit{taben} 拓本, \textit{tapian} 拓片) taken from stelae further compound the art-historical challenges because rubbings can be more than simple reproductions of their source stelae engravings. Highly valued as traces of a material culture that has largely disappeared, rubbings of stelae (and of other ancient artifacts), especially since the middle Qing period (beginning around the mid-eighteenth century), have taken on a heightened cultural aura that ushers them into a partially aestheticized realm, placing them in ever higher demand by historians and collectors.\(^3\) Coveted as collector’s items, stele rubbings present issues of authenticity and connoisseurship that compare generally with those occurring in the study of paintings and calligraphy, or any type of commodified entity that has inspired heavy demand and a flourishing market. For this reason, aiming to base the present study on rubbings that purportedly originate from a stele dated to the mid-thirteenth century, I begin my discussion with caveats drawn from the exacting art and science of rubbings connoisseurship.


\(^3\) Such demand arose during the Qing concurrently with a growth in epigraphical studies. Summing up the post-Song history of epigraphy, Li Xueqin 李學勤 (1933–2019) wrote:

Once \textit{lixue} [Daoxue] began to flourish, epigraphical research was dismissed as an example of “puttering with things and exhausting the will” (\textit{wanwu sangzhi} 玩物喪志, using the words of Cheng Yi), and epigraphical studies therefore languished. But starting in the middle Qing, interest in Han studies arose . . . this in turn brought about the resurgence of epigraphy.

A late Southern Song stele, now lost, serves in absentia as this paper’s topic. The stele was engraved and erected a little past the midpoint of the thirteenth century, in Dangtu district 當塗縣 of Taiping prefecture 太平郡, East Jiangnan circuit 江南東路 (modern-day Anhui), on the order of Mou Zicai 牟子才 (d. ca. 1265, jinshi 1223), an official who had requested relocation there from the Southern Song court. Referred to here as “Mou’s stele” or “the Dangtu stele,” since it seems to never have been given its own name, the stele itself was destroyed in the nineteenth or twentieth century; however at least one pair of rubbings from it remains in existence today. Taken from the front (beiyang 碑陽) and back (beiyin 碑陰) sides of Mou’s stele, the two rubbings eulogize and portray two renowned figures of former eras, the high Tang poet Li Bai 李白 (700–762), shown in Figure 1, and the late Northern Song poet-calligrapher Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105), shown in Figure 2. The titles (bei’e 碑額) of both rubbings are written in large, seal-script characters: Tuoxue tu 脫靴圖 (Picture of Removing the Boots) on the Li Bai side, and Fanzhao tu 返櫂圖 (Picture of Rowing Back) on the Huang Tingjian side. Records of the rubbings usually embellish these titles to include mention of the two poets’ sobriquets or alternative names, and of their eulogies, which are also present, as in Taibai tuoxue tuzan bei 太白脫靴圖贊碑 (Stele Picture with Eulogy of Taibai Having his Boots Removed), and Shangu fanzhao tuzan bei 山谷返櫂圖贊碑 (Stele Picture with Eulogy of Shangu Rowing Back). Written

4. Dangtu district was the administrative seat of Taiping prefecture.

5. Tuotuo 脫脱 et al., ed., Song shi 宋史 (hereafter SS; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 41.12359.

6. The stele may have been destroyed by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution or earlier by Japanese soldiers during World War II. Both explanations were offered to me in Dangtu in fall 2017. Yet a Dangtu gazetteer published in 1936 already noted the stele’s absence; see Lu Shigu 魯式穀, ed., Dangtu xianzhi 當塗縣志 (Minguo chaoben, 49 juan 不分卷, 1936), 41.93a–93b (estimated); or consult this text in the Airu database, pp. 2983–84. The stele was still intact in the eighteenth century; see note 55. This study bases itself on the well-published pair of stele rubbings held in the National Library of China (NLC) 國家圖書館 (see note 7).

7. Titles approximating this wording are found in NLC publications, and in the database Zhongguo jinshi zonglu 中國金石總錄 (Lanzhou: Gansu Wuliang guji shuzi jishu youxian gongsi, 1994). (I thank Beverly Bossler for spreading word of the latter database shortly after it was launched, around 2013.) The rubbings measure 163 by 100 centimeters, or approximately 64 inches high by 39 inches wide. The earliest reproductions known to me of rubbings taken from this stele can be found in jinshi shuhua 金石書畫, Yu Shaosong 余紹宋, chief ed. (Hangzhou: Dongnan ribao, 1935), 26.5; 30.3. The NLC rubbings are reproduced in Beijing tushuguan canq Zhongguo lidai shike taben huibian 北京圖書館藏中國歷代石刻拓本匯編, 100 vols., ed. Beijing tushuguan
in smaller, regular-script characters, the two eulogies each occupy central locations in their respective rubbings, forming blocks of text whose margins align almost exactly with the horizontal areas defined by the large titles above them. Beneath each eulogy is an engraved line drawing of the eulogized figure that takes up almost the lower third portion of the whole composition. The two rubbings’ uniformity in format renders them a pair, in spite of the very different nature of their protagonists’ actions, and conveys a parallelism in their theme. Their source engravings’ original shared location on one stele is strongly implied by the large crack running diagonally across each rubbing that closely mirrors the crack on its mate, leading one to conclude that the rubbings were taken from opposite sides of a single, two-sided stone.

Unlike most portraits of esteemed figures in China, these two depict their subjects performing actions that are quite specific to each man’s situation. Thus, Li Bai, wearing a court gown and seated on an embellished stool in three-quarter view facing right, offers his left foreleg and booted foot to an unnaturally small standing figure who represents the court official and eunuch Gao Lishi 高力士 (683–762). Gao extends both arms forward while bending slightly at the waist as he prepares to remove Li’s boot. Recounted in both the Old and New Tang History, and prominent in the vast sea of Li Bai-related

jinsihzu 北京圖書館金石組 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1991), 44:123–24; and Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang taben huibian 北京圖書館藏畫像拓本匯編, 10 vols., ed. Ji Yaping 龔亞平 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1993), 1:80–81. These two NLC sources, basing themselves on different records, disagree by a year in their dating of the original engravings: the 1991 series dates them to 1256, citing Shike tiba suoyin 石刻題跋索引 (in the case of the Li Bai rubbing) and Qian Daxin’s 錢大昕 (1728–1804) Qianyantang jinshiwen bawei 猶研堂金石文跋尾 (in the case of the Huang Tingjian rubbing); while the 1993 series dates them to 1257, citing Wu Shifen’s 吳式芬 (1796–1856) Jungu lu 攘古錄. While claiming to follow Qian Daxin’s dating, Wu wrote that Qian had dated them to the fifth rather than fourth year of the Baoyou 寶祐 reign period, arriving at 1257 rather than 1256. See Jungu lu (Qing ed.; rpt. Jiangsu Guangling guji keyinshe, 1993), 15.33a. The Dangtu gazetteer for 1996 has no mention of this stele; see Dangtu xianzhi 當塗縣志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996).

8. I thank James Flath for noting the symmetry of these cracks and its significance. Although most records of the two rubbings do not indicate their origin from the single stele, an entry found in Qing editions of the Dangtu county gazetteer suggests their common location on one stele by listing it thus: “Stele Bearing Pictures Painted by Mou Zicai of Taibai Having his Boots Removed and Shangu Rowing Back” 牟子才畫太白脫靴、山谷返櫂圖碑. See Dangtu xianzhi 當塗縣志, 32 juan (Kangxi edition, 1707, revised), 32.16a.

In Pursuit of a Lost Southern Song Stele and Its Maker

lore, the story behind this scene tells of how Li made the powerful Gao Lishi perform this humiliating act while both men were in attendance at the court of Emperor Tang Xuanzong (r. 721–756). In revenge, Gao coordinated with the Emperor’s favorite concubine Yang Guifei 杨贵妃 to prevent any further promotions for Li Bai, leading to Li’s eventual estrangement from court. For many years after leaving the capital, Li wandered widely, finally to settle in Dangtu, where he sought help from his uncle the district magistrate Li Yangbing 李阳冰, and where he died the following year. In her study of popular Li Bai images across different historical mediums, Kathlyn Liscomb has found this rubbing’s picture to be the earliest extant visual representation of Li Bai’s boot-removal episode.

The stele’s other rubbing shows Huang Tingjian kneeling in three-quarter view on the prow of a small boat being steered across the rubbing’s lower composition toward its left edge. Two tied-up cloth bundles, partly revealed beneath the boat’s woven-grass awning, presumably contain scrolls of Huang’s poetry and all of his other belongings. This picture refers to the historical

10. According to the New Tang History: “Once when Bo was attending the Emperor he got drunk and had Gao Lishi take off his boots. Lishi had always been treated nobly and was shamed by this. He picked out one of (Li’s) poems in order to incite Noble Consort Yang. When the Emperor wanted to make Bo an official, the lady immediately put a stop to it. Bo understood that he would not be accepted by those close to [the emperor] so he was more haughty and unrestrained, and did not cultivate himself. . . . He entreated [the emperor] to be returned to the mountains and the emperor conferred gold upon him and released him to return” 白嘗侍帝, 醉, 使高力士脱靴. 力士素貴, 耻之, 擿其詩以激楊貴妃, 帝欲官白, 妃輒沮止. 白自知不為親近所容, 益驁放不自脩, . . . . . . 懇求還山, 帝賜金放還. See Xin Tangshu, 202.5763; trans. William Nienhauser in “A Reading of Li Bo’s Biography in the Old History of the T’ang,” Oriens Extremus 43.1/2 (2002): 182. This story had already appeared in the ninth-century sources Tang guoshi bu 唐國史補 and Xiyang zazu 西陽雜俎; see Wang Qi 王琦, ed., Li Taibai shi jizhu 李太白詩集注 (Wenyuange Siku quanshu ed., hereafter SKQS), 35.22a–22b. It is noteworthy that later on, when Xuanzong’s political survival required that he dispense with Yang Guifei, it was Gao Lishi who strangled her. See Denis Twitchett, “Hsüan-tsung (Reign 712–56),” in The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 3: Sui and T’ang China, 589–906, Part One, ed. Twitchett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 460.

11. Kathlyn Maurean Liscomb provides an excellent run-down of the literature and issues related to Mou’s stele engravings; see “Li Bai, a Hero among Poets, in the Visual, Dramatic, and Literary Arts of China,” The Art Bulletin 81.3 (Sept. 1999): 357–59. She then discusses other renditions of this scene on varied mediums through subsequent eras, revealing a widespread appreciation for the subject among different social classes in later history. The present study will, rather than conducting what Liscomb calls “an interdisciplinary examination of a focused theme over a long period of time” (p. 355), devote itself to what more we can learn about the role played by this single artifact in the biography and world of its maker.
episode of Huang’s brief reposting, beginning in 1100, from his place of exile in Sichuan to Taiping prefecture. After traveling down the Yangzi for many months, he occupied the Taiping post for only nine days before the imperial court re-banished him to Yizhou 宜州 (modern-day Guangxi) far to the southwest, where he died a few years later.¹² Both poets’ biographical links with Dangtu, neither one of which involved a very lengthy sojourn, were the basis for their portraits on this stele. Most significant to this stele-maker was that, as a pair, the pictures depicted events in the two poets’ lives that either brought about or reflected the undeserved mistreatment that their respective imperial courts had inflicted upon them. Obliquely alluded to in the two poetic eulogies, to be discussed below, the two events are here given a visual substance that can itself carry cultural or political implications, also to be explored below.

Viewing the rubbings side-by-side, we sense a vague interaction between their two main figures, whose positions slightly face one another. Another linkage between the rubbings’ compositions is that, while visually complementing each other, they also create between them a distinct leftward progression. Li Bai and Gao Lishi form between them a tight, contracting space, while Huang Tingjian and the punting boatman at his skiff’s stern face in opposite directions and are located as far away from one another as possible in the picture—leading the pair of compositions to take on a centripetal/centrifugal (jusan 聚散) opposition. But, in addition, our eyes are irresistibly pulled into a leftward sweep, set in motion by the implied movement of Huang’s skiff and brought to full stop in the form of Li Bai’s seated figure. In this way the two contiguous rubbings form the bare bones of a unified composition reminiscent of the directional dynamic seen in many Song handscrolls, beginning at the right end and guiding the viewer leftward to a finish coinciding with the composition’s leftmost element.

¹². In early 1100, Huang was ordered to reemerge from exile, eventually to be posted as Vice-Director in the Ministry of Works (libu yuanwailang 禮部員外郎), but due to illness he requested a posting as Magistrate of Taiping prefecture instead. See Huang Xun 黃蕃, Shangu nianpu 山谷年譜 (SKQS ed.), 27.1b; 28.2b. By one account, at the time of Huang’s arrival in Dangtu in the sixth month of 1102, the official there had already received the imperial order for Huang’s rebanishment, but put off informing Huang until nine days later. See Zhang Xiaoxiang 張孝祥, Yuhu jushi wenji 於湖居士文集, juan 29, quoted in Huang Baohua 黃寶華, Huang Tingjian pingzhuan 黃庭堅評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1998), 90. According to this source, Huang saw the court’s order upon his arrival, and knew his days there were numbered.
These compositional qualities lend credence to a statement in Mou Zicai’s official biography that Mou first painted the scene of Li Bai’s boot-removal and then had it engraved onto a stele, a sequence that would have also applied to the Huang Tingjian portrait. If they existed already as paintings, the two compositions would likely have been presented in the same relative positions that the rubbings always take in reproduction, including here. Details in both rubbings that appear more at home in paintings than in stone engravings further suggest their painted origin. The stool Li Bai sits on is so richly embellished with intricate linear decoration that in the rubbing it creates an unclear area almost completely without ink, or white; while the woven-grass awning over Huang Tingjian’s boat, due to its tight, crisscrossing lines, similarly stands out as an almost all-white area amidst the rubbing’s generally black background. Both details thus appear to be somewhat unsuited to the engraved stele medium. They make much more sense, however, when we see them as transmitting linear designs that had originally been applied to a softer surface with a pliable brush.13 Visually emphasizing the main figures of each rubbing’s composition, these whiter areas correspond to what would have been two darker areas in their source paintings, where they served a similar function.

