

***Cultural Authority and Political Culture in China: Exploring Issues with the Zhongyong and the Daotong during the Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties.*** By Christian Soffel and Hoyt Cleveland Tillman. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012. Pp. 223. €42.00.

To do justice to this thoroughly researched, lucidly written, and astutely argued monograph by Christian Soffel and Hoyt Tillman, it seems only appropriate to tout its merits and virtues at the very outset by pinpointing its many contributions, despite its apparently narrow subject-matter. First, the book is a detailed, hitherto understudied history of the hermeneutics of one centrally important classical text in late medieval China: the *Zhongyong* 中庸, commonly but problematically translated into English as *Doctrine of the Mean*. Second, it sheds critical light on the extent and limit of the influence of the Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) school of commentarial readings, generally and uncritically accepted to be orthodox, and therefore, assent-eliciting. Third, it throws into sharp relief the intimate relations between classical scholarship and politics by exploring the intricate interpenetration of the predominant notions of *daotong* 道統 (intellectual orthodoxy) and *zhengtong* 正統 (political legitimacy). Fourth, it draws much needed attention to the customarily neglected roles of Confucian scholarship in the Jin and Yuan periods. Fifth, it illustrates the heterogeneity and diversity of classical exegesis in the period in question. Sixth, it is a timely reminder, in our age of woeful forgetfulness about the past, of the lingering and enduring relevance of the classics.

Chapter One begins with a succinct explication of the meanings of the title of *Zhongyong*, canvassing definitions from the Han to the Song while referring to the modern sinological renderings. It then addresses the beguiling question of the origin and authorship of the text, for which there can be no certain and fixed answers. Chapter Two offers a variegated picture of the Song interpretations of the *Zhongyong* by parsing the varied readings by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), Zhu Xi, Ye Shi 葉適 (1150–1223), and Wang Bo 王柏 (1197–1274), the main goal of which is to argue that the later elevation of Zhu Xi's views to orthodox status was by no means assured. In point of fact, the text was a site of much contestation and disagreement, such that even Wang Bo, an avowed disciple of Zhu, did not hesitate to voice his disapprobation of the master's glosses. Following the vein of argument that we should not let Zhu Xi's eventual authoritative stature obscure what actually did happen earlier in history, Soffel and Tillman examine in Chapter Three the construction of the *daotong*, that is, the lineage of the authentic Way laid down and laid out by the ancient sages, in light of the clamorous debates about the import and purport of the *Zhongyong*. They reveal that the boisterous and polyphonous hermeneutics of this classical text in the Song proposed and suggested many different lines of transmission of the Way, of which Zhu Xi's famous *daotong* was neither the earliest nor the most valid.

Chapters Four through Six, which constitute Part Two of the book, by way of an in-depth study of the political thoughts and classical exegeses of the Yuan thinker, Hao Jing 郝經 (1223–1275), an important follower of Zhu Xi in North China, fill a gaping lacuna customarily found in surveys of Chinese intellectual history and philosophy—the period between the death of Zhu Xi and the rise of Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529). Here, Soffel and Tillman duly remind us that the thirteenth century witnessed a vibrant concern and preoccupation with the testament and legacy of Zhu Xi. Hao, as a guardian of and heir to the cultural tradition of the north, paid homage to Zhu while maintaining and developing his distinct views on the *Zhongyong* and the *daotong*. Hao's biography is intriguing and significant in that he lived through three different regimes: ten years under the Jin, twenty-six under the Mongols, and sixteen under the Southern Song. The situation of his life at a critical historical juncture of political transitions and cultural crises gives us revealing glimpses into the tensions and relations between political loyalty and cultural allegiance.

Soffel and Tillman, in Chapter Four, examine the roles and contributions of Hao Jing in the continuation and consolidation of *daoxue*: learning of the Way. They not only reveal Hao's gregarious engagements and relations with scores of his contemporary fellow-scholars, but also show the many ways in which his thoughts on the Confucian traditions were intimately related to the political, cultural, and philosophical issues of his time. As a Hanlin 翰林 advisor to Khubilai Khan and an envoy to the Southern Song, he took pains to bring his scholarship to bear on the practical culturo-political affairs of the day. To Hao, the proper recognition, understanding, and transmission of the Way/*dao* was dependent on the conscientious appreciation and apprehension of the *wen* 文 (variously understood as culture, heavenly patterns, literatures, and *belles-lettres*). This “*wen* of ours” (*siwen* 斯文) originated in the Great Ultimate (*taiji* 太極), together with heaven and earth, and was textually embedded in the classics completed by the sages. In Hao's words, “. . . the *dao* was *wen*.”

