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A Prince and His Polity: Dynastic Affiliation in the Poetry of Zhu Youyuan (1476–1519)

ABSTRACT:
Princes are still peripheral in much of the history of China's Ming dynasty, especially so in the writings of Western sinology. Prince of Xing Zhu Youyuan (1476–1519) is a fitting example, left almost to oblivion save for his posthumous role in the Great Ritual Controversy. This essay offers a close study – the first in English – of Zhu and his writings. In particular, it is interested in how he envisioned and wrote about his relationship with the Ming dynastic enterprise. Through close readings of his political poetry, the essay contends that Zhu was attached to the Ming as a distinctly dynastic polity and that he felt obligated to safeguard the patrimony he had inherited. Apart from Zhu, the essay also introduces several other princes who put similar sentiments to paper. Examining their writings leads to the argument that Zhu was participating in a broader princely culture of maintaining a sense of dynastic identity and affiliation.

KEYWORDS:
Zhu Youyuan, Ming China, princes, Jiajing emperor, dynastic identity

INTRODUCTION

It was a brilliant autumn day in the subprefecture of Anlu 安陸, Huguang 湖廣 province. The climate was pleasant and cool, a reprieve from the summer heat. Distant clouds suspended in the air dissolved and gave way to clear skies. Fortunately, beauty was not without its beholder. That beholder was Zhu Youyuan 朱祐杭 (1476–1519), prince of Xing 興王 and fourth son of the Chenghua 成化 emperor (r. 1465–1487). On October 14, 1496, Zhu had taken leave from his palace to indulge in some local sightseeing, traveling to and summitting nearby Conghu Mountain 從岵山. Atop its low-lying peak Zhu Youyuan was no doubt rewarded with a view of his princely estate, accompanied by a sprawling sky and autumn foliage.[1] Zhu composed six poems to

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[1] Sun Wenlong 孫文龍 et al., *Chengtian fuzhi* 承天府志, rpt. in *Riben cang Zhongguo han-*

commemorate the occasion, and in a preface that opens them recalled: "Coming upon such sights, my heart was greatly stirred. But within it felt as if there was something that could not be stilled. So, I composed six poems to express those sentiments that welled up inside me 觸物動心, 亦自有不能已者焉, 因賦詩六章以寄興云." Even as the day drew to a close and he embarked on the journey home, Zhu Youyuan was still savoring the fragrant air.[2]

Vignettes like these are many in Zhu Youyuan's writings, which are replete with scenes of leisure and scholarly ruminations.[3] Zhu was a first-degree prince (*qinwang* 親王) who had been assigned two years earlier to Anlu; he was twenty years old when he summited Conghu Mountain that October morning.[4] Given his mild personality, Zhu's tenure in Anlu was largely untroubled, for "he refused to engage in many of the other leisure pursuits of his peers and indulged himself instead in artistic and literary pastimes."[5] As prince, Zhu Youyuan also spent much time in the company of officials and literati, with whom he would sightsee and recite poetry.[6] "Princes and literati did not… live at a social or cultural distance from one another," Zhu being no exception.[7] Furthermore, he was an academic. He regularly attended lectures on the classical canon after audiences with his officials; he discoursed on various texts while delivering sermons himself on other subjects, like the principles of good government.[8] In a word, as a prince and properly

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jian difang zhi congkan: Chengtian fuzhi, Taoyuan xianzhi 日本藏中國罕見地方志叢刊, 承天府志、桃源縣志 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe), *j.* 2, p. 32b.

2 Zhu Youyuan 朱祐杬, *Enji shiji* 恩紀詩集 (Ming neifu chaoben 明內府鈔本; microfilm held in the Harvard-Yenching Library, FC4876 995; hereafter, cited as *Enji*), *j.* 3, pp. 19b–21a. "Bingchen Chongyang deng Conghu shan shi (bing xu liushou)" 丙辰重陽登從岵山詩 (并序六首). The work's folio numbers do not resume from 1a at the start of each *juan*, but proceed consecutively throughout. I will cite it following this original formatting, with *juan* and folios both numbered continuously.

3 A reasonably detailed but entirely hagiographical biography survives in the first five *juan* of Xu Jie 徐階 et al., *Chengtian dazhi* 承天大誌 (1566; held in the Kokuritsu kōbunshokan 国立公文書館).

4 *Xiaozong shilu* 孝宗實錄 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo, 1961–1966), *j.* 92, p. 1697. Below, all references to Ming emperors' *Veritable Records* (titles ending in "…*shilu*,") employ this edition.

5 James Geiss, "The Chia-ching Reign, 1522-1566," in Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 7: *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, part 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1988), p. 440.

6 Xu et al., *Chengtian*, *j.* 2, pp. 1b, 2b–3a, 14a.

7 Jérôme Kerlouégan, "Printing for Prestige? Publishing and Publications by Ming Princes Part 2," *East Asian Publishing and Society* 1.2 (2011), pp. 115–16. Also see Liang Manrong 梁曼容 and Zhang Jiahao 張嘉豪, "Mingdai Qinfan yu chaoting guanyuan de shehui jiaowang: yi muzhi zhuanshu ren wei zhongxin" 明代秦藩與朝廷官員的社會交往, 以墓志撰書人爲中心, *Yan'an daxue xuebao* 延安大學學報 (*shehui kexue ban* 社會科學版) 45.2 (2023), pp. 102–10.

8 Xu et al., *Chengtian*, *j.* 2, pp. 2b–3a, 12a–b, 15b.

"local emperor," Zhu Youyuan assumed the role of literati sponsor,[9] of steward and authority over the classical tradition, and of intellectual conversant in politico-philosophical discourse.[10]

But Zhu Youyuan has rarely taken center stage in studies of Ming history. He usually appears as a secondary character in the Great Ritual Controversy 大禮議 of the 1520s, being the father of its antagonist (or protagonist, depending on one's view) the Jiajing 嘉靖 emperor (r. 1522–1566). The drama began when the unpopular Zhengde 正德 emperor (r. 1506–1521) died without an heir in 1521. To settle the succession crisis, the Ming court summoned Zhu Youyuan's son Zhu Houcong 朱厚熜 to succeed his cousin Zhengde as the Jiajing emperor. But soon after, the court demanded that Jiajing abandon the prescribed ritual ties to his father and instead tether them to Zhengde's. The action was taken in order to preserve the necessary fiction of an unbroken line of imperial descent. But Jiajing would have none of this. He wished to remain ritually connected to his own father and moreover to elevate him from the status of prince to emperor. This maneuver of his incensed the Ming court because Jiajing was threatening to sever the orthodox line of descent and to inaugurate his own. After years of conflict, Jiajing cleared away (with much violence) his opposition in 1524 and ritually enshrined Zhu Youyuan both as father and imperial predecessor, thereby creating a new imperial bloodline that would last until the dynasty's demise in 1644.[11]

If sinologists do know of Zhu Youyuan, it is principally in the context of the Great Ritual Controversy.[12] Scarcely has he been examined independently of it, perhaps with the exception of Richard G. Wang's superb study *The Ming Prince and Daoism*, which shows that Zhu shared with his princely peers a devotion to and patronage of Daoism, and a handful of other studies.[13]

[9] For more on Ming princes' patronage of literati, see Kerlouégan, "Printing for Prestige?" (part 2), p. 123 ff.

[10] "Local emperor" is adapted from idem, "Printing for Prestige? Publishing and Publications by Ming Princes," *East Asian Publishing and Society* 1.1 (2011), p. 58.

[11] For recent treatment of this subject, see Aaron Throness, *Yang Tinghe: A Political Life in the Mid-Ming Court* (Leiden: Brill, 2024), pp. 117–94 *passim*.

[12] This sort of treatment can be observed in the late-imperial biographical tradition: Carney T. Fisher, *The Chosen One: Succession and Adoption in the Court of Ming Shizong* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), pp. 47–48.

[13] Richard G. Wang, *The Ming Prince and Daoism: Institutional Patronage of an Elite* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2012), pp. 73–78, 149–50, 251 (n. 132). For English studies that mention Zhu, see e.g. John W. Dardess, *Four Seasons: A Ming Emperor and His Grand Secretaries in Sixteenth-Century China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), chap. 1. Japanese scholarship also mostly limits mention of Zhu to the ritual controversy: Nakayama Hachirō 中山八郎,

The present essay seeks to position Zhu Youyuan at the center of a long overdue inquiry. I am interested in his poetry, in particular his political poetry. He published in 1505 a literary collection titled *On the Emperor's Grace, A Collection of Poetry* 恩紀詩集.[14] While many of his poems are musings on the natural world, one also finds him dwelling on issues of a more political hue, namely, his affiliation with the dynastic enterprise and his duties as local representative of the Ming imperial household. This is to say that Zhu's poetry can tell us something about how he saw himself in relation to the Ming political cosmos.

