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## The Lady Vanishes: Religious Conflict and Premortem Enshrinement in Sixteenth-Century China<sup>1</sup>

In 1107, an image of the most popular Buddhist deity, the bodhisattva Guanyin [Kuan-yin], was carved in the sacred caves at Dazu. For several centuries, she took a special interest in protecting the villages round about. One day in 1524, Guanyin was just about to embark on an inspection tour when she heard that the prominent official Lin Jun, accompanied by the magistrate and prefect administering the area, was coming to see the sacred caves. She decided to wait and have a talk with them about how to help the common people. When the party arrived, Lin Jun praised the workmanship of the statues, and pausing just across from the Guanyin statue, wrote a poem as a memento. Prefect Fan, to flatter Lin, proposed engraving the poem in the cliff. Magistrate Tang, not to be behindhand, suggested that Lin's image be carved on the mountain too, replacing the Guanyin image. Lin agreed, even after he was told that Guanyin protected the people of the whole area. Magistrate Tang gave the order to remove Guanyin and carve Lin in her place. That night, Tang heard a voice warning him against the change, but he responded by charging up the mountain with a band of soldiers. As soon as the

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seated Guanyin saw him coming, she scolded him, pointing out that she demanded nothing from the people, whereas he, who was the “father and mother of the commoners” merely treated them like so much fish and meat to be eaten. How dare he attack her! But Tang destroyed the statue anyway. Guanyin’s head, lying on the ground, continued to stare angrily and scold him... Tang woke, to find that the meeting was only a dream. When the trio did return to the mountain, however, the lady had vanished. They erected Lin’s image in the empty space, and engraved the poem, much to Lin Jun’s satisfaction, – and to their own when he graciously suggested that their images be placed to either side of his.<sup>2</sup>

The old scholarly focus on differences between China and Europe is yielding to a search for similarities and mutual influence.<sup>3</sup> One apparent remaining difference is that during the sixteenth century, when Europe was riven by religious strife, China experienced the peaceful co-existence of different religions. Voltaire deployed this harmony as a model for Europe in his *Treatise on Tolerance* (1763), having learned about it from Jesuit missionaries living in China during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing ([Ch’ing]1644-1911) dynastic periods.<sup>4</sup> Scholars

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<sup>2</sup> Chen Xianxue [陈贤学], *Strange Tales of the Dazu Stone Carvings* [大足石刻奇闻] (Chongqing: Chongqing Publishers, 1991), 27-30 (paraphrase). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author’s.

<sup>3</sup> One example: Hilde De Weerd, “Considering Citizenship in Imperial Chinese History,” *Citizenship Studies* (2019): 1-21.

<sup>4</sup> Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance*, trans. Jonathan Bennet, 2017, accessed at [www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/voltaire1763.pdf](http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/voltaire1763.pdf) July 15 2020, section 4.

continue to focus on religious coexistence today, even as they overturn the Jesuit presentation of Confucianism as a secular teaching. But, as this tale of Confucian official Lin Jun [林俊] (1452-1527) ousting the Buddhist “Goddess of Mercy” from her niche suggests, Ming also experienced considerable religious competition, sometimes violent. In particular, ardent Confucians took advantage of holding office to attack religious institutions they disapproved of, with or without central state permission. Centered on dramatic events in the career of Lin Jun and his friends, this article adds another dimension to the scholarly view of a particular Ming practice – premortem enshrinement. While the placing of the images of living men in shrines has been treated as primarily political, it also played a role in religious competition that shows the darker, violent, spiritual side of official Confucian power.

### **Introducing Ming Religions: From Co-existence to Syncretism**

The “Three Teachings” or major religions of China – Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism (sometimes spelt Taoism) – had dramatically different scriptures, worldviews, ultimate aims, clergies, temples, rituals, and gods. To introduce them briefly: Confucian teachings centered on ethical self-cultivation in the context of familial and, for elite men, political relations. Its scriptures, the classics and histories, formed the basis for civil service examinations that selected men (normally from among the elite, gentry families that comprised about 5% of the population) to serve for brief terms in the bureaucracy that administered the provinces, prefectures, and counties of the empire. Confucian scripture provided the “Mandate of Heaven” legitimating rhetoric of dynastic rule: the current dynasty would be supported by Heaven (whether conceived of as an impersonal force, or as a top deity also called “God on High” or “the Jade Emperor”) and its partner Earth, so long as the emperors were personally virtuous, heeded

wise advisors, and assured the livelihood and security of the people. Confucians held that the cosmos, centered on Heaven, Earth, and Man, was real; that it mattered; and that it held legitimate joys as well as pain.

Buddhism, by contrast, postulated a vast number of worlds, generated by illusion, and imbued with suffering. Buddhism's multiplying scriptures taught that sincere ethical behavior – including some specifics that agreed with Confucian values, others that differed – could earn merit for oneself and one's family. Merit translated into good fortune and a better rebirth in the next life, as well as contributing to spiritual wisdom. Buddhist monks and nuns were celibate. In addition to their own spiritual practice, they taught, healed, exorcised, managed charity and funerals, and attended to cults of powerful deities and saints called bodhisattvas (including Guanyin), who answered the prayers of lay petitioners. The Daoist clergy, by contrast again, included married men and women, and taught that the world was real and a source of pleasure. With a vast canon of scripture and practice built up over centuries, Daoists pursued bodily and spiritual self-cultivation. They also served communities as exorcists, healers, and rainmakers, and attended to another vast hierarchy of deities whom laypeople could approach for aid.

Finally, this rather crowded religious realm included China's "popular religion." It centered (and centers today) not on scriptures, ethics, or clergy, but on cults to spirits ranging from territorial saints defining local identities, to strange local nature spirits, to major mountain gods, to men and women enshrined after death. Spirits entered this pantheon by demonstrating spiritual efficacy [□]. A ghost or spirit might initially attract attention by possessing people, causing illness, or appearing in dreams, to demand propitiation at a small shrine. Once there was a space for offerings, people would pray there for help: with no sense that a person should

worship only one god, those in need petitioned any number of spirits. If prayers were answered, people donated to enlarge the shrine, and spread the word of the spirit's efficacy; and as long as the spirit continued to respond, its constituency and temple would grow, making it yet more powerful. Believers might eventually petition the state for recognition, which would be granted if investigation confirmed that the miracles had occurred.<sup>5</sup>

Deities were housed on home altars (alongside ancestors) and in temples, hermitages, and shrines.<sup>6</sup> Confucius was worshipped in an official school-temple complex in every government seat. One of the two most popular deities was Guanyin, a bodhisattva who had attained enlightenment but vowed to remain in the realm of suffering to answer every sincere call for help, and appear to people in any shape that would lead them to salvation. The other was (confusingly) a former human named Guan Yu or Guandi, a martial hero from a millennium

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<sup>5</sup> Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Adam Yuet Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> One generally translates 寺 as temple (usually Confucian or Buddhist), 庵 as temple (normally Buddhist), 观 as hermitage (Daoist), and 祠 as shrine (many kinds), but the terms were not differentiated consistently in Ming times, nor do they consistently indicate size or importance.

before Ming.<sup>7</sup> Ming people generally supported, incorporated, and relied on all of these religions (as well as tolerating Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and various sects).

Sometimes this coexistence was actively celebrated, as in the sacred cave complex at Dazu in Sichuan. Explicitly embodying the principle that “the three teachings converge into one” [三教合一], the caves held images and texts carved out and engraved from the ninth century through the nineteenth and paid for by a myriad of donors, humble and mighty.<sup>8</sup> Of the 60,000 icons, about 80% are Buddhist, 12% Daoist, and 8% Confucian.<sup>9</sup> In some niches, including some dating to Ming times, Confucius stands alongside Laozi, the father of Daoism, and a Buddhist figure; and at one spot the Confucian *Classic of Filial Piety* is inscribed.<sup>10</sup> In this collegial atmosphere, the jarring replacement of a Guanyin with the image of a living official required explanation for locals, resulting in the tale told above. It requires explication by historians, too: this article attempts that.

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Meulenbeld, “Chinese Religion in the Ming and Qing Dynasties,” *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions*, ed. Randall L. Nadeau (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 126; Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Barend J. ter Haar, *Guan Yu: The Religious Afterlife of a Failed Hero* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Guo Xiangying [郭祥英], *Research into the Dazu Rock Carvings* [大足石刻研究] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2000), 118, 136.

<sup>9</sup> Dazu Rock Carvings Museum in Chongqing, *Dazu Rock Carvings of China* (Chongqing: Wan Li Book Co., 1991), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Zhou Zhao, “The Unified Three Teachings in the Rock Carvings of the Song Dynasty in Chongqing and Sichuan” (Ph.D. diss., Heidelberg University, n.d.), 36, 120, 122.

As for the central Ming state, it claimed and sometimes exercised the right to regulate religion. All the religions, including some popular cults, were built into the state.<sup>11</sup> Tensions were inevitable. Because the Ming founder put Daoist clergy in charge of much public worship, some Confucians saw them as direct competitors.<sup>12</sup> The central state occasionally outlawed a local or regional cult, as well as (but in vain) spirit mediums<sup>13</sup> In 1391, large numbers of Buddhist temples were ordered closed, but the effects were shortlived in some places.<sup>14</sup> Buddhist and Daoist institutions and personnel rebounded, so that by the 1480s there were over half a million

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<sup>11</sup> For regulations, see *inter alia* Romeyn Taylor, “Official Religion in the Ming,” in *The Cambridge History of China volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, part 2*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Daniel Overmyer, “Attitudes toward Popular Religion in Ritual Texts of the Chinese State: The Collected Statutes of the Great Ming,” *Cahiers d’Extreme-Asie* 5 (1989-1990); Chen Xiyuan [陈曦园], “At the Overlapping Margins of Popular Belief and State Power – Taking as an Illustration the Destruction of One Shrine in Ming-era Nanjing” [重叠的边缘：信仰与权力——以明代南京一庙的毁灭为例], in *Power and Culture in Ming-Qing Legal Practice* [明清法律实践中的权力与文化], ed. Ch’iu Peng-sheng [邱澎生] and Chen Xiyuan (Taipei: Central Research Academy, 2009), pp. 87-143; and Sarah Schneewind, “Visions and Revisions: Village Policies of the Ming Founder in Seven Stages,” *T’oung Pao*, second series, 87.4/5 (2001): 317-359, on Buddhism pp. 345-52.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare: Daoism, Territorial Networks, and the History of a Ming Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015), 152. Mid-Ming Confucians were competing against not just religious specialists, but other kinds of specialists as well. He Bian, *Know Your Remedies: Pharmacy and Culture in Early Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 14.



monks, more than four times the number in the early Ming.<sup>15</sup> The Confucian attacks on Buddhism, Daoism, and deity cults in this article responded to real competition. The attacks occurred across the empire, and mainly without central coordination. Since the imperial center drew officials in from communities all over, and then sent them out to hold bureaucratic office anywhere but in their home towns, the high Ming suppression occurred wherever zealots were posted.

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<sup>13</sup> Perhaps because mediums had “great potential for dissident interpretation.” Robert Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion* (MacMillan Press: Houndmills, England, 1987), 158.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy Brook, “At the Margin of Public Authority: The Ming State and Buddhism,” in *Culture and State in Chinese History: Conventions, Accommodations, and Critiques*, ed. Theodore Hutters, R. Bin Wong, and Pauline Yu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 161-181. Brook’s student Dewei Zhang, *Thriving in Crisis: Buddhism and Political Disruption in China, 1522-1620* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), “following the line of Brook’s argument” (24-5), ignores both Chün-fang Yü’s different view (*The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Chu-hung and the Late Ming Synthesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981)) and errors in Brook’s chapter pointed out in print before the chapter re-appeared in a collection. (See Schneewind, “Visions and Revisions,” 353-54; cf. Sarah Schneewind, “Review of *The Chinese State in Ming Society*,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* XXXVIII/4 (2007), 1203-04.)

