

## Targeting the Readership for a Ming Publication: “Comprehensiveness” in the Construction of the *Compendium for the Expert Physiognomist*

Physiognomy, that is, divination by means of bodily features, is a major cultural practice in China. Its long history as a skill and art shows that it was a system for describing people’s characters and predicting their futures by means of facial or other physical aspects. It was particularly significant in the traditional culture for its perceived connection to Heaven, specifically, in regards to individuals, the intent of Heaven as manifested on their bodies. In late-imperial China, quite a few literati became obsessed with physiognomy, as one learns in the works of Zhu Guozhen 朱國禎 (1557–1632), the Tianqi emperor’s chief grand secretary: he said that everyone constantly talked about physiognomy (*xiangshu* 相術) and geomancy (*kanyu* 堪輿).<sup>1</sup> The focus of this study will be an exploration of the mechanisms by which both late-imperial scholars and commoners could understand the basic principles of physiognomy.

In the twilight of the Ming dynasty, a text titled *Compendium for the Expert Physiognomist* (*Shenxiang quanbian* 神相全編, below, frequently referred to as the *Compendium*) was already popularly followed for its knowledge about physiognomy; and it contributed to embedding the practice in everyday life.<sup>2</sup> From that point in time down to our own times the *Compendium* has continued to be reprinted. It was included

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<sup>1</sup> Zhu Guozhen 朱國禎, *Yongzhuang xiaopin* 湧幢小品, in *Mingdai biji xiaoshuo daguan* 明代筆記小說大觀 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2005), vol. 4, p. 4023.

<sup>2</sup> *Shenxiang quanbian*, in *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成, ed. Chen Menglei 陳夢雷 (rpt. Taipei: Guomin chubanshe, 1959). I translate *Shenxiang quanbian* as *Compendium for the Expert Physiognomist* because *shenxiang* in Ming times meant master physiognomist and not “spirit physiognomy,” as some earlier scholars rendered it.

in the great imperial collectanea project, *Imperial Compendium of Illustrations and Books through the Ages* (*Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成) (1726–1728), and even now serves as the basis for pocket-sized editions of low-brow physiognomic texts. Chinese and Western scholars have long acknowledged the significance of the *Compendium*. Livia Kohn referred to it as a “textbook of physiognomy”; Zhang Jiemin, editor of the *Dictionary of Chinese Physiognomy* (*Zhongguo xiangshu cidian* 中國相術辭典), described it as “a collection of great achievements,” and Richard J. Smith called it the “single most important Chinese reference work for ‘body divination.’”<sup>3</sup>

Yet, there has been virtually nothing written specifically on the formation of the *Compendium*, its method of compilation and organization, and its significance for the constructions of knowledge in traditional China. William Lessa’s *Body Divination* describes the general principles of, rationales for, and symbolism of physiognomy; he demonstrates how its practices reflect various social concerns, but does not situate changes in physiognomic practice in their social and cultural contexts.<sup>4</sup> Livia Kohn’s meticulously researched article introduces the contents of the *Compendium*, describes the major patriarchs and masters quoted therein, and traces them to earlier, still surviving physiognomic materials; but it says nothing about how the *Compendium* was compiled, its structuring of knowledge, and why it could claim to be comprehensive.<sup>5</sup>

The term *quanbian* in the title of the work offers a good starting point concerning the issue of comprehensiveness as a term of art in book compilation. Comprehensiveness was a lasting concern among Chinese writers and publishers even long before the Ming: book titles included such terms as *quanbian* 全編, *tonghui* 通會, *quanshu* 全書, and *tongjian* 通鑑 in order to evoke thoroughness as a literary quality. The first “encyclopedic epoch,” as Mark Edward Lewis argues, was the Warring States (481–221 BC) period, when writers organized texts into “grand schemes that led the reader through an ordered, often hierarchical, sequence that consisted of all essential knowledge.”<sup>6</sup> The desire

<sup>3</sup> Livia Kohn, “A Textbook of Physiognomy: The Tradition of the *Shenxiang quanbian*,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 45 (1986), pp. 227–58; Zhang Jiemin 張解民, ed., *Zhongguo xiangshu cidian* 中國相術辭典 (Taipei: Jieyou chubanshe, 1994), pp. 6, 126; Richard J. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers: Divination in Traditional Chinese Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 188.

<sup>4</sup> William A. Lessa, *Chinese Body Divination: Its Forms, Affinities, and Functions* (Los Angeles: United World, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> Kohn, “Textbook of Physiognomy.”

<sup>6</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: State U. of New York P., 1999), p. 287.

for comprehensive knowledge in a single text only increased during the publishing boom of the Ming when, as Craig Clunas puts it, “encyclopedic knowledge” became all the rage.<sup>7</sup>

Yuan Zhongche 袁忠徹 (1367–1458), a famous physiognomist of the early Ming, is often credited with compiling and editing the *Compendium*.<sup>8</sup> Whether or not Yuan did so, the *Compendium* was not exhaustive in its inclusion of existing physiognomic texts, but rather a selective anthology and collectanea – features discussed below – that left out numerous essays from earlier physiognomic tracts. More important for our purposes, however, the editor of the *Compendium* claimed his book to be comprehensive. Why? Two pre-Ming collections of physiognomic texts (which are taken up in more detail in what follows) allow us to pose questions about the nature of that claim: did the editor mean the work possessed an expanded lexicon? A more systematic codification of physiognomic knowledge? More importantly, what was it about the claim to comprehensiveness that has made it so popular and versatile? What were the main agendas behind the creation of a “comprehensive compilation”?

One way to understand the techniques of collecting and anthologizing in the *Compendium for the Expert Physiognomist* is to place the work in the context of the publishing and reading trends that stand out significantly in the Ming period. The reading public in the commercialized and monetized society of the time grew quite broad, and demanded more and more printed books; but the readership also desired practical, how-to guides across a wide range of subjects. In response, publishers reprinted, retitled, and expanded older works and published new materials such as technical, divinatory, and even Confucian canonical compendia. At the same time, written knowledge was spreading to strata

<sup>7</sup> Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China, 1368–1644* (Honolulu: U. of Hawai‘i P., 2007), p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> For a biography of Yuan Zhongche, see: L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1976), pp. 1629–32. In this biography, Lienche Tu Fang argues that Yuan was the editor, if not the author, of the *Compendium*. Livia Kohn relies on Fang’s essay to state that Yuan was the editor and thus regards it as an early Ming book.

The attribution to Yuan Zhongche is rather tenuous. The *Ming History* records that Yuan Zhongche edited *Gujin shijian* 古今識鑒, a collection of stories about physiognomy that stemmed back to ancient times, but makes no mention of his editing the *Compendium*. Because Ming publishers routinely made up names for authors and editors, and the two pre-Ming physiognomy collections *Yuguan zhaoshen ju* 玉管照神局 and *Taiqing shenjian* 太清神鑒 were attributed to an earlier person, it would not be surprising if a Ming publisher adopted the same practice in this case.

A certain Ni Yue 倪嶽 (1444–1501, *j.s.* 1464) is the author of the earliest extant preface; thus it is safe to say that the *Compendium* was first published in the mid-Ming.

outside the literati sphere, becoming useful information for townsfolk and others who were not concerned with mastering works for the civil service examinations. The literati elite, many of whom were failed examination candidates, became interested in such works, which went on to remarkable heights of popularity. It was the development of more sophisticated publishing practices coupled with a voracious reading public that triggered the desire for “comprehensive” works.

In the *Compendium*, the idea of “comprehensiveness” was as much a manufactured effect linked to the methods of collection and organization as it was the sheer volume of inclusion. What can be found in the *Compendium* is not a systematic presentation of physiognomic knowledge, which had been done in an earlier physiognomic collection entitled *The Great Clarity Mirror of Spirit* (*Taiqing shenjian* 太清神鑑, hereafter *The Great Clarity Mirror*) published in the Song dynasty, but it is an organization of physiognomic knowledge in accordance with a new conceptualization of how to compile and organize related texts. This new concept of collecting texts distinguishes the *Compendium* from earlier collections and was key to its widespread popularity among all social classes as the true fount of physiognomic knowledge.