The essay does not assume *a priori* that poetry allows for a transparent view into the mind of its author. Often poetry is translucent if not opaque, representing with uncertain clarity (and honesty) the innermost thoughts of its writer. To begin with, poetry was a tool that a writer could use to construct an identity – an elite identity usually being most coveted.[15] This may have impelled the poet to write strategically and even inauthentically in order to derive the satisfaction of donning an elite guise and to socialize within a desired circle. Adding

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"Min no Kasei chō no tairei mondai hottan" 明の嘉靖朝の大礼問題発端 and "Futatabi 'Min no Kasei chō no tairei mondai hottan' ni tsuite" 再び "明の嘉靖朝の大礼問題発端"に就いて, both in Nakayama Hachirō sensei Min Shin shi ronshū henshū iinkai 中山八郎先生明清史論集編集委員會, ed., *Min Shin shi ronshū* 明清史論集 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1995); Satō Fumitoshi 佐藤文俊, *Mindai ōfu no kenkyū* 明代王府の研究 (Tokyo: Kenbun shuppan, 1999), p. 260. For Chinese studies that touch on Zhu, see Zhou Hongmei 周紅梅, "Xingxian wang Zhu Youyuan yu difang shehui" 興獻王朱祐杭與地方社會, in *Di shisan miao Mingshi guoji xueshu yantao hui lunwen ji* 第十三廟明史國際學術研討會論文集 (2009); Liang Manrong 梁曼容, "Mingdai fanwang yanjiu" 明代藩王研究, Ph.D. diss. (Dongbei shifan daxue 東北師範大學, 2016), pp. 184, 190; Xue Gang 薛剛, "Shixie yangliu, jiesu beichou: Ming Ruizong *Yangliu – jinsi lülü shi shei cuo* tankao" 詩寫楊柳, 借訴悲愁, 明睿宗 "楊柳, 金絲縷縷是誰搓" 探考, *Lüliang xueyuan xuebao* 呂梁學院學報 13.1 (2023), pp. 29–32. Xue contends that on the basis not of their birth order but of the rank of their mothers, Zhu Youyuan was the more legitimate heir to the throne, relative to his elder half-brother Zhu Youcheng 朱祐樘, the eventual Hongzhi 弘治 emperor (r. 1488–1505). The problem here is that Hongzhi had already been installed as heir-apparent (December of 1475; see *Xianzong shilu* 憲宗實錄, *j.* 147, pp. 2692–700) by the time that Zhu Youyuan was born in 1476. There in turn could not have been any ambiguity about whether Zhu Youyuan had the right to displace him as heir. Moreover, Hongzhi's mother was made consort immediately after her death in 1475 (*Xianzong shilu*, *j.* 142, p. 2644), while Zhu Youyuan's mother was of equal consort rank at the time of his birth (*Xianzong shilu*, *j.* 155, p. 2817). The argument thus does not stand up to scrutiny.

[14] Zhu Youyuan's literary output is not limited to poetry. Many of his memorials, prefaces, poetry, and other writings have fortunately survived in Xu Jie et al.'s *Chengtian dazhi*. For additional works of his, see Chen Qinghui 陳清慧, "Mingdai fanfu zhushu jikao" 明代藩府著述輯考, *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊, no. 2 (2009), p. 69. Zhu's work is briefly looked at in: Lian Wenping 連文萍, "Mingdai huangdi de shige chuangzuo yu chuanbo: yi Ming Taizu, Renzong, Xuanzong, Shizong wei lunshu zhongxin" 明代皇帝的詩歌創作與傳播, 以明太祖、仁宗、宣宗、世宗爲論述中心, *Qinghua xuebao* 清華學報 46.2 (2016), pp. 301–2.

[15] See Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming (1470–1559)* (Honolulu: U. Hawai'i P., 2004), p. 60; Zong-qi Cai, ed., *How to Read Chinese Poetry in Context: Poetic Culture from Antiquity through the Tang* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2018), p. 4.

to this, writers were aware that their poetry could be published, read, and circulated. They were not writing purely for their own eyes, and knew that they could influence the impression their readers formed of them. All of this is to say that poetry was inflected by its authors' interior concerns (how poems inflected their sense of self) and exterior concerns (how others viewed them). To be sure, this does not mean that we must see poetry as inherently contrived. There are many occasions in which a reader can come to know the true sentiments of an author – even the author as a personality – through poetry.[16] But if both possibilities (strategic or authentic) can hold true, which sort of person was Zhu Youyuan? It seems to me that he was a blend of both: at once conscious of his identity as a prince, in addition to the cultural and political expectations that that identity imposed on his writing, but at the same time emotionally expressive, such that he enjoyed using poetry to give voice to his authentic sentiments and to articulate his sense of identity. In paraphrase of Jack W. Chen, Zhu Youyuan's poems define not only how he wished to be seen, but also what he wished to be.[17]

I begin with an overview of Zhu Youyuan's *Enji shiji*. I outline its structure and study the preface that he appended to it. The essay then proceeds in chronological lockstep with Zhu's writing and examines how he understood his position as prince in both the broader Ming polity and in Anlu locally. At the broad level, it shows that Zhu felt an ironclad affiliation with the Ming as a dynastic enterprise, a keen sensitivity to his blood relation to emperors past and to safeguarding the patrimony he inherited from them. On the granular level and as an extension of his dynastic concerns, the essay contends that he envisioned himself as a local leader in Anlu charged by his dynasty with presiding over the wellbeing of its people in times of dearth. He did not see himself as detached from Anlu and its inhabitants. Rather, his princely identity and the obligations attached to that identity bound him even closer to them. I conclude by putting Zhu in conversation with two other princes in order to show just how seriously many Ming princes conceived of and laid claim to their places in the polity.

[16] Stephen Owen, "Transparencies: Reading the Chinese Lyric," in Paul W. Kroll, ed., *Critical Readings on Tang China* (Leiden: Brill, 2019) 2, p. 583. Also see idem, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World* (Madison: The U. Wisconsin P., 1985), p. 15. Ji Hao, however, usefully problematizes poetic transparency, in "Reception of Du Fu in the Anglophone World and the Issue of Poetic Transparency," *Tamkang Review* 45.1 (2014), pp. 151–69. An apt example of poetic authenticity from the Ming is Qiu Jun 丘濬 (*js.* 1454, 1421–95). See Jiang Mian 蔣冕, *Qiongtai shihua* 瓊臺詩話 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1972), *j. xia* 卷下, p. 12a–b.

[17] Jack W. Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), p. 49.

Why take their claims seriously? I see several reasons. The first is that we can begin to approach an answer to what exactly "Ming" meant to those who not only lived under its dominion but who also belonged to its dynastic branch. What exactly the dynasty meant would have differed depending on whom one asked: ordinary people registered in military households might have viewed the Ming as a system which tore their families apart through forced conscription, or as a system with which they could negotiate for their own benefit.[18] A minister toiling away in his capital office might have seen his polity as an array of departments responsible for the administration of the realm as well as a political extension of the Confucian moral values embedded in the classical canon he knew so well. But what of Ming princes? What did the polity mean to them? By taking seriously their claims to dynastic affiliation (expressed in poetry, or in any medium for that matter), we are reminded that the Ming was perceived by a privileged portion of its population as a familial and properly dynastic enterprise.

In a narrower sense, by taking the princes' claims seriously we may also define with greater precision what exactly "*zongfan* 宗藩 culture" was. If *zongfan* culture as a concept suggests that those who occupied princely rank in the imperial lineage shared in common a sense of belonging to a corporate group, as well as similar political and moral values, methods of cultural practice, and ways of understanding the world, then our task is to determine what Ming princes thought about, said, and did within each of the above categories.[19] Craig Clunas, Jérôme Kerlouégan, Richard G. Wang, Liang Manrong 梁曼容, and others have significantly advanced our understanding of what forms princely culture assumed in categories like these, each in their own way; what I hope to add to their contributions is a view into not only Ming princes' articulations of dynastic affiliation but also what the parallels in these articulations suggest about their shared culture. To adapt Walter A. Rosenbaum's thinking on political culture and map it onto an approach to *zongfan* culture, it is worth studying how Zhu Youyuan "feels and thinks about the symbols, institutions, and rules that constitute the fundamental political order of his society and how he responds to them."[20] That is, by taking seriously Zhu Youyuan's poetic expressions of dynastic devotion and affiliation we can establish, even if in

[18] Michael Szonyi, *The Art of Being Governed: Everyday Politics in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2017).