<sup>15</sup> Anne Gerritsen, “The Hongwu Legacy: Fifteenth-century Views on Zhu Yuanzhang’s Monastic Policies,” in *Long Live the Emperor! Uses of the Ming Founder Across Six Centuries of East Asian History*, ed. Sarah Schneewind (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2008): 55-72, p. 65.

Historian Timothy Brook has distinguished two phases in the coexistence of religions in Ming times, and has proposed an explanation for the shift. For the first two centuries, the norm for laypeople was a low-intensity experience that Brook calls a “condominium” to capture the way religions co-existed “with a considerable degree of harmony: equal in principle, equally available to worshippers, and free to associate and interact in a multitude of ways.”<sup>16</sup> The condominium approach was supplemented, in the later sixteenth century, by more systematic, thoughtful, purposeful religious integration that many scholars have called “syncretism.”<sup>17</sup> The late-Ming syncretists, including Lin Zhao’en [林兆恩] (1517-1598), whom Brook dubs “the most synthetically minded of late-Ming thinkers,” were challenged.<sup>18</sup> But they were not burned at the stake. Brook argues that the late-Ming synthesis took its cue from a popular practice of jointly worshipping the Buddha, the Daoist sage Laozi, and Confucius in “Three Teachings Halls.”<sup>19</sup> Religious violence, this article suggests, may have played a role in the change.

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<sup>16</sup> Timothy Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism: The Unity of the Three Teachings and their Joint Worship in Late Imperial China,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21.1 (1993): 13-44.

<sup>17</sup> See among others Yü, *The Renewal of Buddhism* and Cynthia Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism,” 22. Judith Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* [Lin Zhao'en] (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); and Kenneth Dean, *Lord of the Three in One: The Spread of a Cult in Southeast China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) 8, 222-23.

<sup>19</sup> Brook, “Rethinking Syncretism,” 27-34.

From the late-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, iconoclasm and temple destruction pitted a minority of zealous Confucians against the great majority of Ming people, both elite and non-elite. Their failure to impose religious purity, and the backlash against them, may have taught later generations the wisdom of a more tolerant approach, and may have been what led them to theorize syncretism more fully.

### **Introducing Premortem Shrines**

The Ming practice of placing into a shrine the image or name-tablet of a living man, and making offerings to it, has been understood as primarily political.<sup>20</sup> One reason is that the best-known premortem shrines are those built to flatter eunuch dictator Wei Zhongxian in 1626. His sycophants were excoriated by Wei's political rivals, a Confucian party, and it is the Confucians who dominate the written record. Premortem shrines were indeed political, but this article will add to their religious dimensions.

To first explain some basics: Premortem enshrinement of an official, usually a prefect or county magistrate being transferred to another jurisdiction, was common, legal, and respected. Yet everyone understood the danger that members of the local elite – prospective junior colleagues of the official – could create a shrine just to flatter a man moving up. Everyone

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<sup>20</sup> Zhao Kesheng [赵克生], “Analysis of the Phenomenon of Temple to a Living Official in Ming Dynasty” [明代活人祠现象分析], *Seeking Truth* [求真] 33.2 (2006): 126-131; Ho Shu-yi [何淑怡], *The Living Shrines for Departed Officials and the Local Society of Jiaxing Prefecture in the Late Ming Dynasty* [明代晚期嘉兴府活人祠与地方社会], *Academia Sinica Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo jikan* 66.4 (2016): 811-854; Sarah Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men in the Ming Political Cosmos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018).

understood the danger that such an official might drop hints, or even build a shrine to himself.<sup>21</sup>

To show that no such corruption was involved, the recipient of a shrine often gave a performance of reluctance. Lin Jun, for example, wrote in a letter that he had objected even to a stone inscription honoring him in Yunnan; that the premortem shrine to him – added he knew not when – was “nonsensical [□□];” and that the lofty prose of its commemorative inscription made him feel even more embarrassed.<sup>22</sup> Ming politicians coveted honors, but impeachment for corruption could mean demotion, punishment, loss of civil service examination rank, and even execution. It was wise to be cautiously humble. Xie Shiyuan [□□□] (1425-94), a friend for whom Lin Jun wrote a biography, went so far as to demolish his own premortem shrine.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Although the Ming government was more bureaucratically rational, and selected talent with far less consideration for hereditary rank, than European governments at the time, there was still room for personal recommendations, with the attendant potential for abuse. Lin Jun, for instance, recommended as tutor to the heir apparent a lowly community school teacher, Liu Min, so filial that he lived in a hut by his mother’s tomb for three years, and so earnest that one prefect always desired his presence at religious rituals, to help him focus. Lin presumably knew about Liu because both men came from Putian in Fujian Province. Zhang Tingyu, ed., *The Official History of the Ming Dynasty* [□□] (1739; reprint Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 25/298/7628.

<sup>22</sup> Lin Jun, “Letter to Censor Chen Yuanxi [Cha]” [□□□□□□], in his *Collected Works of Lin Jun* [□□□], hereafter *Jiansu ji* 23/20.

<sup>23</sup> Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, 151, 158. Other officials avoided the appearance of impropriety by converting their premortem shrines to Wenchang pavilions; Wenchang was a god of literature who had begun as a gigantic, fearsome, mountain viper thunder-god. See Zhao, “Temples to a Living Official,” 127-8 n. 15; and Han Kuang [□□], “Record of the Virtuous

Wide public sponsorship was a more systematic way than such performances to demonstrate a premortem shrine's innocence. Premortem shrines, in contrast to posthumous shrines to officials, did not require state approval; their propriety rested on unsolicited action by large numbers of locals, especially commoners, expressing gratitude for good governance. Of course, public endorsement could be faked.<sup>24</sup> But the social requirement of wide sponsorship made premortem enshrinement a potent tool in the hands of local people. For by honoring one resident administrator, they implicitly (sometimes explicitly) criticized his predecessors; and by explicitly posting which of his policies they approved, they set an agenda for his successors.

This political interpretation requires supplementing in at least three ways that connect to Lin Jun and to Ming religious conflict. With the exception of chapter three, *Shrines to Living Men* fits shrines primarily into a repertoire of secular honors for resident administrators. The repertoire included petitioning to keep the magistrate or prefect, inscribing his praises on stone, singing ditties about him, lying in the road to prevent his leaving, and naming things after him.<sup>25</sup> But, first, this model does not work well for provincial-level officials, like Lin Jun, who lacked

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Governance of Mr. Li" [ ] (ca. 1624), in 1630 Shanxi *Weizhou Gazetteer* [ ], 564.

(Local gazetteers are listed by date of publication and province.)

<sup>24</sup> Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, esp. 12, 155-57, 264. There were also legitimate, but private, premortem shrines that claimed no popular sponsorship, like Fan Fu's image of Lin Jun at the Dazu caves. See Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, chapter 8.

<sup>25</sup> For instance, when Long Jin dredged a river that had been blocked for a century, Jiading people named the channel after him and put up a stele that rhymed his surname: "We got a dragon (*long*), the river stopped laggin' (*tong*) [ ]." Zheng Zhongkui, *New Chats with the Jade Whisk* [ ] (1636?; reprint Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002) 6/1.

direct responsibility for taxation, justice, disaster relief, and other aspects of people's daily lives. Second, shrines had a spiritual side, even if other items in the repertoire were secular.

Third, *Shrines to Living Men* argues that premortem shrines honored those who worked for locals' livelihood and security and "followed the wishes of the people."<sup>26</sup> Certainly, locals valued kindness and respect for their lives and their ways. The "parental metaphor" was one way that locals pressured officials to govern well, and one way that officials signaled their understanding.<sup>27</sup> Lin Jun's friend Xie Shiyuan, we are told, "loved the Jianchang people like children, and the Jianchang people respected him like a parent."<sup>28</sup> Of Magistrate Ji Su, who also earned a premortem shrine, it is recorded:

When there were commoners who broke the law, with good words he would explain to make them understand, sitting in the court over the affair all day without flogging or beating them. He once said to a commoner, "I am acting as your father-and-mother official. There has never been one who was a father or mother yet was not kind to his/her children. But I fear that you will not learn from experience. It is difficult to avoid restraining you with the law without also losing the dynasty's original good intentions."<sup>29</sup>

Ji Su had to enforce the law, yet used parental metaphor to express reluctance to issue the customary beatings. Locals, for their part, strategically praised magistrates as "parents,"

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<sup>26</sup> Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, 75.

<sup>27</sup> Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, 85-7.

<sup>28</sup> 1517 Jiangxi *Jianchang Prefectural Gazetteer* [江西南昌府志] 7/8-10, 24, 30, 17/5,6, 13.

<sup>29</sup> 1519 Nanzhili *Jiangning County Gazetteer* [江西南昌府志] 8/5.

sometimes specifically as mothers, to highlight trust and gentleness and elicit governance that respected local wishes.<sup>30</sup>

But kindness and respect for local norms would have meant accepting religious variety. The idea that local communities deployed premortem enshrinement to pursue their own political ends cannot explain the enshrinement of Confucian zealots who violated local religious values. The following sections will show that premortem shrines could house spirits; introduce Lin Jun's career and his replacement of Guanyin; explain the violent competition of Confucianism with other Ming religions; recount how some iconoclasts were themselves enshrined while still alive; consider whether their other government contributions suffice to explain that; show how deeply people resented their intolerance; present an alternative, religious, explanation for their enshrinement; and show how that underlines, again, the violence of the competition.

### **The Spirit in the Shrine**

Some ardent Confucians, like philosopher Zhan Ruoshui [湛若水] (1466-1560), who spoke up for Lin Jun when he angered the Jiajing emperor, believed that only the sincerity of the worshipper brought gods and spirits into being.<sup>31</sup> But most people understood the soul(s) of a person more concretely. After death, the soul might reside in the grave; reside in or visit the ancestral name tablet portrait at a home altar or in an ancestral temple; descend to the underworld

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<sup>30</sup> The people loved Du Qiming [杜岐明] (fl. 1615) like a “kind mother [慈母].” 1882 Beizhili

*Huailai County Gazetteer* [懷來縣志] 11/24.

<sup>31</sup> Donald S. Sutton, “Prefect Feng and the Yangzhou Drought of 1490: A Ming Social Crisis and the Rewards of Sincerity,” *Minsu quyi* [閩縣志] 143.3 (June 2004): 19–47, pp. 39-40. Zhang, *Official History* 24/283/7266.

for judgment and punishment; be reborn, immediately or after that judgement and punishment; ascend to a Daoist or Buddhist paradise; serve as a judge in Hell; or split into constituent parts to be absorbed into earth or dispersed into air. Or – it turns out – the soul might find a home in a shrine built before death.

According to the *History of the Former Han Dynasty*, one Zhu Yi (d. 61 BC), called his sons to his death-bed, and said:

“In the past, I was the official in charge of Tongxiang. Those people loved me. I must be buried in my Tongxiang. Later generations of sons and grandsons making cooked offerings to me would not be as good as the Tongxiang commoners doing so.” And he died. His sons buried him in Tongxiang... The people thereupon together raised a mound and established a shrine... and the seasonal offerings have not ceased, even up until today.<sup>32</sup>

Zhu Yi’s choice stresses that the bond between a resident administrator and the people of his jurisdiction could be like that of parent and child. This highly emotional metaphor for governance was political – but not merely political.