This article highlights the different ways the *Compendium* collected and organized. Following a brief historical overview of earlier physiognomic texts, I discuss the book’s selective adoption of different ways of putting texts together—anthology and collectanea—in its format. Next, I analyze the significance of “complete/comprehensive” (*quan* 全) in the context of the Ming publishing boom, particularly the mixing and meshing of different genres and registers that sought to address different levels of the reading audience. The third section examines how the included essays, whose titles use the verb “to physiognomize” (*xiang* 相), all of which are unique to the *Compendium*, reveal (at least partly) the editor’s agenda. Finally, I speculate on the intended audience and the habits of reading that the text’s particular format and content evoked. Through new ways of collecting and organizing, the editor sought to cater to different levels of audience by presenting physiognomic knowledge as suitable for various kinds of readers. The editor’s violation of long-standing boundaries between elite and popular, or “elegant” and “common,” in the physiognomic interpretations helps us understand the work’s versatility and continuing popularity.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Much scholarship has been devoted to the interaction between elite and popular in late-imperial literature. For an excellent overview, see David Johnson et al., eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1985). On the history of what Kathryn

## PHYSIOGNOMIC COLLECTIONS BEFORE THE MING

Physiognomy has a long textual history. In the *History of the Han Dynasty* (*Han Shu* 漢書), the historian Ban Gu (32–92) listed a work entitled *Physiognomizing People* (*Xiangren* 相人) in his “Bibliographic Treatise” (“Yiwen zhi” 藝文志), in a subsection named “Methods of Forms.” Over the next thousand years, only a few physiognomic works were listed in these dynastic histories; the *History of the Sui* contains three such works, and the *New History of the Tang* has only two. It was not until after the expansion of printing in the Song (960–1279) that large numbers of physiognomic tracts began to appear, thirty of which are listed in the *History of the Song Dynasty*.<sup>10</sup>

Several Song-period developments help explain the revived interest in physiognomy. With the devastation of the Tang aristocracy during the An Lushan Rebellion (755–763) and the institutionalization of the meritocratic principles represented by the civil service examinations in the early Song, many Chinese scholars began to explore concepts related to the fate of individuals in society as social mobility increased.<sup>11</sup> The proliferation of cheaply printed examination aids helped many non-elites study the Confucian classics and thus increase their chance of entering officialdom. At the same time, the study of the principles of fate (*mingli* 命理) coincided with the popularity of the Neo-Confucian discussions concerning the “investigation of things” (*gewu* 格物) and encouraged the examination of underlying principles generally. Finally, because earlier contrasts and differences between the elite and the popular began to blur in the Song, professional physiognomists in rapidly growing cities easily sought out and obtained all sorts of urban dwellers as clients.

The surge in the number of physiognomy texts in the Song had a dual effect. On the one hand, physiognomy, geomancy, and astrology all contributed to the visibility of the overarching study of the principles of fate. On the other hand, the diversification of knowledge, leading to the potential for the spread of contradictory principles, threatened the foundation of physiognomy. Two collections appeared in the Song seeking to anchor physiognomic knowledge in accordance with stan-

Lowry describes as the “mutually defining opposition between the ‘elegant’ and the ‘common’” permeating the study of Chinese literature, see her *The Tapestry of Popular Songs in 16th- and 17th-Century China: Reading, Imitation, and Desire* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 146–48.

<sup>10</sup> For an excellent summary of physiognomic texts throughout Chinese history, see: Xiao Ai 蕭艾, *Zhongguo gudai xiangshu yanjiu yu pipan* 中國古代相術研究與批判 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1996), pp. 182–223.

<sup>11</sup> Zhang Rongming 張榮明, *Xiang shu* 相術 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), p. 37.

dardized principles. The first, *The Spiritual Clarification of the Jade Office* (*Yuguan zhaoshen ju* 玉管照神局, hereafter *The Jade Office*), attributed to the high official Song Qiqiu 宋齊邱, who served the Southern Tang dynasty (937–975), was listed in various personal libraries during the Song; it contained three chapters.<sup>12</sup> The second physiognomic collection, *The Great Clarity Mirror* of six chapters, appeared sometime during the late Song and is more detailed and extensive in scope.<sup>13</sup> The book's express purpose was the systematization and standardization of physiognomic ideas from various origins and traditions. The "Preface to *The Great Clarity Mirror*" states:

[Physiognomy's] origins are various, discussions lengthy. ...The disorderliness of physiognomic discourses in which the sayings are sometimes different and sometimes the same, has resulted in scholars being inconsistent. I have collected ideas about physiognomy in this work called *The Great Clarity Mirror* to make them consistent.<sup>14</sup>

Although the exact publication date of the *Compendium* is unclear, we can be fairly certain that these Song texts were available to the compiler because of the similarity of structure and because numerous texts were shared among them. Divided into fourteen chapters, the *Compendium* far surpasses the two Song collections in scope. It follows, however, the organizational structure of the two Song books by presenting physiognomic knowledge from general principles to individual bodily parts, thence to women and children, and ends by discussing facial complexion.<sup>15</sup> This sequence is still the standard organizational pattern of modern physiognomic texts. By at least the thirteenth century, therefore, the proper order for presenting physiognomic knowledge had been more or less standardized. In the late-imperial period, however, it

<sup>12</sup> For bibliographic details of *The Jade Office*, see Kohn, "Textbook of Physiognomy," p. 237.

<sup>13</sup> For bibliographic details of *The Great Clarity Mirror*, see *ibid.*, p. 238. Although the Song period had various kinds of compendia and encyclopedia, the six-chapter *Great Clarity Mirror* was likely the most extensive for physiognomic knowledge. Lucille Chia describes Song-period "divination texts," part of what she refers to as printed ephemera, as "thin"; see *Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th–17th Centuries)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Asia Center, 2002), p. 145. For example, general encyclopedia like *Expanded Records of a Forest of Matters* (*Shilin guangji* 事林廣記) were small in scope and limited to information about the government and the civil service examinations in the Song and only significantly expanded later; Benjamin Elman, "Collecting and Classifying: Ming Dynasty Compendia and Encyclopedias (Leishu)," *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* (2007), p. 134.

<sup>14</sup> A modern typeset printing of the *Great Clarity Mirror* is in *Chuanshi cangshu, zibu, shushu* 傳世藏書, 子部, 術數, ed. Liu Zhoutang 劉周堂 (Haikou: Hainan guoji xinwen chubanshe, 1995), vol. 1, p. 353.

<sup>15</sup> For a summary of the *Compendium*'s table of contents, see Kohn, "Textbook of Physiognomy," pp. 228–30.

entered a new stage, as the practice of compiling texts from eclectically juxtaposed materials of different linguistic registers allowed publishers and writers to present physiognomy as both elite and popular.

#### FORMATTING THE COLLECTED TEXTS

By Ming times there were two standard ways of putting together texts – anthology (*jixuan* 集選) and collectanea (*leishu* 類書). Anthologies were important literary vehicles long before the Ming; the Confucian classic *Book of Poetry* from the fifth century BC is essentially an anthology, and thus studies of the anthology as a method of assembling texts have focused primarily on the canonization of poetry.<sup>16</sup> The first *leishu* – texts that organized knowledge by classification – was *Huang lan* 皇覽, a third-century text compiled to assist the emperor in ruling.<sup>17</sup> During the Tang dynasty there was a surge of interest in collectanea. Newly published works became much longer, were aimed at a broader audience, and focused more on specialized knowledge. The early-Tang *Record of Elementary Learning* (*Chuxue ji* 初學記), for example, was compiled specifically for young students.

Collectanea typically consist of large numbers of excerpts from primary sources rather than specially written articles. They usually list excerpts on the same subject within a chapter, but do not include editorial comments or explanatory transitions. The excerpts are typically grouped according to the genres of the source texts, often in the categories of narrative, poetry, and expository essays. The understood benefit of the collectanea model was that it allowed for the rapid accumulation of knowledge.<sup>18</sup> In the Ming era, publishers began to contract

<sup>16</sup> For the development of genres, norms, and aesthetic tastes in the formation of poetic canons, see: James R. Hightower, “The *Wen Hsüan* and Genre Theory,” *HJAS* 18 (1957), pp. 512–33; David R. Knechtges, *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1982) 1, pp. 1–52; Pauline Yu, “Poems in Their Place: Collections and Canons in Early Chinese Literature,” *HJAS* 50.1 (1990), pp. 163–96; Grace S. Fong, “Gender and the Failure of Canonization: Anthologizing Women’s Poetry in the Late Ming,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, and Reviews* 26 (2004), pp. 129–49. Fong observes that women’s poetry anthologies failed to be canonized because of the desire for comprehensiveness. For literary collections consisting of the works of a single author in the Tang dynasty, see: Christopher M. B. Nugent, “Literary Collections in Tang Dynasty China,” *TP* 93.1 (2007), pp. 1–52. On the issues at stake in anthologizing, see Barbara M. Benedict, “The Paradox of the Anthology: Collecting and *Différence* in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *New Literary History* 34.2 (2003), pp. 231–56.

<sup>17</sup> Yao Fushen 姚福申, *Zhongguo bianji shi* 中國編輯史 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 1990), pp. 5–9. For an introduction to *leishu*, see Kenneth Dewoskin, “Lei-shu,” in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1986), pp. 526–29.