[19] Here I would like to thank Craig Clunas and Jérôme Kerlouégan for helping me think through the substance and implications of *zongfan* culture, a concept originally coined by Clunas.

[20] Walter A. Rosenbaum, *Political Culture* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), p. 4.

a preliminary way, how Zhu thought about the "fundamental political order" that was his dynasty and that his envisioning and in turn *writing* about a personal and political relationship with the Ming was a component of *zongfan* culture. That it was not Zhu Youyuan alone who thought and wrote in this way is very much suggestive of this.

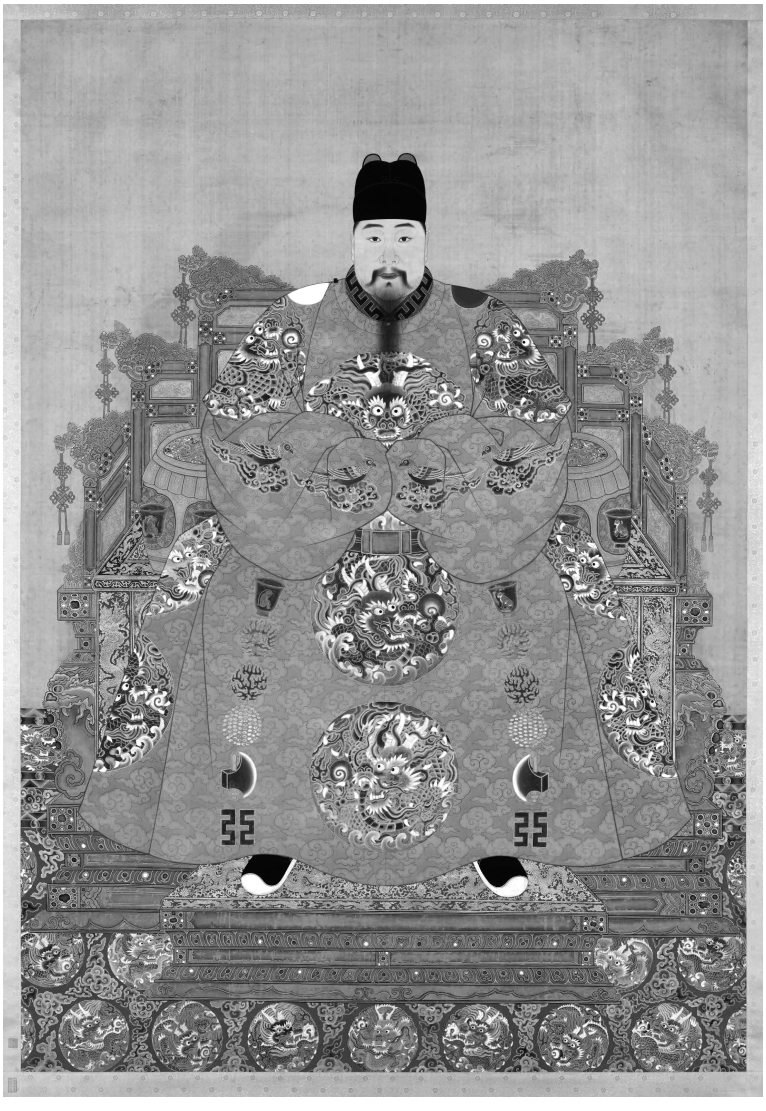

Figure. "A Seated Portrait of the Ming's Prince Xian of Xing" 明興獻王坐像軸

Portrait painted after Zhu Youyuan's posthumous elevation to emperor, as indicated by his imperial attire. Courtesy of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

THE COLLECTION

Zhu Youyuan's *Enji shiji* is divided into seven *juan*, each of which can be associated with a particular phase in his life. The first *juan* is comprised of poetry written while Zhu was still living in the capital as a teenager; the second, of poetry brushed during his southward journey to Anlu; and the third to seventh, of writings penned on various occasions following his arrival there.[21] Based on its prefatory material and contextual clues, it most likely spans the years 1494–1502.[22] Below is a list of the collection's chapters:

1. Within the imperial chariot, honored with the emperor's grace (*Niangu enrong* 輦轂恩榮)
2. Poems spontaneously composed on an august journey (*Huangtu jixing* 皇途即興)
3. Pleasant scenes enjoyed in my investiture (*Fengguo yuqing* 封國餘清)
4. Miscellaneous recitations from my study (*Shutang zayong* 書堂雜咏) [I]
5. Miscellaneous recitations from my study (*Shutang zayong* 書堂雜咏) [II]
6. Miscellaneous recitations from my study (*Shutang zayong* 書堂雜咏) [III]
7. An inadequate series of chanted *sao*[23] (*Qiangxu saoyin* 強續騷吟)

Through these seven *juan* Zhu Youyuan tries his hand at an array of subjects and in a variety of poetic forms. On one occasion he recounts his melancholy when he pays obeisance for the last time at the Ming tombs.[24] On another he ruminates over the importance of the classical canon and employment of Confucian officials for good order,[25] and on yet another Zhu rhapsodies on the prowess of the Han River 漢江.[26] He uses pentasyllabic verse (*wuyan* 五言) and heptasyllabic verse (*qiyan* 七言), rhyme-prose (*fu* 賦) and ancient folk song (*gu yuefu* 古樂府).[27] The chronology and content of Zhu Youyuan's *Enji shiji* invite

[21] The ordering and contents of Zhu Youyuan's collection are outlined in a 1505 postface by Moral Mentor 紀善 Zhou Zhao 周詔 (d. 1522), whom Zhu had personally asked to write. *Enji*, "Enji shiji houxu" 恩紀詩集後序, pp. 2b–4a. For a brief biography of Zhou, see *Shizong shilu* 世宗實錄, *j.* 9, p. 348.

[22] Zhu Youyuan's departure for Anlu was in 1494 (the events leading up to it open his collection), and his preface to the work is dated to 1502. He also attaches an undated postface to the end, preceding Zhou Zhao's own from 1505. Zhou notes in his postface (2a) that Zhu's compilation of poems had long laid dormant before Zhu asked him to write. There are grounds to assume, then, that all of the poetry was composed roughly between 1494–1502.

[23] Perhaps related to 離騷; see Stephen Owen, "Reading the 'Li sao'," in Martin Kern and Stephen Owen, eds., *Qu Yuan and the Chuci: New Approaches* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), p. 226.

[24] *Enji*, *j.* 1, p. 6b, "Shangye zhuling" 上謁諸陵.

[25] *Enji*, *j.* 5, p. 36a, "Dushu" 讀書.

[26] *Enji*, *j.* 7, pp. 48b–51b, "Hanjiang fu (bingxu)" 漢江賦 (并序).

[27] See Michael A. Fuller, *An Introduction to Chinese Poetry: From the Canon of Poetry to the Lyrics of the Song Dynasty* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017), List of Terms.

the reader to accompany him through the early and mature phases of his princehood as well as to observe how he experienced and understood the world around him. Zhu is intimate with his reader, although in a refined way.

Why put a collection of poems together? A Ming writer could have offered many answers to this question. In his 1502 preface, Zhu Youyuan offers his own:

> As concerns these poems on imperial grace, they have been written in order to commemorate the grace of the emperor's familial intimacy, to immortalize it. He who is above extends intimacy through grace, while he who is below requites it through righteousness. With this, grace will be forever preserved by means of righteousness, and righteousness will be made manifest by means of grace. Both will enjoy splendor together with the state; this is how goodness is advanced. However, should one extend intimacy through grace and the recipient requite it without righteousness, then evidence of grace will of course exist, but the grand patterns governing the relationship between ruler and minister will begin to be forgotten. Could this grace be forgotten even for a single moment!
>
> 恩紀詩者,所以紀皇上親睦之恩於不忘也. 上以恩施之, 下以義報之. 則恩由義永, 義由恩著, 與國咸休, 鮮有促者. 若施之以恩而報之以非義, 則恩紀, 而君臣之大法始忘焉. 夫恩可一念忘乎哉!

In the opening lines of this preface, Zhu theorizes a reciprocal (if still hierarchal) moral relationship between giver and receiver, in which the former's intimacy is echoed by the latter's propriety in gratitude. He later provides an example of such a relationship by recounting the acts of imperial grace of which he had been the beneficiary: on his 1494 investiture in Anlu, he was given the "Huang Ming zuxun" 皇明祖訓, a proto-constitutional document written by the Ming's founding dynast (which governed the conduct of princes like Zhu); chariots and garments; canonical texts and precious gems; sacrificial and musical implements; and lands from which to draw revenue. "As for whatever one could need in a princely estate, which would yield only greater support in perpetuity," Zhu writes, "such things have been completely provisioned for me. Still, all was done according to regulation 凡需於王國而可益於久遠者, 百物爲之備, 而有制焉."