An early Ming writer, Wang Zhi, retold Zhu Yi’s story to eulogize a resident administrator, Pan Shu, buried where he had served in office. Wang admitted that burial away from home, and making offerings to an unrelated person, ran counter to ritual propriety. But, he wrote, one should sympathize with the sincere local feelings it expressed. Those feelings included a religious aspect. As Wang recounted, when rebels invaded the area, seizing civilians,

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<sup>32</sup> Ban Gu and Ban Zhao, *History of Former Han* [ ] 11/89/3635ff.



Pan shielded them by reminding a rebel leader that the locals were “Heaven’s people.”

Therefore, Wang explains, “Heaven repaid him” with the tomb carefully tended by locals.<sup>33</sup>

Many Ming texts about shrines to officials include the story of Zhu Yi on his deathbed. The emotional, spiritual connection between people and “parental officials” the story evoked was not merely an ideological call for popular obedience, nor merely a popular call for humane government. Rather, the story had personal, religious meaning for enshrined officials and their kin.

He Wenyan (何文元) (js. 1418, d. 1457)<sup>34</sup> had been prefect of Wenzhou from about 1430 to 1436. He aided the people in many ways, including effective prayer to Heaven for rain and effective pleas to the central state for changes in policy.<sup>35</sup> Wenzhou gentryman Zhang Lun’s biography of He Wenyan insists that to earn a lasting shrine, a resident administrator had to get along well with the “children” of his jurisdiction, and contribute concretely to their welfare.

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<sup>33</sup> Heaven also granted Pan’s son a government post. Wang Zhi (王祜) (1379-1462), “Postface to Assistant Magistrate Pan [Shu]’s Epitaph” (潘舒公墓誌) (c. 1379), in his *Wang Wenduan gong wenji* 26/24-6. Those rebels, by the way, founded the Ming dynasty.

<sup>34</sup> We can sometimes date a man only by when he passed the second-level (provincial) examination (*jr.*) or highest (metropolitan) examination (*js.*).

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Nimick, *Local Administration in Ming China: The Changing Roles of Magistrates, Prefects and Provincial Officials* (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2008), 100. Zhang Lun (張倫), “Account of Conduct of Minister of Personnel Mr. He Wenyan” (何文元公行狀), in Jiao Hong (焦弘) *Records of the Testimonies about the Worthies of the (Reigning) Dynasty* (何文元公行狀) (1594; reprint Taipei; Mingwen shuju, 1991) 24/35-41 (110/147-150).

Only a wise prefect or magistrate who loves the people like children and whose contributions and virtue enter into their hearts – only such a one will the people truly love like a father and mother. Thus they are content with him, and when he leaves, they therefore yearn for him and, further, erect a shrine to worship him.<sup>36</sup>

On the day He Wenyuan departed in 1436, thousands of Wenzhou people wept and blocked the road, then lined the river bank bowing towards his boat. Wenyuan himself also sobbed and sighed as he tried to comfort them. As it turned out, the Wenzhou post was the high point of his career. Two years later he was jailed for the first time, caught up in central politics. More trouble followed. In 1457, three days before he hanged himself,

He Wenyuan gathered his sons, and said, “I used to be Prefect of Wenzhou. The Wenzhou commoners honored me deeply indeed. Now I have been gone from Wenzhou for ten years and more, but my heart has never left Wenzhou. When I die, my spirit [ ] will certainly return to Wenzhou.”<sup>37</sup>

Echoing Zhu Yi, Wenyuan had accepted Wenzhou’s offer of incorporation into the locality.

He Wenyuan’s son Qiaoxin [ ] (1427-1503), for whom Lin Jun would later request a posthumous honorary title,<sup>38</sup> took this message to heart. In office, he worked hard on famine

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<sup>36</sup> Zhang Lun [ ] “Record of the Shrine to Former Prefect Mr. He [Wenyuan]” [ ] [ ], in 1503 Zhejiang *Wenzhou Prefectural Gazetteer* [ ] 19/ 77-9 (995-9).

<sup>37</sup> Zhang Lun, “Account of Conduct,” 24/35-41.

<sup>38</sup> Zhang, *Official History*, 16/183/4854.

relief.<sup>39</sup> And in 1469, he wrote the commemorative record for a premortem shrine to Jiang Hao [江好] (*jr.* 1435). Jiang had administered He's home town, Guangchang, for almost two decades:

His Honor's merciful cherishing of us people was no different from that of a parent to children. And us people's love of His Honor is also just like that of a child to parents. Well, a child with respect to parents: can he bear one day of not seeing their faces?

He Qiaoxin then invoked the old story to speak of Jiang Hao's incorporation into his longtime jurisdiction, Guangchang:

Of old, Zhu Yi left a legacy of love in Tongxiang, the people making offerings to him right up to today without surcease. Guangchang is Mr. Jiang's Tongxiang. After a hundred, a thousand years, won't his spirit be coming and going between [his jurisdiction] Guangchang and [his own home town] Xin'an?<sup>40</sup>

When He Qiaoxin put the story about Zhu Yi into his stele for Jiang Hao, he was surely thinking of the tragic death of his father. He was surely thinking of his father's dying words: that Wenzhou had loved him, and to Wenzhou he would return. Premortem enshrinement was emotionally and spiritually real for Confucian families.

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<sup>39</sup> L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, editors, *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 505.

<sup>40</sup> He Qiaoxin [何乔心] (1427-1502), "Record of the Premortem Shrine to Mr. Jiang, Former Prefect of Jianchang and Salt Distribution Commissioner of Zhejiang" [江好公神主碑记] (c. 1469), in He's collected works [何乔心集] 13/17a-20a.

## Lin Jun and the Lady

The same was true in the Lin family. Lin Zong (d. 1468) was a lowly Instructor in the Confucian school in Qizhou in Huguang, but with his “mild and elegant character,” he had a striking ability to awaken people from their confusion. When he left Qizhou, grateful students made him a shrine called “Respecting the Wise” in the Confucian school-temple compound; and mourned him there when they heard of his death. Four decades later, the shrine was repaired. Zong’s grandson Lin Jun was extravagantly praised in the commemorative record for the repairs (presumably because of his own high rank), and wrote a prayer text for services at the shrine.<sup>41</sup>

Who was Lin Jun? He is known as an upright official who wore out his life in government service, under the Chenghua (1465-1487), Hongzhi (1488-1505), Zhengde (1506-1521), and Jiajing (1522-1566) emperors. Lin was born into a gentry family in Xianyou County, Putian Prefecture, Fujian. He passed the highest civil service examination in 1478. In 1484, as a division chief in the Ministry of Justice, he remonstrated with the emperor for favoring a Buddhist monk, and was demoted to a lowly and distant post in Yunnan, narrowly escaping execution. After a short time, Lin was recalled to the secondary capital, Nanjing. In 1488, Li was posted back to Yunnan, winning promotion to Surveillance Commissioner of Yunnan Province, and also “winning the people’s hearts.” In 1492, he was transferred to Huguang Province, whence he memorialized about various matters of governance, including the burden that construction work was putting on commoners. In 1500, after a sick leave, he was granted a post in Guangdong that he did not take up, and then a post in Nanjing as a Censor. In that capacity, he remonstrated with the emperor in early 1501, arguing that earthquakes and floods in two

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<sup>41</sup> For this and other examples of descendants’ connections to premortem shrines see Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, 246-49.

provinces were due to palace guards and women wielding improper influence. He requested that the emperor return to proper governance and heed wise men. Lin also requested retirement, but instead, he was sent to suppress bandits in Jiangxi province; by personally entering their lair, he won the leader's surrender. Lin served in other posts before returning home to observe mourning for his mother.

In 1506, Jiangxi people successfully petitioned to get Lin back, but because his father died, he went into mourning again instead. In 1510, Lin became Grand Coordinator of Sichuan and environs, charged with suppressing several bands of far-ranging bandits/rebels. Despite great carnage, mutual antipathy between himself and the Supreme Commander led to Lin's removal from office before the state's victory. When Lin departed in December of 1511 to retire home for a time, gentry and commoners wept as they saw him off (supposedly), and placed his image in a shrine. When the Jiajing emperor succeeded to the throne, in May 1521, Li became Minister of Public Works back in the capital, then a year later, Minister of Justice, a post he left with an honorary title in August, 1522. After repeated requests to retire, Lin died at the age of 76, remonstrating with the emperor to the last. Along the way, like all high officials, he was swept up in impeachments and counter-impeachments, and he was dismissed for supporting the Jiajing emperor's opponents during the great controversy over the emperor's ancestral ritual. But the *Ming History* compilers judge him incorrupt from beginning to end, and after his death he was enshrined with two other officials in "The Shrine to Three Correct Men." The dynasty granted him an honorary title forty years after his death.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Li Huiquan [李惠权], *Record of Searches in Yunnan History* [《云南历史》] (Yunnan: Yunnan People's Publisher, 2011), 169, accessed through Duxiu 20 January 2017; and Zhang, *Official History* 17/194/5136-40, 11/111/3445, 11/112/3449-50, 15/165/4476, 18/206/5454, 18/208/5492.

It was in 1524 that Chongqing Prefect Fan Fu [樊富] (*jr.* 1507) chipped the twelfth-century Guanyin out of her sacred niche in Dazu to make space for Lin's image. In addition to the story in the epigraph, a second undated story recounts that Lin Jun was depressed because he had been demoted from a position in Beijing, to Supreme Commander in distant Sichuan. To cheer him up, Dazu County Magistrate Tang, and his superior, Chongqing Prefect Fan, took Lin sightseeing at the caves. As they strolled along, Fan suggested to Tang that he give Lin some of Dazu's famous liquor. Lin exclaimed, "I've tasted the famous wines of every place, and none can match this fragrance and taste! The stone statues are beautiful, the wine is beautiful, and rarely have I felt so happy!" He wrote a poem to express his joy, and the prefect and magistrate had artisans engrave it on the cliff-face at the end of the row of niches. Emboldened by the liquor, Lin Jun added, "In my whole life, I have never felt so delighted and carefree. Cut out and demolish this Buddhist statue, and carve us the images of us three sages there for posterity!" Magistrate Tang, delighted, gave the order. When Lin Jun had sobered up, he wanted to retract his words, but the Buddhist statue had already been destroyed. The images of Lin, Tang, and Fan were carved in its place.<sup>43</sup>

Three male images did indeed replace the lady Guanyin in this cliff at Dazu in 1524. As the drawing shows (Figure 1), niches 289 and 286 hold Buddhist figures similar to the Thousand-Armed Guanyin originally in niche 288. Identified by name, Lin Jun sits upright, with a long beard, gauze cap, official robe, jade belt, tablet of office, and hiking boots. Lin is flanked by another old man, identified by local historian Lin Zuquan as Prefect Fan Fu, and a younger man

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<sup>43</sup> Chongqing Region Dazu County Committee, "Folk Stories about the Dazu Stone Carvings" [大足石刻民间故事], *Dazu wenshi* 22 (2008), 111.

[大足石刻民间故事], *Dazu wenshi* 22 (2008), 111.