It appears that we have solid enough basis on which to provisionally accept these rubbings, and the absent stele to which they point, as additions to Mou Zicai’s body of works, most of which is long lost.14 The stele has sufficient

---

13. Based on its boat awning, Susan Huang proposes that the Huang Tingjian rubbing is indebted to a painting. See Huang Shih-shan 黃士珊, “Banhua yu huihua de hudong—cong Song Yuan fojiao banhua suojian zhi Songhua yuansu tanqi” 版畫與繪畫的互動——從宋元佛教版畫所見之宋畫元素談起, in Zhejiang University Journal of Art and Archaeology, Supplementum I: Proceedings of the International Conference on Song Painting 浙江大學藝術與考古研究(特輯一), 宋畫國際學術會議論文集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2017), 16.

14. Mou’s extant writings, originally voluminous according to his biography (SS 411.12361), are now limited to the following: nine poems, preserved in Song shi jishi 宋詩記事 and Song shi jishi buyi 宋詩記事補遺; one ci in Quan Song ci 全宋詞; and sixty mostly official writings in Fu Zengxiang 傅增湘 and Wu Hongze 吳洪澤, eds., Songdai Shuren zhuzuo cunyi kao 宋代蜀人著作存佚錄 (Chengdu: BaShu shushe, 1986), 404. In addition, Mou Zicai’s son Mou Yan 牟巘 includes scattered quotes of his father’s poetry in his own posthumously published collection of writings, Lingyang ji 陵陽集. Furthermore, Lidai mingchen zouyi 历代名臣奏議 contains forty-five memorials and other writings by Mou (though these must include repetitions from other sources).
documentation from the Yuan and Qing periods to establish its historical existence, and to confirm its link with Mou. Although not identified as a painter, Mou Zicai was described by a younger contemporary as “splendid at painting” (bingyu danqing 炳於丹青). According to his biography in the Song History (Song shi 宋史), during Mou’s final years as a court official, Emperor Lizong 理宗 (r. 1224–1264) asked him about cultural objects of the Han and Tang dynasties, upon which the two men launched into a detailed viewing session. This, along with other scattered indications of Mou’s cultural knowledge and breadth in early texts, some presented below, suggests the likelihood that Mou himself painted the two pictures later engraved on this stele, rather than taking credit for works executed by an anonymous artisan. We might also note the probable indebtedness of both stele drawings to earlier compositions of the Tang and Northern Song.

15. Ma Tingluan 馬廷鸞, “Mou Zicai teshou Zizhengdian xueshi zhishi zhi” 牟子才特授資政殿學士致仕制, in Biwu wanfang ji 碧梧玩芳集 (SKQS ed.), 9.3b. We might wonder whether Mou Zicai was related to the near-contemporary painter Mou Yi 牟益 (1178–1242), also a Sichuan native, who painted Beating the Cloth (Daoyi tu 擀衣圖) in 1240. His handscroll bears a long inscription by the artist telling us the painting is meant to go along with Xie Huilian 的詩詞 of the same name. It stands out in Southern Song painting as a self-conscious pairing of painting with poetry in a mode more similar to late Northern Song attempts than to current ones, and can be labeled a literati painting from an age that has left few such works. On this painting, see Lara C. W. Blanchard, “Mou Yi’s Pounding Cloth: Play, Reference, and Discourse in Song China,” Artibus Asiae 73.2 (2013): 295–341; and Yi Ruofen 衣若芬, “Guiyuan yu suoxiangsi: Mou Yi Daoyi tu de jiedu” 閨怨與所相思: 牟益「搗衣圖」的解讀, Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan 中國文哲研究集刊 25 (Sept. 2004): 25–59.

16. See SS 411.1236i.

17. James Cahill comments that when “an official is reported to have ‘painted’ some elaborate picture, [the question] is whether he really painted it himself or had it done by a proper artist, whether in detailed instructions from himself or on the basis of a sketch he made.” See “Political Themes in Chinese Painting,” in Three Alternative Histories of Chinese Painting, The Franklin D. Murphy Lectures IX (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1988), 13–36, 35n13. Cahill’s view seems to posit little overlap between “proper” and literati artists.

18. The use of already-established compositions from the Tang and Northern Song periods to depict this subject matter can mean that the pictures carried associations already attached to their imagery in the current culture, conceivably making them more visually effective by adding an extra layer of significance to their present use. A Tang vintage for the Li Bai scene is suggested by the lone figures interacting against a blank background, and by the unnatural tininess of Gao Lishi, whose “petty nature,” in Liscomb’s words, is hereby conveyed through “an artistic device not often employed in paintings of this time.” See “Li Bai, a Hero among Poets,” 357. Such a device was, however, less foreign to Tang painting. The picture of Huang at the prow of a small boat is reminiscent of contemporary images of Tao Yuanming’s Returning Home, the prose-poem
To some extent we can relate Mou’s stele to the contemporary practice of erecting shrines in honor of local worthies, or revered figures associated with a given locality through their beneficial activities there. Song officials enshrined local worthies with increasing frequency as the dynasty approached its end; and their shrines often included stelae bearing portraits of the honored men. How this practice relates to Mou’s stele will be worthy of analysis later on; for now, it is noteworthy that shrine portraits were rarely attributed to the individuals who made them, as mentioned above, in much the same way that the artisans who engraved content onto stele surfaces often went unnamed.

Mou’s images, on the other hand, are consistently identified with his name in Yuan, Ming, and Qing sources (there are no known mentions of these images in extant Song writings). Compared with the usual status of local portraitist-artisans, Mou’s elite social position as a court official certainly factors into his stele’s presence on the historical record. At least as germane must be the response that his stele images set off in the imperial court, as recorded in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts (see below). We will see that Mou’s engravings played a role quite different from that of local shrine portraits: while the latter reflect heightened political activity at the local level, Mou’s images were made ultimately for court consumption. At the same time, local shrines would likely have been the initial inspiration for Mou’s stele depictions.

We must dwell a bit more on connoisseurship to consider the two rubbings’ relationship with their source stele, since there are clear questions regarding their authenticity. Given the stele’s destruction, the existence of these rubbings is of course essential to our knowledge of it and its content. But any attempt to understand the rubbings as wholly transparent in their ability to transmit that had held special meaning to Su Shi 蘇軾 and his late Northern Song followers, among whom Huang Tingjian himself was prominent. See Elizabeth Brotherton, “Beyond the Written Word: Li Gonglin’s Illustrations to Tao Yuanming’s Returning Home,” Artibus Asiae 59.3/4 (2000): 225–63.


20. On this subject see Oliver Moore, “The Sociology of Stone Inscriptions and Reprographics in Middle Period China” (unpublished paper for Conference on Middle Period China, Harvard University, June 5–8, 2014). But we should mention here that two engravers’ names are faintly carved into the lower-right corner of the Huang Tingjian facade: Cai Mai 蔡邁 and Fan Ren 范仁.
the original stele engravings is bound to run into pitfalls.\textsuperscript{21} The classical and theoretical authority of rubbings, gaining further cachet when they came from old stelae, reached a height during the late Qing period, when our two rubbings were made.\textsuperscript{22} This, along with the great age of Mou Zicai’s stele by that time, as well as the inevitable wearing down of any stele’s surface from erosion and from repeated tapping on it to make rubbings, presents grounds enough for us to put our two rubbings on high probation. Their lines appear too crisp and their backgrounds not worn-down enough for them to be plausible impressions from a stele of such age,\textsuperscript{23} nearly seven centuries old by the mid-nineteenth century. Therefore it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the rubbings were made from a recut stele: a newer stele that had been engraved on the basis of rubbings taken from the original one.\textsuperscript{24} That the recut stele dated from the middle Qing period at the earliest is suggested in a recent study of the Tieqin tongjian lou 鐵琴銅劍樓 library, one of the four great private libraries of the Qing (in Changshu 常熟, Jiangsu), to which our two rubbings once belonged.\textsuperscript{25}

The likelihood that the two rubbings are from a recut stele should in turn alert us to other complications. The stele’s recutting could have been

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Wu Hung provides an illuminating analysis of the complex relationship between rubbings and their source stelae in his discussion of rubbings descended from “The Stele at the Temple of the Western Marchmount Hua” (Xiyu Huashan miaobei 西嶽華山廟碑), factoring in the stele’s many recuttings, in “On Rubbings—Their Materiality and Historicity,” 37–45; see also Yunchiahn C. Sena, Bronze and Stone: The Cult of Antiquity in Song Dynasty China (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 37–64.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Kenneth Starr, Black Tigers, 180. The National Library of China judges our two rubbings to date from the Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1796–1820) or Daoguang 道光 (1821–1850) periods. See Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tabian huibian, 1:80–81. The rationale for this dating must be the lack of a transmission history for the rubbings prior to the lifetimes of their first known owners, Gu Guangqi 顧廣圻 (zi Qianli 千里, 1766–1835) and Qu Yong 曲鏞 (1794–1846).
  \item \textsuperscript{23} I thank Alfreda Murck and Julia Murray for alerting me to this. Further supporting these suspicions is my observation in Beijing that all the other rubbings from Southern Song stelae belonging to the NLC collection besides the two under study, viewed in reproduction, are much paler and therefore less legible than the present two, due to the worn surfaces of their source stelae.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Stele recutting (fanke 翻刻 or chongke 重刻) was a frequent means of giving new life to a worn-down stele; rubbings from the recut stele would have crisper lines and improved contrast over those from the original. See Ma Ziyun 馬子雲 and Shi Anchang 施安昌, Beitie jianding 碑帖鑑定 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 1993), 482.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Zhong Weixing 仲偉行, Wu Yongan 吳庸安, and Zeng Kang 曾康, eds., Tieqin tongjian lou yanjiu wenxian ji 鐵琴銅劍樓研究文獻集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997),
\end{itemize}
motivated by a loss of clarity in rubbings taken from its original, even to the point that the carver of the new stele lacked a completely informative model on which to base himself, and therefore needed to depend on a combination of memory and imagination to fill in the blanks. For this reason we should refrain from accepting the rubbings as entirely faithful reflections of their single mid-thirteenth century originals. Starting from this reality, we might also consider the possibility that the present rubbings had more than one source. If, for example, the wording of the eulogies had become unclear on the original stele, the artisan who recut it could have gone to an outside source to complete them, such as local gazetteers or any of the other literary or epigraphical records in which the eulogies had been recorded by the late Qing. This also applies to the colophons in smaller script added onto side areas of the stele compositions by Yuan, Ming, and Qing period local officials. Moreover, remembering that a common motivation for the recutting of a stele was the booming market demand for ancient (or apparently ancient) rubbings, it could well be that some of our rubbings’ surface blemishes result from a doctoring of the recut stele to make its rubbings transmit the aged surface of the original.

The above caveats justify dispensing with the traditional model of an object-based art-historical study, in which the authenticity of the artifact under study is of primary importance, for this article. Here we accept the two rubbings, with their questionable authenticity if posited as imprints from a thirteenth-century artifact, as products of a recut stele and therefore lying at an unspecified remove from their original engraved source. But an assumption underlying this study is that the rubbings convey important information.

---

26. Although most recut steles “follow the original quite faithfully” according to Starr, it seems prudent to keep in mind the possibility of rubbings revision and forgery. See Starr, Black Tigers, 192.

27. Texts recording the Mou stele and rubbings, some of which transcribe the stele inscriptions, can be found in Xu Naichang 徐乃昌, Anhui tongzhi jinshi guwu kaogao 安徽通志金石古物考稿 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1972), 4.62–66. Included are four Qing epigraphical records: Qian Daxin, Qianyantang jinshiwen bawei; Wu Shifen, Jungu lu; Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762–1843), Tieqiao jinshi ba 鐵橋金石跋; and Zhao Shaozu 趙紹祖 (1752–1833), Anhui jinshi lüe 安徽金石略.

nevertheless, as they likely carry the same basic content and composition as
did the originals and might therefore offer useful refinements to our reading
of the historical source texts that mention them. The very making of the stele,
with its eulogies and its prominent pictorial content, is of great interest both
within their relatively ill-documented time frame, and the even less-charted
history of literati painting in the Southern Song period.