Zhu professes to a sense of appreciation for this imperial largesse from his elder half-brother, the Hongzhi emperor, not to mention a sense of obligation to requite it. He continues:

> As for those many items with which I was bestowed, I have already stowed them within my storehouse of treasures and recorded them with my grand scribe. But still, I am profoundly moved by all this. How could I be content with merely describing these matters? This is the reason for which I composed these poems on the emperor's grace. 錫物名數, 固已藏之玉府, 錄之太史, 而予感之於心, 又安能已於言邪? 此紀恩之詩所以作也.

As far as Zhu lets on, he has put his sentiments to poetry and his poetry to print in order to find an outlet for his sense of indebtedness – to express the gratitude he felt for all that Hongzhi had done for him. He claims to take nothing for granted. Beyond his personal sentiments, there is also the possibility that Zhu wrote this poetry and published this collection in order to put his relationship with Hongzhi on display. Either consciously or subconsciously he may have wished to model and advertise morality in the imperial family. Perched atop the throne was a benevolent monarch, Hongzhi, who dispensed grace with a view to promoting affection within the imperial clan; below was Zhu Youyuan, requiting Hongzhi's magnanimity with righteousness expressed through poetry. Both persons are fashioned into moral exemplars. Whether or not this was actually Zhu's intention is difficult to say, but such is the effect of his writing.

Finally, Zhu confesses a concern for posterity, who he fears might be led astray by failing to acknowledge imperial favor. He prefaces this concern with a sequence of moral degeneration: a failure to acknowledge grace leads to waywardness, and waywardness to perversity; to take grace for granted leads to arrogance, and arrogance to insolence. Indeed, he had future generations in mind, for his design was "to also cause those who come after me to reflect upon the disasters incurred by neglecting gratitude, and to instead strive with all their might toward the great righteousness of loyalty and filial piety 且俾後之人鑒忘恩之纏禍也, 而奮厲於忠孝之大義云爾已矣."[28] I think that what Zhu Youyuan has done in this preface is the following: to articulate what appear to be sincere thanks for what he had received; to situate his poetry (and thus himself) within a reciprocal moral relationship with the Hongzhi emperor; and to warn posterity, and surely his own princely successors no less, against selfishness and subsequent debauchery – a sickness which Zhu knew afflicted parts of the imperial clan.[29] Arguably

[28] *Enji*, "Enji shiji xu" 恩紀詩集序, pp. 1a–3b.

[29] See his comments in a memorial to Hongzhi: Xu et al., *Chengtian*, *j.* 15, pp. 4b–6a. "Chen wushi cixie Jing Huangdi shu" 陳五事辭謝敬皇帝疏. For a magisterial study of princely criminality during the Ming, see Lei Bingyan 雷炳炎, *Mingdai zongfan fanzui wenti yanjiu* 明代宗藩犯罪問題研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014).

at stake for Zhu Youyuan in this preface was how one should remain morally and politically accountable to the Ming dynastic enterprise, especially to the person of the emperor.

A PRINCE AND HIS POLITY

For most Ming princes born to an emperor, a certain weighty day would always arrive. Welcome or not, on reaching maturity they were jettisoned from the capital and installed in a lavish estate out in the provinces. The season of departure was for many of them a time of excitement and apprehension. A new life awaited in an unfamiliar place. The climate was foreign, the comforting presence of the emperor and companionship of siblings were left behind, and the promise of captivity waited. For the eighteen-year-old Zhu Youyuan, that day was October 16, 1494.[30] Of course, he had time to ready himself before assuming his estate in Huguang. In both Beijing and its environs there were sites to be visited and rituals to be performed. En route to Anlu, too, there was ritual business for Zhu to attend to. It is in the poetry that he produced during his ritual itinerary that one finds important reflections on the politics of princehood.

One of Zhu Youyuan's most important ritual duties was to pay respects to earlier emperors. For this purpose, on October 6, 1494 Zhu traveled roughly fifty kilometers north of Beijing to the imperial necropolis. The tombs stood flanked by lush mountains and were roofed with slanting golden tiles. Those fortresses of stone gazed over stone-laid pathways and clusters of pine. This was an emotional experience for Zhu, who ruminated over the spirits that still dwelled inside. The ritual visit was at once a gratifying performance of filial piety (he was to visit his father's tomb, after all) while also an expression of political and familial devotion. That day he performed rites at five tombs: Yongle's, Hongxi's, Xuande's, Yingzong's, and his father Chenghua's.[31] Zhu wrote a poem to commemorate the occasion, "Paying Obeisance at the Tombs" 上謁諸陵:

祖宗靈魄妥仙山	My ancestors' spirits dwell in mountains divine,
鳳舞龍飛鎖豹關	phoenixes twirl and dragons soar, tombs' gates locked so firm.
宇宙萬年鍾聖胤	The eternity of the cosmos is concentrated in the imperial progeny,

[30] *Xiaozong shilu*, *j.* 92, p. 1697.

[31] Ibid., *j.* 92, p. 1689. Here I refer to Zhu Qizhen 朱祁鎮 (1427–64) by his temple title

華夷一統絕神姦	Chinese and barbarian united, those who defile eliminated.
旗幢古色松楸動	Banners wear ancient colors while pines and catalpa sway,
冠劒幽光日月環	crowns and sabers glimmer dimly as sun and moon revolve.
今我拜辭南楚去	Today I come to pay respects before leaving for southern Chu,
玄袍滿漬淚痕斑	my black robes stained with traces of tears.[32]

The poem begins by celebrating the august aura of the tomb complex. It describes the supernatural qualities of the landscape while invoking mythical creatures which testify to the imperial pedigree of the tombs' occupants. Their eminence is at once supernatural and mundane: the Ming house had earned and would forever enjoy the cosmos' favor, and so too had it brought unity to Chinese and barbarian and morality to the court. Regardless of his hyperbole, Zhu describes his family's project as enjoying cosmic endorsement from above and as instilling order on the world below. Then, following a description of the tomb compound and the celestial bodies, he ends with a farewell, in which he detaches from allusion and indulges in sorrow.

I think we can detect Zhu Youyuan's feeling a type of political bond between himself as a devoted prince and the Ming as his dynastic patrimony. Ensconced in the tombs were none other than his ancestors, whose august aura Zhu seeks to celebrate. Moreover, he surely sees himself as one of those descendants in whom the cosmos inhered. We sense an attempt to establish a cosmological current that was magnetized to the dynastic founder (Hongwu 洪武; r. 1368–1398), those who succeeded him on the throne, and their princely progeny. Zhu Youyuan indeed inhabited a world molded by Ming, even as he left its capital behind.

Ten days later, Zhu Youyuan's departure arrived. He was to convene with Hongzhi at court for a final meeting. After Hongzhi concluded a session of court at Fengtian Gate 奉天門, he retreated to within the hall and took a seat behind his throne, where he waited for Zhu to meet him. After Hongzhi had settled in, Zhu Youyuan – wearing billowing robes and donning a ceremonial cap – was led to him, where-

(*miaohao* 廟號), Yingzong, in order to avoid confusion created by his having two reign titles (*nianhao* 年號). Indeed, Zhu Qizhen reigned not once but twice, first as the Zhengtong 正統 emperor (r. 1436–49) and second as the Tianshun 天順 emperor (r. 1457–64).

[32] *Enji*, *j.* 1, p. 6b. I have replaced irregular characters with their standard counterparts.

upon Zhu performed rites of veneration. Hongzhi offered him food and drink, which he accepted and consumed. Zhu kowtowed before his half-brother in a display of veneration, for their being half-brothers did not mean that they could dispense with the political and ritual hierarchies inherent in their positions. Hongzhi then escorted Zhu Youyuan in a procession through the court to Meridian Gate 午門 during which Zhu performed more rounds of kowtows. Upon reaching the gate they finally bade farewell.[33]

En route to Anlu in the waning months of 1494, Zhu Youyuan and his entourage made a stop in the former capital of Nanjing. There, Zhu offered his respects at the Hongwu emperor's tomb. A poem marks the occasion of his visit, "Paying Obeisance at the Tomb of the Grand Ancestor and Great Emperor" 上謁太祖高皇帝陵. Zhu Youyuan articulates the sentiments we see in the poem above with greater clarity:

紫氣山盤聖祖陵	Purple *qi* and coiling mountains envelop the Sagely Ancestor's tomb,[34]
王孫肅仰在天靈	His progeny gaze up solemnly at His spirit in Heaven.
紀綱華夏嚴聲教	He brought laws to the Chinese and rigor to moral transformation,
蹴踏胡元滌穢塵	He obliterated the barbarian Yuan and cleansed the land of their dust.
宗室大封枝幹盛	Broadly was the imperial clan invested, both branch and trunk flourished,[35]
乾坤夾輔版圖增	Heaven and Earth came to His aid and the polity expanded.
神何恤我開心志	Why do the spirits take pity on my aspirations so earnest?
駿惠閎休永繼承	I shall diligently carry on His grand enterprise, lasting for eternity.[36]

Zhu does several things here. The first is that he recounts the historical saga of the Ming ruling house. The most important *topoi* are Hongwu's restoration of a "Chinese" order and obliteration of Mongol

[33] *Xiaozong shilu*, *j.* 92, p. 1697.