– Magistrate Tang in the later stories – who may be “a student of Lin Jun’s.” Or the flanking figures may be generic representations of a student and retired official.<sup>44</sup>

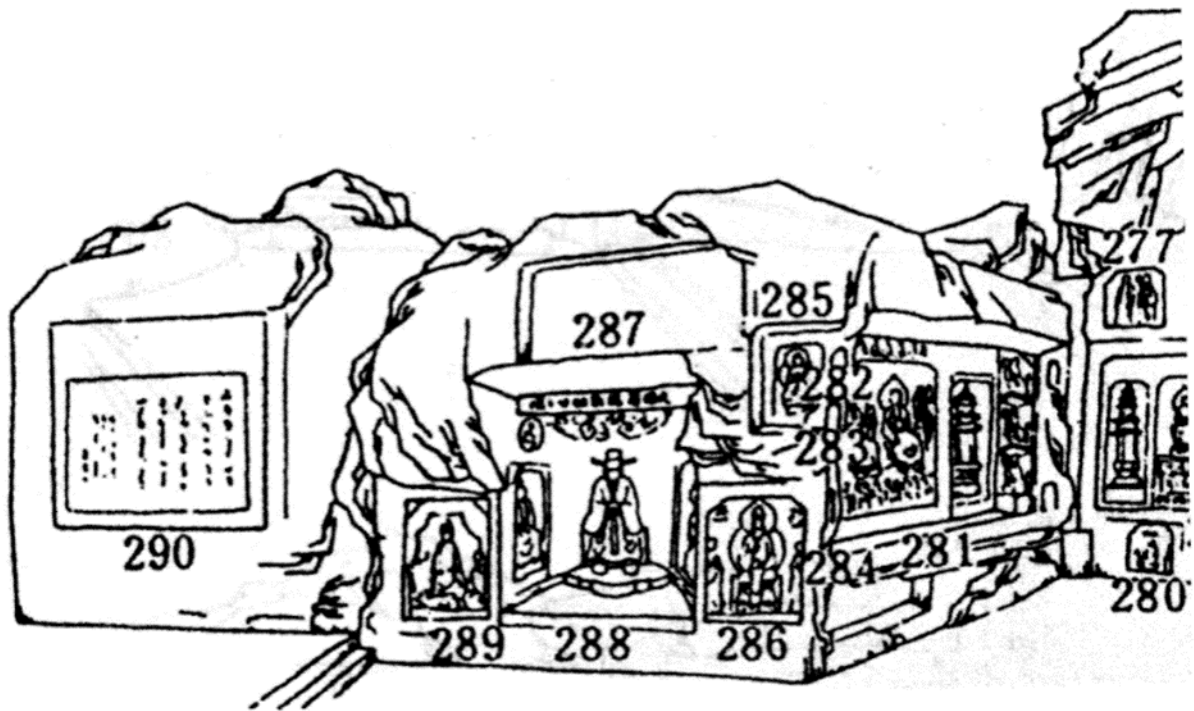


Figure 1. This line drawing of the last section of the “Buddha Crescent” at Dazhu’s North Hill site (Beishan Fowan) shows Lin Jun’s poems in niche 290, and the three men’s images in niche 288, flanked by Buddhist figures in 289 and 286. Lin Jun’s official hat clearly differentiates him from

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<sup>44</sup> Lin Zuquan [林 zuquan] and Kang Yongfu [康 Yongfu], *Plants and Stones of Hu Mountain* [虎山植物与石刻] (Fuzhou: Haifeng chubanshe, 2001), 38-40. Li Yongqiao [李 Yongqiao], et al., *Complete Catalogue of the Content of the Dazhu Rock Carvings* [大足石刻内容总目] (Chengdu: Sichuan Province Social Science Academy Publisher, 1985), 116-7.

the figure in 286 with its halo. Source: Guo Xiangyin [郭祥银], *Research into the Dazu Rock Carvings* [大足石刻研究], n.p. (second foldout).

In fact, Lin Jun did not visit the caves with Fan and Tang. We know that, because the flat inscription space labelled 290 holds the primary account of the episode, dated 1524, by Chongqing Prefect Fan Fu, as well as two poems by Lin Jun. Far from drunken elation, the poems express sorrow about old age, and a heartfelt wish to retire home to die.<sup>45</sup> Fan's inscription explains that he had worked under Lin Jun in Yunnan.<sup>46</sup> Fan had been a mere Instructor when his services were requisitioned for Lin's campaign against bandits; he was deeply influenced by Lin's teaching. They never met again, but Lin did send him a small portrait and some poems, which Fan took along on a business trip to Dazu. While sight-seeing at the caves, Fan, inspired by the image and funerary inscription of a Song official, personally paid for the excavation of a niche, and hired artisans to carve Lin's image based on the small portrait, and to inscribe the poems on the cliff. No public funds or labor were requisitioned, he stresses. To further fend off charges of impropriety, Fan writes that his efforts expressed, in permanent form, the longing of the Sichuan people for Lin: for they had enshrined him twelve years earlier. Fan closes with the date, his own name, and a mention of Dazu County Magistrate Tang Ao [唐敖].<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Literary leader Li Mengyang (1473-1530) praised Lin's poetry for conveying emotion and thus revealing the writer's true character. Chang Woei Ong, *Li Mengyang, the North-South Divide, and Literati Learning in Ming China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016), 248.

<sup>46</sup> Lin Jun mentions Fan in a memorial written then; see his *Jiansu ji*, 4/10.

<sup>47</sup> The poems and inscription appear in Lin, *Plants and Stones*, 39-40.



Fan did not tell the whole truth: he omitted the destruction of the bodhisattva. Nevertheless, his account gives the lie to the later tales, for Lin did not visit the Dazu site: his image was based on an ink portrait.

Lin's career was typical for a prominent scholar-official of Ming times. The strange stories about Lin, too, are paralleled for other officials. Lin serves as a case study of the intersection of Ming religious conflict with premortem enshrinement.

### **“Destroying Improper Shrines”**

Despite widespread acceptance of their co-existence, the respective clergies of the faiths clashed at times. Especially between about 1470 and 1550, Confucian officials attacked Buddhist, Daoist, and popular religious institutions, often designating them “improper shrines” [ improper shrines ].<sup>48</sup> Historian Zhao Xianhai echoes widely-held scholarly understandings when he writes that the term “improper shrines” meant either 1. Cults not registered in state statutes or 2. Cults set up by ordinary people and not appropriate to their status or 3. Buddhist and Daoist temples that exceeded the numbers stipulated for each locality in 1391. Zhao also rightly points out that the movement was spearheaded by individual Confucian officials, rather than the law or court policy.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Chen Qi earned the local nickname “Ghostbuster Chen” [ 鬼打鬼 ] by destroying ninety-seven improper shrines. Taiwan Central Library, *Index to Biographical Materials on Ming People* [ 明人傳記資料 ] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987). Some gentrymen out of office also fought Buddhism and Daoism: e.g., He Qin [ 何勤 ] (d. c. 1515), *1537 Liaodong Gazetteer* 3/37.

<sup>49</sup> Zhao Xianhai [ 趙顯海 ], “A Synopsis of the Phenomenon of Ming-era Destruction of ‘Improper Shrines’” [ 明中葉以來民間信仰之破壞現象綜論 ], *Journal of Northeast Normal University (Philosophy and Social*

The movement partook of what historian He Bian calls a “remarkably scattered yet mutually connected landscape of knowledge transmission” among officials posted all over the empire.<sup>50</sup> In practice, the definition of “improper shrine” depended on their individual views, although they sometimes relied on imperial law to make a case against particular houses of worship.<sup>51</sup> Improper shrines included very local cults to strange spirits; widespread cults associated with money and sex like the Five Manifestations and Wutong; large and powerful Buddhist and Daoist temples; and even cults mandated by the central state, such as City God temples. Clergy were defrocked, treasures seized, images melted down and dissolved, ritual paraphernalia repurposed for Confucian worship.<sup>52</sup> The movement gained some belated support

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*Sciences*) 195.1 (2002): 28-33, p. 28. “Improper shrines” was also used as shorthand in secondary accounts. A local gazetteer reports that in 1522-23 Wang Ke [王克] destroyed many Buddhist temples and Daoist hermitages [道观]; the Qing-era *Ming History* calls them “improper shrines.” Wang used the materials to rebuild or build government buildings, including the Confucian school-temple complex. 1529+71 Shaanxi *Lantian County Gazetteer* [蓝田县志]; Zhang, *Official History* 18/206/5432.

<sup>50</sup> He Bian, *Know Your Remedies*, 35. Bian is speaking of the pharmacological knowledge officials were at this time compiling to compete with professional doctors. They also competed against healers who were shamans, Daoists, and Buddhists.

<sup>51</sup> Chen, “Overlapping Margins.”

<sup>52</sup> See Sarah Schneewind, *Community Schools and the State in Ming China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 81-5, 88-91; and Sarah Schneewind, “Competing Institutions: Community Schools and ‘Improper Shrines’ in Sixteenth Century China,” *Late Imperial China* 20.1 (1999):85-106, p. 90 and footnote 20.

from the Jiajing emperor, but the destruction was largely short-lived and ineffectual on a national scale.

Lin Jun's intolerance was well known. In 1484, he impeached a palace eunuch who had introduced to the emperor a Buddhist monk, whom the emperor honored and followed. Lin objected to their plan to clear several hundred families out of a neighborhood in Beijing to make room for an expensive new temple. Lin also insulted the monk personally, referring to his low origins (his grandmother had owned a brothel). Lin warned that a recent earthquake and other portents stemmed from the emperor's disregard of the people's wellbeing and his attention to Buddhism and Daoism, teachings unknown to the ancient sage-kings. The monk was eventually executed, but in the meantime Lin had been jailed, beaten thirty strokes, and exiled to the lowly post of assistant subprefect of Yao'an, 1800 miles from the capital, in far western Yunnan province. Lin escaped execution only through the courageous intervention of another palace eunuch.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Chün-fang Yü, "Ming Buddhism," in *Cambridge History of China, volume 8*, 893-952, p. 920. Goodrich, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 652. Lin Jun, "Memorial on Propping Up the Foundation of the State" [□□□□□] in his selected works [□□□□□], reprinted in *Collected Essays on the Statecraft of the August Ming* [□□□□□], ed. Chen Zilong et al. (1638; reprint Taipei: National Library, 1964) 6-7/1/6b-10a. Zhang, *Official History* 26/307/7884. One of those who spoke up for Lin was Wang Shu [□□] (1416-1508), himself enshrined while still alive in Yangzhou for his work on justice, famine relief, and free medicine, and who established a Confucian academy there. Zhang, *Official History*, 16/182/4834; Goodrich, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 1417.

When he could, Lin acted on his contempt for Buddhism in particular, but also Daoism and deity cults. While serving at the provincial level in Yunnan, he destroyed some 360 improper shrines, and used their wood for Confucian schools.<sup>54</sup> That reuse exemplifies how destruction was motivated by competition for material resources and space, as well as for hearts and minds.

### **Converting Improper Shrines into Confucian Sacred Spaces**

Intolerant Ming officials argued that preventing heterodox worship would not only prevent the disasters that Heaven deployed as warnings, but would also stop people from wasting money on gods and temples. Both household budgets and tax coffers would benefit.<sup>55</sup> Further, confiscation could recoup the wasted investments communities had already made in improper cults. As historian Chen Xiyuan notes, places of worship not protected by law often fell victim to officials' fiscal needs.<sup>56</sup> Temple buildings were converted to Confucian sacred spaces, and, more rarely, gods could be turned into ancestors.

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<sup>54</sup> Zhang, *Official History* 17/194/1537.

<sup>55</sup> Zhao, "Ming-era Destruction," 29.