<sup>18</sup> Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, *Qishiji zhi shijiu shiji Zhongguo de zhishi, sixiang yu xinyang* 七世紀至十九世紀中國的知識、思想與信仰 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2000) discusses

with writers for compilations of everyday collectanea, on all manner of topics, so as to attract buyers from the lower socio-economic strata, but also to entice better-educated readers who sought comprehensive knowledge. Ming publishers thus always advertised their everyday collectanea as having broad appeal, being easy to use, containing practical knowledge, and being comprehensive in content.<sup>19</sup>

In putting texts together, the *Compendium* uses a combinative method that blends the features of anthology and collectanea. It relies on the anthology as its primary method of presentation, as Livia Kohn demonstrates in her study of the *Compendium*. What Kohn overlooked, however, was the blending of collectanea into anthology. That is, in an individual essay, each sentence is followed by a separate paragraph constituting excerpts from other sources as a form of explanation. For example, in an essay entitled “On the Five Offices” (“Wuguan shuo” 五官說) (*juan* 2) one sentence reads, “With the ear’s pure-jade complexion, at a young age he will become one of the Three Dukes.” The accompanying collectanea paragraph lists several related excerpts from other physiognomic texts:

The *Broadened Mirror Collection* 廣鑒集 says: “The nobility or humbleness of the ear does not depend on its size. First, the color must be fresh – sparkling white is the best. In the past, Lord Ouyang Wenzhong had ears as white as his face and he is well-known throughout the world.” “Rhapsody on Human Relations and the Great Concordance” 人倫大統賦 says: “[an ear] paler than the face indicates flying fame. Sparkling luster filling a circle indicates fidelity, honesty, and sincerity in behavior (see figure 1).”<sup>20</sup>

The editor is using the collectanea tradition as a way to include the greatest possible variety of physiognomic knowledge and practices while also commenting on the anthologized writings.<sup>21</sup> The collation

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the knowledge system apparent in the Tang collectanea *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (624) and the “vulgarization” of knowledge, which he sees as indicative of social mobility and broadened readership.

<sup>19</sup> Wu Huifang 吳惠芳, *Wanbao quanshu: Ming Qing shiqi de minjian shenghuo shilu* 萬寶全書: 明清時期的民間生活實錄 (Taipei: Huamulan wenhua gongzuofang, 2005). As a genre, the daily-life encyclopedia dates to *The Expanded Records of a Forest of Matters* and other texts of the Song and Yuan periods, but late-Ming everyday encyclopedia were designed to be easy to use and aimed at a popular audience.

<sup>20</sup> *Compendium*, j. 2, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> This practice of combining is predominant in *juan* 1 and 2 and, though it fades in later parts of the *Compendium*, the method is noticeable when the reader opens the book. In *juan* 1, the collectanea method is used alongside five anthologized essays and occupies nearly half the chapter.

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|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>走他鄉無定止也<br/> <small>召如璧玉年少作二公</small></p>     | <p>廣鑑集云耳若貴賤不取大小先要色鮮瑩白爲上昔歐陽文忠公耳白如面名聲天下 大統賦曰白或過面主聲譽之飛揚瑩白貫輪主信行之敦厚</p>             | <p>貼肉垂珠紅潤自然主財祿亨通<br/> <small>貼肉者隱伏也紅潤者垂珠鮮澤也主平生財祿綿綿百謀百成于求于遂天生自然富貴 大統賦云壽越眉兮貴嘆血聰重明兮富貼肉 許負賦云壽越眉兮貴嘆血聰重明兮富貼肉 許負</small></p> | <p>古今圖書集成<br/> <small>增補龍溪先生集卷之百二十一 系相術部卷之五</small><br/> <small>賦云壽越眉兮貴嘆血聰重明兮富貼肉 許負</small></p>                           | <p>是誰家子似此貼肉隱伏而垂珠紅潤者主平生旺相而長富貴一歲入運至十五歲陰成父母病少之相</p>                               | <p>若尖小直如箭羽安得不孤窮<br/> <small>尖小者謂之猴耳主孤貧如箭羽者其耳形直豎似矢之翎最爲貧賤之相主十五歲男女並有妨財破敗長大貧賤孤獨之相 五總龜云及耳無</small></p> |
| <p>輪最不堪直如箭羽少資糧又曰雙耳尖小多妨<br/> <small>魁</small></p> | <p>命門難入指壽原怪短忘淺愚蒙<br/> <small>命門者耳孔也若窄小難入小指尖者主愚頑短壽無智之人 洞中經云耳孔容針家無一金</small></p> | <p>無輪兼反薄家破囊空<br/> <small>薄者主貧也一歲至十五之內妨克破祖長大孤貧夭壽之相 太清神鑑云輪爲城內爲廓城鬼</small></p>                                           | <p>古今圖書集成<br/> <small>增補龍溪先生集卷之百二十一 系相術部卷之五</small><br/> <small>廓吉廓鬼城凶 金鏡經云耳無輪廓多破散大統賦云耳薄如紙貧而早死 五總龜云能可城兜廓不可廓兜城</small></p> | <p>厚大垂肩極貴天年過八十方終<br/> <small>廣鑑集云耳大四寸高聳垂肩者主大貴壽長蜀劉先主耳毫垂肩目顧其耳朱太祖口方耳大</small></p> | <p>只因是毫生數內頭曰老龍鐘<br/> <small>毫者孔內生毫也龍鐘竹名其曲頭垂向地若人生耳毫主長壽似龍鐘之竹緩曲頭低極老之相</small></p>                    |

Figure 1. Page from juan 2 of Compendium  
 Each sentence is followed by a paragraph made up of excerpts from other sources.

of excerpts from a wide variety of outside sources without obvious editorial intervention not only reinforces standardized general principles, but also ensures uniformity in the niceties of physiognomic thought. The uniformity of the “Rhapsody on Human Relations and the Great Concordance” and the *Broadened Mirror Collection* thus implicitly conveys physiognomy as a unified system of knowledge.

Combining both formats is advantageous in other respects as well. The collectanea format allows the close juxtaposition of quotes from a wide range of old masters, thus setting up the book as part of the synthetic tradition of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. Physiognomic treatises quoted or included are ascribed to such famous legendary or historical personages as the Daoist immortal Lü Dongbin, the legendary late-Zhou Daoist master Guiguzi, two Han-era female physiognomists

named Tang Ju and Xu Fu, Guan Lu (210–256), and even Bodhidharma 達磨, the semi-legendary founder of Chan Buddhism. (Some personages, for example, Bodhidharma, are difficult to connect clearly to physiognomy.<sup>22</sup>) The excerpt style also allows insertions of quotes from a wide variety of people not usually associated with physiognomy. For example, a quote from Mencius is sandwiched between an excerpt from *The Broadened Mirror Collection* and one from *The Great Clarity Mirror*. An excerpt from the “Rhapsody on Human Relations and the Great Concordance” completes the paragraph. Such juxtaposition of the most obvious physiognomic texts and less likely texts bolsters the collection’s claims to comprehensiveness. Furthermore, it makes a statement about the orthodoxy of physiognomy by quoting Mencius, implying the importance of physiognomy in the Confucian classics.<sup>23</sup>

Through the adoption of the collectanea style, the *Compendium* presents itself as a collection of received wisdom with little editorial intervention. The lack of an editorial voice is only ostensible since the use of the excerpt style of collecting is deliberate, and aims to show that the *Compendium* draws on rich and varied traditions yet restructures them to affirm a uniform physiognomic lexicon and standard methods of practice. In this sense, the dominant “cut-and-paste approach” of putting excerpts together that deconstructs the notion of the book helps to construct a different type of book, the compendium.<sup>24</sup> The rhetorical technique of minimal editorial intervention and uniform physiognomic lexicon are both important. The texts’ heteroglossia is merely superficial. The basic principles of physiognomy tolerate no contradiction; that is, it presents itself as at the stage of unified physiognomic principles.

The combinatory method, the blending of anthology and collectanea, was an innovative method in the field of physiognomy in the Ming. The two Song-era collections, *The Jade Office* and *The Great Clarity Mirror*, do not employ this format. Since excerpts are added into the anthologized writings in the form of commentaries in the *Compendium*, this combinatory method bears close connection with the broader commentarial

<sup>22</sup> Kohn, “Textbook of Physiognomy,” p. 237. Xiao Ai hypothesizes that the Buddhist master was conveniently incorporated into physiognomy because of confusion between the Buddhist concept of *xiang* 相 (external appearance) and the physiognomic concept. Xiao, *Zhong-guo gudai xiangshu yanjiu*, pp. 236–40.

<sup>23</sup> *Compendium*, j. 2, p. 38. Mark Csikszentmihalyi finds the emphasis on physiognomy a distinctive feature of the *Mencius*; *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 127–41. The *Compendium*’s excerpt from *Mencius* offers additional proof for Csikszentmihalyi’s argument.

<sup>24</sup> Cynthia Brokaw, “Book History in Premodern China: The State of the Discipline I,” *Book History* 10 (2007), p. 280.

culture in late-imperial China.<sup>25</sup> The degree to which the *Compendium* represents an innovation in its efforts to summarize an entire field of knowledge, however, is unknown to this author. Comprehensiveness is certainly possible without the combinatory method. A case in point, the pre-Qin *zajia* 雜家 (eclectic school) writings demonstrated their comprehensiveness by including doctrines from all philosophical schools. The mixed content of the *zajia* works, authorized by the overarching idea that rulership required broad knowledge,<sup>26</sup> rendered them “textual forms of political unification.”<sup>27</sup> In the *Compendium*, the number and variety of treatises anthologized would have been impressive and distinguished the collection from its predecessors. By its blending method, the *Compendium* visually exposes the process of knowledge formation and unification through its format, something that would have struck the late-imperial reader as innovative. This comprehensiveness is then meticulously supported by the content of the collection.