[34] The site of Hongwu's tomb was frequently depicted as "the foundation of the Ming Empire and its royal aura [was] portrayed as bringing fortune to the dynasty." See Hui-Han Jin, "Emotional Death: Tombs and Burial Practices in the Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644," Ph.D. diss. (University of Minnesota, 2017), pp. 122–23.

[35] We see this sort of language, with references to the dynastic polity as the "trunk" and the extended imperial family as its "branches," in early-medieval China as well: Ignacio Villagran, "'Sturdy Boulders that Protect the Realm': Early Medieval Chinese Thinkers on Decentralized Governance," *Early Medieval China* 24 (2018), pp. 94–95.

[36] *Enji*, *j.* 2, p. 11a.

misrule,[37] as well as the installation of princes throughout the empire – a policy that strengthened Ming roots as they grew in still unstable soil.[38] Here, Zhu is conjuring the collective memory of his family, "the myths, narratives, and traditions that constitute who a group is and how it relates to others."[39] For him, narratives of Chinese rejuvenation and the princes' augmentation of territorial control are essential to his family's story and collective identity.[40] Relatedly, and crucially, the second thing that Zhu Youyuan does in the poem is to articulate "dynastic awareness." Liesbeth Geevers and Mirella Marini argue in a different context that a critical element of such awareness is the recognition of "heredity, which looks both to the past and the future."[41] I argue that Zhu exhibits this. By harkening back to Hongwu's achievements, alluding to his own place in Hongwu's investiture project, and depicting himself as a prince committed to perpetuating the dynastic line – weaving together past, present, and future – Zhu Youyuan seems to demonstrate a sensitivity to the Ming as a dynastic entity and himself as embedded in it. In other words, Zhu articulates his sense of self and his purpose precisely in relation to the Ming house and its political project.

Zhu Youyuan's subsequent career in Anlu shows as much. From here we will shift from Zhu's ruminations about the broader polity to seeing how his thoughts played out at the ground level. The following pieces of prose and poetry were composed in the early summer of 1496, about two years after he had taken up his tenure. He had acclimatized to life as his own master in Anlu – a prince who maintained his own study and ritual itineraries. But life outside his palace compound mattered to him, as his writings from 1496 show. The occasion for their composition was not a happy one. We learn in them about a

37 For an interrogation of Mongol-related *topoi* in Ming times, see Johannes S. Lotze, "Translation of Empire: Mongol Legacy, Language Policy, and the Early Ming World Order, 1368–1453," Ph.D. diss. (University of Manchester, 2016), pp. 20–26.

38 See Jaeyoon Song's essay, "Share and Rule: Intellectual Origins of the Early Ming (1368–1644) Princedoms," *Ming Studies* 81 (2020), pp. 28–60, for the intellectual underpinnings of Hongwu's princedom policies.

39 Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1999; rpt. 2003), p. 163.

40 Edward L. Farmer observes that the Ming system of princely investiture "was designed to extend the emperor's power via his family members to outlying areas": *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation: The Reordering of Chinese Society Following the Era of Mongol Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), p. 34.

41 Liesbeth Geevers and Mirella Marini, "Introduction: Aristocracy, Dynasty and Identity in Early Modern Europe, 1520–1700," in Liesbeth Geevers and Mirella Marini, eds., *Dynastic Identity in Early Modern Europe: Rulers, Aristocrats and the Formation of Identities* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), p. 12.

dire drought and ensuing poverty in Anlu. From spring to summer rain had been sparse and poverty was mounting.[42] Popular plight outside the comfortable confines of his palace alarmed Zhu, who decided to appeal to the spirits for help. He composed four poems and a preface for them during his time of prayer; I translate a portion of the preface and one poem below:

> I received the Sagely Son of Heaven's command to assume the solemn task of assisting in governing the state and protecting the people. But for long I have failed to stir Heaven and the spirits. From spring to summer in 1496 there has been intense drought and no rain; the people in their suffering are unable to tend to their agricultural labors, and in their anxiety are petrified of dearth. And if the people are suffering from dearth, how could their lord alone enjoy it all! Moreover, should they desire to provision generously for guests and sacrifices, and to be earnest in moral relations, such things also become nearly impossible. So, on June 11 I paid a visit to the Hall of Abstinence, where I spent three nights in silent prayer to the spirits of the altars of soil and grain, as well as to the spirits of mountains and rivers, winds, clouds, thunder, rain, and city walls and moats. I prayed that they would graciously offer succor to our region. But should one claim that it is me [and not the spirits] who will provide comfort to the people, I would say, "how could I dare arrogate such a role?" I thereafter composed four rhapsodies to express my sentiments.[43]
>
> 吾奉聖天子綸命, 寄治國保民之重託, 素無以感動天神. 迺弘治丙辰自春徂夏, 亢陽不雨, 民苦不能藝黍稷, 惻惻然有不足之慮. 夫民既不足, 君安得獨足哉! 而欲洽賑祭, 厚倫理, 其亦難矣. 輒於五月之一日出齋書堂, 越三日予夜默禱社稷、山川、風、雲、雷、雨、城隍之神, 以惠澤一方. 若曰有志恤民, 則吾豈敢? 因賦詩四章以寓意焉.

At least rhetorically, Zhu Youyuan takes seriously the throne's charge that he preside as leader over Anlu and its inhabitants, presenting himself as a delegate of the Ming throne and as a member of the dynasty's administration. To be sure, this was part and parcel of how the fifteenth-century court rhetorically framed princes' role in

[42] While no drought in 1496 is recorded in the Kangxi edn. of the Anlu gazetteer, climatological crises were experienced in the late-15th c.: Zhang Zunde 張尊德 et al., *Anlu fuzhi* 安陸府志, in *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng: Hubei fuxian zhi ji* 中國地方志集成: 湖北府縣志輯 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe), vol. 42, *j.* 1, pp. 21a–b. As Zhu Youyuan would recall later, Anlu's climate roughly between 1508–10 was no more hospitable: Xu et al., *Chengtian*, *j.* 18, pp. 10a–b. "Le fengnian ji" 樂豐年記.

[43] *Enji*, *j.* 3, pp. 21ab. "Daoyu youzuo (bing xu sishou)" 禱雨有作 (并序四首).

the polity. When Zhu's own father Chenghua invested him as prince in 1487, Chenghua decreed that assisting in governance was Zhu's responsibility.[44] Although princes were in practice deprived of power to administer the localities in which they were invested, they were still expected to behave as political, moral, and spiritual exemplars there. When times were troubled, as they were in 1496, it was imperative that Zhu Youyuan fulfill those roles.

To do so, Zhu sought recourse in supernatural succor. It is not surprising that he did. The spirits to whom he appealed – those of the altars of soil and grain, mountains and rivers, and others – were the principal entities which populated Ming princes' spiritual worlds. In their estates princes were required by the Ming state to maintain altars for and an itinerary of sacrifices to them, partly for the sake of ensuring popular wellbeing, as will be shown below.[45] Indeed, "the princedom served to mediate between official religious policy and the commoners' interests."[46] One of the four poems that Zhu Youyuan penned shows his acting as such a mediator:

默禱齋居秉至公	Silently I pray in this hall of abstinence, approaching with utmost impartiality,
誠心懇懇惜民窮	with a sincere heart and reverence I fret over the people's suffering.
皇天有感驅炎魃	Should August Heaven be moved, let it drive out these demons of drought,
后土無私協化工	so that the Terrestrial Deity may selflessly aid the Creator.
四海虬龍騰甲翰	Throughout the realm horned dragons stir the myriad creatures,
九重雷電鼓鴻濛	thunder and lightning strike in the heavens and jolt the primordial chaos.
仁風鎮日催霖雨	May the benevolent winds hasten the frosts and rains from dawn till dusk,

[44] *Xianzong shilu*, *j.* 292, pp. 4943–44.