<sup>56</sup> Chen, "Overlapping Margins," 119. Because Ming buildings shared a basic layout, it was easy to convert a temple to a school to an office. Premortem shrines, when the enthusiasm that spurred their establishment was spent, were also converted to other uses. In Jiading county, one was made into a branch of the City God temple, another housed the Gods of Soil and Grain. 1808 (reprint 2003) Nanzhili Jiading *Anting Gazetteer* [□□□] 4/251. Zhang, *Thriving in Crisis*, chapter 7, has interesting material on other uses for temples, and the struggles over their resources.

Many improper shrines were made into community schools beginning in 1478, to bring Confucian values to village children.<sup>57</sup> Others became academies. Zou Shouyi [邹守益] (1491-1562) was a devoted disciple of a friend of Lin Jun's, the preeminent Ming Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming [王阳明] (1472-1529). Demoted in 1524 to a low-ranking post in Guangde subprefecture, Zou posthumously enshrined an early Ming official who had argued that “if there were no Buddhist or Daoist ceremonies, or shrines to demonic and improper ghosts and spirits [鬼怪], then the people would not make reckless expenditures, and resources would suffice for succeeding generations.”<sup>58</sup> Zou ended an expensive popular festival that regularly took a Daoist deity's wife to visit him in his temple, – by permanently moving her there, in imitation of orthodox patrilocal marriage. With the backing of two influential locals, Zou moved the Daoists of another establishment, the Hermitage of Sublime Mystery, into the wife's now-empty temple, just outside town; and then turned the hermitage's former location – right in the middle of town – into a Confucian academy promoting his teacher Wang Yangming's teachings. Zou completed the new academy in 1526 by building shrines to two Confucian worthies under the ginkgo tree of the former temple, and shifting two existing Shrines to Eminent Officials and Local Worthies to the academy's left and right. The Daoist hermitage that was moved – an action labelled “destroying an improper shrine” – was a major institution that the central government had put in charge of registering Daoists and supervising the other Daoist temples in the area.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See Schneewind, *Community Schools*, 73-6.

<sup>58</sup> Wang Shuying [王守仁], *Collected Works* [王阳明全集] (c. 1402) 3/17.

<sup>59</sup> 1536 Nanzhili *Guangde Subprefectural Gazetteer* [南直隸廣德府志] 3/12, 4/3, 4/7, 4/13. Zou Shouyi himself prefaced this gazetteer. On the system of registering temples, see Brook, “At the Margin of Public Authority.”

Zou's changes aimed at Confucianizing people by taking over sacred spaces in prominent locations in county towns.

Besides schools and academies, lineage organizations that used Confucian language and promoted Confucian ritual multiplied from the 1520s onwards.<sup>60</sup> Lineage-building could render gods more orthodox. The Jin clan of Kunshan had long been known for their “heroic personal presence and fierce determination,” as the 1341 local gazetteer puts it. Men of muscle in life, in death they became gods who responded to prayers, so that their cults flourished. Most efficacious of all was Jin Yinglong of the Yuan period (1276-1368): he answered every prayer for help with matters of life and death, misfortune and blessing, as quickly as echo follows sound. Every home in a wide region had an altar to him, and every community a temple.<sup>61</sup> Prominent Ming official Ye Sheng [叶盛] (1420-1474) wrote a preface for the new genealogy that Jin Yinglong's sixth-generation descendants had compiled. These later Jins and Ye himself fully believed in Yinglong's spiritual efficacy, but wanted to purge the cult of its improper side, including shamanism and spirit possession. They turned the clan into an organized lineage by creating a genealogy that listed all the verifiable facts about clan members, and set out Confucian regulations. As descendants followed the rules to win glory for ancestors and praise for

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<sup>60</sup> They arose for complex reasons and served many purposes. See Michael Szonyi, *The Art of Being Governed* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>61</sup> 1341 (reprint 1908) *Nanzhili Kunshan Gazetteer* [南直隸昆山人物志] 5/12-13. The gazetteer lists Jin under “the efficacy of spirits” [神效].

themselves, Ye concluded, they would be relying on Yinglong's influence.<sup>62</sup> This family newly concerned with Confucian respectability reconfigured a popular god into an ancestor.

During Lin Jun's lifetime, the growth of lineage organizations skyrocketed, and their Confucianization intensified. Guangdong lineages took over land confiscated from temples by Education Intendent Wei Jiao in a province-wide campaign against popular religion, Buddhism, and Daoism.<sup>63</sup> When a Li lineage in Fujian built both an ancestral hall for group worship and a private shrine [祠堂] to the forebears of one branch, Lin Jun, who had married one of his daughters into the Li family, commemorated the latter in 1526.<sup>64</sup> Lin Jun's own lineage also built a hall at about this time. As the most prominent member, Lin Jun wrote the lineage regulations: all members should practice the Confucian family virtues, keep to their proper occupations, obey the law, and help one another.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ye Sheng, "Preface to the Genealogy of the Jin Clan of Zhoujing Village" [周敬村金氏宗譜序] in his complete works [周敬村先生集] 5/37. Ye emphasizes that the Jins had never abused their command of violence.

<sup>63</sup> David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 100-03.

<sup>64</sup> Zheng Zhenman, *Family Lineage Organization and Social Change in Ming and Qing Fujian*, trans. Michael Szonyi (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 199. Lin Jun wrote inscriptions for other Putian lineages, too; see Kenneth Dean and Zheng Zhenman, *Ritual Alliances of the Putian, Plain Volume Two: A Survey of Village Temples and Ritual Activities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 140, 216, 440, 608, 831. Thanks to Michael Szonyi for these references.

<sup>65</sup> Zheng, *Family Lineage Organization*, 200-01: this was a "control-subordination lineage," with high-ranking gentry lording it over their kinfolk.

In a letter, Lin Jun also wrote about his grandfather's well-deserved installation into the posthumous Shrine to Local Worthies in their home town.<sup>66</sup> Such posthumous shrines to Confucian exemplars were sometimes put in former improper shrines.<sup>67</sup> While Lin Jun was fighting rebels in Sichuan, for instance, he destroyed the image in a temple to a first-century warlord who had usurped an imperial title. Lin turned the temple into a shrine to men who had fought the rebels.<sup>68</sup> Conversions and confiscations aided Confucianism at the expense of other religions.

### **Destroyers Enshrined While Still Alive**

Opponents of popular religion had earned premortem shrines earlier, but there are a number of examples in high Ming.<sup>69</sup> Zhang Bi [张比] (1425-87), the first to “destroy improper

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<sup>66</sup> Lin, *Jiansu ji*, 23/16.

<sup>67</sup> Song official Zhou Hu [周虎] (“Tiger” Zhou) and his 90-year-old mother, who both defended Hezhou in 1206 against Jurchen invaders, won premortem enshrinement from grateful soldiers and civilians in a spacious temple and a separate “Worthy Mother Shrine.” Both buildings had fallen into disrepair by 1527, when Subprefect Yi Luan [伊栾] converted improper shrines dedicated to a plague god [瘟神] and to the deity Five Manifestations [五显] into a new temple complex for mother and son, with biannual official offerings. 1575 Nanzhili *Hezhou Gazetteer* [南直隸汝州府志], 401, 591-92.

<sup>68</sup> 1581 *Complete Gazetteer of Sichuan* [四川通志] 27/26. Zheng Jingdong [郑景东] et al., *Outline of the Culture of China's Three Gorges Region* [三峡地区文化概况] (Beijing: China's Three Gorges Publisher, 1996), 229. Accessed through Duxiu April 2016.



shrines to establish community schools,” was enshrined while still alive in the jurisdiction.<sup>70</sup>

When Zou Shouyi, discussed above, was transferred, the people of Guangde erected a premortem shrine to make offerings to him.<sup>71</sup> More instances appear below.

As for Lin Jun, in addition to the medieval warlord’s temple mentioned above, he attacked at least two other shrines in Sichuan, one to the Five Manifestations and one to a local deity, as a gazetteer printed very shortly after his tenure reports.<sup>72</sup> Yet Lin was enshrined while still alive in Sichuan.<sup>73</sup> In Yunnan, having destroyed hundreds of places of worship, Lin was

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<sup>69</sup> As well as the famous Di Renjie of Tang times, Valerie Hansen mentions an earlier instance in “Gods on Walls: A Case of Indian Influence on Chinese Lay Religion?,” in *Religion and Society in T’ang and Sung China*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 75-113, p. 77.

<sup>70</sup> See Schneewind, *Community Schools*, 73-6; Sang Yue [桑岳], “Record of the Legacy of Love Shrine to Mr. Zhang Donghai” [张董海爱祠] and Ru Ne [茹讷], “Record of the New Shrine in Nan’An” [南安], both in 1919 Jiangxi *Da’ou County Gazetteer* 9/34ff.

<sup>71</sup> Zou Shouyi’s grandson, Zou Deyong, blocked one of the shrines to Wei Zhongxian by erasing the registers of draftable workers (Zhang, *Official History* 24/283/7269, 7271). Wen Lin [文林] (1445-99) destroyed improper shrines in Yongjia County that included the stupa at a Zen monastery established in 899, as well as building schools, rebuilding a government altar to Soil and Grain, and carrying out a kind of Confucian ethical support group called the community compact. He earned a premortem shrine there (1566 Zhejiang *Yongjia County Gazetteer* [永康县志] 5/16; 1503 Zhejiang *Wenzhou Prefectural Gazetteer* [温州府志] 8/51, 16/8b).

<sup>72</sup> 1518 (reprint 1990) Sichuan *Pengzhou Gazetteer* [彭州志], 963.

himself depicted and placed in a shrine built on waste land in the Zhengde period, some years after his departure, but still during his lifetime.<sup>74</sup>

Lin had deeply offended Buddhists in Yunnan. A Buddhist icon, carved out of wood in Tang times, was so revered that it drew worshippers every single day. Lin Jun smashed and burnt it, earning the nickname “Split the Buddha like Firewood Lin” [□□□].<sup>75</sup> Another efficacious golden image was called a “Living Buddha,” and Lin ordered that one melted down.<sup>76</sup> How can we explain his enshrinement by the very localities whose objects and places of worship he had demolished?

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<sup>73</sup> Not just privately at Dazu, but elsewhere, according to Fan Fu’s inscription in Lin Zuquan, *Plants and Stones of Hu Mountain*, 39-40. Other Ming destroyers enshrined in Sichuan while still alive include Li Yue [□□] (1621 *Sichuan New Chengdu Prefectural Gazetteer* □□□□□□ 21/21b (1251)) and, in the very early Ming, Chongqing prefect Yang Hao [□□] (1545 *Complete Gazetteer of Sichuan* [□□□□] 4/20).

<sup>74</sup> 1572 (reprint 1934) *Complete Gazetteer of Yunnan Province* [□□□□] 12/12, “Legacy of Love Shrine to Mr. Lin [Jun]” [□□□□□]. It was built in the Zhengde period (1506-1521), refurbished in 1526, and moved in 1534, at which time Chen Cha [□□] wrote a commemorative record. (Premortem shrines often outlived the men they honored.) See also Li Huiquan, *Record of Searches in Yunnan History*, 170.

<sup>75</sup> 1625 *Outline of Yunnan* [□□] 4/7b.

<sup>76</sup> Zhang, *Official History* 17/194/5137 and He Qiaoyuan [□□□] *Storehouse of the Mountain of Fame* □□□ 74/9 (206) imply that the “Living Buddha” was a person, hence the error in Schneewind, *Community Schools*, p. 84. 1572 *Complete Gazetteer of Yunnan* 8/818 clarifies.