Indeed, as the first-century Chinese dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* defines it, *bian* 編, the word used for “collection” in the title *quanbian*, means “putting bamboo strips in order 次簡.” Moving the concept to the *Compendium*, it is the ordering of the strips of physiognomic knowledge alongside more extended treatments in the anthologized essays, thus indicating the connection between the two styles of collection and emphasizing the book’s comprehensiveness.

#### LINGUISTIC REGISTERS AND THE AURA OF COMPREHENSIVENESS

We have seen that the editor of the *Compendium for the Expert Physiognomist* advertised the work’s comprehensive (*quan*) quality; it rested on a type of collecting that mixed texts and authors. Yet the manufactured effect of comprehensiveness also lies in the incorporation of different genres and linguistic registers, in particular, vernacular rhymes with classical prose essays. These texts reference two separate schools in the studies of fate (*ming* 命) that the modern scholar Zhang Mingxi names literati-amateur physiognomists (*shufang pai* 書房派) and professional physiognomy masters (*jianghu pai* 江湖派). Generally speaking,

<sup>25</sup> David Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction Reading and Writing between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford U. P., 1997), p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of how the “unquestionably eclectic” texts in *Lüshi chunqiu* convey “cohesiveness” through their subscription to an overarching concept of rulership, see James D. Sellmann, *Timing and Rulership in Master Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals (Lüshi chunqiu)* (Albany: State U. of New York P., 2002), p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p. 308.

literati-amateurs were primarily concerned with philosophical discussions of physiognomic principles in their expository essays, while less-educated professional masters sought required expertise by, in part, memorizing orally-transmitted physiognomic lyrics.<sup>28</sup> Another scholar, Zhu Pingyi, contends that the two schools emerged in the Han dynasty, each with its own system of knowledge and practice, but the distinctions between them gradually blurred over the centuries. Vernacular rhymes were aimed at the professional physiognomy masters, while the classical prose essays targeted the literati-amateurs.<sup>29</sup>

Anne McLaren's term "oral-traditional texts" is useful for understanding vernacular rhymes in the *Compendium*. McLaren defines oral-traditional texts as those "texts imitating an oral genre which have been re-shaped by current publication practices."<sup>30</sup> As I will discuss in more detail below, what we find in a printed collection like the *Compendium* is a figurative usage of orality. Orality was not genre specific. In addition to the vernacular rhymes, there was a well-known lyric tradition usually deemed as having a higher cultural value. In the same manner, the elite classical prose of the literati was complemented by a newer vernacular prose still in the process of development, at least until the late Ming when it became a full-fledged literary language.<sup>31</sup> The editor of the *Compendium* seems to have reserved the vernacular for rhymes, and the high classical style for prose essays. This is similar to the different stylistic registers studied by Ge Liangyan in his work on verse and prose in early vernacular literature. As Ge observes, "Versification was brought closer to spoken language" while "vernacularization in prose lagged considerably behind that in verse."<sup>32</sup>

The *Compendium* is distinguished from earlier physiognomic collections by its abundant inclusion of oral-traditional texts. There are several types of oral-traditional texts in the *Compendium*: ballads of sig-

<sup>28</sup> Zhang Mingxi 張明喜, *Xielu de tianji, Zhongguo xiangshu yu mingxue* 洩露的天機, 中國相術與命學 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> Chu Pingyi 祝平一 uses the anthropological terms "Great Tradition" and "Small Tradition" to define the scholarly and popular pursuits of physiognomic knowledge in his *Handai de xiangren shu* 漢代的相人術 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1990), pp. 5-7; Wan Mingyong's 萬民英 (j.s. 1550) *Sanming tonghui* 三命通會 (rendered by Richard J. Smith as *Comprehensive Compilation on the Three Fates*), is quintessentially in the scholarly tradition, according to Zhang Mingxi, but includes rhymes and pithy lines from the popular tradition; Zhang, *Xielu de tianji*, p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> Anne McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> Ge Liangyan, *Out of the Margins: The Rise of Chinese Vernacular Fiction* (Honolulu: U. of Hawai'i P., 2001), pp. 32-35.

<sup>32</sup> Ge, *Out of the Margins*, pp. 24-25.

nificant length, short poems of four seven-character lines, and short maxims (*geli* 格例) for easy memorization. The longer ballads, two to be specific, “Rhapsody on the Golden Lock” (“Jinsuo fu” 金鎖賦) and “Song of the Silver Key” (“Yinshi ge” 銀匙歌) (*juan* 7), are of great importance because of their length and because they distinguish the *Compendium* from the earlier *Great Clarity Mirror* and *Jade Office*. “Song of the Silver Key,” for example, is a ballad in seven-syllable lines running more than 1,200 characters while “Golden Lock” is over 500. Xiao Ai has undertaken field work concerning contemporary professional physiognomists and has identified these long oral-traditional texts as Ming-period texts used by these practitioners for recitations, but has found that the practitioners are unfamiliar with pre-Ming physiognomic texts.<sup>33</sup>

Easy-to-understand and memorable short poems are particularly dominant in the middle section of the *Compendium*, a section that Kohn acknowledges is separated from preceding chapters, on the one hand, that focus on general principles ascribed to famous people and, on the other, following chapters that include full-length treatises. The short poems in the middle (*j.* 3–5) are not attributed to anyone in particular and mostly analyze specific physiognomic features. Such poems describe thirty kinds of eyebrows, thirty-six shapes of eyes, twenty-four distinctive noses, fourteen styles of ears, and fourteen mouth configurations. All such entries on physiognomic details, more than one hundred in total, are in the heptasyllabic quatrains. The rhymes are colloquial, easy to understand, and easy to memorize. Colloquial rhymes are found in the Song-era textbooks that were discussed above, possibly as a textual novelty associated with commercial printing of that time, but the large number of them in the *Compendium* stands out as unusual.<sup>34</sup>

The arrangement of materials – the mixing of vernacular rhymes with philosophical essays of a high register – distinguishes the *Com-*

<sup>33</sup> Xiao Ai identifies these recitation texts as those gleaned from *Methods of Physiognomy by the Hemp-Robed Daoist* (*Mayi xiangfa* 麻衣相法), a Ming collection; Xiao, *Zhongguo gudai xiangshu yanjiu*, p. 200. Curiously, Xiao’s excellent summary of physiognomy collections does not mention the *Compendium*. Kohn’s meticulous study of such collections antecedent to the *Compendium* does not mention the above *Methods of Physiognomy*, which is probably the result of her dating the *Compendium* to the early Ming. Whichever of the *Compendium* or *Methods of Physiognomy* is the earlier seems unknown; and thus I do not make claims about treatises having appeared for the first time in the *Compendium*. The bibliography section of the *History of the Ming* does not list the *Compendium*, but does have *Methods of Physiognomy*, which it attributes to Bao Lizhi; other extant Ming catalogs do not give this attribution.

<sup>34</sup> Commercial printing in the Song era turned books into commodities, and printers competed with each other for textual novelty; Susan Cherniack, “Book Culture and Textual Transmission in Sung China,” *HJAS* 54.1 (1994), pp. 79–82. See also Poon Ming-sun, “Books and Printing in Sung China (960–1279),” unpub. Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 1979), pp. 167–81; Chia, *Printing for Profit*, pp. 65–148.

*pendium* from its two Song predecessors.<sup>35</sup> *Juan 3* illustrates the co-existence of elite and popular materials in a variety of discourses in the range from the oral to the written.<sup>36</sup> It begins with “Explanation of the Images of the Five Elements” (“Wuxing xiang shuo” 五行象說), “On Forms” (“Lun xing” 論形), “On Spirits” (“Lun shen” 論神), “On Energy” (“Lun qi” 論氣), “On Voice” (“Lun sheng” 論聲) and “On the Five Musical Notes” (“Lun wu yin” 論五音), all of whose titles indicate the contents are expository essays, thus reflecting elite prose sources: *shuo* 說 and *lun* 論 are typical titles for prose essays. These essays fall in the category of prose essays, they contain grammatical particles (*fu* 夫, *zhe* 者, and *ye* 也, for example), and appear as independent essays that illustrate a single philosophical idea.<sup>37</sup> A good example of the latter quality is as follows:

Humans have yin-yang energy and replicate the form of Heaven and Earth; humans are endowed with the Five Elements making them the most intelligent of all creatures—their head is analogous to Heaven, their feet the Earth, their eyes the sun and moon, their voice thunder, their arteries and blood vessels rivers and streams, and their bones metal and stone. 人稟陰陽之氣, 肖天地之形, 受五行之資, 爲萬物之靈者也, 故頭象天, 足象地, 眼象日月, 聲音象雷霆, 血脈象江河, 骨節象金石.<sup>38</sup>

The chapter continues with oral-traditional texts, notably scriptures (*jing* 經), rhapsodies (*fu* 賦), songs (*ge* 歌), maxims (*ge* 格 or *geli* 格例), and incantation formulas (*jue* 訣 or *koujue* 口訣); examples of the latter are “Oral Formulas on Wealthy Visages” (“Fu xiang koujue” 富相口訣) and “Oral Formulas on Prosperous Visages” (“Gui xiang koujue” 貴相口訣).<sup>39</sup> *Jue* 訣, as the seventeenth-century dictionary *Correct Characters Comprehended* (*Zhengzi tong* 正字通) defines, are mnemonic aids used in such arts as necromancy, astrology, and medicine.<sup>40</sup> The focus of oral-traditional texts is on practical use and easy memorization.