Examining the relationship between this stele and its maker, or the inten-
tions behind its making, as well as the stele’s implied audience and its con-
temporary reception, can provide a window onto a chapter in the late stages
of the Song period as well as a slice of the period’s art history. Moreover, it
can shed light on the life of a figure who would be better known to posterity
if his time of activity had not coincided with his dynasty’s ending decades,
and if most of his writings had not disappeared (we assume) in the conflag-
ration that accompanied the defeat of Song by the Yuan dynasty in 1279.29
Furthermore, given the paucity of literati paintings of this period, going by
what is now extant, and the sudden appearance of such works not long after
the establishment of the Yuan over the same area, we can be excused for
wondering whether Mou’s stele tells us anything about the sources of early
Yuan literati painting. In the following, a look at early texts from or related
to this stele will suggest a plausible role for the stele engravings within Mou
Zicai’s life and career. A comparison between his engraving of the stele and
the contemporary practice of building shrines to local worthies will bring his
own objectives into clearer focus. Questions related to the engravings’ style
will play little part in this discussion, for the reasons given above.30 Yet the
following pages do invite the question whether such a thing as Neo-Confucian
painting, or painting linked with the political orientation of Daoxue 道學,
the newly court-approved Learning of the (Confucian) Way, existed during
the Southern Song.

29. For this opinion on Mou’s aborted status in history, see Hu Zhaoxi 胡昭曦, Liu Fusheng 劉復生, and Su Pinxiao 粟品孝, Songdai Shuxue yanjiu 宋代蜀學研究 (Chengdu: BaShu shushe, 1997), 162.

30. If we accept the notion that the even lines used in Mou’s portraits depart stylistically
from the modulated lines preferred by the Southern Song court, we are probably giving too
much weight to the style of these recut reproductions. It is also worthy of note that Mou Zicai’s
contemporary, the court painter Ma Lin 馬霖 (ca. 1180–after 1256), altered his own brushwork
from the court preference of his time. See Wen Fong, “Song Mimesis and Beyond,” in Trad-
tion and Transformation: Studies in Chinese Art in Honor of Chu-ting Li, ed. Judith G. Smith
(Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas), 96–103.
Mou Zicai’s Two Eulogies for Li Bai and Huang Tingjian

In accord with the traditional approach to rubbings and stelae in epigraphical studies (jinshixue 金石學), Mou Zicai’s eulogies to the two poets have garnered more written attention than have the two engraved portraits beneath them. Following is Mou’s eulogy to Li Bai:

錦袍兮烏幘
神清兮氣逸
凌轢兮萬象
麾斥兮八極。

錦袍兮烏幘
神清兮氣逸
凌轢兮萬象
麾斥兮八極。

我思古人，
伊李太白。
孰為使之朝禁林，
而暮采石也。
其天寶之嬖倖歟
疏擿詞篇，
浸潤宮掖。
吾觀脫靴之圖，
未嘗不嫉小人之情狀，
而傷君子之疎直。
惟公之高躅兮，
霍神龍之不可以羈繩。
矧富貴如敝屣兮，
其得失又何所欣戚也。

With brocade gown, ah, and black cap,
A spirit pure, ah, his manner unconstrained.
Vanquishing, ah, all things in existence,
He commands, ah, the eight ends of the earth.
“I long for this man of ages past,”
Ah, Li Taibai!
Who caused you to be at the Imperial Academy in the morning,
But at Stone Quarry on the same evening?
Wasn’t it that favorite of the Emperor in the Tianbao era?
He selectively impugned your poems and gradually turned the court against you.
Whenever I look at this Removing the Boots picture,
I never fail to resent the attitude and behavior of the petty man,
And yearn for the unconventionality and frankness of the gentleman.
You have a lofty presence, ah,
you’re a scintillating dragon that cannot be bridled.
You laugh at wealth and nobility as if they were worn-out shoes, ah.
And when did you ever feel happy or sad about success and failure!

31. Translated by Richard Lynn, Ku’an Yun-shi (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 115–16, with minor changes, such as the use of “ah” rather than “oh” to approximate xi兮 in the original text, thanks to a suggestion by Professor Li Shan 李珊 (Art History Department, Hubei Institute
Eulogy by Mou Zicai of Lingyang

The anger and sorrow in this eulogy, written almost as though its subject had been Mou’s personal friend, are sincere (we understand) at the same time that they act rhetorically to emphasize the wrongfulness of Li’s banishment. These qualities also help fill out our view of Mou, who comes off as a rather severe and strait-laced figure in his official Song History biography (partially discussed below). The eulogy’s elegiac mood is furthered by the writer’s periodic use of the character xi兮 to break up clauses, thus gesturing towards the voice of the ancient poet Qu Yuan 屈原 (340?–278? BCE), whose famous long poem “Encountering Sorrow” (“Li sao”離騷), also punctuated with xi, was written in exile after rejection by his king due to slander. Further heightening the mood are such hyperbolic flights as “the eight ends of the earth,” and “a scintillating dragon,” as well as the telescoping of time suggested in Mou’s rhetorical question placing Li Bai in the imperial palace in the morning and at “Stone Quarry” (in Dangtu) on the same evening.32 “Stone Quarry” is one translation of Caishi 采石, a small, rocky land mass that juts out of the Yangzi near its eastern bank, also called “Stone Quarry Jetty” (Caishi ji采石矶).33 Famous in the lore as site of Li’s legendary drowning while drunkenly embracing the moon’s reflection on the river, it is the last place Li Bai lived prior to his death, for which reason this piece of geography has

of Fine Arts). The Qing compiler Gu Sili （顧嗣立, jinshi 1712）included shortened versions of Mou’s two eulogies among the poetry of Guan Yunshi 貫雲石 (1286–1324) in Gu’s Collected Yuan Poetry (Yuanshi xuan元詩選); hence their appearance in Lynn’s book, where he helpfully translates the eulogies in their entirety (Kuan Yun-shi, 115–17), basing himself on Zhou Mi’s transcriptions (see below). Guan’s shortened transcription of Mou’s Li Bai eulogy has a preface dated 1317, in which he records the presence of a Removing Boots Gazebo (Tuoxue ting脫靴亭) in Dangtu (Kuan Yun-shi, 115); it is probably here that Guan saw Mou’s stele and copied down both eulogies’ first sections.

32. Liscomb describes this tightened chronology as “hyperbolic,” and also notes the historical inaccuracy of giving full responsibility for Li Bai’s banishment to Gao Lishi, referred to in the poem as “that favorite of the emperor in the Tianbao era” (742–755), or of Xuanzong. See “Li Bai, A Hero,” 357.

33. Though it is not ideal, I have adopted “Stone Quarry” from Paul Douglas Moore, instead of “Pick Rocks” from Richard Lynn (Kuan Yun-shi, 102), to render “Caishi.” See Moore, “Stories and Poems about the T’ang Poet Li Po” (Ph. D diss., Georgetown University, 1982). The Yangzi flows from south to north at this point, which is why I describe Caishi here as being located at the river’s east rather than south bank; but the whole area of Taiping prefecture was a part of Jiangnan (the area south of the River).
long carried close associations both with him, and (for many fans) with his ultimate transcendence to immortality. \(^{34}\) At times the place-name “Caishi” is often found together with the most well-known alternate name for Li Bai, “Banished Immortal” (Zhexian 謫仙), to yield Zhexian Caishi, linking poet with site and vice versa. \(^{35}\)

In his eulogy Mou is perhaps savoring the liberties encouraged by Li Bai’s famously unrestrained nature, poetry, and richly elaborated biography. But Mou is also emphasizing the cruel arbitrariness of those in power when he sets up his oversimplified chronology of Li’s fate. No such emphasis is necessary in the case of the more recent figure Huang Tingjian. Fittingly, Mou’s eulogy for Huang does not reach such heights of hyperbole or extreme dictation, and is more based on documented historical fact, making it even more outrageous than the legends surrounding Li Bai. By working in the Court Historiography Office as an aide to Li Xinchuan 李心傳 (1167–1244) in the latter’s compilation of the Documents of Four (Southern Song) Reigns (Sichao huiyao 四朝會要) earlier in his career, \(^{36}\) Mou had gained privileged access to records from earlier in the Song dynasty, although this was probably not the only basis for his deep knowledge of Huang Tingjian’s era, in which he cherished a particular interest. Following is Mou’s poetic eulogy to Huang:

幅巾兮野服，
貌腴兮神肅。

With plain headcloth, \(^{37}\) ah, and rustic clothes, Of fertile countenance, ah, and spirit aloof,
孤騫兮風雅，
唾視兮爵祿。
我思古人，伊黃山谷。

He soars alone, ah, so elegant and refined,
Spurning in contempt, ah, salary and rank.
“long for this man of ages past,” ah, Huang Shangu!

曷為使之六年僰道，
而九日姑孰也。

What caused you, after six years in Bodao,
To have but nine days in Gushu?

吾觀返櫂之圖，
未嘗不感君子之流落，
而痛小人之報復。

When I gaze at this picture of Rowing Back,
I cannot but feel for the gentleman’s wanderings in exile,
And am pained at the vengefulness of petty men.

惟公之高風兮，
渺驚鴻
之不可以信宿。

Only you sir, with your high-mindedness, ah,
Seem remote like a startled swan
who will not be stayed.

Our Way is like an empty boat, ah—

What have its comings and goings to do with honor and disgrace?

**Eulogy by Mou Zicai of Lingyang**

The boat image conveys Huang’s singleness of purpose, reinforced perhaps by his somber expression. Also evoked is the powerful literary image of “(plying) a little boat” (pianzhou 扁舟), as seen in this couplet by Li Bai, for example: “Man’s life in this world does not answer my wishes / Tomorrow morning, hair

38. Gushu 姑孰 was an old name for the Dangtu area, while the place name Bodao 僰道, “at the juncture of the three southwestern provinces (Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan),” connotes a wild area inhabited by barbarians. See Lynn, Kuan Yun-shi, 117.

39. Written here in reversed chronological order, “Fu and Shao” are abbreviations for the two late Northern Song dynasty reign periods, Shaosheng 紹聖 (1094–1097) and Yuanfu 元符 (1097–1100), which correspond to Emperor Zhezong’s 哲宗 (r. 1085–1100) time of personal rule and support for advocates of the Reform party, political enemies of Huang Tingjian.
loosed to the wind, I shall pilot my little skiff.” 人生在世不稱意, 明朝散發弄扁舟. The stele depiction of Huang’s forced return into exile is thus rendered through a visual and literary image that bears associations with both high-minded reclusion and release. Concurrently the little boat takes on a clear metaphorical meaning in the eulogy’s final couplet, where Mou likens Confucian morality to an empty boat that moves about free of self-interested guidance. The suggested untethering of moral behavior from political ambition or state service accords with the larger direction of Daoxue thought, and lends higher meaning to this picture of Huang going into exile. Moreover, the empty boat image finds a clear parallel in Mou’s Li Bai eulogy’s image of worn-out shoes, to which wealth and nobility are likened (in value). Each of Mou’s eulogies pointedly adopts a physical object in the eulogized poet’s portrait, through depiction (boat) or suggestion (shoes), linking picture with poem to signify larger themes underlying the poets’ biographies.

Huang Tingjian’s second and final banishment, orchestrated by members of what Mou in his eulogy’s eighth line calls the “faction of [Yuan]fu and Shao[sheng]” (Fu Shao zhi pengdang 符紹之朋黨), or Reform faction, occurred two and a half years into the reign of Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100–1126). Huizong by this point had retreated from his earlier moves toward reconciliation with the anti-Reform faction, moves prompted partly by the Empress Dowager Qinsheng 欽聖太后 (1046–1101), serving temporarily as Regent during the first half of 1100 while the young Huizong got his bearings as Emperor. One of numerous former anti-Reform officials sporadically


41. See note 18.

42. Attaching a philosophical concept to the already loaded term “empty boat” （xuzhou 虛舟）is clever and must also have other contemporary references—a question for future research.

43. In discussing Daoxue in the Southern Song, Michael A. Fuller notes the importance of finding concrete illustrations: “Daoxue writers . . . needed to demonstrate how these terms [xing and li, nature and principle] inhered in the world, in the self, and in texts; they needed people to be able to grasp intuitively how such transcendent structures could be apprehended in experience. Daoxue, in a word, needed poetry.” See Drifting among Rivers and Lakes: Southern Song Dynasty Poetry and the Problem of Literary History (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 32. This claim could apply to painting as well.

44. For a detailed account of this shift (or re-shift) in late Northern Song court politics, followed by its fateful reversal shortly thereafter, see Ari Daniel Levine, “Che-tsung’s Reign and
directed by the throne to leave their varying places of exile for new official assignments, \(^45\) Huang set forth from Sichuan at the end of 1100 on a lengthy journey by boat down the Yangzi for eventual posting to Taiping county as magistrate, arriving there finally in the sixth month of 1102, only to be sent back into exile the following week. \(^46\) During a lengthy pause in his journey downriver, Huang had stayed in the Chan Buddhist Chengtian Temple 承天寺 in Jingzhou 荊州 (modern-day Jiangling 江陵 county, Hubei) while he rested and awaited assignment by the throne. On the request of the abbot there, he wrote a commemorative record celebrating the recent completion of the temple’s new seven-story pagoda, and had it engraved onto a stele. It was this record that provided his enemies in court, now back in full Reform faction mode, with a fabricated basis for once again banishing him. Citing allegedly seditious lines in Huang’s “Record of the Pagoda of the Chengtian Chan Cloister in Jiangling Prefecture,” the Grand Councilor Zhao Tingzhi 趙挺之 (c. 1040–1107) adopted language supplied to him by the current Assistant Fiscal Commissioner 轉運判官 of Hubei, Chen Ju 陳舉, himself seeking revenge against Huang for an insult. \(^47\) But absent Chen’s vindictive

---

\(^45\) Huang Baohua, *Huang Tingjian pingzhuan*, 83–84.