## Tolerating Intolerance?

We might hypothesize that the zealots, with a Confucian commitment to the people's livelihood and security, had done so much shrine-deserving good in other ways that their intolerance could be overlooked. This may be the case with an acquaintance of Lin Jun's, celebrated in a ditty: "Earlier there was Father Yang [Ziqi], later there was Mother Dong [Qi]." <sup>77</sup> Dong Qi (董氏) (1472-1546), as Gaoping magistrate from 1506 to 1509, had taken as his slogan: "Manage the business of the nation like one's family business; regard the common people as one's own children." <sup>78</sup> But Dong's predecessor Yang Ziqi (杨子奇) (1458-1513) presents a more complex case, for he was a zealous destroyer of improper shrines who nevertheless won *postmortem* enshrinement.

Lin Jun reports Yang Ziqi's visit and contribution to a shrine for a filial exemplar that Lin was commemorating. <sup>79</sup> As magistrate of three different counties between 1487 and about 1500, Yang prohibited Buddhists, Daoists, and shamans, briefly stopped an annual ecstatic festival celebrating a mountain god, and turned improper shrines into community schools, academies, and shrines to Confucian exemplars – about one hundred of them in Kunshan and forty in Gaoping. <sup>80</sup> He also earned *postmortem* shrines himself in those two counties. <sup>81</sup> The inscription for the Gaoping shrine recounts Yang's governance and asserts the propriety of the

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<sup>77</sup> 1658 Shanxi *Gaoping County Gazetteer* (平定县志) 4/6 (224), 5/4 (274), and at 10/53 (611-3) in a 1621 commemorative record for the rebuilding of Dong's shrine.

<sup>78</sup> Xu Xueqing (徐雪清), *Record of Personages of Hengshui* (衡水人物志) ([China] n.p., 2010), 146. 1735 Shanxi *Provincial Gazetteer* (山西通志) 96/.

<sup>79</sup> Lin Jun, "Record of Additions to the Endowment of Fields to Pay for Sacrifices at the 'Filial and Brotherly' Shrine" (增修祀田以资祭祀于'孝悌'祠), in his *Jiansu ji* 9/10.

shrine based on the exemplary mutual affection of Yang and the people.<sup>82</sup> But locals also attributed to Yang real miracles that made him a plausible, direct competitor to the spirits of the temples he had repurposed.

Specifically, the local gazetteer records that Yang Ziqi was a rain-maker. Rainmakers were forgiven much in the way of religious destruction.<sup>83</sup> Some of Yang's success came through orthodox Confucian methods. Since Heaven might withhold rain in response to injustice,

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<sup>80</sup> Katherine Carlitz, "Shrines, Governing-Class Identity, and the Cult of Widow Fidelity in Mid-Ming Jiangnan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56.3 (1997): 612–40, pp. 624-26; 1892 *Shanxi Provincial Gazetteer* [山西通志] 36/12; 1538 *Nanzhili Kunshan County Gazetteer* [南直隸昆山人物志] 9/14. 1658 *Gaoping County Gazetteer* 7/6, 5/4.

<sup>81</sup> 1729 *Zhejiang Zixi County Gazetteer* [浙江西溪縣志] 2/460 (Yang's home town); and 1658 *Gaoping County Gazetteer* 5/4. The Gaoping inscription was written just before Yang's death on 29 December 1513.

<sup>82</sup> The character is li 礪 meaning "whetstone," or "to sharpen," standing in for li 勵, "to encourage."

<sup>83</sup> He Jingming [何景明] (1483-1521), for instance, was out in the boondocks of Shaanxi holding civil service examinations during a drought. He climbed up to a spring in the mountains, and dropped in a sacrificial text: it rained immediately. When, to extend the cramped grounds of the school, he the destruction of both an altar to a local goddess and the efficacious family shrine of a high official, no-one dared object. Daniel Bryant, *The Great Recreation: Ho Ching-ming (1483-1521) and his World* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), Appendix 1, p. 6. Accessed through the Ming History English Translation Project, 26 March 2020. See also Ling Mengchu (1580-1644), "Heavenly Preceptors, with their Theatrics, Subdue Drought Demons; A County Magistrate Prays for Sweet Rain from Heaven," story 39 in *Slapping the Table in Amazement*, trans. Shuhui Yang and

officials who righted matters could bring rain. In Changshu county, a wealthy local bully had a poor husband killed, in order to seize his beautiful wife. Yang Ziqi had identified both the assassin and his client, but did not jail them, lacking the firm evidence or a confession; the county suffered several months of hot, dry weather. Yang prayed, asking whether it was because the murderers were still at large; he obtained confessions, and the rain poured down. The whole county rejoiced, calling him “divine.”<sup>84</sup> This was civil, Confucian rain-making.

But the sources then confront us with a conundrum. Gaoping, too, when Yang arrived there, suffered a summer drought so extreme that there was no green in the fields. As Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke has shown was typical in Qing times,<sup>85</sup> Magistrate Yang – the gazetteer says – asked for local guidance. He told his staff that since he came from the rainy southeast he did not know how to manage drought. They pointed him to a stream where one could efficaciously petition for rain, and he followed their instructions.

He ordered the village elders to tie up snake-lions and, and then had a young boy sing: “Salamander! Salamander! Raise clouds and spit out fog! Send down rain and copious rain, then we’ll let you go home.” Then they released the snake-lions into the stream. In a little while, dark clouds collected in all four quarters and a fine rain fell, so that their garments were all completely soaked...<sup>86</sup>

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Yunqin Yang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), esp. 841, 847.

<sup>84</sup> 1729 Zhejiang *Zixi County Gazetteer* 2/461.

<sup>85</sup> Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke, *Dry Spells, State Rainmaking and Local Governance in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).

No matter how common such strange measures were, it is very surprising to find them attributed to a narrow-minded religious zealot like Yang. In fact, the date of 1499 suggests that as time passed, local memory combined and confused Yang Ziqi, who served only 1-2 years in 1495-65, with another Magistrate Yang who served from 1502 to 1506, completely eliding the intervening magistrate.<sup>87</sup> When Yang Ziqi brought rain, it was in orthodox Confucian ways, but errant local memory attributed to him a more broadminded approach.

Locals cared little *how* an official brought rain, so long as it was done. Fuzzy about how one Yang succeeded another, they remembered “Yang” as willing to deal in salamanders and spells to bring rain, and forgave assaults on their places of worship. Yang Ziqi’s remembered contributions outweighed his offenses, and so he earned a shrine while still alive.

### **Resenting Intolerance**

Yet such an explanation cannot account for all premortem enshrinements of destroyers. It overlooks the deep embedding of worship in communities, and the long-term investments that destroyers either demolished or appropriated. As historian Michael Marmé points out, “Temples imply both a temple committee and a broader congregation; thus moves to suppress ‘licentious’ [i.e., ‘improper’] temples should probably be understood as efforts to eliminate forms of auto-organization not sanctioned by the state.”<sup>88</sup> Conversely, when temples and shrines survived or

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<sup>86</sup> 1658 *Gaoping County Gazetteer* 9/4-5 (453). Yang also dealt with a plague of locusts devouring the new grain just when he arrived in Gaoping, by paying for sacrifices of some kind.

<sup>87</sup> 1607 *Shanxi Zezhou Gazetteer* [□□□]18/47.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Marmé, *Suzhou: Where the Goods of All the Provinces Converge*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 152. Zhao, “Ming-era Destruction,” 29-30 agrees that the fear of

were revived, it was because the community kept them going with labor, materials, money, and faith. People did not passively accept attacks on sacred spaces.

First, communities reversed conversions as soon as they could. In Jiangxi, Lin Jun banned improper worship while refurbishing shrines to Confucian exemplars. As historian Guo Qitao has reported, “the locals seemed to obey the order but actually just paid [Lin] lip service. After a short while the old [improper worship] had returned and become popular again.”<sup>89</sup> Likewise, in Sichuan, within eight years, locals had rebuilt one of the temples Lin destroyed in 1510.<sup>90</sup>

Second, congregations and leadership fought hard against dissolution. Historian Chen Xiyuan has described one such battle in detail. In 1539, the vast, mixed crowd of worshippers at the thriving Temple to Lord Liu [劉公] in the secondary capital, Nanjing, caught the attention of Shangyuan county magistrate Cheng Jie [程傑] (1489-1564). Cheng Jie destroyed a number of temples and earned living shrines in several places.<sup>91</sup> In this case, Cheng asked the Nanjing Ministry of Rites to investigate. Finding that, contrary to the cover story told by hereditary popular organization was a second motive in the campaign against improper shrines.

<sup>89</sup> Guo Qitao, *Exorcism and Money: The Symbolic World of the Five-Fury Spirits in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: UC Berkeley Center for Chinese Studies, 2003), 58. For other examples of rapid reversal, see Schneewind, *Community Schools and the State*, 146-50, and Schneewind, “Competing Institutions.”

<sup>90</sup> 1518 Sichuan *Pengzhou Gazetteer* [彭州府志] 71.

<sup>91</sup> Wang Cai [王才], “Tomb Inscription for Mr. Cheng ‘South Tower’ Jie, Vice-Minister of the Pasturage Office” [程 (sic) 程傑墓誌銘], in Jiao, *Records of Testimonies* 140/18-20. See Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, 102.

temple curate Chen Xue, the god had originally been a just drowned man, an aggrieved ghost, the Ministry designated the temple an “improper shrine.” County personnel destroyed the statue of the god.

But when a military boat anchored in Nanjing caught fire, curate Chen convinced the community that the fire was a potent display of the god’s dissatisfaction. Donors paid for another, very grand image of the god. Philosopher Zhan Ruoshui, whose views on the soul appear above, was Nanjing Minister of Defense. He stepped in to support Magistrate Cheng.<sup>92</sup> They converted the temple grounds into a cemetery for the poor (supporting the Confucian practice of burial over the Buddhist practice of cremation), used its wealth to repair city walls, reported the matter to the City God, beat the new image of Lord Liu one hundred strokes inside the shrine to Song-era Neo-Confucian founder Cheng Hao, and exiled the temple curate.<sup>93</sup> And that was that.

In concluding that the suppression of Lord Liu left popular religion as a whole unweakened, historian Chen Xiyuan explicitly takes Zhan as a “proxy” for the state and Curate Chen as a “proxy” for popular religion.<sup>94</sup> But that is an etic understanding, imported from social science with its abstract categories. Officials held particular religious and policy views, and did not always follow the lead of the center; for their part, Ming people believed in particular gods,

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<sup>92</sup> Zhan Ruoshui worried about how both central state demands and religious institutions hurt people’s livelihoods, and believed in connecting moral knowledge and action through Confucian institutions. See He Bian, *Know Your Remedies*, 65, 79.

<sup>93</sup> Chen, “Overlapping Margins.” For a Buddhist temple Zhan destroyed in Nanjing at the same time, see Zhang, *Thriving in Crisis*, 49-50.

<sup>94</sup> Chen, “Overlapping Margins,” 120.



supported particular clergymen, and felt deep anger against particular officials, just as they supported others.<sup>95</sup> A later Ming story about Lin Jun suggests the intensity of local hatred of iconoclasts.