Chapter Five specifically explores Hao Jing's views on the legitimate succession of dynasties—the *zhengtong/zhitong* 治統—by locating them in the context of the political culture of the Song, Jin, and Yuan. Understandably, Hao saw political and dynastic legitimacy not so much in terms of the ruling regime's nationality or ethnicity as its adherence to and realization of the Way. Yi 夷 (barbarian) and Xia 夏 (Chinese), to him, were entirely cultural designations, and the boundary between them was therefore permeable and fluid, to the extent that the so-called barbarians could be readily transformed by the cultural values and traditions of Confucianism. Just as the Jurchen Jin came under the sway of Chinese culture, so too the Mongols were acculturated and brought into the fold of Confucian civilization.

Chapter Six returns to the main issue at hand—the interrelation between the

classical text of *Zhongyong* and the cultural concept of the legitimate lineage of the Way (*daotong*)—by detailing and analysing Hao Jing’s readings of the classics. The authors argue that while Hao’s 1255 “Inscription for Master Zhou [Dunyi]’s Shrine Hall” 周子祠堂碑 clearly accepted and followed Zhu Xi’s view of the *daotong*, touting Zhu as the one who “attained the great completion” of *daoxue*, a careful review of Hao’s many other classical exegeses and expositions, especially those produced in the last twenty years of his life, reveals his divergence from the Song master’s vision. Once again, Soffel and Tillman are keen to point to the fungible hermeneutic world in which Hao and others wrote their commentaries, wherein even loyal followers of Zhu’s, such as Hao Jing and Wang Bo, readily parted ways with their spiritual teacher. The authors’ larger argument is that in much of the existing historiography on Song-Jin-Yuan intellectual culture, scholars like Hao and Wang are purposefully neglected so that the grand narratives about the mainstream of Confucianism, dominated by the iconic figure of Zhu Xi, will not be subverted.

In many ways, the book under review is an extension of the central thesis that Hoyt Tillman has been advancing in several of his previous works, most notably his *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy*,<sup>1</sup> namely that the establishment of the Cheng-Zhu 程朱 orthodoxy was a gradual and diverse process, whose twists and turns suggest no foregone conclusion of the eventual canonization of Zhu’s interpretations. What is amplified here once more is the complicated and convoluted nature of the history of the growth of ideas, which cannot be reduced to any teleological narrative that predetermines the outcome. But while we must thank Tillman and Soffel for drawing proper attention to the dissenting voices of the likes of Wang Bo and Hao Jing, in their focused effort to pinpoint divergence, we may wonder if our co-authors may not have unduly given short shrift to convergence, which did happen with the elevation of Zhu Xi as the orthodox icon. Perhaps they think that hackneyed story has already been told, but I think it is worth retelling in the context of the Tillman and Soffel’s astute portrayal of the messy magma of ideas that is the very stuff of history.

My slight dissatisfaction notwithstanding, what distinguishes Tillman and Soffel’s treatment of their subject-matter is their unstinting effort to identify and pinpoint the intellectual milieu and context in which their protagonists operated. Their method is never merely textual analysis, although they do a whole of it in order to trace the contour and lineage of ideas. Their intellectual history always unfolds in the social history of literati fellowship and the political history of scholar-officials’ negotiation

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<sup>1</sup> Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1992).

with imperial authority. Thus, their book is not just stuffed full of abstract ideas but is vividly peopled by personages who thought and acted in hopes of ameliorating state and society.

ON-CHO NG

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***Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy: Toward Progressive Confucianism.***

By Stephen C. Angle. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012. Pp. x + 204. £55.00 cloth, £17.99 paper.

This book is a highly stimulating attempt to engage critically with Confucian political philosophy in order to advocate a brand of “progressive Confucianism” relevant in a Chinese context but also beyond. It is structured in eight well-balanced chapters, including an introduction (Chapter 1) and a conclusion (Chapter 8), addressing a series of controversial issues about Confucianism while gradually proposing sets of new ideas.

What is so progressive about “progressive Confucianism”? Angle explains in the introduction (p. 17) that the term has a double meaning: It entails a *commitment to moral progress*, both at the individual and at the collective levels while sharing with other progressive social and political movements—at least to some extent—a critical attitude towards all forms of “social, economic, or political oppression.” These two dimensions are not devoid of tension and this is undoubtedly one of the main interests of the book.

Angle largely builds on the work of philosopher Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 and more precisely on his byzantine concept of moral mind’s self-restriction (*ziwo kanxian* 自我坎陷) in order to make his argument. His precise interpretation of this pivotal concept is the focus of Chapter 2 but also runs across several other chapters: It is in itself an important contribution to our understanding of Mou’s thought even though Angle also largely emancipates himself from Mou. In brief, self-restriction plays a role in different dimensions of Mou’s philosophy (including, as Angle mentions, cognition, science, and politics). In his metaphysical system, self-restriction applies to moral mind in its interplay with our epistemic (i.e., cognitive) mind. But what Angle is primarily interested in is the role of self-restriction in politics. As a Confucian, Mou Zongsan is still committed to the preservation of a link between morality and politics, but he rejects classical connections between the two and a vision of politics being swallowed by morality (pp. 24–25), which implies all sorts of possible excesses