\(^46\) Huang Xun, *Shangu nianpu*, 29.5a.

\(^47\) Huang Tingjian, “Jiangling fu Chengtian Chanyuan ta ji” 江陵府承天禪院塔記, in *Shangu bieji* 山谷別集 (SKQS ed.), 4.1a–2b, partially quoted and discussed in Zheng Yongxiao 鄭永曉, *Huang Tingjian nianpu xinbian* 黃庭堅年譜新編 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 1997), 346–47. Here Huang Tingjian recounts his composition of this memorial and preparation of its stele, on which at the stele inscription’s end (beiwei 碑尾) he added the names of men who had participated in the stele’s creation: Zou Yongnian 鄒永年 bought the stone, Huang Sheng 黃乘 inscribed its title in seal script, Huang Mou 黃某 (“a certain Huang,” meaning himself) wrote the memorial, and Ma Cheng 馬珹 erected the stone. Huang Tingjian included these names (aside from his own) at the request of the temple’s abbot, who wished to recognize these men, mostly local officials, for their contributions to the pagoda’s construction. Also present at the stele’s creation, Chen Ju and his aides wanted their names included as well, but Huang refused to add them. Deeply humiliated, and aware of enmity between Huang and the newly appointed Councilor of the Right Zhao Tingzhi, Chen Ju sent Zhao a copy (or rubbing?) of Huang’s “Memorial,” accompanying it with the accusations against Huang that Zhao later used (both men claimed that Huang “takes pleasure in speaking ill of the state,” xingzai bangguo
act, another pretext might have presented itself to justify Huang’s banishment in the current political climate.

Beyond the two eulogies’ clear parallels in tone and rhythm, they share use of the same character, *ti* 挖, to describe the behavior of both poets’ enemies. Denoting the pointed selection of works or passages from a literary *oeuvre* with the express intent of using these against their author, this character is also found in Li Bai’s *New* and *Old Tang History* biographies, where Gao Lishi selects from Li Bai’s poetry a work that will incite Yang Guifei’s hatred. 48 Mou Zicai’s repetition of this word reminds us that both of his subjects were banished on false claims about their writings, claims fabricated against them by influential figures. One wonders whether Mou was addressing the use, by the powerful, of fabricated literary grounds, in particular, for his subjects’ mistreatment. Whether or not his intent was so specific, the prominence he gives to the trumped-up attacks on both poets’ writings can only underscore their shared status as deeply wronged cultural figures.

Each eulogy’s fifth line, “I long for this man of ages past” (*wo si guren* 我思古人), is a phrase from the poem “Lüyi” 綠衣, from *The Odes of Bei* (**Bei* feng 邳風) in the *Book of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), where it is followed by the line, “He truly understands my heart” (*shi huo woxin* 實獲我心). 49 Both eulogies above all convey their author’s yearning for the portrayed poets as extraordinary men, unsullied by the worldly ambition and petty score-taking that had motivated their enemies to send them into exile. It is partly on this basis, in spite of the great differences between the two figures’ banishments on one hand and Mou’s own experience, on the other, that the latter places

---

48. See footnote 10 for an explanation of the original incident. According to an early version of this story, the Li Bai poem that Gao “picked out” to show Yang was the second of his “Qingping diao ci” 清平調詞, in which Li “depicts the events of Zhao Feiyan 趙飛燕, Yang Guifei’s notorious Han dynasty predecessor.” See Nienhauser, “A Reading of Li Bo’s Biography,” p. 182, 182n38.

himself beside them and conveys his own values by way of his high praise. In paralleling himself with these predecessors, Mou is furthermore likening the figures behind the poets’ banishments to those he had recently left behind on his departure from the Southern Song court in Lin’an. We meet them on the following pages.

**Yuan Texts about Mou Zicai’s Stele**

Records of the stele in early Yuan texts appear to be inseparable from accounts of how its rubbings were received back at court. The Song-Yuan *ci* composer, art connoisseur, and historian-raconteur Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298) wrote later in the century what must be the earliest historical documentation and transcription of Mou’s two eulogies, in a long entry in his notebook (*biji* 筆記) *Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語, completed in 1291:

> In the days when Mou Cunsou Duanming [Zicai] was Magistrate [of Taiping] at Dangtu, the prefectural office’s garden contained a Removing Boots Gazebo, which derived its name from [the story of] the Banished Immortal [of] Stone Quarry; and Cunsou made a picture of this.

> 又以山谷崇寧初守當塗日，方九日而罷，蓋坐嘗作《荊州承天院塔記》，轉運判官陳舉承執政趙挺之風旨，摘其間數語以為幸災謗國，除名謫宜州，遂作《返棹》一圖以為對。

> To each [image] he attached a eulogy. It did not take long [for these] to reach the capital. The Grand Councilor at the time, Ding Daquan, and the Palace Attendant [eunuch] Dong Songchen learned of them and were enraged. So they

---

50. Xia Chengtao 夏承燾 supplies this date in “Zhou Caochuang nianpu” 周草窗年譜, in *Tang Song ciren nianpu* 唐宋詞人年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 358.
gathered up the traces of gifts that Mou had given to past guests while he was in the capital, in the form of money, wine, and such things, and claimed all of it to be stolen goods. They also directed the county overseer [of the locality where Mou was then posted] to harshly tighten the screws. From this time on, officials of the court held their tongues, bringing upon themselves the Kaiqing disaster.51

These two eulogies had long been out of circulation by the time I ran across them:

\[ \text{[Here Zhou transcribes the two].} \]

各繫以贊，未幾流傳中都。時相丁大全、內侍董宋臣聞而惡之，遂捃摭其在都日餽遺過客錢酒等物，並指為贓。下所居郡，監逮甚嚴。自此朝紳結舌，詭致開慶之禍焉。二贊削稿久矣，余偶得之。

I have said that Shangu took the initiative in bringing on calamity through his language; public opinion also holds that Shangu committed offenses, and this is probably apt. But his unsullied name has shone over these past two hundred years! What have scholars of the present age to fear from acting like gentlemen?53

予嘗謂山谷初以言語掇禍，公又以山谷得罪，是殆有數。然清名照映于二百年間，士之生世，亦何憚而不為君子哉!

Here, Zhou refers to Mou by his courtesy name Cunsou and by the name of the palace, Duanming, to which Emperor Duzong 度宗 (r. 1265–1275) promoted

---

51. This must refer to a damaging Mongol attack against the Song that occurred in 1259, during the single-year Kaiqing 開慶 reign period. F.W. Mote suggests that the Song dynasty might have fallen to the Mongols that year had Mongke Khan not died right then, and that any chance for Song to reach a peaceful agreement with the Mongols (as it had formerly done with the Jin) was obviated by the court's incompetence. See his *Imperial China: 900–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 441. Richard L. Davis does not give such certain agency to Mongke’s death in fending off the Song’s demise. But this Mongol attack had already done much damage, resulting in the fall of ten prefectures in Sichuan (including Longzhou 隆州, Mou Zicai’s home prefecture). See his “The Reign of Li-tsung,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 869–70.

52. Zhou’s transcription of the two eulogies (as recorded here) differs from the wording on the stele rubbings by a single character: Zhou writes *zhang* 章 instead of *pian* 篇 in the ninth line of the Li Bai eulogy. This minor variation, yielding “He selectively impugned your *writings* 章” instead of “He selectively impugned your *pieces* 篇,” could be traced to Zhou Mi himself or to a subsequent publisher of his book; on the other hand the stele’s recarver could have made the switch from *zhang* to *pian*.

him as Academician in the Duanming Pavilion (Duanmingdian xueshi 端明殿學士) at the end of his career. Ding Daquan 丁大全 (1181–1263) became chief councilor in early 1258, arguably placing this stele’s probable year of creation a bit later than Qian Daxin’s 錢大昕 (1728–1804) dating. Zhou Mi’s passage devotes itself more to Huang Tingjian than to the much better-known Li Bai; Huang’s case enabled Zhou Mi to discuss a Song figure, aligning with his larger project of recording historical episodes from that recent dynasty. Like Mou Zicai himself, Huang provided Zhou Mi with a chance to comment on the still-burning issue of the Song dynasty’s recent demise, closely related in Zhou’s thinking to the weakness of court officials when faced with corruption, which he viewed as having facilitated the Mongol invasion.

Zhou writes that, in the garden located next to the prefectural office in Dangtu, Mou encountered a gazebo named after Li Bai’s boot-removal episode. The gazebo may have contained a stele devoted to that event, or could have itself been named in reference to the local proximity of Caishi and its famous denizen. Although Zhou makes no mention of either stele or rubbings in his discussion of the pictures, using only the less precise terms hui 繪 (“paint”) and tu 圖 (“picture”), it is safe to assume that he is writing here about rubbings of the stele, for these were instrumental in the unfolding of subsequent events, and were the most likely instruments by which Mou’s eulogies became known to Zhou. Zhou’s use of the term hui is appropriate when we remember that the pictures existed as paintings prior to their engraving (ke 刻 or le 勒) into stone; Zhou would have understood the rubbings as records of these paintings. It is helpful to recall that Zhou Mi was a noted painting connoisseur, widely familiar with private art collections in Hangzhou where he lived during the last decades of his life. He also knew Mou Zicai personally and was a close friend of his son Mou Yan 牟巘 (1227–1311). Zhou is exaggerating here the

54. See note 7. Qian dated the stele to 1256 on the basis of a 1358 colophon that Mou Zicai’s grandson Yingfu engraved onto its Huang Tingjian side, to the left of Mou Zicai’s eulogy, in which Yingfu mentions a space of eighty-three years separating himself from (what Qian Daxin presumes to be) Zicai’s erecting of the stele. See Qian Daxin, Qian yan tang jinshiwen bawei, in Jiading Qian Daxin quanji 嘉釗錢大昕全集 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997), 17.446–48. Elsewhere Qian wrote that the stele was still extant, indicating he probably viewed it in person; see Nianershi kaoyi 廿二史考異, in Jiading Qian Daxin quanji, 18.1495.

55. See note 7. Mou Zicai’s friendship with Mou Yan began in 1246, when their fathers held official posts in Quzhou 衢州. See Jennifer Jay, A Change in Dynasties: Loyalism in Thirteenth-Century China (Bellingham: Western Washington University, 1991), 198n3. In Pinzhou yudi pu 蘋洲漁笛譜,
relationship between the rubbings’ reception and the demise of the Song dynasty when he decries court officials’ inability to prevent the calamity. But of interest here is the two courtiers’—Ding Daquan and Dong Songchen—strong reaction to the rubbings, which was kindled above all by the picture of Gao Lishi removing Li Bai’s boots and its likening of Dong to that notorious eighth-century eunuch of Xuanzong’s court. Mou further strengthened the effect of this parallel through the tone of his accompanying eulogy.

Presenting the Li Bai rubbing within Mou Zicai’s larger career, Mou’s Song shi biography offers a somewhat different account of its context and reception:

At this time [in the 1250s], Ding Daquan (1181–1263) and Dong Songchen were creating turbulence in the court, both within and without; and [Mou] Zicai repeatedly submitted requests to retire [from his position] and return [to Tai-ping prefecture]. [There] Zicai at first erected a shrine to Li Bai, adding to it a memorial record that went:

時丁大全與(董)宋臣表裡濁亂朝政，子才累疏辭歸。初，子才在太平建李白祠，自為記曰:

“The denunciation of [Li] Bai actually came about because Gao Lishi incited the anger of Yang Guifei, as revenge for the resentment he felt at having had to remove [Li Bai’s] boots. Prideful and full of himself, Lishi would never have willingly taken the part of slave. But Bai was not simply adopting a haughty attitude toward Gao Lishi; he felt it should be his duty to sweep away corruption; so he protested against [Gao’s] extremely great power. Unaware of all this, [the Emperor] drove away whomever [Lishi] saw as a threat; thus Lishi’s influence continued to expand, and the rise of court eunuchs got its start here. From this time on, [Gao] led the imperial guards and caused bloodshed in the court; even the emperor could not bring him to heel.”

Zhou Mi writes how pleasurable it was to eavesdrop on the wide-ranging conversations of his father’s adult friends, remembering Mou Zicai for his erudition and interest in epigraphy. See Ankeny Weitz, Zhou Mi’s Record of Clouds and Mist Passing before One’s Eyes: An Annotated Translation (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 9. Much later Mou Yan wrote a preface for Zhou Mi’s Qidong yeyu, wherein he makes reference to his father’s boot-removal picture and eulogy, relating them to the corruption and decay of the government during the Baoyou and Kaiqing reign periods (1253–1259). See Mou Yan, “Zhou Gongqin Qidong yeyu xu 周公謹齊東野語序,” in Lingyang xiansheng wenji 陵陽先生文集 (Wuxing congshu ben ed., 1921), 12.5a–6a.