Born two generations after Lin Jun, Li Yiheng (1507-1573) pointed to a scurrilous motive behind Lin's iconoclasm. Lin was inspecting a silver workshop, Li recounted, when he learned that monks of the Yuanhua temple in Yunnan, having encountered a piece of sandalwood shaped a bit like a Buddha, invoked six spirits, who in just one night carved it into a Buddha-image. The monks cast 100 catties of gold into the shape of a heart and liver, and placed them inside the image. His greed aroused, when he was posted to Yunnan, Lin sought out the temple and ordered soldiers to split open the image with an axe. Delighted by the gold entrails, he sent soldiers to break open images in more than three hundred temples in the area, garnering over 4,000 catties of gold and silver. But – showing, Li Yiheng writes, that retribution for evil will not fail – when Lin arrived at the Non-action Temple, he met resistance. Angrily he burned down its Purple Transformation Tower, and the monks, furious in their turn, killed him. They broke his corpse up into pieces, and murdered his entire corps of sixty-two soldiers. They burned the bodies as an offering at the White Stupa, and dumped the bones and ashes into the Double-Duck Stream, to float away on the current. The monks kept their secret and the government was completely bewildered as to what had become of Lin. (Li does not divulge his own source.)<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Wei Jiao was impeached because of the ill-feeling his attacks on temples caused in Guangdong; for the whole story, including supernatural elements like those in the Lin Jun stories, see Schneewind, “Competing Institutions.”

<sup>96</sup> Li Yiheng [李 宜 亨], “Split the Buddha like Firewood Lin,” in his *Night Talks in Huaicheng* [華 宜 城 夜 話], in Li Huiquan, *Record of Searches in Yunnan History*, 168-71

Present-day historian Li Huiqian points out that Lin Jun was well known to have lived for decades as a prominent official after leaving Yunnan, so Li Yiheng's factual errors of time and place are puzzling.<sup>97</sup> There is no other imputation that Lin kept temple wealth for himself.<sup>98</sup> The official *Ming History* says that Lin used all the gold from melting down the "Living Buddha" to pay off people's debts.<sup>99</sup> In Sichuan, Lin's opponents loudly accused Lin of failing to suppress the rebels, of impoverishing families by requisitioning labor and cash to carry military equipment and supply troops, of leaving monks with nowhere to shelter, so that greedy officials exploited them and "cries of resentment arise in a wail" – but they did not accuse Lin himself of

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<sup>97</sup> Li Huiqian, *Record of Searches in Yunnan History*, 170-71.

<sup>98</sup> Another destroyer did face charges. Lu Wen [ ] (1517-1581), who won a premortem shrine in Sichuan, was later accused of peculation and of having converted a Daoist hermitage into a living shrine, apparently to himself. Lu defended himself, calling the accusations baseless: the hermitage was just the roosting place of a particular Daoist, not an approved institution, and Lu had made it into a Confucian school. His biographer suggests that the accusation, laid by a Fujian native, stemmed from bitterness that in arresting pirates along the Fujian coast Lu had swept up many supposedly innocent civilians. Zheng Ming [ ], "Account of Conduct of Nanjing Right Vice-Minister of Defense Lu Beichuan" [ ], in Huang Zongxi [ ] (1610-95), *Sea of Ming Texts* [ ] (1693; reprint Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987) 452/2b, 5b-6.

<sup>99</sup> Zhang, *Official History* 17/194/5137.

corruption.<sup>100</sup> Despite his errors, Li Yiheng captured both the deep resentment of temple destruction and the competition for resources it represented.

That resentment means that the premortem enshrinement of Lin and other destroyers – the replacement of one icon with another – requires further thought. It could not simply be that communities overlooked the destruction in order to flatter a powerful official, or that they valued other activities more. Is there reason to think that destroyers partook of the same kind of power as the icons they replaced?

### **Martial Power**

Confucian officials operating publicly in the crowded religious Ming world had access to at least five kinds of power, besides the authority of office and of the educated man. First, they could call on deities. Many relied on the City God. The religiously broad-minded Li Dai [李戴] (c.1531-1607) was county magistrate of Xinghua when floods devastated it. He swore to Heaven to care for the people at the expense of his own well-being, and earned a premortem shrine.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> The Minister of Rites opined that while abolishing over-quota temples in ordinary times supported orthodoxy, in this case requisitioning labor to knock down temples and rendering monks homeless would only swell the rebel ranks. Zhang, *Official History* 17/194/5138.

*Veritable Records of the Zhengde Reign* [正德實錄] 72/ for Zhengde 6.2.14 (March 13, 1511), at <http://sillok.history.go.kr/mc/id/msilok>.

<sup>101</sup> Yuan Zhu [袁珠], “Record of the Shrine to Mr. Li” [李公祠記] (1571), in 1684 *Nanzhili Xinghua County Gazetteer* 3/925-7; shrine listed 3/846. Li promoted the publication of works on Buddhism and Daoism, and met with Jesuit Matteo Ricci, telling him: “If your God is the lord of heaven, Buddha is supreme on earth.” Goodrich, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 870, 993, 1141,

Iconoclasts, too, could call on Heaven, but could not plausibly ask such potent deities as Guanyin or Guan Yu for aid.<sup>102</sup>

Second, “parental officials” could accrue power by kindness. Prefect Chen Zu [陳祖] “really was like a loving mother caring for her infants. The reason our commoners turned their hearts to him and responded with obedience and could not forget him lies precisely in this.” People agreed to help Chen rebuild the city wall as a fair exchange: they said, “since we rely on him for everything, he can totally rely on us for the wall.”<sup>103</sup> But provincial-level officials like Lin Jun, distant from ordinary concerns, were not generally considered parental officials. And god-smashers, all too obviously, relied on force, not kindness.

Third, as religious scholar Mu-chou Poo writes in explaining premortem shrines, “Certain individuals were considered to have possessed divine power because of an extraordinary act.”<sup>104</sup>

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1187.

<sup>102</sup> In 1053, Guanyin helped a prefect build a bridge: when funds ran short, she sailed along the shore and seduced all the local men into contributing money. Votive stupas, pavilions, and a premortem shrine along and near the bridge honored Guanyin, Daoist-affiliated divine craftsmen and the prefect himself. Wilt Idema, *Filial Piety and its Divine Rewards: The Legend of Dong Yong and the Weaving Maiden with Related Texts* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009), 60; Ronald G. Knapp and A. Chester Ong, *Chinese Bridges: Living Architecture from China’s Past* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2008), 215.

<sup>103</sup> Guo Xi [郭希], “Record of the New-Built Premortem Shrine to Mr. Heyang Chen” [新築陳公祠記] (1522-50), in 1550 Beizhili *Guangping Prefectural Gazetteer* [懷慶府志] 7/6–7.

<sup>104</sup> Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 212.

The act might be a demonstration of courage. Confucian exemplar Hai Rui [海瑞] (1514-1587) famously defied the Jiajing emperor, and stood up to local tyrants and corrupt superiors as a low-ranking official in Chaozhou, Fujian. His premortem shrine there recognized that bravery.<sup>105</sup> Lin Jun was as brave as Hai Rui. Lin repeatedly remonstrated with emperors, and in one case rode right into a bandit lair to secure the leader's surrender. His courage may help explain his premortem enshrinement.

Fourth, iconoclasts demonstrated that they were stronger than the gods, and thus worthy to replace them. Popular god Lord Liu, as described above, had set a military boat on fire, but Zhan Ruoshui and Cheng Jie had inauspiciously and insultingly turned his whole temple complex into a graveyard for abandoned corpses, and publicly beaten his curate in a Confucian shrine. Likewise, Zhou Chen [周忱] (1381-1453) destroyed shrines that were associated with granaries, yet for two decades he reduced both taxes and hunger so well that when impeachment recalled him to the capital, people in the region set up shrines to him. It could be that the shrines constituted a political plea to the center for the reimplementation of Zhou's policies.<sup>106</sup> But by abolishing granary gods, yet still assuring good harvests and protecting the area from central

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<sup>105</sup> Chaozhou emigrants maintain an altar to Hai Rui in a temple in Singapore, and he also has a cult on his native Hainan Island. Keith Stevens, "The Popular Religion Gods of the Hainanese," *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 41 (2001):43-93, p. 70.

<sup>106</sup> Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, 131.

taxation, Zhou Chen had proven his spiritual efficacy.<sup>107</sup> A person stronger than a deity has power that makes enshrinement a good investment.

Fifth and finally, many of the iconoclasts demonstrated a kind of power not normally associated with Confucians: martial power. Scholars have shown that spiritual power was not inherently “good” or “evil” in Chinese popular religion.<sup>108</sup> Instead, there was a distinction between “bright” civil [文] efficacy in the mode of the parental metaphor, and “dark,” violent, martial [武] efficacy. Both could be legitimately harnessed. Civil power is normally associated with Confucian governance. For instance, Lin Jun’s friend Xie Shiyuan, an ardent builder of Confucian schools and shrines, lauded the Ming dynasty because, having won the empire on horseback, it protected the empire with civil culture [文].<sup>109</sup> Civil power was not purely secular: As Lin Jun reported, Xie Shiyuan’s success in the examinations had been portended by his

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<sup>107</sup> Zhou’s example inspired Ye Sheng to replace the “laughable” granary gods in the far south, while suppressing a Yao minority rebellion in 1458. In addition, Ye reported on a local god next to the Confucian temple-and-school complex: “It was said to be very efficacious, so powerful that the teaching officials, fearing disaster, dared not destroy it. Because I issued a document, they ‘destroyed’ it, changing it to worship [a Song-era official killed in fighting Vietnamese troops].” (Ye Sheng [叶盛] (1420-1474), *Diary from East of the River* [河内日记](reprint Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980) 6/4-5.) Although a leading Confucian litterateur, in his dealings with the southern rebellion, Ye Sheng himself faced criticism for excessive slaughter, chiefly from Guangdong native Qiu Jun [丘俊]. Goodrich, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 1580-81.

<sup>108</sup> Robert Weller and Keping Wu, “On the Boundaries between Good and Evil: Constructing Multiple Moralities in China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 76.1 (2017): 47-67.

<sup>109</sup> 1517 Jiangxi *Jianchang Prefectural Gazetteer* 7/6-10, 24, 30, 17/5,6, 13.

grandmother's dream of a great star that ascended from a Buddhist tower where young Xie was lying alone.<sup>110</sup> But civil power was just that: civilized, humane, even elegant.

Martial power had a different style. It appears in two examples of premortem enshrinement at opposite ends of the Ming period. Gu Cheng [郭晟] (1330-1414), bodyguard to the Ming founder, even as a youngster was amazingly strong, "imposing in stature and appearance." As a general and provincial administrator he "awed the whole South into peace," subduing opponents of Ming power in Guizhou and Yunnan by ruthless executions. Yet the non-Han ethnic groups that he repeatedly "punitively pacified" enshrined him while he was still alive.<sup>111</sup> Likewise, Huang Degong [黃德公] (d. 1645) was an illiterate tough, a general for the rump Southern Ming regime after 1644. Huang drank prodigiously before every battle and kept his subordinates in line with violence. "Everywhere he went, the people felt his virtue," the official *Ming History* reports, and the people of three jurisdictions along the 130-mile line he held established premortem shrines to him.<sup>112</sup> This kind of "virtue" is a commanding force of personality that is founded on violence, whether for good or for bad ends. Premortem shrines may have both propitiated that power and drawn on it, as was common with martial gods like Guan Yu.

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<sup>110</sup> As prefect of Jianchang, Xie settled outstanding lawsuits so well that people thought him "divine" [神]. Lin Jun, "Biography of Vice Censor-in-Chief Xie Yueyan" [謝悅言傳], in his *Jiansu ji* 24/17-20.