[45] Zhang Mingfu 張明富 and Zhang Yingchao 張穎超, *Tianhuang guizhou de xinzhi jiegou: Mingdai zongshi qunti xintai, zhishi zhuangkuang ji xinyang yanjiu* 天潢貴冑的心智結構, 明代宗室群體心態、知識狀況及信仰研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2019), pp. 348–52; Kerlouégan, "Printing for Prestige?", p. 57; Wang, *The Ming Prince and Daoism*, chap. 2. Altars to these entities in princely estates were mandated by the *Ancestral Injunctions* (apart from *chenghuang* 城隍, interestingly): Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, *Huang Ming zuxun* 皇明祖訓, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書, ser. 2, vol. 264 (Ji'nan: Qi Lu shushe, 1996), p. 16a–b. For further statutory details, see Zhu Qinmei 朱勤美, *Wangguo dianli* 王國典禮, rpt. in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe), vol. 59, *j.* 4, pp. 7a ff.

[46] Phrasing from Richard G. Wang, "Ming Princes and Daoist Ritual," *TP* 95 (2009), p. 53.

沾溉江山萬物通　bestowing bounty on the land, so that the myriad things may flow.[47]

As with the preface that preceded it, Zhu Youyuan presents in the poem a multifaceted portrait of himself, first as dutiful custodian of Anlu's people and second as intermediary between them and the pantheon of spirits. This is to say that Zhu seeks to actively intercede with and provoke a response from these spirits out of a sense of his dynastic obligation (and surely compassion), as argued above. I see no reason to suspect that he was somehow insincere or cynically pragmatic, but, importantly, Zhu fixes his attention on both the actual *and* rhetorical performances of this intercession. Throughout the poem, laden with dramatic and evocative language, he constructs an idealized version of himself as religious leader (as he was so tasked), hoping for a future without demons of drought.

In Zhu Youyuan's assumption of local religious leadership we can discern his self-identification with the dynastic enterprise. Over a decade ago David M. Robinson relatedly noted that "[o]nly recently have we begun to reconsider imperial princes as important actors whose considerable resources influenced local social, cultural, and religious life and whose status as members of the imperial family bound them to the wider polity."[48] This poem casts light on Zhu's local and dynastic bonds, and in fact the confluence of the two: he attempts to influence local life in Anlu for the better, arguably because he was conscious of his membership in the Ming imperial family and the humanitarian duties that membership imposed on him.

PRINCES AND THEIR POLITY

If Zhu Youyuan had been a peculiar prince, and if his writings in devotion to the Ming were little more than idiosyncrasies, then the present essay would not matter much beyond the confines of mid-Ming Anlu. But he wasn't, and they weren't. This essay's findings do resonate beyond Zhu's Anlu estate and, moreover, with more princes than just the one. Zhu was part of a greater community of princes for whom the Ming was neither a trivial heirloom nor a system to be taken for granted. They too were moved by feelings of dynastic affiliation and saw them-

[47] *Enji*, *j.* 3, p. 22a.

[48] David M. Robinson, "Princely Courts of the Ming Dynasty," *Ming Studies* 65 (2012), p. 2. Similarly, Kerlouégan has argued that "To look at princely courts as totally disconnected from the local or provincial administration is to underestimate the importance of the role they played in the life of a prefectural or provincial capital." See "Printing for Prestige?" (Part 2), p. 115.

selves as members of the polity. It strikes me as significant that we can see these sentiments crossing princely ranks, too. Being born directly to the Chenghua emperor, Zhu Youyuan was a first-degree prince and had always been destined to be. Ming princes of the first degree were born, raised, and educated in the capital – in immediate proximity to the emperor and the imperial household, not to mention the actual apparatuses of administration. That Zhu Youyuan felt so strongly this connection to the dynastic enterprise was due in great part to the fact that he had actually lived within, interacted with, and matured alongside it. But princes of the second degree (*junwang* 郡王), one of whom we will meet below, were destined for a different life. They were born in the provinces to first-degree princes who were not in line for the succession, sometimes living at terrible distances from the capital and its dynastic trappings. Their opportunities to directly interact and form relationships with the Ming polity were by comparison far more limited. As such, it would be reasonable to expect that the strength of their psychological attachments might have been diluted, but we do have evidence to the contrary. In the paragraphs that follow I would like to examine two other princes. In doing so, I bring Zhu Youyuan into conversation with relatives whose lives both preceded and intersected with his own. The first is a first-degree prince of the Ming's very first batch, living some six generations earlier than Zhu Youyuan; the second is a prince contemporary with Zhu, born into a second-degree rank but later in life promoted to the first degree.

Even at dynasty's dawn we find a prince whose writings resonate with Zhu Youyuan's. His writings show that hints of dynastic affiliation were already emerging in the earliest years of Ming rule. The prince concerned here was the paragon of princely rectitude Zhu Chun 朱椿 (1371–1423) – the eleventh son of the Ming founder, the Hongwu emperor. Zhu Chun was born into a world much different from Zhu Youyuan's. During Zhu Chun's youth the future of the Ming was not yet certain. The Mongol threat still loomed not far from the northern border, and China proper was only just emerging from the disintegration of the Mongol Yuan. The Hongwu emperor's hegemony was gaining momentum but was still consolidating.[49] The burden of resuscitating China was onerous. From his youth, Zhu Chun came to understand that he and his siblings would be tasked with shouldering that burden, with

[49] John W. Dardess, *More Than the Great Wall: The Northern Frontier and Ming National Security, 1368–1644* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), p. 16 ff; idem, "Background Factors in the Rise of the Ming Dynasty," Ph.D. diss. (Columbia University, 1968).

consolidating their father's rule by trekking out to the provinces and pressing the boundaries of Ming rule against the currents of disorder. Many of his brothers went on to succeed in this. They became military men in their own right and led armies into the battlefield for the dynastic cause.[50] Zhu's installment as prince of Shu 蜀王 in 1378 at the tender age of six and assumption of an estate in Sichuan in 1390, at the age of eighteen, signaled his membership in the nascent dynastic polity.[51] But Zhu Chun was evidently drawn to the life of a prince-literatus rather than just a prince-commander. He was described some generations later as a prince who "had the character and air of a Confucian 有儒素風" and was of a refined, academic disposition.[52] This retrospective is affirmed by his immersion in and command of literati culture, as seen in his patronage of such an eminent literatus as Fang Xiaoru 方孝孺 (1357–1402), as well as by his remarkable output of poetry, letters, eulogies, funerary texts, and postscripts.[53]

Extant in Zhu Chun's collected works are many letters written to his princely siblings. I would like to examine an affectionate letter Zhu wrote to his younger brother Zhu Gui 朱桂 (1374–1446), Hongwu's thirteenth son. Zhu Chun and Zhu Gui were close in age and, as such, we may assume that as boys and adolescents they spent much time together. Soon after Zhu left for his princedom in Sichuan, Zhu Gui went north for his own in Shanxi in 1392.[54] From this point forward, they seem to have maintained a steady correspondence. One undated letter among a cluster of them from Zhu Chun's hand is of particular interest here. The occasion was the birth of a son to Zhu Gui, probably his first son Zhu Xuntuan 朱遜煓 (1393–1418), which should allow us to date it to either late 1393 or early 1394. Zhu Chun congratulates his sibling in

[50] Zheng Xiao 鄭曉, *Wuxue bian* 吾學編, in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), vol. 424, p. 220. "Huang Ming tongxing zhuwang zhuan xu" 皇明同姓諸王傳序; also Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2001), p. 48; Xu Xuemo 徐學謨, *Xushi haiyu ji* 徐氏海隅集, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書, ser. 4, vol. 125 (Ji'nan: Qi Lu shushe, 1997), *wenbian* 文編, *j.* 39, pp. 1a–2a.

[51] *Taizu shilu* 太祖實錄, *j.* 117, p. 1907; *j.* 199, p. 2981.

[52] Zhu Mouwei 朱謀瑋, *Fanxian ji* 藩獻記 (1600, Microfilm held in the Harvard-Yenching Library, FC2731), *j.* 2, p. 3a.

[53] For Zhu's literati connections, see Chen Dadao 陳大道 et al., comp., *Sichuan zongzhi* 四川總志 (1619; Microfilm held in the Harvard-Yenching Library, FC4876 398), *j.* 2, p. 12b; Huang Yu 黃瑜, *Shuanghuai suichao* 雙槐歲鈔 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), *j.* 2, p. 21. For his collected works, see the citation, below. Zhu Chun was not an exclusive Confucian, however. He was also an avid patron of Daoist rituals and practitioners, and even personally worshipped at Daoist temples: Wang, *The Ming Prince and Daoism*, pp. 54, 140, 143.