57 Qian Daxin observed that the stele bearing this memorial had long disappeared by the time he visited the site in the eighteenth century; see Qianyantang jinshiwen bawei, 17.447. Mou’s
《白之斥，實因高力士激怒妃子，以報脫靴之憾也。力士方貴倨，豈甘以奴隸自處者。白非直以氣陵亢而已，蓋以值掃除之職固當爾，所以反其極重之勢也。彼昏不知，顧為逐其所忌，力士聲勢益張，宦臣之盛，遂自是始。其後分提禁旅，碟血宮庭，雖天子且不得奴隸之矣。》

[Mou] also sketched a description of [Gao] Lishi removing [Li Bai’s] boots, wrote a eulogy for it, and engraved [these on] a few stones [stelae]. A court subordinate got hold of rubbings [from these] and passed them on to [Dong] Songchen, who was greatly angered. With the two rubbings in hand he complained in tears to the Emperor, and subsequently conspired with [Ding] Daquan to instigate the Censor to write a memorial framing and impeaching Zicai, saying that in [Tai-ping] prefecture he had embezzled the expenses of official banquets and gifts to guests, in order to enrich himself. [Mou] was demoted by two ranks; but that was not the end of it.58

又寫力士脫靴之狀，為之贊而刻諸石。屬有拓本遺宋臣，宋臣大怒，持二碑泣訴於帝，乃與大全合謀，嗾御史交章誣劾子才在郡公燕及饋遺過客為入己，降兩官，猶未已。

In sharp contrast to Zhou Mi’s Qidong yeyu narrative, the Song shi biography of Mou lacks any mention of the Huang Tingjian portrait with eulogy, and frames Mou’s Li Bai engraving within his construction of a Li Bai shrine, itself unmentioned by Zhou Mi.59 This clash prompts us to wonder about the relationship between these two Yuan sources. Between them, it is tempting to assign greater weight to Zhou Mi’s narrative because it was written closer to the event, and finds some corroboration in Guan Yunshi’s preface, from roughly thirty years later, recording a Removing Boots Gazebo in Dangtu that was likely the source of the two eulogy excerpts he copied (see note 31). The Song shi biography’s version of the story, compiled by an official committee at the Yuan court over fifty years later than Zhou’s passage, is more likely to have been colored by popular narratives that emerged in the interim.60
Indeed, the excerpt here includes dramatic touches not found in Zhou Mi’s more sober account, such as the incident where Dong Songchen runs crying to the Emperor with the rubbings in hand. And whereas Zhou writes of the rubbings’ swift transmission to the capital, as though this was a natural occurrence unrelated to any specific human agency, the Song shi biography attributes it to the work of a spy for Dong Songchen.

In Zhou’s telling, Mou’s images with eulogies were directly prompted by a gazebo that was already in place in Dangtu’s prefectural office garden and unrelated to a shrine. Probably located on Caishi, the Li Bai shrine would have been difficult to confuse with the gazebo. The Song shi biography has Mou himself creating the Li Bai shrine, for which he then composes both the memorial essay (unmentioned by Zhou) and the picture with eulogy of the boot-removal episode. These two accounts are hard to reconcile, but we can suggest some possibilities. Zhou Mi is known to have harbored a deep dislike for Daoxue and its advocates, which raises the question whether, given that the enshrining of local figures was largely the practice of Daoxue adherents, Zhou chose to dissociate Mou’s stele from such activity. It could also be that the later Song shi text erroneously conflated Mou’s building of the shrine and making of the stele as though they were one event, when they had really been two discrete actions. Mou could also have made more than one version of his boot-removal engraving, with only one of them accompanying the shrine.

point to Mou’s activities in the capital as basis for their accusations; in the SS biography the same accusations concern Mou’s behavior in the prefecture.

61. A biography of Mou in an early Qing gazetteer of Taiping prefecture echoes lines in the Song shi biography but adds a few details: that the year of Mou’s posting in Dangtu was 1255, that the Li Bai shrine was located on Caishi, and that Mou made pictures of both Li Bai’s Boot Removal and Huang Tingjian’s Rowing Back. See Huang Gui 黃桂, ed.; Song Xiang 宋驤, comp., Taiping fuzhi 太平府志, 40 juan (Kangxi period, rpt. 1903), 26.13a–13b.

62. Mou’s engraving of “a few stones” (zhushi 諸石) may reflect that multiple rubbings were yielded, of which three would comprise the two Li Bai and Huang Tingjian compositions under discussion along with the Li Bai shrine memorial. Mou could also have engraved multiple versions of the Li Bai composition.


64. Liscomb proposes that Mou had the Li Bai portrait engraved twice, “first for the gazebo commemorating the poet and then on a stele that could be placed near the one for Huang Tingjian
Still another possibility comes to mind when we read Linda Walton: “A common pattern of shrine-building (not always to True Way [Daoxue] patriarchs) was that it was associated with a local school, followed by the moving of the shrine to a new site and the founding of an academy.” Replacing “shrine” with “stele” opens the way for considering that Mou made his stele first and then later moved it to become integrated into his Li Bai shrine, though Huang Tingjian’s portrait remains a missing component. Whatever the scenario, Mou appears to have been playing a double game: adopting a stance of honorable reclusion as were many of his peers, but carefully cultivating his potential to regain a court position, as will be elaborated below.

Coming from their separate standpoints—a personal commentary inspired by the rubbings versus official history written for the interests of a new dynasty—the *Qidong yeyu* and *Song shi* narratives do share the aim of discrediting the late Southern Song court by describing the two courtiers’ attempts to destroy the career of an upstanding official. For Zhou Mi, this is the end of the story, foreshadowing as it does the demise of the Song dynasty and supporting his understanding that this demise had resulted from scholar-officials’ failure to bring about court reform. For the compilers of the *Song History*, this passage fit into their larger objectives as one more illustration that the present Yuan dynasty possessed a legitimate mandate to have supplanted the Song. In both cases, we view Mou’s stele through the curtain (or wall) of the Song’s extinction, little more than two decades after he erected it.

**Mou Zicai’s Song shi Biography**

Mou Zicai belonged to the first generation of officials serving in court positions after Daoxue had become state orthodoxy by Emperor Lizong’s decree of 1241. Mou was among its strongest advocates at the time, at least in terms of its application to court statecraft. His official *Song shi* biography offers us a case study of an official making principled arguments for good governance, in stark collision with the behavior of some of the most venal operators in

---

65. See *Academies and Society in Southern Song China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 60.
the late Southern Song government, serving under an emperor whose moral center was slipping away. According to his official biography and those court documents by him that still remain, Mou’s professional career was marked not by periods of banishment such as those that had befallen the subjects of his two stele portraits, but rather by lengthy spells of usually self-initiated relocation or temporary retirement, including the one that brought him to Dangtu district in the 1250s. By the time of his final retirement in 1265, he had reached the fairly high positions of Minister of Rites (libu shangshu) and Supervising Secretary (jishizhong); he had also been honored as an Academician in the Hall for Aid in Governance (Zizhengdian xueshi). He had won the respect of the Emperors Lizong and Duzong, and of many colleagues. As a scholar, Mou had studied with two important Daoxue adherents, Wei Liaoweng (1178–1237), who was largely responsible for spreading Daoxue into Sichuan earlier in the century, and Li Fangzi 李方子 (jinshi 1217), author of the first biography of Zhu Xi, no longer extant. Consequently, Mou is a good example of a Daoxue sympathizer in court who by all appearances sincerely sought to “enact the Way,” largely through loyal but unflinching remonstrance to both Emperor and fellow officials, even while, as reflected in the final line of Mou’s stele eulogy to Huang Tingjian, an important aspect of “Our Way” was its decoupling from bureaucratic success.
From the very beginning of his official career, as conveyed in his biography, Mou placed himself in a position adverse to strong forces in the court: in his civil service examination essays concerning national strategy, he expressed disagreement with the policies of the current grand councilor, Shi Miyuan  (1164–1233), and perhaps for this reason was posted as Defender (xianwei 縣尉) of Hongya district 洪雅縣 in Sichuan, ensuring his protection as well as temporary irrelevance. This early stance anticipates the tone of his subsequent career, as presented in Song shi, throughout which he observes court events with a watchful and reprimanding eye and never holds back from criticizing those in power, attacking colleagues whom he believes to be in the wrong, and sometimes sharing his opinion of other officials with the Emperor, who himself was not immune to Mou’s lecturing. Mou first entered the palace around 1238, as aide to the historian Li Xinchuan in the “compilation of the state history and veritable records for the period 1127–1224.” Further establishing their close connection was the marriage of Li’s granddaughter to Mou’s son. Like Li, Mou was a native of Jingyan district 井研縣 of Longzhou 隆州, in Chengdu Superior Prefecture circuit 成都府路. He had already served as Li’s aide for a similar history compilation project back in that circuit, from which both men fled with their families in the mid-thirties due to the Mongols’ ruthless invasion of that area as a first step in their conquest of the South. In 1240 when Li Xinchuan was banished from the court for good and took up residence in Huzhou 湖州 (modern-day Zhejiang), Mou and power politics were simply incompatible.” See “Wei Liaoweng’s Thwarted Statecraft,” in Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China, ed. Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 342. See also Peter K. Bol, “Chu Hsi’s Redefinition of Literati Learning,” in Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 151–85.

71. SS 411.12355.
74. Ogodei’s “series of lightning strikes against Sichuan . . . by late 1236 was said to have razed all but four of fifty-eight prefectural capitals in the region.” See Paul J. Smith, “Family,
served as Controller-general in Jizhou 吉州 (modern-day Ji’an 吉安, Jiangxi) and later in Quzhou 衢州 (modern-day Zhejiang). According to the writings of his son Mou Yan, Mou Zicai established a residence in Huzhou (as did many refugees from Sichuan) in 1246; and lived there mostly during the period between 1247 and 1251, when Zheng Qingzhi 鄭清之 (1178–1251) was grand councillor.75 Those who had fled Sichuan had no way to ever return to their ancestral homes; Mou therefore lived out the rest of his life in the southeast. A noteworthy activity not recorded in his Song shi biography that immediately followed his forced uprooting and relocation is the instrumental role he played in establishing in the capital city and other urban centers the cult of Zitong 梓潼, a god originally local to Sichuan. This activity (shared with co-provincials) is generally agreed to have been fueled by a desire to pray for Zitong’s expulsion of the Mongols from his home province.76

The period of Mou’s greatest influence in court was between 1251 and 1265, and it was during this period that his two relocations to Dangtu occurred; the first of these was very brief and the second must have lasted for some years. By this late stage in his reign, Lizong had withdrawn from his earlier attentiveness to affairs of state and began to lean even more heavily on the advice of surrounding courtiers,77 among whom perhaps the most shameless in taking advantage of his growing incompetence were the two much maligned court figures encountered earlier, the eunuch Dong Songchen and the official Ding Daquan (jinshi 1238). Described by Richard Davis as “a manipulative eunuch whose favor by the emperor seems to correlate in direct proportion to


75. Mou Yan, “Ti Shi Donggao Nanyuan tuhou” 题施东杲南园图后, in Lingyang xiansheng wenji, 17.11a–11b. In this colophon to Shi Donggao’s painting South Garden, Mou Yan writes that in 1247 his father ran afoul of the current grand councilor and moved into the Huzhou residence attached to this garden. Zheng Qingzhi’s death in 1251 prompted Mou’s return to court as Editorial Director (zhuzuolang 著作郎) in the Palace Library.


77. See Hu Zhaoxi and Cai Dongzhou, _Song Lizong Song Duzong_, 163.
the bureaucracy’s disdain,”78 Dong remained in Lizong’s favor until his death in 1263. Ding Daquan rose up as an official in the bureaucracy and was even more disliked by court officials than Dong and other palace favorites,79 as his promotions were said to have been achieved through the close relationships he cultivated with both Dong Songchen and Lizong’s favorite concubine, Consort Yan 閻妃 (d. 1260),80 whose period of activity coincides almost exactly that of Dong. At some point in the 1250s, according to popular accounts, the following ditty appeared on a palace door: “With Yan, Ma, Ding, and Dang (referring to Dong)/Dynastic strength will soon be gone!” 闚馬丁當

Enabled by a weak emperor, court factionalism combined with unsavory interactions between inner court and outer court officials hobbled the effectiveness of governance during the Song dynasty’s last half-century, inspiring increased numbers of officials to resign in protest. Mou was no exception. Some places in the Song shi biography read like a sequence of vendetta outbreaks between competing officials, among whom Mou often prevails, with assistance from Emperor Lizong.82 At one point in 1253, as narrated in his official biography, having grudgingly accepted the position of Court Diarist, Mou repeatedly requests dismissal from it soon after effecting an exit from the same office of a colleague with whom he feels ashamed to work:

The Censor Xiao Tailai (jinshi 1229) impeached Gao Side (jinshi 1229) and Xu Lin. Li Boyu (jinshi 1235) of the Right Office of State Affairs objected that those

---

80. Davis cautions us not to be too credulous when reading traditional accounts of bad actors in history; see “The Reign of Li-tsung.” 888.
81. See He Zhongli 何忠禮 and Xu Jijun 徐吉軍, Nan Song shigao: zhengzhi, junshi, wenhua 南宋史稿: 政治, 軍事, 文化 (Hangzhou: Hangzhou daxue chubanshe, 1999), 356. The second name is that of Ma Tianji 馬天驥, said to have sent lavish wedding gifts to Lizong’s daughter, which enabled his promotion as Vice Minister of Rites (libu shilang 礼部侍郎) with a concurrent position as Commissioner of the Bureau of Military Affairs (tong qianshu shumiyuan shi 同簽書樞密院事). In Songji sanxiao zhengyao 宋季三朝政要 (1312), the posting of this ditty is dated to the third year of the Baoyou reign period, or 1255 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2005), 2.15b.
82. Mou makes a good exhibit for Davis’ claim that “Li-tsung often advanced his most vocal critics to prominent posts.” See “The Reign of Li-tsung,” 873.
impeached had not deserved it, whereupon the Emperor reprimanded Boyu and, lessening his rank by two levels, had him dismissed.