Similarly, *juan 7* and 8 contain texts from the two extremes of the oral/written spectrum. In *juan 7* there are seven-character ballads of

<sup>35</sup> Kathryn Lowry provides a thoughtful discussion of the blurring of the “elegant” and the “common” in print during the late Ming boom. Lowry, *Tapestry of Popular Songs*, pp. 148–56. The mixing of popular and elite materials in *Compendium* provides a mid-Ming case of the same phenomenon.

<sup>36</sup> *Compendium*, j. 3, p. 50.

<sup>37</sup> Nienhauser, “Prose,” in idem, ed., *Indiana Companion*, pp. 93–95.

<sup>38</sup> *Compendium*, j. 3, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> *Compendium*, j. 3, pp. 50–54.

<sup>40</sup> Zhang Zilie 張自烈 (1597–1673), comp., *Zhengzi tong* (rpt.; Beijing: Zhongguo gongren, 1996), p. 483.

considerable length – the above-mentioned “Rhapsody on the Golden Lock” and “Song of the Silver Key,” which remain popular among professional physiognomists today. The language of the ballads verges on the vernacular. For example, “Rhapsody on the Golden Lock” says:

|         |                                                           |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 眉要曲兮不要直 | Eyebrows must be curved – not straight;                   |
| 曲直愚人不得知 | Curved or straight, an idiot would not know.              |
| 曲者多學又聰俊 | Curved eyebrows indicate knowledge and wisdom,            |
| 直者刑妻又克儿 | Straight ones belong to childless widowers. <sup>41</sup> |

“Song of the Silver Key” ends with a colloquialism,

|         |                                                                 |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 試看人生無歸著 | Look at those who barely make ends meet,                        |
| 耳大無輪口無角 | They have big shapeless ears and mouths like carp.              |
| 不在東街賣餛飩 | If they are not selling wonton on the eastern streets,          |
| 便去西街賣餅飩 | They are selling pancakes on the western streets. <sup>42</sup> |

Shapeless ears and a carp-like mouth point to an ignominious future as a snack-seller: it seems the person’s features are shaped like the products they will eventually sell. What makes this verse, and the *Compendium*, notable for scholars interested in the mixture of linguistic registers in print culture is that following it is the “Rhapsody on Human Relations and the Great Concordance.” Excerpts from this essay appear seventeen times in the *Compendium* in the collectanea style (two of those were discussed earlier in this article), but the entire essay occurs in the latter part of *juan* 7 and beginning of *juan* 8. The essay is quintessentially elite; its author, Zhang Xingjian 張行簡 (z. Jingfu 敬甫), was an official (j.s. 1179) in the Ministry of Rites and well known for his knowledge of astrology, physiognomy, and numerological speculation. The essay is in parallel prose. It begins, for example, with,

Social stature is determined by the bone structure, emotions are revealed by the appearance. Compunction arises from the beginning of an action; success and failure resides in the midst of a decision. 貴賤定於骨法，憂喜見於形容。悔吝生於動作之始，成敗在乎決斷之中。

If *qi* is light and the body weak, though talented, a person will not long live. If the spirit is forceful and the bones robust, he will

<sup>41</sup> *Compendium*, j. 7, p. 135.

<sup>42</sup> *Compendium*, j. 7, p. 137.

be protected long and far. 氣清體羸, 雖才高而不久. 神強骨壯, 保遐筭以無窮.<sup>43</sup>

What was the experience like for Ming readers as they transitioned from a colloquial, humorous, non-intellectual reading of the features of a future snack-seller to, on the same page, the world of philosophical discussions about human agency and emotions?

The *Compendium's* blending of high and low registers draws our attention to the often-debated issues surrounding orality and literacy.<sup>44</sup> Walter Ong theorizes that orality is essentially mnemonic because of the problem of information storage and retrieval. He points out that its vehicles are often designed as mnemonic devices, namely, "heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns," "alliterations and assonances," "epithetic and other formulary expressions," and the like.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Jack Goody considers the lexical and syntactic features that linguists associate with the oral register as significantly different from the written register of the same language: the oral register contains simpler words, a smaller vocabulary, and heavily rhythmic patterns.<sup>46</sup>

The deliberate mixing of oral with written indicates that orality can be, and often was, used figuratively, or as a trope, thus rendering problematic a definite claim about a printed text's origins.<sup>47</sup> Ong's and Goody's paradigms have inherent limitations in helping us understand the *Compendium*, but McLaren's concept of oral-traditional texts is more useful, because both the Ming chantefable texts she studied and the physiognomic rhymes in the *Compendium* are oral genres fossilized in print. In her excellent study, McLaren observes that printed chantefables possessed all the intrinsic attributes of a work derived from an oral genre, and sought to reflect something of this orality, despite ap-

<sup>43</sup> *Compendium*, j. 7, p. 137.

<sup>44</sup> There is a tremendous number of Western works on this topic, and I only will mention several landmark studies that have held up well over time: Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, edited by Adam Parry (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1971); Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1960); Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1983); Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1963) and *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1986); Jack Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1987).

<sup>45</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 34. Havelock expressed a similar idea. For a discussion of Ong and Havelock's examinations of orality and literacy, see: Emevwo Biakolo, "On the Theoretical Foundations of Orality and Literacy," *Research in African Literatures* 30.2 (1999), p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> Goody, *Interface*, pp. 262–64.

<sup>47</sup> Herbert Marks discusses the two senses of "the opposition between the oral and the written" in a literal-historical and figurative sense. The figurative sense has received much scholarly attention in the last few decades; Marks, "Writing as Calling," *New Literary History* 29.1 (1998), p. 15.

pearing in print. Such chantefables are essentially hybrid, with “the heavily formulaic material” being the indirect product of oral transmission while “other stylistic features clearly relate to and emulate contemporary textual conventions.”<sup>48</sup> The printed chantefables thus indicate that they were printed for a new, less educated audience. Formulism in these texts aids recitation from memory and also conditions reading because the sheer redundancy of the material renders a text more accessible to a reader of limited literacy and more appealing to a less-educated physiognomist, though it would be equally appealing to more educated readers looking for easier reading material.<sup>49</sup>

The figurative adoption of orality has several advantages important for the dissemination of physiognomic knowledge. Skills and knowledge passed on orally have an aura of the immediacy of person-to-person communication and give the impression of communality.<sup>50</sup> This aura can be easily appropriated in written genres to create certain designed effects. Although oral and written are never clear-cut categories,<sup>51</sup> the editor of the *Compendium* created, and exaggerated, an imaginary difference between the oral and written to cater to an audience already familiar with both. What we see in the ordering of oral-traditional texts with philosophical treatises and colloquial and easy-to-memorize rhymes with higher literary style is a dialectic of assimilation and differentiation: the mingling of high and low, elite and popular was in fact a characteristic of Ming literary culture.<sup>52</sup> The incorporating and contrasting of the two would have been a gesture understood by Ming readers, and it would have helped the editor of the *Compendium* to advertise his work’s comprehensiveness. Though a completely different kind of literature, the *Compendium* offers additional support for Ge Liangyan’s statement about late-imperial orality: “The ‘Chinese type’ of popular orality was by no means absolutely isolated from the literate culture. Rather it was in constant interaction with writing and with

<sup>48</sup> McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables*, pp. 40–42.

<sup>49</sup> Franz H. Bäuml, “Medieval Texts and the Two Theories of Oral Formulaic Composition,” *New Literary History* 16.1 (Autumn 1984), pp. 43–44, quoted in McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture*, p. 42.

<sup>50</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 41–57.

<sup>51</sup> For example, the Tang transformation texts, as Victor Mair says, “represent various points of development on a continuum ranging from oral to written.” Victor H. Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard U., 1989), p. 119.