[54] *Taizu shilu*, *j.* 220 p. 3222.

dynastic language that is reminiscent of the sort Zhu Youyuan would use a century later:

> Written to my younger brother, Prince of Dai, on a certain year, month, and day. We are of closest kin, indeed bonded together by blood, as if sharing a single body. We each now reside in our own princely estates; opportunities for us to meet come but rarely. Whenever I recite poems on fraternal affection, I am always made to reminisce with such nostalgia, recalling those bygone days when we would gather together in court, sharing in the delights of conversation and food. Recently, I learned that a successor was born to you. This brought me greatest joy and gratification! In this we see the grandeur of the imperial family's continued blessings, establishing kin and raising the princely screen to augment the strength of state, both of which will transmit that strength into eternity. The expansion of our lineage is indeed wonderful![55]
>
> 年月日致書弟代王, 同氣懿親, 理猶一體. 各居藩國, 胥會靡常, 每誦華鄂之詩, 未嘗不顧瞻徘徊, 思夙昔彤庭聚集, 言燕之歡也. 比聞誕育世嫡, 爲之欣然慰懌. 夫以皇家積慶之隆, 建親樹屏以壯國勢, 傳之萬年. 宗支蕃衍, 實爲美事.

Even if the birth of Zhu Gui's successor did bring personal joy to him, Zhu Chun's vision was clearly inflected by political and dynastic interests. That son was a blessing to the wider Ming imperial family insofar as he advanced those interests – namely, to strengthen the family and polity's foothold in the provinces as satellites of the new regime and to raise the defensive barricades proudly referred to as "screens." Put another way, this birth was in service of the dynastic enterprise to which both Zhu Chun and Zhu Gui belonged, and with which Zhu Chun surely felt a sense of political and familial affiliation. He was after all a member of that blessed "imperial family" and of its expanding "lineage." To be sure, the letter does not strike the same personal and subjective tone as do Zhu Youyuan's writings. Zhu Chun is focused more on the broader, corporate nature of the Ming enterprise rather than his directly personal relation to it. He also did not have a century of ancestral history and dynastic patrimony from which to draw, as Zhu Youyuan did when he wrote; the Ming family was still young and limited in scope. But the same principle – namely of an affiliation with

[55] Zhu Chun 朱椿, *Xianyuan ruizhi ji* 獻園睿製集, in *Ming Shuwang wenji wuzhong* 明蜀王文集五種 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2018), vol. 1, *j.* 4, p. 11a–b.

the Ming as a dynastic polity – seems to have been developing, if not already operative, in the case of Zhu Chun.

Our second respondent is a nephew of Zhu Youyuan's located in Xi'an prefecture, Shaanxi province. His name was Zhu Chengyong 朱誠泳 (1458–1498). Born into the Qin 秦 princely house, Zhu Chengyong showed promise from a young age and was educated rigorously. Zhu's grandmother née Chen 陳, who was "rigorous and skilled at teaching 嚴明善教," trained the boy in the texts of China's classical canon; Zhu spent much time working with Tang poetry as well.[56] In 1468, at around the age of ten, he was invested as prince of Zhen'an 鎮安王, a lesser second-degree title in the principal Qin house. He held the position for two decades. But he was not to hold this intermediate rank forever. Zhu rose to become prince of Qin in 1488, assuming status on par with his uncle Zhu Youyuan. Zhu Chengyong seems to have shared in the prince of Xing's disposition: he often enlisted the services of "learned scholars 文儒" and enjoyed lengthy discussions with them, much like Zhu Youyuan did with his own roster of academics. He earned a reputation for elegance, penetrating erudition, and generosity. And like his distant uncle in Anlu, he produced a large body of poetry, much of which survives in his *Xiaoming gao* 小鳴稿.[57]

The commentarial tradition has treated him kindly on account of his gentle character and accomplishments in scholarship and literature. One official and writer, Xu Zonglu 許宗魯 (*js.* 1517, 1490–1559), was inspired to describe Zhu Chengyong as a virtuous exemplar upon passing by the prince's tomb.[58] Writing some two centuries after Xu, the editors of the Qing court's great bibliographic project *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 argued that "Among those princes of the Ming who are renowned for literary learning, Chengyong certainly should be seen as the foremost 明代親藩中以文學著名者, 要必以誠泳爲稱首焉."[59] Not only were Zhu Youyuan and Zhu Chengyong both literary men. They shared an attachment to and identification with the Ming dynastic enterprise

[56] Zhu Chengyong would later speak of Chen in highest terms: Zhu Chengyong 朱誠泳, *Xiaoming gao* 小鳴稿, in *Jingyin Wenyuan ge Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書, vol. 1260 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan), *j.* 9, pp. 2b–3a ("Kangzu fei Chenshi" 康祖妃陳氏); also ibid., *j.* 2, p. 29a–b ("Si zumu taifei ying ouzuo" 祀祖母太妃塋偶作).

[57] For his investment in 1468, see Tan Qian 談遷, *Guoque* 國榷 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), *j.* 35, p. 2252. For a biography and the quotations: Zhu, *Fanxian*, *j.* 1, p. 2a–b. Also useful is He Jingming 何景明, *Yong daji jiaozhu* 雍大記校注 (Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 2010), *j.* 18, p. 261.

[58] Xu Zonglu 許宗魯, *Shaohua shanren houji* 少華山人後集, in *Shaohua shanren wenji* 少華山人文集 (1548, Microfilm held in the Harvard-Yenching Library, FC4876 956), *j.* 5, p. 12a ("Guo Qin Jianwang mu" 過秦簡王墓).

[59] Zhu, *Xiaoming* (*Siku quanshu tiyao* 提要), p. 2a.

as well. We can see this in Zhu Chengyong's own oeuvre of poems, three of which I would like to look at here. The first consists of a short excerpt from a poem in which Zhu ruminates over music; the second is a review of dynastic history from antiquity to Ming; and the third is a song in praise of the Ming enterprise.

The first short excerpt is a single couplet from "Delighting in a Musically Accompanied Story" 琴書自樂. The couplet opens the larger poem and places it in historical context. Zhu Chengyong writes: "The inception of my family's enterprise was inaugurated by the august ancestors 我家肇造自皇祖/then invested were my ancestors as princes, tasked with defending the western territories 我祖分茅守西土."[60] In the first portion of the couplet, Zhu Chengyong ties himself to the larger dynastic family and the history of its project – a story that began with the Hongwu emperor, the "august ancestor" to whom Zhu harks back. In the second portion, Zhu ties that enterprise to his own princely lineage, which began in 1370 with the investment of Hongwu's second and notoriously debauched son Zhu Shuang 朱樉 (1356–1395).[61] Based on the foregoing, Zhu Chengyong identifies in genealogical and political terms with the Ming dynasty writ large as well as with its local iteration in Xi'an where, as he made sure to state elsewhere, he served as a "princely screen 藩屏."[62]

Our second piece is for the most part a declensionist account of China's dynastic history. The perfect government of the revered Xia, Shang, and Zhou was steadily receding from view, and from the Han on dynasties chased power and were humiliated by barbarian intrusions. But the Ming's arrival on the scene changed everything.

三代日以遠	With each passing day the Three Ages fade away,
至治不可追	their perfect governance gone forevermore.
我嘗讀前史	I once perused the histories of eras past,

60 Ibid., *j.* 3, p. 29b. Similarly, we also find the prince of Shu 蜀王 Zhu Shenyi 朱申鈲 (1447–71) preoccupied with dynastic and princely histories: *Huaiyuan ruizhi ji* 懷園睿製集, in *Ming Shuwang wenji wuzhong* 明蜀王文集五種 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2018), vol. 2, *j.* 1, pp. 1a–2a ("Yu benfu wenwu guan" 諭本府文武官, "Yu chengfeng si" 諭承奉司, and "Xianyuan ruizhi ji xu" 獻園睿製集序).

61 Hok-lam Chan, "Ming Taizu's Problem with His Sons: Prince Qin's Criminality and Early-Ming Politics," *AM* 3d ser. 20.1 (2007), pp. 45–103. Zhu Shuang assumed his estate in 1378; see *Taizu shilu*, *j.* 117, p. 1917. Zhu Chengyong wrote a short eulogy (*zan* 贊) for his great-great-grandfather Zhu Shuang, as well as for many more of his princely forebears, but says nothing about his ignominious acts; *Xiaoming*, *j.* 9, pp. 1a ff. ("Minzu" 愍祖).