御史蕭泰來劾高斯得，徐霖，右司李伯玉言泰來所劾不當，上切則伯玉，降兩官，罷。

[Mou] Zicai said: “Your majesty’s reform [was supposed to involve] the summoning [to court] of various worthies; but today [Zhao] Ruteng, Side, and Lin have one by one been impeached, and Boyu again penalized; good men are becoming scarce.” [Mou] was given the added office of Court Diarist, which office he strenuously [sought to] reject.

子才言：《陛下更化，召用諸賢，今汝騰，斯得，霖相繼劾去，伯玉又重獲罪，善人盡矣。》除兼侍立修注官，力辭。

There was a large fire in the Temporary Capital [Lin’an]. In response to an imperial decree Zicai submitted words of extreme straightforwardness about the matter and was given an additional post in the Documents Drafting Office. At this time, [Xiao] Tailai was also transferred to the position of Imperial Diarist, and Zicai, ashamed to be associated with Tailai, strenuously submitted seven resignations, upon which the Emperor removed Tailai. But then Zicai continued requesting to exit [the post], saying: “Now that Tailai has left, how can I be allowed to stay here alone?”

行都大火，子才應詔上封事，言甚切直，兼直舍人院。會泰來亦遷起居郎，恥與泰來同列，七疏力辭，上為出泰來，而子才亦請去不已，曰：《泰來既去，臣豈得獨留。》

83. Xiao’s new position as Imperial Diarist (qijulang 起居郎) appears to have placed him in the same office with Mou as Court Diarist (xiuzhuguan 修注官). Of these two positions Hucker writes that the relationship between them is unclear; see Dictionary of Official Titles, 427. Zhou Mi wrote an account of the above events titled “Li Boyu” 李伯玉, in which he refers to Xiao’s and Mou’s positions as “Left Scribe” (zuoshi 左史) and “Right Scribe” (youshi 右史), respectively. See Zhou Mi, Guixin zazhi 癸辛雜識, ed. Wu Qiming 吳企明, Tang Song shiliao biji congkan 唐宋史料筆記叢刊 ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), Bieji 別集, xia 下.299.

84. SS 411.12357. According to the Basic Annals (benji 本紀) of Lizong’s reign, Mou strenuously rejected the position of Court Diarist only four times, rather than seven. These Annals also provide more detail about Mou’s opinion of Xiao: Mou “fully laid out Tailai’s predatoriness and filth, and his own unwillingness to be associated with him” 級陳泰來姦險汙穢，恥與為伍. See SS 43.8.48. Here we also learn that Xiao was made Prefect of Longxing prefecture 龍興府 in the eighth month of the first year of the Baoyou reign period (1253), dating his removal from court to likely earlier that year.
(The Emperor did not grant Mou his wish.) Xiao Tailai was a protégé of Ding Daquan, whose habit of embedding members of his clique in the position of Censor, allowing Ding to direct the expulsion of his enemies, may have played a role in Mou Zicai’s low opinion of the man. In addition, one of the victims of Xiao’s impeachment described above, Gao Side, had long been a colleague of Mou’s, beginning back when both men worked for Li Xinchuan in Sichuan; Gao would later compose a poetic elegy to Mou. Thus Mou’s objection to Xiao had a clear basis, even if Mou’s behavior in the above passage is puzzling—why did he try to leave the position of Court Diarist immediately after the emperor had made the position tolerable by removing his nemesis? We see here the high degree of trust that Lizong placed in Mou, and the influence that Mou had with the emperor; both of these find ample corroboration elsewhere in the biography. We also learn how embroiled Mou was in factional politics even while insisting on his own purity, and that of his allies.

Mou was certainly influenced by the legacy of his teacher Wei Liaoweng and by the mindset of other Daoxue adherents. Wei’s teacher (indirectly) was the revered Zhu Xi, who had himself spent relatively little of his life in an official position. Admiration for officials who distanced themselves from the court was growing over the course of the late Southern Song. Especially germane to Mou’s behavior may have been Wei’s belief, as recorded in Song Yuan xuean buyi and paraphrased by James T.C. Liu, that:

Learned scholar-officials should not hold back from offering their opinions, for how can they be sure that (these) will not be accepted? Even when for some reason an official is sent out to a provincial post, the emperor might still place trust in his opinions, a situation preferable to serving at court without such trust.

From this passage we might gain insight into the motivation behind Mou’s consistent rejections of official positions, and especially, behind his stints

85. Hu Zhaoxi and Cai Dongzhou, Song Lizong Song Duzong, 165.
away from court. Periods of reclusion increased his value as perceived by both sovereign and colleagues, since detachment from personal ambition garnered greater credibility and influence. As the Song wore on, moreover, a growing admiration for officials who differed with and distanced themselves from the court was making itself evident.88 As Liu suggests after paraphrasing Wei Liaoweng’s thought-process, such detachment was not without its own transactional benefits: if an official who had earlier resigned in protest was later recalled to court, he “could then insist on his own policies as the price of his participation.”89 Mou would have been in a good position to level such demands.90

What Was Mou Zicai Really Doing?

Placing the Song shi account translated above within the larger biography of Mou Zicai and checking it against other texts brings us closer to reconstructing the larger sequence of events leading to his reassignment to Dangtu and creation of the Dangtu engravings. The Song shi excerpt translated above is about Mou’s second posting there, as we suspect from the words “[Mou] repeatedly submitted requests to retire and return” (leishu cigui 累疏辭歸) in its first line. During his earlier tour there Mou had enacted a number of policies contributing to Taiping prefecture’s moral education and welfare, for which he had been rewarded by a summons back to court to take the post of Probationary Vice Minister of Works (quan libu shilang 權工部侍郎). Local gazetteers differ over the dates of his arrival in Dangtu; in some it occurred during 1253, the same year in which he effected the ouster of Xiao Tailai as Imperial Diarist, while in others it happened two years later. The discrepancies could reflect his having been posted there twice. During his first tour as Prefect of Taiping jun, Mou educated the Dangtu population and performed other good works, as his Song shi biography relates:

As Senior Compiler in the Palace of Gathered Worthies, [Mou] was made Magistrate of Taiping prefecture. Earlier as Superintendent of Tea and Salt for

90. The point would be further supported by reading his SS biography against those of his memorials that are gathered in JCJB. But a more detailed history of Mou’s actions as a court official, while desirable, is beyond the limits of this study.
Jiang(nan) and Huai(nan) circuits, he had requested exemption [from that office], pointing to his lack of familiarity with finances.91

On arriving at the prefecture, the first thing he did was teach the population about filial piety and brotherly love, and he engraved [on stone], thereby promulgating, two poems written by a predecessor, “Principled Tree” and “Charitable Bamboo.”92 In his spare time he instructed students through lecturing on the classics. He also repaired over a hundred warships from the Battle of Caishi and restored thousands of weapons [from that battle].

至郡，首教民孝弟，以前人《慈竹》《義木》二詩刻而頒之，間學為諸生講說經義。修采石戰艦百余艘，造兵仗以千計。91

In addition, Mou contributed to the material wealth of the prefecture by paying back earlier debts of its administration and improving the health of the community granary. His actions accord with a growing Daoxue priority on benefitting localities through good works and moral education, on the understanding that the most effective socio-political action took place in districts and prefectures rather than the central court.94 We also learn in this passage that Mou made engravings onto stelae to further spread his message in Dangtu. This was not a rare practice, but it seems to have been on the increase at this time, perhaps fueled by the actions of recent emperors.95

---

91. Of such behavior James T.C. Liu writes: “A few members [of the Daoxue school] with extreme views openly stated their aversion to fiscal duties, as these tended to compromise their moral integrity, and used it as the ground to request for transfers.” See his “How Did a Neo-Confucian School Become the State Orthodoxy?,” *Philosophy East and West* 23.4 (Oct. 1973): 496–97. Liu’s characterization may apply to Mou, who nevertheless was a competent administrator according to what comes next in his biography.

92. These appear to have been two didactic poems written by the elder statesman He Yi 何異 (*jinshi* 1154), on whom Mou likely modeled himself. The last line of “Yimu” 義木 translates: “How I have yearned to write “Principled Tree”/As a distant continuation of [the] “Charitable Bamboo” poem./Filial piety grows before my eyes;/Bamboo and pine are both friends of mine” 懷哉賦義木，遠繼慈竹詩。孝順長在眼，竹木皆吾友。See Zuo Guochun 左國春 and Rao Na 繆娜, “Yi Hongzhi Fuzhou fuzhi buyi Quan Song shi” 以《弘治撫州府志》補遺《全宋詩》, *Wenxue yanjiu* 文學研究 2015.11: 17–18.

93. *SS* 112359.


95. See Ebrey, “Huizong’s Stone Inscriptions,” 229–74; Murray, “The Hangzhou Portraits of Confucius and Seventy Two Disciples,” 7–18. Aside from Huizong and Gaozong, Lizong was
As we have seen, Mou’s *Song shi* biography draws a direct connection between his second posting in Dangtu and the “turbulence” (*luan* 亂) in both outer and inner court created by Ding Daquan and Dong Songchen, whose rising influence during the 1250s coincided with a number of court scandals in which the emperor played a key role. Any of these could have incited Mou’s next departure from court and second posting to Dangtu. One of them, however, is linked closely to Mou’s *Boot Removal* picture in a popular record included in *Songren yishi huibian* 宋人軼事匯編 (*Compendium of Anecdotes about Song Figures*). Its transcription below is preceded by a passage in Mou’s *Song shi* biography narrating the initiating event:

### ‘Song shi’:

On the fifteenth day of the first month, [the Emperor] invited common prostitutes into the palace, and [Mou] Zicai said, “All this is Dong Songchen and his like doing damage to your unsullied record.” Mou was made Provisional Vice-Director of the Ministry of War, from which position he repeatedly requested to retire, but the Emperor would not allow it. Mou was [instead] promoted as Compiler of the *State History* and Senior Compiler in the Office of the *Veritable Records*.  

### ‘Songren yishi huibian’:

On the eve of New Year’s Day of the *guichou* year [Baoyou 宝祐 1, 1253], the Emperor summoned prostitutes into the palace. Among them was Tang An’an, whose erotic singing had no parallel and was favored by His Highness. Vice Minister Mou Zicai submitted a memorial saying: “All this has come about from the provocations of Dong Songchen and his like, marring Your Highness’s pure and cultivated behavior over these past thirty years.”

---

another Song emperor who made frequent use of engraved stelae; see Zhu Jianxin 朱劍心, *Jinshixue* 金石學 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1981), 289.

96. Richard Davis does not point to any particular event prompting Mou’s departure from court, writing: “One tao-hsueh proponent at the Ministry of Works, Mou Tsu-ts’ai (chin-shih 1223) resigned in outrage at such improprieties”—which Davis links to “eunuch power . . . compounded by imperial indulgence of various other favorites.” Mou’s departure coincided with that of the Censor Hong Tianxi 洪天錫 (*jinshi* 1226), who denounced eunuch power in mid-1255 and resigned shortly afterward. See “The Reign of Li-tsung,” 887–88.

97. SS 411.12358.
癸丑元夕，上呼妓入禁中。有唐安安者，歌色絕倫，帝愛幸之。侍郎牟子才奏曰：“此皆董宋臣輩引誘，壞陛下三十年自修之操。”

The emperor ordered Ding Daquan to release a proclamation stating: “Your loyal [memorial] will be accepted with no harm [to yourself]; just do not dare replicate [and leak] it.” Zicai also made a picture, Gao Lishi Removing [Li Bai’s] Boots. An ally made a rubbing [of it] and sent it to Songchen, who said in fury, “An oral opinion is allowed; but [not] a painting so brazen!” [With rubbing] in hand he went into audience, crying to the Emperor, “That Mou guy in Dangtu is scolding Your Majesty.”

The Emperor looked at the picture and said with a laugh, “This is rebuking you, not me.” Songchen replied, “He is saying that you are Minghuang [Tang Xuanzong]; Consort Yan is Taizhen [Yang Guifei]; and I am [Gao] Lishi; furthermore he is placing himself in the role of Taibai [Li Bai].” After this, His Highness was less pleased.

In the second, popular narrative, Mou’s stele engraving of the boot removal takes center stage. This passage is said to base itself on sources dating from the Ming period, but these must have derived from earlier writings, some perhaps available to the fourteenth-century compilers of Mou’s Song shi biography.