<sup>52</sup> Tina Lu, “The Literary Culture of the Late Ming (1573–1644),” in Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, eds., *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2010) 2, p. 73.

an extremely rich written literature in *wenyan*.<sup>53</sup> In the *Compendium*, comprehensiveness (*quan*) and formatting (*bian*), the two key words in the title, clearly point to the specific kind of ordering and mixing of registers that is being argued here.<sup>54</sup>

#### PROSIMETRIC ENTRIES

The prosimetric form in Chinese literature, the incorporation of verse in prose, has received significant scholarly attention. Wilt Idema emphasizes the importance of the form and considers it a unique characteristic of Chinese literature.<sup>55</sup> The prosimetric form was linked to the idea of the popular, as Anne McLaren explains, and late-imperial writers of vernacular stories and novels adopted it to fulfil readers' expectation that a popular text should include verse.<sup>56</sup> It is also worth mentioning that the prosimetric form could be consciously manipulated so as to juxtapose different narrative voices in late-imperial vernacular fiction.<sup>57</sup>

Adding to the wealth of prosimetric texts is a group of entries in the *Compendium* each having the verb *xiang* 相, simply meaning "to physiognomize," in their title. The thirty entries in the group are short, often of two or three paragraphs, and numerous; they take up most of the middle section of the *Compendium* (*juan* 3–5) in which they occur.<sup>58</sup> They are not attributed to any person in the history of physiognomy and likely represent original contributions by the editor. Though the order of prose and verse can vary, the most common form of the mixture is for the entry to begin with a prose paragraph that is followed by a four-line verse. To illustrate the mixture of different linguistic styles in these essays, I translate in full a short entry entitled "Physiognomizing Flesh" ("Xiang rou" 相肉). The essay begins in high-style philosophical argumentation and ends with "as the poem says":

<sup>53</sup> Ge, *Out of the Margins*, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Though of a later period, Feng Menglong consciously mixed "songs by literati and the most vulgar of singers" in his collection *Guazhi'er* (*The Hanging Branch*); Lowry, *Tapestry of Popular Songs*, p. 187.

<sup>55</sup> For an introduction to performance literature composed of alternating prose and verse, see Wilt Idema, "Prosimetric Literature," in Nienhauser, ed. *Indiana Companion*, pp. 83–92, and Anne McLaren, "The Oral-Formulaic Tradition," in Victor Mair, ed., *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2001), pp. 989–1014.

<sup>56</sup> McLaren, "The Oral-Formulaic Tradition," pp. 1011–12.

<sup>57</sup> Mei Chun, "Garlic and Vinegar: The Narrative Significance of Verse in 'The Pearl Shirt Reencountered,'" *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 31 (2009): pp. 23–43.

<sup>58</sup> ㄱ. 1 and ㄱ. 2 have two entries each that use the word "xiang" in their title.

Flesh is where blood is produced and bones concealed. It is analogous to the earth that produces and renders the myriad things. It is desirable that the flesh should be plump but not abundant, lean but not deficient. If it is abundant, then *yin* surpasses than *yang*; if it is deficient, then *yang* surpasses *yin*. 肉所以生血而藏骨, 其象猶土生萬物而成萬物者也, 豐不欲有餘, 瘦不欲不足, 有餘則陰勝於陽, 不足則陽勝於陰.

As the poem says 詩曰:

|         |                                                                      |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 骨人肉細滑如苔 | Fine flesh, smooth and soft like moss,                               |
| 紅白光凝富貴來 | With a reddish and pale luster, it indicates<br>wealth and position. |
| 揣著如綿兼又煖 | Warm like touching cotton,                                           |
| 一生終是少凶災 | There won't be disaster or calamity in this<br>life. <sup>59</sup>   |

Neither the title nor the form of this prosimetric entry was new. *The Great Clarity Mirror* has only one entry titled “Physiognomizing Palm Lines” in the entire book and does not have the same distinctive mixture of prose and verse with contrasting high and low registers, but is in simple classical language. The prosimetric format can be found in *The Jade Office*: there, thirty body types (lion shape, monkey form, rabbit style, and so on) are first defined in prose and then rendered in verse for easy memorization.<sup>60</sup>

The *Compendium*, however, is set apart from *The Jade Office* and *The Great Clarity Mirror* by the sheer number of “xiang” essays as well as the uniformity in their format. *Juan* 4, for example, contains twelve entries, including physiognomizing the top of the nose bridge, the radix nasi region, the nose, the philtrum, the mouth, the waist, and the navel. All entries have the same format: a prose essay followed by a seven-character verse, merely differing in the word choice before the verse with some using “as the verse says” (*shiyue* 詩曰) and others “as the formula says” (*jueyue* 訣曰).<sup>61</sup> The uniform format of these essays contributes to the prosimetric characteristics of the *Compendium*, indicating that the editor considered the mixture of prose and verse most befitting a compendium that laid claim to comprehensiveness. Like the adoption of the prosimetric form in late Ming vernacular fiction, these essays show the editor’s conscious manipulation of the idea of the popular.

<sup>59</sup> *Compendium*, j. 1, p. 32.

<sup>60</sup> Modern typeset print of *The Jade Office* in Li Ling 李零 et al., eds., *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan: Xiangshu juan* 中國方術概觀 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993), pp. 161–69.

<sup>61</sup> *Compendium*, j. 4, p. 72–73.

To better understand how the editor of the *Compendium* created “xiang” essays, I compare, below, the entry “Physiognomizing Virtue” (“Xiang de” 相德) in the *Compendium* to its source entry in *The Great Clarity Mirror*. This is the perfect entry to explore the editor’s agenda precisely because it does have a source essay in *The Great Clarity Mirror*, though in the latter the entry is classified as a “discourse.”

“DISCOURSE ON VIRTUE” IN *GREAT CLARITY MIRROR*      “PHYSIOGNOMIZING VIRTUE” IN *COMPENDIUM*

A

Great indeed are the ramifications of virtue! Heaven possesses an imposing virtue and therefore offers a lofty space for four seasons to revolve and thrive. Earth possesses the ultimate virtue and therefore grants an abundant space for the myriad things to grow and thrive. Humans with virtue are the same. Therefore, the way of Heaven protects him, human hearts look up to him, and he shall enjoy the grandeur of longevity.

德爲義大矣哉! 天之有大德也, 四時行而長處高; 地之有至德也, 萬物生而長處厚; 人之有德也, 亦若是矣。故天道祐之, 人心歸之, 享長生之榮。

B

The ability to be filial to parents, loyal to the king, in harmony with people, and be of assistance to things is the forerunner of all virtues and exemplary behavior. If not rewarded in this world, they will certainly be repaid in the netherworld. If not rewarded in their own lifetime, their descendants will benefit in theirs. Therefore, good physiognomists should first observe a person’s virtue and then his physical appearance. If his virtue is sublime, his physical appearance poses no hindrance of his becoming a gentleman; if his lineaments are good, but his actions ferocious, it does not keep him from being a petty man.

且能孝於親, 能忠於君, 能和於人, 能濟於物, 爲德之先, 爲行之表。雖未陽賞, 必獲陰報。未及其身, 必及子息。是以善相者, 先察其德, 而後相其形。故德美而形惡, 無妨爲君子; 形善而行凶, 不害爲小人。

The ability to be loyal to the king and filial to parents is the forerunner of all virtues and exemplary behavior. If not rewarded in this world, they will certainly be repaid in the netherworld. If not rewarded in their own lifetime, their descendants will benefit in theirs. Good physiognomists first observe one’s virtue and then their physical appearance. If one has virtue, but is ugly, it won’t keep him from becoming a gentleman. If their physical appearance is good, but their actions are ferocious, there is nothing to keep him from becoming a petty man.

能忠於君, 孝於親, 爲眾德之先, 眾行之表, 不得陽賞, 必爲陰報, 不在其身, 而在其子孫。善相者, 先察其德, 後相其形。故德靈而形惡, 無妨爲君子, 形善而行凶, 難掩爲小人。

C

Xunzi said, "To physiognomize the lineaments is not as important as to physiognomize the mind. To discuss the mind is not as important as to discuss virtue." This is to exhort people to do good deeds. It also shows that virtue is primary. 荀子曰：相形不如相心，論心不如論德。此勸人爲善也。又言其德爲先矣。

Xunzi said, "To physiognomize the face is not as important as to physiognomize the mind. To discuss the mind is not as important as to choose the proper methodology. This is to exhort people to do good deeds.

荀子曰：相面不如相心，論心不如擇術，此勸人爲善也。

D

Physique is like the artisan's [raw materials]. Timber can be beautiful, but when a clumsy artisan discards it, it remains wood that does not become useful.

夫形者，譬之匠也，材既美矣，匠拙則棄之，乃爲不材之木也。

Physique is the timber of a person; virtue is the tool. The physique is already beautiful, and assisted with virtue, is like being polished and turned into a vessel. If it encounters a clumsy artist and is discarded, it is timber that does not become useful.

形者，人之材也，德者，人之器也。材既美矣，而副之以德，猶加雕琢而成器也。器遇拙工而棄之，是爲不材之材也。

E

Indeed, one's physique is beautiful. If one has no virtue, then his physique is only beautiful on the surface, and he will certainly encounter calamity, injury, and humiliation. Therefore, virtue comes before the body. It is preferable to have virtue and an ugly physique rather than a beautiful body and no virtue. 人之形美矣，苟無德，則形以虛美，而夭禍人損，遭之凌辱，無疑也。是知德在形先，形居德後，乍可有德而形惡，不可形善而無德矣。

Indeed, virtue precedes physical appearance and physical appearance comes after virtue.