62 Zhu, *Xiaoming*, *j.* 9, p. 17b ("Yuanxiao yaji tu xu shi zai Zhen'an di zuo" 元宵雅集圖序時在鎮安邸作). The piece was composed in 1483, when he was still prince of Zhen'an. The quotation reads: "I unworthily hold this investiture, serving here as a princely screen 予叨奉茅土, 爲藩屏於斯."

撫卷心傷悲　caressing those pages, my heart was broken with sorrow.
炎劉崇伯術　The dynasty of Liu venerated the politics of hegemony,
李唐竟淪夷　the Tang of the Lis was in the end overrun by barbarians.
女禍世所恥　And then came the disaster of female rule, bringing shame to the age,[63]
和蕃人共嗤　with the Tibetans she jeered at the Tang!
逮茲趙宋氏　We then had the Zhaos of the Song,
兵力苦不支　their military strength was strained and came to collapse.
委靡不復振　Weakened and downtrodden, there was no hope for recovery,
甘爲異國欺　and they were tormented by foreign states.
明明我皇祖　But brilliant and radiant was my august ancestor!
仗鉞驅熊貔　Raising the banners of war He expelled those barbaric beasts.
一怒九圍定　With righteous rage the entire realm was pacified,
百世今熙熙　for eternity the realm shall bask in the splendor we enjoy today![64]

As with Zhu Youyuan, Zhu Chengyong ends by reciting familiar *topoi* related to Ming dynastic history: the righteous destruction of Mongol rule, the pacification of the Chinese realm, and the splendor ushered in by the new dynasty. More relevant to our interests is Zhu Chengyong's depiction of the Ming success as his family's success – a success which fastened him to the Ming cause and that cause to his identity. If we accept that dynastic identity is something that is constructed, then the issue is how claims to it were expressed.[65] Here, we have Zhu laying claim to precisely that through a restorationist narrative that celebrated *his* ancestors and the abiding afterglow of their accomplishments.[66]

63 This surely refers to the reign of Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690–705).

64 Zhu, *Xiaoming*, *j.* 2, p. 9b. From "Ganyu 感寓 (bashiba shou 八十八首)." Given Zhu's unsympathetic view of non-Chinese peoples, I suspect that this poem's original terms of reference for them might have been censored by the Siku quanshu editors; the Siku edition of Zhu's works is the only edition I have been able to utilize.

65 Here, I borrow from and alter the phrasing of Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann in *Toward a Geography of Art* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 2004), pp. 136–37.

66 In another piece dating to roughly 1487–88, following Hongzhi's enthronement, Zhu Chengyong continues this story by offering effusive praise for Ming emperors from the dawn of the Ming to his own day: Hongwu, for establishing an eternal dynastic enterprise; Yongle 永樂 (r. 1403–24), for governing the two capitals and his civil and martial prowess; Hongxi 洪熙 (r. 1425) and Xuande 宣德 (r. 1426–35), for the splendor of their reigns; Yingzong, for his

Our third and final piece by Zhu Chengyong is "An Ode to the Princely Aura of the Golden Pavilion" 金臺王氣歌.[67] It celebrates the luster of Ming rule, especially the rule of the founding emperor. The first several and the final couplets are most deserving of our attention. We begin with the first:

我祖應天命	My ancestor received the Mandate of Heaven,
車書混南北	His acts of unification brought the south and north together.
定鼎制多方	He founded the dynasty and imposed government over the many regions,
當天履中極	heeding Heaven's Charge, He assumed the imperial throne.
大都之地何雄哉	How magnificent was the soil upon which the great capital was established!
真人御世自天來	A perfect man, dispatched by Heaven, emerged to order the age.
九重宮闕三台近	Within the palace the Three Platforms were close to one another,
萬里河山一詔開	and with a single edict the wilds in their vastness were opened.

This is high praise, centering on the collective memory of the Ming foundation and its divinely-sanctioned ordering of a troubled realm. Zhu ties himself to that enterprise by emphasizing that these accomplishments were familial. It was the dynastic heritage. The poem goes on to praise the sagacity of the sitting emperor (perhaps Hongzhi) for working with Confucian men and ruling perfectly. But it ends on a melancholy note, shifting away from singing the Ming's praises to divulging feelings of disillusionment. He concludes: "In deepest shame I hold this princely estate, rendering no support 深愧維藩無寸補 / Heaven hangs aloft as I gaze at Five Clouds Pavilion, day after day 天高日望五雲樓."[68] If that which Zhu felt powerless to support was the Ming state, which I suspect it was, then this would surely be a thinly-veiled critique of the *fanjin* 藩禁 system, a host of stifling policies that deprived princes of their political and military power while confining princes like Zhu

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valiance before 1449 and perfect rule after the 1457 restoration; and Chenghua, for his synchronicity with Heaven. See *Xiaoming*, *j.* 3, pp. 1a–2a ("Hongzhi longfei ge" 弘治龍飛歌).

67 Translation of *wangqi* 王氣 borrowed from Craig Clunas, *Screen of Kings: Royal Art and Power in Ming China* (Honolulu: U. Hawai'i P., 2013), p. 30. I have adjusted his "kingly aura" to "princely aura."

68 Zhu, *Xiaoming*, *j.* 3, pp. 6a–7a. For a possible allusion vis-à-vis the "Three Platforms", see Du You 杜佑, *Tongdian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988; rpt., 1996), *j.* 24, p. 659.

Chengyong to their estates.[69] It may very well be that Zhu desired to support the Ming dynastic enterprise, a stance that he felt played an important role in his sense of self. But wearing the shackles of the *fanjin* prohibitions would have meant he never could have.

These intersections between Zhu Youyuan, Zhu Chun, and Zhu Chengyong hint that dynastic concerns were a feature of what Craig Clunas has termed *zongfan* culture. As outlined earlier in this essay, the concept is as simple as it is effective. *Zongfan* culture suggests that those who inhabited the princely community shared similar values, outlooks, and worldviews, including those concerning the Ming. Because of their imperial pedigree, as well as the intellectual environments in which they were raised, it is not surprising that many princes shared a sense of dynastic affiliation. While all cannot be folded into this sphere, Zhu Youyuan, Zhu Chun, Zhu Chengyong, and others can. Much like Zhu Youyuan opined time and again, Zhu Chengyong also understood that in his investiture he had been "entrusted with membership in this alliance within the imperial clan 受宗盟," language that would have made sense to princes before, during, and after his time.[70] It surely would have made sense to prince Xian of Xiang 襄憲王 Zhu Zhanshan 朱瞻墡 (1406–1478), based in Huguang province's Xiangyang 襄陽 prefecture. He lived a life devoted in word and deed to supporting the Ming patrimony, whether in memorializing during times of crisis or publicly writing himself into the genealogy and history of his dynasty.[71] Further research will no doubt uncover many others who thought and wrote in the same way.[72] If Ming princes took their dynasty seriously and vocally laid claim to membership within it, which Zhu Youyuan certainly did, it is imperative that we treat their claims seriously, for they were nothing less than expressions of dynastic affiliation. Zhu Youyuan wanted his claims to be taken seriously, after all, for in 1500 he declared:

69 For more on the *fanjin* system, see: Liang, "Mingdai fanwang," chap. 3; Satō, *Mindai ōfu*, pp. 76–85.

70 Zhu, *Xiaoming*, *j.* 5, p. 22a ("Song Xiuwu bo huanchao" 送脩武伯還朝).

71 Aaron Throness, "A Critical Biography of Zhu Zhanshan, Prince Xian of Xiang (1406–1478)," *TP* 109 (2023), pp. 128–29. Phrasing adapted from David M. Robinson, *In the Shadow of the Mongol Empire: Ming China and Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2020), p. 18.

72 Zhang Mingfu 張明富 and Huang Yongmei 黃咏梅 have in a similar vein argued that Ming princes cared about the state and acted on their concerns in a variety of ways; see "'Qiwu' de lingyi mian: Mingdai zongshi youguo shulun" "棄物" 的另一面, 明代宗室憂國述論, *Ming Qing shi yanjiu* 明清史研究 2 (2022), pp. 21–30.

To abide by the *Ancestral Injunctions*, to be circumspect in princely conduct, and to ensure the continuity of the dynastic line in perpetuity, these are my aspirations.[73]

遵祖訓、慎王度、而保國脉於有永者, 吾之心也.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Enji Zhu Youyuan 朱祐杬, *Enji shiji* 恩紀詩集

[73] Zhu Youyuan 朱祐杬, *Hanchun tanggao* 含春堂藁 (1526, held in the Kokuritsu kōbunshokan), p. 3b ("Hanchun tanggao xu" 含春堂藁序).