---

98. Zhou Xunchu 周勛初, ed., Songren yishi huibian 宋人軼事匯編, 5 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2014), 3.208. The sources for this entry are Tian Rucheng 田汝成, Xihu youlan zhi yu 西湖游覽志餘, juan 2, and Mei Dingzuo 梅鼎祚, Qingni lianhua ji 青泥蓮花記, juan 13. The two dates for this scandal given in early sources (1253 and 1255) lead Hu Zhaoxi and Cai Dongzhou to speculate that Lizong invited prostitutes into the palace two times; see Song Lizong Song Duzong, 179n6.

or textual architecture, we are interested in the priority given to Mou’s boot-removal engraving in the second account. Its creation immediately follows Mou’s reprimand to Dong Songchen on behalf of the Emperor, suggesting that the image was an addendum to the reprimand (possible in spite of its temporal and spatial distance from the court event). Less bound to the kind of archival accuracy (or at least rough chronology) implied by the format of the official biography, the popular account from Songren yishi huibian provides a simplified motivation for Mou’s engraved image, and in doing so lays it side-by-side with Mou’s courtly admonition to Dong, thus displaying the differing reception given to Mou’s image in comparison with his words.

Between words of reprimand on one hand and the allegorical image on the other, it is the latter that conveys Mou’s message more powerfully and incites the anger of Dong Songchen, its immediate target. Such a conclusion is one of the main points of the popular account quoted above. The image intensifies Mou’s words because it addresses Dong’s behavior not by illustrating it, but by revealing its larger import through historical analogy. The depiction we see, of Li regally presenting his foot as Gao reaches toward it in shrunken obeisance, may have further contributed to Dong’s furious response. Engraving the image onto a stele invested it with an official and classical aura less implicit in a painting. Whether or not Mou erected his stele with the express purpose of having rubbings made from it which would then be conveyed back to the capital, there is little reason to doubt the account of its reception back at court, an account shared by both official biography and popular narrative that finds ultimate basis in the writings of Zhou Mi. All versions of the story suggest that Mou Zicai out in the field kept his thoughts firmly with the court and refused to lose hope in the potential reform of both it and the emperor. In fact, it is quite likely that Mou Zicai intended Lizong himself as the ultimate audience of his stele engravings, even while their immediate target was Dong Songchen and they may well have concurrently circulated amongst scholar-officials in Jiangnan.

100. As Li Cho-ying and Charles Hartman point out in reference to Gaozong’s Portraits and Eulogies of Confucius with his Seventy-two Disciples (completed almost exactly a century before the generally agreed-upon date of Mou’s stele, 1256), steles were made less for public display themselves and more to serve as basis for the making and distribution of rubbings from them. See Li and Hartman, “A Newly Discovered Inscription by Qin Gui: Its Implications for the Study of Song Daoxue,” HJAS 70.2 (Dec. 2010): 393, 415.
In this connection we can appreciate how Mou Zicai’s two portraits distinguish themselves from the portraits of worthies commonly found on local shrines that were widespread at this time.\(^{101}\) Mou’s participation in the current practice of local shrine-building (to Li Bai), recorded in his Song shi biography and echoed in numerous local gazetteers from later on, accords with the intellectual and political affinities of his Daoxue adherent peers, who placed a new weight on local accomplishments as their preferred means of “enacting the Way” without having to embroil themselves in court politics at the national level.\(^{102}\) Yet while shrines to local worthies usually focused themselves on the elevation of figures who, by their actions in localities away from court, reflected a disillusionment with, and a deemphasis upon, governance at the national level in favor of an engagement in concrete local accomplishments, Mou chose for his subjects of eulogy two paragons who were well-established in the empire-wide scholar-official culture but could only boast brief and undistinguished sojourns in the locality of Dangtu.\(^{103}\) It was mistreatment by their respective imperial courts that Mou emphasized in eulogizing Li Bai and Huang Tingjian, rendering the locality of Dangtu less a source of pride as an arena for both men’s local accomplishments in governance from the bottom up, and more a coincidentally shared destination that witnessed the two figures’ ill use by the central government. Mou’s two subjects do not stand out as unusual in the late Southern Song, for, as Ellen Neskar explains, “One


\(^{102}\) Their approach to the state is summed up by Conrad Schirokauer and Robert Hymes: “[T]he Northern Sung elite concentrated whenever possible on acting upon a national stage, on achieving high office, on living the role of the elite of a nation, an empire. The Southern Sung elite, by contrast, seems to have retracted itself in its home localities, to have married locally, lived locally, and in many ways (though by no means all) thought and acted locally;” see their “Introduction,” in Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China, ed. Hymes and Schirokauer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4, 20–27. Mou Zicai in his early life was not an exception to this localist turn, and might have continued thus had he and peers not been uprooted and become dependent upon the Southern Song court for their livelihoods. But in addition, a basis for Mou’s more empire-wide orientation, also visible in the career of Wei Liaoweng, may lie in the men’s Sichuan background and related intellectual leanings, as discussed below.

\(^{103}\) Mou could have chosen a local worthy to eulogize, such as Guo Xiangzheng 郭祥正 (zi Gongfu 功甫, 1035–1113), an esteemed figure with whom Huang Tingjian had spent his last hours in Dangtu sharing poems and wine. See Huang Baohua, Huang Tingjian pingzhuan, 371. Retired by that time from national government, Guo was revered in Dangtu for his good works there; but to enshrine Guo would have been at cross-purposes with Mou’s goal.
of the most striking trends in the late Southern Song was the enshrinement of men who had been persecuted by the court and exiled to the provinces.” Nevertheless, we come away from Mou’s writings and behavior with a strong sense that his foremost concerns lay specifically with the current situation in Lizong’s court, and its potential reform. Even his establishment of a shrine to Li Bai was a departure from most other local shrines of the period in its underlying intentions, which become clear when we read the memorial he wrote to accompany it. In enshrining Li Bai as a vehicle to criticize the power of eunuchs in the imperial court, Mou was adopting an *au courant* practice (the enshrinement and portraiture of local worthies) in order to achieve goals that were oriented directly at influencing an issue at the capital. While exalting the two poets as victims of their respective courts, Mou seems to have been seeking to influence his own, from which he intended only a temporary exile.

Regarding Mou Zicai’s shrine in this light, we might also suspect it was Mou himself, relocated to a local position by his own request, who not only commissioned the accompanying stele but also orchestrated its rubbings’ transmission back to the capital. We find content in other extant memorials by Mou that align with the ambitions underlying his stele imprints. In one example he had written in 1252, Mou likened five issues in the current government to those of the penultimate reign period of the Northern Song under Huizong, the Xuanhe 宣和 era (1119–1126), with the prescient implication that if not corrected these issues would again lead to a bad end for the dynasty. The issues were: “seeking favors for private ends” (*qi siye*) 啟私謁, “addiction to short-term goals” (*ni jinxi*) 澀近習, “a reverence for engineering projects” (*chong mutu*) 崇木土, “harboring petty men” (*bi xiaoren*) 庇小人, and “a loss of human-heartedness” (*shi renxin*) 失人心. After witnessing and criticizing the mounting scandals at Lizong’s court, Mou requested leave to return to his earlier post. But he did so not simply to make a huffy court exit; he was making a last attempt to steer the Emperor away from his present course, using a format guaranteed to provoke, in a way that his eloquent memorials had not.

---

105. Zhang Jinling 張金岭, *Song Lizong yanjiu* 宋理宗研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008), 166. This long memorial, dated to 1252, was titled “On Five Issues by Which [our] Shady and Corrupted Government Resembles the Xuanhe Reign.” See “Lun yinzhuo zhi zheng youlei Xuanhe zhe you wushi shu” 論陰濁之政有類宣和者有五事疏, in *JCJB* 91:289–3–98. This is far from the only instance of Mou likening the government of his time to that of the late Northern Song.
Mou’s approach may have been similar to that of Wei Liaoweng, paraphrased above, to the effect that an official might more effectively express criticism of court policies while serving away from court. Wei’s ideas found some vindication when Lizong personally looked into the slander leveled at Mou and concluded it was baseless. We remember that as a result of this slander Mou was demoted by two ranks; “but this was not the end of it,” according to his Song shi biography:

The Emperor had his doubts, and with a wooden tablet secretly questioned the prefect of Anji [Huzhou] Wu Ziming [about Mou’s case], to which Ziming wrote in a memorial, “I once visited Zicai’s home, and his four walls were bare; it is widely known that he is impoverished. I urge Your Highness not to believe rumors.” The emperor told the Participant in the Classics Colloquium about this, saying, “This matter of Mou Zicai—Wu Ziming says there is nothing to it; what do you think?”

帝疑之，密以槧問安吉守吳子明，子明奏曰：“臣昔至子才家，四壁蕭然，人咸知其清貧，陛下毋信讎言。”帝語經筵宮曰：“牟子才之事，吳子明乃謂無之，何也。”

No one dared respond, but then Dai Qingke said, “I believe that Zicai once criticized Ziming’s older brother, Zicong.” The Emperor replied, “There you have it,” and with this the matter was resolved. Overall public opinion held that, although despicable, [Ding Daquan and Dong Songchen] could not be done away with. 

眾莫敢對，戴慶珂曰：“臣憶子才嘗責子明之兄子聰。”帝曰：“然。”事遂解。蓋公論所在，雖仇讎不可廢也。

Not long after this, Daquan was defeated and Songchen denounced; furthermore, those who had slandered [Mou] Zicai were all scattered to places beyond the southern sea, upon which Zicai was restored to his official positions and made superintendent of the Palace of Jade Arising and Ten Thousand Immortalities (probably a sinecure). 

106. SS 411.12359–60. Wu Ziming and Zicong were nephews of Wu Zhigu 吳知古, Lizong’s favorite among the Daoist nuns he cultivated, and thereby secured official posts; see Davis, “The Reign of Li-tsung,” 874. Of the latter Mou had claimed, [Zicong] “uses official rank as a commodity on the market, with shameless officials crowding around his door. Public opinion finds this outrageous and he should not be employed.” 以官爵為市，搢紳之無恥者輻輳其門，公論素所切齒，不可用。See SS 411.12358. As a result Zicong was demoted from Audience Attendant (zhigemen shi 知閤門事) to Prefect of Fengzhou 潞州. In the above Song shi passage, Emperor
In Pursuit of a Lost Southern Song Stele and its Maker

The demotion or departure of Ding Daquan and Dong Songchen cleared the way for Mou’s return to court.\textsuperscript{107} The \textit{Song shi} account tells us that, following his rehabilitation, Mou was held in even higher regard than before by Lizong.\textsuperscript{108} Despite friction between Mou and the current grand councilor.

Lizong learns the real story on Mou from Zicong’s brother Ziming, who speaks in favor of Mou even though aware of Mou’s earlier criticism of his brother; perhaps for this reason Lizong sees Ziming’s word as reliable.

\textsuperscript{107} In the tenth month of 1259, Ding was impeached, due to having concealed news that the Mongols had crossed the Yangzi and put Ezhou (modern-day Wuchang, Hubei) under siege, but even so he was given a high-status local position. The following year, Jia Sidao transferred Ding to a military unit and three years later had him banished to Guangdong. See He Zhongli and Xu Jijun, \textit{Nan Song shigao}, 356–57. Dong was expelled from court by Jia in 1260. See Hu Zhaoxi and Cai Dongzhou, \textit{Song Lizong Song Duzong}, 175.

\textsuperscript{108} The reliability of Mou’s \textit{Song shi} biography should not go unquestioned. At one point it tells us that Mou informed the court of overly harsh behavior by Xu Weili 徐謂禮, the Prefect of Xinzhou 信州, during Xu’s remapping of that prefecture’s agricultural field boundaries (jingjie 經界), which resulted in the court’s censuring of Xu. But the recent discovery of Xu Weili’s tomb, in which a complete set of his personnel documents (in copy) was found to contain no mention of this episode, sheds doubt on the \textit{Song shi} account. See Charles Hartman, \textit{Review of Wuyi Nan Song Xu Weili wenshu} 武義南宋徐謂禮文書, ed. Bao Weimin 包偉民 and Zheng Jiali 鄭嘉勵, \textit{JSYS} 43 (2013): 358–66. Bao Weimin writes: “The Song court acting on the basis of Mou Zicai’s words to ‘immediately end [Xu’s] boundary remapping and censure Weili’ is apparently exaggerated praise for the subject of the \textit{Song shi}’s ‘Biography of Mou Zicai’; it can be seen from the [unearthed] documents that Xu Weili’s implementation of the boundary remapping was actually a professional accomplishment for which [Xu] won praise and promotion by one rank.” See Bao Weimin, “Qianyan: Wuyi Nan Song Wuyi Nan Song Xu Weili wenshu gaikuang jiqi xueshu jiazhi” 前言：武義南宋徐謂禮文書概況及其學術價值, in Bao Weimin, ed., \textit{Wuyi Nan Song Xu Weili wenshu} (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2012), 4. Added basis for skepticism about Mou’s biography comes by way of a long account by the epigrapher Luo Zhen yu 羅振玉 (1866–1940) in his “Zhao Wenmin Erxian tujuan ba” 趙文敏二賢圖卷跋, in \textit{ZhenSong laoren yigao} 貞松老人遺稿, Jiaji 甲集, Bazhong 八種, 6 vols. (n.p.: n.p., 1941), Hougao 後稿, 32a–33a. According to this extraordinary text, assuming we can trust Luo, Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1328) painted Mou Zicai’s two portraits of Li Bai and Huang Tingjian in handscroll format at the request of Zicai’s grandson Mou Yingfu. (Kobayashi Takamichi’s paper provides probable basis for Zhao Mengfu’s willingness to do such a favor for Mou Yingfu; see note 73.) Following these portraits, Yingfu wrote a long memorial record, transcribed by Luo, devoted to describing his grandfather’s integrity and undeserved mistreatment by the court, giving much attention to his stele (of which Yingfu presumed there had been two), at the end of which Yingfu writes that he has asked gentlemen of the realm (adding up to a total of seventeen), in the capital where he is presently located, to inscribe the handscroll and “remember for posterity the moral integrity of
Jia Sidao 賈似道 (1213–1275), the emperor promoted Mou to the post of Vice-Director of the Ministry of Rites. To what degree Mou’s stele engravings played a role in Emperor Lizong’s high opinion of him is hard to say, as he had already won his esteem; but they accord with Mou’s already well-established attempts to hold Lizong as well as his court colleagues in line. What was exceptional here was his doing so by means of a different medium from usual to amplify the point.