是知德在形先，形居德後也。

F

Guo Linzong observes that people have nine virtues. The first virtue is to be magnanimous; the second virtue to delight in good deeds; the third is to be fond of charity; the fourth is to recommend worthy people; the fifth is to sustain consistency; the sixth is to be thorough; the seventh is to be diligent; the eighth is to treasure things; the ninth is to be modest. 郭林宗觀人有九德，一曰：容物之德，二曰：樂善之德，三曰：好施之德，四曰：進人之德，五曰：保常之德，六曰：不忘之德，七曰：勤身之德，八曰：愛物之德，九曰：自謙之德。

G

As the poem says: How many people have imposing and fine features? How many have a frivolous appearance? One should know that in discussing physiognomy there are no other techniques. One first analyzes self-cultivation and then the body.

詩曰：幾輩堂堂相貌精，幾人相貌太輕盈。要知說相無他技，先相修持後相形。

A comparison of the two essays shows how the *Compendium* remade the content of the older source in order to lower the language register and thus appeal to commoners.<sup>62</sup> Changes range from simple word choices to the deletion of complicated philosophical concepts and sentences that attempted to elevate the essay by fleshing out less common analogies and so on. In word choice, “Physiognomizing Virtue” uses more colloquial phrases, for example, replacing *xiangxing* 相形 (to physiognomize the lineaments) with *xiangmian* 相面 (to physiognomize the face) (Section C). In a most eye-catching change, the first sentence of “Discourse on Virtue” was deleted in “Physiognomizing Virtue” thus exemplifying the editor’s intention to make the material easier to understand (Section A). Similarly, in Section D, “Physiognomizing Virtue” compares the cultivation of virtue to carving a tool, which helps clarify potentially obfuscating philosophical concepts. In Section F, “Physiognomizing Virtue” adds a line from Guo Linzong 郭林宗, an official of the Latter Han dynasty known for conversation about people’s characters and careers and reputedly “well versed in different walks of life,”<sup>63</sup> copied from “Discourse on the Mind” (“Lun xin” 論心) in *The Jade Office*; its enumeration of the “nine virtues” was done in a way to facilitate memorization.<sup>64</sup> The final poem in “Physiognomizing Virtue,” typical of “xiang” entries, summarizes the essay in four colloquial lines of verse thus presenting the entry as being easier to use for a wider audience.

The author of the entries in “Physiognomizing Virtue” also took pains to eliminate or modify difficult philosophical concepts. The first sentence in “Discourse” locates human virtue within the realm of three essential powers in all of nature – heaven, earth, and man; it is a major structure in Chinese cosmology. The exclamation, “Great indeed are the ramifications of virtue!” creates an atmosphere of argumentation. The intended audience of such sentences are sagely kings or men of high social status, for whom such sentences as “The way of Heaven protects him, human hearts look up to him” are relevant. “Physiognomizing Virtue” deletes these mood-building, but impractical, sentences that put the essay in the domain of “learning” and instead dives directly into practical guidance about virtue, thus the “techniques” of this branch of knowledge.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in Section B of the “Discourse

<sup>62</sup> *The Great Clarity Mirror*, p. 366; *Compendium*, j. 5, p. 90.

<sup>63</sup> Kohn, “Textbook of Physiognomy,” p. 236.

<sup>64</sup> *The Jade Office*, p. 138.

<sup>65</sup> The dichotomy of principle/practice, amateur/professional has been an overarching theme in Chinese culture; Luo Zhitian, *Inheritance within Rupture: Culture and Scholarship*

on Virtue” there are four virtuous actions listed, but in “Physiognomizing Virtue” the editor deleted the final two, to “harmonize with people, and be of assistance to things,” which are issues that would concern scholar-officials rather than commoners. More complex philosophical concepts are also deleted to facilitate easy understanding. In the “Discourse on Virtue” the philosophical concept of *xu* 虛 (insubstantial)/*shi* 實 (substantial) is introduced to help readers understand how the form/body are surface/illusion while human virtue is the substance. “Physiognomizing Virtue” simplifies the issue by deleting these concepts and merely repeats itself (Section E).

#### WHAT CATERS TO AN EXPERT?

Unlike present-day “books for dummies,” which promote simplicity, the editor and publisher of the *Compendium* walked a more subtle line. They wanted to sell the work to an expanding reading public, but did so by promoting the *Compendium* as suitable for an “expert physiognomist.” The idea of “an expert” is a term loaded with culturally and historically specific meanings. What catered to an expert physiognomist in the Ming dynasty?

Several points need to be addressed before speculating on the book’s targeted “expert” audience. Despite including both high and low language registers, the editor favored the lowbrow. In selecting treatises, when the same text was available in different formats, he preferred the lowbrow. This tendency is illustrated in the “Song on Physiognomy” (“Fengjian ge” 風鑒歌) attributed to a Song-era Daoist, Chen Tuan 陳搏, in *juan* 7. The song has two source texts: “Physiognomy by Mr. Chen Tuan” (“Chen Tuan xiansheng fengjian” 陳搏先生風鑒) in *The Jade Office* and “Discourse on the Esoteric” (“Shenbi lun” 神秘論) in *The Great Clarity Mirror*.<sup>66</sup> The former is prose in the classical language and the latter, despite its title “discourse,” is in verse and more colloquial. The *Compendium* chooses the version (in seven-character lines) in *The Great Clarity Mirror* but changed the title “Discourse” to “Song” in order to clarify its language in verse.<sup>67</sup>

Annotations provided in the *Compendium* indicate, once again, that the editor aimed at a relatively less-educated audience. The com-

in *Early Twentieth Century China*, translated by Lane J. Harris and Mei Chun (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), pp. 240–43.

<sup>66</sup> *Compendium*, j. 154–56; *The Jade Office*, pp. 120–23; *Great Clarity Mirror*, pp. 357–58.

<sup>67</sup> Kohn, “Textbook of Physiognomy,” p. 238, notes the distinction between these versions, but does not speculate on the reasons for the difference.

mentary to the essay titled “Rudimentary Physiognomy, First,” is interlinear and in a smaller font. It takes pains to explain something as basic as the Five Elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth).<sup>68</sup> In the essay titled “Rhapsody on Abnormality” (“Shenyi fu” 神異賦) (*juan* 6), the first longer treatise on the principles of physiognomy that was included in its entirety, the editor has written annotations throughout in order simply to explain the basics of Chinese history. After the line “Shun had the abnormality of double pupils and so received the abdication of Yao and became emperor,” the editor noted, obviously for a culturally shallow reader: “Yao and Shun are the names of emperors.” After the line that says “Chong’er had joined ribs,” the editor added: “Chong’er is the name of Duke Wen of Jin. *Pian* 駢 means joined” (see figure 2).<sup>69</sup> This reminds one of Yu Xiangdou’s 余象斗 (ca. 1560–1637) “abundant commentary 評林” edition of *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, in which Yu felt it necessary to explain who the ancient military writer Sunzi was, and what the word “eunuch” meant. One also thinks of Sibao 四堡 editions of the Confucian classics that were popular among readers who desired simple annotations and commentaries.<sup>70</sup>

To understand the diverse nature of the *Compendium*’s target “expert audience,” we can compare the work with encyclopedias for daily usage, which mushroomed in popularity in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.<sup>71</sup> Many of these everyday encyclopedias were printed, and reprinted, in Fujian, a major center of commercial publishing at that time; they received quite a wide distribution as well. To quote the preface to the late-sixteenth-century *Five Carts Piled with Brocade* (*Wuche bajin* 五車拔錦), encyclopedias made knowledge available to “all four classes of people”: they could read about something as easily as “reaching for items in a silk pouch.”<sup>72</sup> As Sakai Tadao speculates in his study of their prefaces and contents, encyclopedias for daily use were intended for the non-elite, such as peasants, petty traders, and even itinerant laborers.<sup>73</sup> Almost all such works had sections that “instructed how to

<sup>68</sup> *Compendium*, j. 1, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> *Compendium*, j. 6, p. 105.

<sup>70</sup> Anne McLaren, “Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China,” in Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow, eds., *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 2005), p. 172; Brokaw, “Book History in Premodern China,” pp. 192–205.

<sup>71</sup> See Sakade Yoshinobu’s 阪出祥伸 introductory essay to the Ming daily-usage encyclopedias, “Kaisetsu: Mindai nichiyō ruisho ni tsuite” 解説, 明代日用類書について, included in *Wuche bajin* (*Gosha bakkin*) 五車拔錦 in *Chūgoku nichiyō ruisho shūsei* 中國日用類書集成, vols. 1–2 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1999), pp. 7–29.

<sup>72</sup> *Wuche bajin*, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Sakai Tadao 酒井忠夫, “Mindai no nichiyō ruisho to shomin kyōiku” 明代の日用類書と庶民教育 (*Daily Life Encyclopedias and Popular Education in the Ming*), in Hayashi Tomo-

physiognomize" (*xiangfa men* 相法門). Moreover, these sections mostly included easy-to-memorize colloquial rhymes. For example, in the popular early-seventeenth-century *Complete Book of the Myriad Treasures in Five Carts* (*Wuche wanbao quanshu* 五車萬寶全書), the physiognomy section only contains lyrics following the tune "Xijiang yue" 西江月, among other songs (*ge* 歌 and *jue* 訣), and pictures.<sup>74</sup> Publishers of daily-use encyclopedias were pushing the vulgarization of physiognomic knowledge to a new level. The editor and publisher of the *Compendium* were, however, aiming at something different, with the inclusion of philosophical essays.