From the standpoint of intent, the pictorial stele engraving of Li Bai’s boot-removal would fit comfortably into the category that Alfreda Murck refers to as “images that admonish.” Scholar-officials resorted to such paintings to imply criticism of current government policies for lack of other means to express their opinions, and in some isolated instances actually had influence over their lofty targets. The most well-known case of this is the Northern Song painting Liumin tu 流民圖, or Picture of Destitute People, portraying starving people at the Anshang Gate 安上門 of Kaifeng, which the official Zheng Xia 鄭俠 (1041–1119) submitted to Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1067–1085) in 1074 along with a memorial criticizing the damaging effects of the Emperor’s recently implemented New Policies (xinfa 新法) reforms. The painting (no longer extant) is said to have so upset Shenzong that he decreed a temporary halt to the policies in question; however, due to outcries by pro-Reform officials these policies were restored soon afterward. What is less known but equally important about Zheng Xia is that later on he made another work that seems more germane to the present subject in terms of its content. He submitted a memorial accompanied by portraits of good and bad Tang dynasty...

---

109. Murck, “Images that Admonish,” Orientations 32.6 (Jun. 2001): 52–57. The paintings that Murck focuses on in this article are a bit different from those making up the core of her related book, whose purpose “was not indirect remonstration but the venting of frustration;” see her Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 5.


111. Murck, Poetry and Painting in Song China, 40–42.
officials, *Pictorial Record of the Careers of Proper and Upright Gentlemen and Heterodox and Crooked Petty Men* (*Zhengzhi junzi xiequ xiaoren shiye tuji* 政治君子邪曲小人事業圖記). For this thinly-veiled suggestion that current court officials had been poorly selected, Zheng was accused of slander and treason, only saved from execution by the emperor’s intervention (but he was still banished until the following reign). Even with his probable knowledge of this precedent, given his familiarity with earlier Song history, Mou Zicai had no reason to fear a similar fate, not only because the immediate object of his criticism was a eunuch. By now long a presence in court, Mou seems by career’s end to have further won the emperor’s favor despite, and perhaps to some degree because of, his forthright dissent.

**Concluding Remarks**

Standing back to analyze what we have gathered about Mou Zicai and his career, we find that his birth in Sichuan and his continuing loyalty to his region of origin, growing more intense after his permanent separation from it upon the Mongol invasion, gives coherence to all aspects of his behavior in the extant textual record. One of his first actions upon relocation from Sichuan to the capital in 1236 was to organize construction there of a temple to the local Sichuan god Zitong; and he continued such activity for the rest of his life in cooperation with fellow uprooted co-locals (*tongxiang* 同鄉). Two years later in 1238, in audience with Emperor Lizong, he was already raising current court issues, questioning the impartiality and cooperativeness of high officials and laying out items of border strategy. Conveniently presented together here, these issues reflect the two main themes underlying most of Mou’s court memorials: unstinting criticism of court behavior and personnel, and unflagging concern for the defense of Sichuan. As the passage from his *Song shi* biography suggests, these two concerns were not separate for Mou, because the health of the polity was essential for an effective reconquest of Sichuan against the Mongols. His ongoing efforts to spread temples to Zitong into the

---

113. The following is one example: “. . . [the Emperor] awarded [Mou] a poem of praise and appreciation. Whenever [Zicai] went to the palace, he was summoned to the inner halls, where [the two] would talk deep into the night and [Lizong] might grant him wine and fruit” . . . 帝賜詩褒賞. 每直, 輒召對內殿, 語至夜分, 或就賜酒果. See SS 411.12361.
114. SS 411.12355.
southeastern heartland, helping to establish the local god as an empire-wide object of worship in his quest to rid his province of the Mongols, were part of this hope. (If we suspect that Mou was in deep denial, given the extent of destruction Sichuan had already suffered along with the court’s apparent inability to do anything about it, we might also agree that he shared this tendency with many of his contemporaries.) His constant watchfulness in guiding Lizong along the right path to maintain correct protocol and ethical behavior in the court, inspired also by his commitment to Daoxue ideals and continuation of his teacher and co-provincial Wei Liaoweng’s precedent, rose to a heightened level of concentration from the loss of his native home and resulting heavier dependence on the health of the dynasty for his own livelihood.

Li Xinchuan was also an influential mentor, with whom Mou shared both a practical (relatively unmoralistic) approach to historical writing and a comparatively broad understanding of Daoxue. Li’s emphasis on government service and action as core elements of Daoxue-inflected behavior finds an echo in Mou’s biography. An intellectual breadth was shared generally by Sichuanese scholars and found its origin partly in the ideas of their earlier co-local Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), whose thought, by now marginalized in the current philosophical mainstream, approached heterodoxy in its syncretism and in positing no inconsistency between morality (Dao) and literary expression (wen 文). Though instrumental in establishing Zhu Xi’s thought in


116. Chaffee writes, “in the dialectic between learning and (the enacting of) the Way, Li’s highest interest and sympathies lay with the latter.” See his “The Historian as Critic,” 521.

117. Amidst the abundance of Su’s writings and behavior that could illustrate this characterization, Peter K. Bol’s following comment on Su’s “Preface to the Collection from a Journey South” will suffice: “the [d]ao of the sage was not a particular set of ideas and concerns but the style of thought that enabled one to respond in a moral or unifying fashion through literary and political action.” See “This Culture of Ours,” 208.
Sichuan, Wei Liaoweng also nourished a high admiration for Su Shi both as literary giant and as thinker whose apprehension of the Dao was more inclusive than that professed by most of Zhu Xi’s followers.118

Mou Zicai’s own spiritual emulation of Su Shi, reflected in his writings, may also underlie the importance he invested in his two stele images.119 This article has posited that Mou used the Li Bai boot-removal engraving as a tool of loyal court dissent that could still possibly have some impact on the throne. But this obviously does not exhaust the stele’s contemporary meaning, and in closing we might consider some of its other ones. The verso image of Huang Tingjian Rowing Back, although without the “transactional” potential held by the Li Bai image, bore contemporary significance nonetheless. As a friend and peer of Su Shi, and as a sufferer of a politically-motivated banishment more painful than Su’s, Huang being pictured on a boat returning into exile may well have stood as a collective image for the anti-Reform faction of the late Northern Song. Many Daoxue adherents saw their goals as standing in direct continuity with this faction, of which Huang as well as Su were major representatives.120 Natives of Sichuan took special pride that Su had been one of the anti-Reform Yuanyou faction’s leaders.121 Esteem for its members was inseparable from awareness of their political failure and subsequent banishment during the benighted final decades of the Northern Song dynasty under Huizong, when the Reform faction prevailed. It is not far-fetched to propose

118. Wei’s admiration for Su Shi and Huang Tingjian distinguished him from fellow Daoxue adherents, including Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178–1235), with whom Wei is often paired in historical discussions. See Shi Mingqing 石明慶, Lixue wenhua yu Nan Song shixue 理學文化與南宋詩學 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2006), 201–14.

119. Mou’s high esteem for Su shows up in his court memorials and poetry; that he was well-versed in Su’s writings is indicated both in his poems and in recollections by his son Mou Yan in Lingyang ji. Su’s definition of literary culture (wen) was broad enough to include painting as well as poetry and prose, an idea later undermined by Huizong’s shrinkage of painting’s intellectual potential.

120. Mou’s damning comparisons of the current court to that of Huizong indicate his sympathy with the banished anti-Reform faction. This position was shared by many Daoxue adherents, and given concrete reflection in the removal of Reform leader Wang Anshi from the Confucian temple and supplanting by the five Daoxue patriarchs upon the establishment of Daoxue as state orthodoxy. See Hu Zhaoxi and Cai Dongzhou, Song Lizong Song Duzong, 128.

121. For a discussion of the continuing influence of Suxue 蘇學 or “Su learning” over Shuxue 蜀學 (“Sichuan learning”) of the late Southern Song, see Hu Zhaoxi, “Songdai Shuxue chulun” 宋代蜀學論集, in Songdai Shuxue chulun 宋代蜀學論集 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2004), 232–35.
that the heroically unrestrained Li Bai as depicted on this stele was capable of being read as Su Shi himself, given the well-known similarities between the public personae of these two Sichuanese poets.

A relationship between the stele and a Shu (Sichuan) orientation suggested above can be linked to Mou Zicai’s political loyalties and those of his party. We have seen how Mou was always very attentive to party affiliation in court interactions, as perhaps all his peers were.\(^{122}\) It appears that figures from Shu, with their broader understanding of Daoxue, sought to wield influence in court during the years leading up to Lizong’s 1241 decree making Daoxue the state orthodoxy.\(^{123}\) While Shu officials failed to carry much influence over the final outcome of Daoxue’s political victory, it is likely that their broader view was one with which Lizong sympathized. If, as this article has proposed, Mou made his stele engravings ultimately for consumption by the Emperor, they could have been designed to appeal to this august audience, in terms of both content and medium. Mou’s celebration of two giants of empire-wide literati culture, by means of visual portraits as much as poetic eulogies, may have helped ensure for him a special channel into the Emperor’s attentions.

In creating his images of Li Bai and Huang Tingjian, Mou Zicai cherished different intentions from those of the southern literati who were painting during the later decades of the same century. Unlike them, Mou Zicai did not use his images with verses principally as personal expression of his unquelled frustration, or solely as statements of solidarity with disenfranchised peers;

---


\(^{123}\) Lizong originally favored the recognition of a broader range of figures for enshrinement than the five ultimately named to the Daoxue pantheon (Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, Zhang Zai 張載, Cheng Hao 程浩, Cheng Yi 程頤, and Zhu Xi) in the Confucian temple. In a memorial to Lizong, Li Zhi 李埴, son of the Sichuanese historian Li Tao, had proposed a total of ten figures (adding Hu Yuan 胡瑗, Sun Fu 孫復, Shao Yong 邵雍, Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, Sima Guang 司馬光, and Su Shi; and removing Zhu Xi) as patriarchs, a position with which Wei Liaoweng agreed. Mainly for political reasons (he sought a broader basis of support), Lizong had favored this more inclusive arrangement, but five years later in 1241 the advocates of this position, mostly Sichuan natives, had waned in influence, due in part perhaps to the recent destruction of their province, and played a lesser role in defining the new orthodoxy. See Hu Zhaoxi and Cai Dongzhou, *Song Lizong Song Duzong* 宋理宗宋度宗, 127–28. Prior to Li Zhi’s proposal described above, Li Xinchuan had argued for the enshrinement of Sima Guang, Zhou Dunyi, Shao Yong, Zhang Zai, the Cheng brothers, and Zhu Xi, receiving no response from the court; see Thomas A. Wilson, *Genealogy of the Way: Construction and Uses of the Confucian Tradition in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 42.
these were the main functions of works by early Yuan eremitic painters. More than we might tend to appreciate, Mou made his images largely as tools of loyal dissent in order to influence both emperor and imperial court. His other loyalty, to a waning Shu thought system and cultural orientation, provided him with a rarified lens through which to warn of coming disaster. Notwithstanding objections that the Song shi editors held a bias exaggerating his effectiveness in the Song court, we have basis on which to claim that Mou adopted a current vocabulary—local shrine portraiture—to further his (then) conservative project of healing government at the national level. The cataclysmic events that occurred soon afterwards have distorted Mou’s priorities in the eyes of later generations. Yet his stele engravings, in their breadth of cultural reference and in their deployment of visual imagery for political dissent, would find resounding echoes in the literati paintings to follow.

124. This contrast in the paintings’ function can only be expected given their artists’ starkly different political situations. One Yuan example, the handscroll Zhong Kui’s Outing (Zhong Kui chuyou tu juan 鍾馗出游圖卷) by the Song loyalist Gong Kai 龔開 (1222–1305), depicts the demon-queller leading a parade of demons and ghouls out to rid China of its parasites, whether the latter are understood as Mongols or corrupt officials who facilitated the Mongols’ triumph. That the paraders themselves appear inept reflects Gong’s deeply pessimistic opinion of late Song official society and his own countrymen, an opinion quite similar to that of his friend and patron Zhou Mi. See Peter Charles Sturman, “Confronting Dynastic Change: Painting after Mongol Reunification of North and South China,” Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics 35 (Spring 1999): 142–69.