How might we reconstruct the likely reading public being sought? Potential buyers of the *Compendium* were not only used to the manner of reading texts with annotations, but also to extensive reading. The vast materials contained in the *Compendium* facilitated skimming, which could be guided by the entry titles. The mixing in of materials of different linguistic registers would not encourage skipping over complete sections, but it is a user-friendly format for readers in the process of learning. Those who aspired to the prestige of

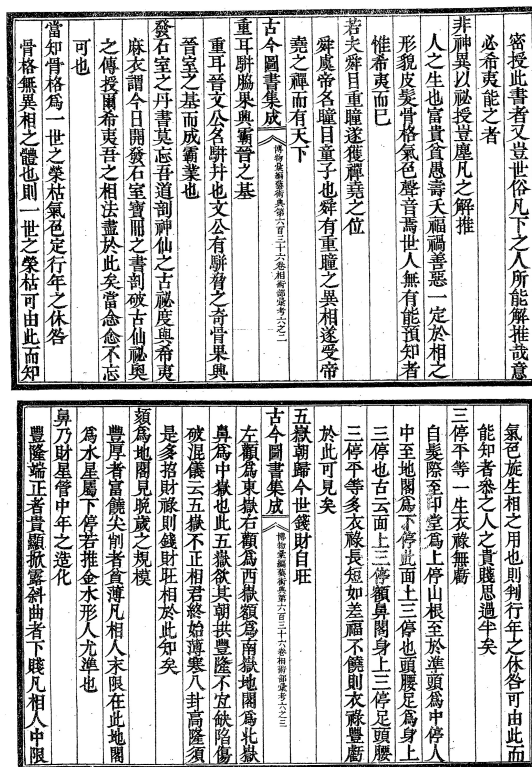


Figure 2. Page from *juan 6* of *Compendium*

This shows annotations of well-known people and common words.

haru 林友春, ed., *Kinsei Chūgoku kyōikushi kenkyū* 近世中國教育史研究 (Tokyo: Kokudoshu, 1958); quoted in Brokaw, "Book History," p. 269.

<sup>74</sup> *Wuche wanbao quanshu* (*Gosha banpō zensho*) 五車萬寶全書, in *Chūgoku nichiyō ruisho shūsei*, vols. 8–9 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2001), pp. 401–18.

owning a book with philosophical essays, even though they might not be able to understand them, could easily skim the book through entry titles indicating easier linguistic styles. The eclectic collection would also appeal to amateur collectors or aficionados, those known as *haoshizhe* 好事者, that is, people who were educated enough to read philosophical essays, but who were more interested in the lively language of oral-traditional texts. The inclusion of philosophical essays alongside such texts, a form that is reminiscent of the “often flowery and sophisticated” combination of classical and vernacular rituals in Kristofer Schipper’s study of Daoist community celebrations in the 1960s, resonates with how practicing physiognomists of Ming times performed their art, and also blurs our usual distinctions between the social categories of literati-amateurs and professional physiognomists.<sup>75</sup>

Most importantly, the explications provided for what seem to be simple concepts and well-known historical figures, which catered to a reading public with only a basic literacy, along with the inclusion of difficult philosophical treatises, do not so much make the *Compendium* an internally contradictory book, but rather create a rhetorical appeal to its eclecticism. While historians of Ming print culture have pointed out the broader social base of the reading public, the rhetorical stance of the *Compendium* and its celebration of comprehensiveness is particularly noteworthy.<sup>76</sup> Its contents show an editor’s desire to create a printed work that was “one size fits all,” offering readers the experience of owning something of significant size that contained a variety of materials not all of which were necessarily useful for that specific reader. “Comprehensive” in the title authorized the “abundance” of its texts and created a broad sense of reading communities. The publisher promoted print as an egalitarian medium.

“Rhapsody on the Golden Lock,” attributed to a Hemp-Robed Master (Mayi 麻衣), begins with an advertisement for its own worth:

<sup>75</sup> Kristofer Schipper, “Vernacular and Classical Ritual in Taoism,” *JAS* 45.1 (1985), p. 22, aptly observes that classical ritual present in community celebrations is counterintuitive. “Accustomed as we are (alas!) to associate the religion of the Chinese people, that is, its she-hui (Assembly of the Earth God), with ‘folk religion,’ we would expect the ritual expression of this religion to be in the spoken language only.”

<sup>76</sup> Inoue Susumu 井上進, *Chūgoku shuppan bunka shi: shomotsu to chi no fūkei* 中国出版文化史: 書物世界と知の風景 (*A Cultural History of Chinese Publishing: Books and the Landscape of Knowledge*) (Nagoya: Nagoya U.P., 2002), pp. 166–75; Kai-wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2004). McLaren, “Constructing New Reading Publics,” p. 176, observes a “rhetorical upgrading of the common reader” in the late Ming publishing industry.

|         |                                                                     |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 相法百家歸一理 | The hundred schools of physiognomy share a principle;               |
| 文字泛多難以撰 | [But] the abundance of texts makes it difficult to compile.         |
| 剛出諸家奧妙歌 | We simply provide a song of the secrets of the schools              |
| 盡與後人容易記 | That makes it utterly easy for posterity to remember. <sup>77</sup> |

These four lines address several key issues: they assume a single principle lies behind physiognomy; they claim that “Rhapsody on the Golden Lock” aims at simplification and comprehensiveness. They also advertise its newness and ease of use, typically sought-after values in the competitive realm of commercial publishing.

## CONCLUSION

In his informative study of divination practices in the Qing dynasty, Richard J. Smith laments that “the exact nature of interaction [between elites and commoners] cannot be documented with precision.” In the present study, by closely examining works like the *Compendium for the Expert Physiognomist* we have moved somewhat closer to that goal.<sup>78</sup> In the case of the *Compendium*, we see that “comprehensiveness” can be closely linked to a new way of putting texts together, a way that focused on the popularization and practical goals of knowledge through a deliberate mixing of highbrow and lowbrow materials and different forms of textual compilation. Understanding oral-traditional texts and the discursive significance the form produces, as well as the ordered appearance of both philosophical treatises and easy-to-memorize rhymes, helped the editor present physiognomic knowledge as philosophical yet empirical, esoteric yet popular.

The transmission of physiognomic knowledge was passed down through works like the *Compendium*, but the work itself also contains a back-story about how masters learned skills. In the “Rhapsody on Abnormality,” Chen Tuan, supposedly its author, portrays himself as a mere transmitter of physiognomic knowledge. Deep in a grotto on Mount Hua, the Hemp-Robed Master taught Chen Tuan the elements of physiognomy as they sat around a glowing brazier in the winter. The Hemp-Robed Master used no words, but wrote the principles in the

<sup>77</sup> *Compendium*, j. 7, p. 135.

<sup>78</sup> Richard J. Smith, *Mapping China and Managing the World: Culture, Cartography and Cosmology in Late Imperial Times* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 151.

ashes with an iron staff.<sup>79</sup> A different Ming text provides an illustration of this very encounter; it helps us visualize how the unique pedagogical session was conducted (see figure 3).<sup>80</sup> Several points of interest here: while attaching significance to the written language, the passage emphasizes the interpersonal transmission between the Hemp Robe Master and Chen Tuan. The words written in the ashes are ephemeral, making the knowledge conveyed esoteric. This following is the kind of experience that the editor intends for the reader of the *Compendium*: oral-traditional texts conveying a touch of intimacy, like winter encounters by a hot brazier; high-prose essays presenting physiognomy as a branch of knowledge deserving serious philosophical pursuit. Although “neither systematic nor particularly coherent,”<sup>81</sup> the physiognomic knowledge passed down through the *Compendium* was, in the end, neither ephemeral nor esoteric, but uniquely crafted to lay open the secrets of the masters to the expanded reading public of the late Ming and beyond.



Figure 3. “The Hemp-Robed Master Transmits the Principles of Physiognomy by a Brazier”

Printed in Newly Published Capital Edition of the Mirror of Auras, Physiognomy, and Face Reading Combined (*Xinkan jingben fengjian xiangfa renxiang bian*) 新刊京本風鑒相法人相編 (Mingde tang 明德堂 edn., 1602), j. 2.1.

<sup>79</sup> *Compendium*, j. 6, p. 104.

<sup>80</sup> “The Hemp-Robed Daoist is an Expert in Physiognomy” is the first illustration in the section on physiognomy in *Wuche wanbao quanshu*, even preceding the standard chart of the human face; this fact establishes the importance of the social source and transmission of knowledge; *Wuche wanbao quanshu*, p. 401.

<sup>81</sup> Smith, *Fortune-Tellers and Philosophers*, p. 188.