<sup>111</sup> Zhang, *Official History* 13/144/4073-5. Forceful ferocity also was not purely male, but characterized chastity martyrs among other women.

<sup>112</sup> Zhang, *Official History* 23/268/6903.

The obvious lack of genteel, civil virtue in these two enshrined generals permits the question: Did other premortem shrines also embody martial power? For as well as bashing statues, many enshrined iconoclasts killed a lot of people. Premortem shrines to Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming commemorated his defeat of a rebellion in the southeast; an accompanying stele lauds Wang not only for his learning, but for “from morning to night deploying martial skills to wipe out the strong bandits so that nought of them remains.”<sup>113</sup> Lin Jun was posted to Jiangxi, Yunnan, and Sichuan precisely to put down rebellions. In one campaign, his forces captured and beheaded or burnt to death over two thousand people, a fact

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<sup>113</sup> Liu Jie [劉傑], “Record of the Premortem Shrine to Capital Censor Mr. Wang Yangming” [先賢祠記] [先賢祠記] (c. 1520), in *Collection of Diagrams and Documents from Ancient Times Until Today* [古今圖書集成] (1726; electronic reprint Taipei: United Data Banks Digital Publication, 2003) 133/35/1.



that so impressed the Qing-era *Ming History* compilers that they mention it twice.<sup>114</sup> His enshrinement while alive may reflect his martial efficacy.

Ritual and religion were part and parcel of the suppression of rebels. In Sichuan, Lin Jun took the trouble to enshrine an official who died at the rebels' hands, courageously shouting to them to kill him instead of innocent civilians, at Jiangjin, about 45 miles from Dazu. For a father and son pair who died three days apart fighting for the state, Lin Jun put up a plaque on their door reading "Father and son loyal and upright," and his successor in office built a "Loyal and Filial Shrine."<sup>115</sup> These elite souls, fighting on the government side, were honored and thus settled. Yet the two thousand commoners who died as rebels warranted no special shrine to comfort them. Lin had shown his power over their bodies; what about their souls?

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<sup>114</sup> Zhang, *Official History*, 16/187/4966, 17/194/5138. Likewise, Lin Jin [林金], facing bandit attacks, shared the hardships of the troops, dealt effectively with both bandits and nervous civilians, and planned defense so well that Ye Sheng sponsored his promotion. Lin Jin also attacked local cults in the far south and was himself enshrined everywhere he served. Half a century later, Confucian zealot and self-promoter Lin Xiyuan [林希元] (*js.* 1517) destroyed a shrine to the Perfect Warrior (a favorite of the early Ming emperors) to provide a more spacious location for Lin Jin's (originally) premortem shrine, called "Mr. Lin's Shrine" [林公祠] and recorded both the earlier Lin's and his own activity in the Qinzhou gazetteer in classic high-Ming fashion. Zhang, *Official History* 15/165/4474; 1539 Guangxi *Qinzhou Gazetteer* [平定州志] 6/2, 8/3-6. On Lin Xiyuan, see Kathlene Baldanza, *Ming China and Vietnam: Negotiating Borders in Early Modern Asia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>115</sup> Zhang, *Official History* 24/289/7423, 7425.

## Thunder and Gunpowder

In Ming times, many kinds of exorcists dealt with unhappy spirits, such as drowning victims or young men slaughtered on the battlefield. Confucian leader Song Lian [宋廉] (1310-1381), a key advisor to the Ming founder, praised him for holding a grand Buddhist mass for all souls, and also wrote approvingly of martial gods and of violent exorcisms to end disease by beheading demons.<sup>116</sup> If such spirits were not settled, their deadly energies emanated from the earth where they lay, causing disease or lending dark strength to other weird old nature spirits. Tamed by the right rituals, on the other hand, the hungry dead became spirit soldiers under the command of a hierarchy of Daoist gods. Such ghosts could fuse with living human troops to lend them strength.<sup>117</sup>

The Ming founder had relied upon these ghostly troops enrolled under martial gods in his conquest – especially the “Perfect Warrior” [完美战士], also called “Dark Martiality” [暗黑 martiality] – and ordered every county to create an altar to settle tame them. The altars were presided over, and the ghostly troops commanded, by each county’s City God, who was answerable in turn to the Daoist gods above him. Mark Meulenbeld describes this Ming innovation as a “scandalous change” to the inherited state ritual regulations, because “it allow[ed] unruly, diabolic spirits to

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<sup>116</sup> John W. Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare*; Natasha Heller, “From Imperial Glory to Buddhist Piety: The Record of a Ming Ritual in Three Contexts,” *History of Religions* 51.1 (2011): 59-83; Paul Katz, *Demon Hordes and Burning Boats: The Cult of Marshal Wen in Late Imperial Chekiang* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995).

<sup>117</sup> Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare*, chapter 4.

be included within the official, imperial system of sacrifices.”<sup>118</sup> The dark side was built into the “bright” (*Ming*) [明] dynasty.<sup>119</sup>

In managing abandoned, potentially diabolical but potentially employable spirits, by Ming times local shamans had largely been subordinated to Daoist specialists in Thunder Rites. These specialists were invaluable allies to the dynasty, for the Thunder gods they harnessed, who spoke by possessing shamans or youngsters under the Daoist priest’s control, not only subdued and commanded demons and ghosts, but also brought rain.<sup>120</sup> Thunder deities carried weapons and wore armor, and in the Daoist pantheon they ranked as “generals” or “marshals.” Recreating the sound and flash of thunder and lightning, Daoist Thunder specialists sometimes “literally blew up temples of rival deities with thunderous bursts of flame,” by invoking Thunder deities.<sup>121</sup> It is no accident that the birthday festivities for City Gods were celebrated “with booming gongs and drums and earsplitting firecrackers.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare*, chapter 4, p. 140.

<sup>119</sup> It may have been precisely because the Ming founding group knew their conquest had relied so heavily on dark power that they chose the name “bright” (*ming*) for the dynasty. See Sarah Schneewind, “The Dark World of the Dead in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty” (26 October 2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2d-RsC5ZCs>

<sup>120</sup> Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare*, chapter 4. See also John Lagerwey, “The Ming Dynasty Double Orthodoxy,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 25 (2016): 113-130.

<sup>121</sup> Shin-yi Chao, *Daoist Ritual, State Religion, and Popular Practice: Zhenwu Worship from Song to Ming (960-1644)* (London: Routledge, 2011), 52-53, 59.

<sup>122</sup> Donald S. Sutton, “Shamanism in the Eyes of Ming and Qing Elites,” in *Heterodoxy in Late Imperial China*, ed. Kwang-Ching Liu and Richard Shek (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press,

How does this relate to our iconoclasts? Huang Fu condemned all City God Temples – required by the Ming state – as improper shrines, because of their Daoist personnel.<sup>123</sup> The system of each county and prefectural seat having a City God emerged in early Ming. These were old, local, popular gods who had not previously been integrated into the state, and their integration was supported by Daoists and opposed by some Confucians. In the end, even hardliners like Yang Ziqi had to accept them.<sup>124</sup> One magistrate expressed the legal and common conception that the City God was the equivalent and partner of the county magistrate when he wrote, “The deity and I jointly administer Suzhou. The harmony of the myriad things is a gift from the deity.”<sup>125</sup> One image of a magistrate commanded ghostly troops from its shrine, while he was still living.<sup>126</sup>

Some destroyers also matched Daoist priests’ facility with gunpowder. As Judith Boltz showed, Song (906-1279) magistrates had used gunpowder to assist or dramatize their exorcism of popular deities.<sup>127</sup> Lin Jun and some other zealous Confucian officials who won premortem shrines were closely associated, not only with battle, which reinforced the ranks of the

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2004), 209-237, p. 218.

<sup>123</sup> Schneewind, *Community Schools*, 83.

<sup>124</sup> Hamashima Atsutoshi, “The City-God Temples (*cheng-huang-miao*) of Chiang-nan in the Ming and Ch’ing Dynasties,” *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toko Bunko* 50 (1992): 1-28, pp. 8, 10.

<sup>125</sup> Hamashima, “City-God Temples,” 11. Magistrates sometimes became City Gods after death, or judges in Hell while sleeping. Paul R. Katz, *Divine Justice: Religion and the Development of Chinese Legal Culture* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 55-57.

<sup>126</sup> Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, 111-12.

abandoned dead, but specifically with gunpowder. Although gunpowder weapons had been invented in China, in the early sixteenth century the Portuguese had the best cannon in East Asia. Late in Lin Jun's life, philosopher-statesman Wang Yangming was charged with quelling a rebellious imperial prince who had equipped himself with some of these cannon. As historian Tonio Andrade vividly recounts, Lin Jun, already in retirement, hastened to cast a cannon, mix up some gunpowder, and send both to his friend Wang to counter the weapons of the prince.<sup>128</sup> Another example: Qi Jiguang [戚繼光] (1528-88), the most famous Ming military innovator in the defense against pirates, promoted both cannon and muskets. Qi was enshrined while still alive in at least two places along the Fujian coast in 1567. One of the shrines to Qi was sponsored by the Master of the Three Teachings, Lin Zhao'en.<sup>129</sup>

Of course, Lin Jun, Wang Yangming, and Qi Jiguang did not wield weapons single-handedly: they trained Ming soldiers to do so. The awesome explosive power they commanded was known to many Ming people, by experience and hearsay. And being blown to bits was far more horrifying than other forms of death, as thousands of Beijing civilians learned and

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<sup>127</sup> Judith Magee Boltz, "Not by the Seal of Office Alone: New Weapons in Battles with the Supernatural," in *Religion and Society*, ed. Ebrey and Gregory, 148-208.

<sup>128</sup> Tonio Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age: China, Military Innovation, and the Rise of the West in World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 137-141. Another official involved with gunpowder weapons and enshrined while still alive was Weng Wanda [翁万达] (1498-1552). Andrade, *Gunpowder Age*, 142; 1577 Guangxi Taiping Prefectural Gazetteer [平定州志] 1/57.

<sup>129</sup> Andrade, *Gunpowder Age*, 142, 172-181; *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 222, 914.

expressed in 1626, when Heaven objected to eunuch dictator Wei Zhongxian's torture of officials by ordering the Fire God to explode the Imperial Gunpowder Workshop.<sup>130</sup>

When we see that a number of officials enshrined alive were also experts in gunpowder, whose sound evoked the many drums of the thunder gods, it is reasonable to guess that they partook of the dark, martial powers of exorcism and command of demon troops. Those powers, *especially* when proven in competition against local deities, may have been what won them premortem enshrinement.

### **Conclusion**

That Lin Jun's image displaced a Guanyin image dramatizes how Ming Confucian officials, while still alive, could literally replace the gods they banished. Nationally and in Sichuan specifically, Lin Jun was known in his time as an ardent foe of Buddhism. In post-imperial times when the opening story took its final shape, the understanding of premortem enshrinement had lost its honorable side. Premortem shrines had become associated, especially because of those honoring dictator Wei Zhongxian, primarily with flattery and self-aggrandizement, rather than with a good reputation for public service. Even though Fan's accompanying text says plainly (in classical language) that Lin was not present, it makes sense that, seeing a new Lin amid the old Buddhist icons, locals assumed he had connived at the lady's vanishing.

Even in terms of scholarly Ming history, the story opened the way into a question about Lin Jun and his colleagues. How could zealous Confucians who smashed beloved gods and

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<sup>130</sup> Naixi Feng, "Mushroom Cloud over the Northern Capital: Writing the Tianqi Explosion in the Seventeenth Century," *Late Imperial China* 41.1 (2020): 71-113.

confiscated locally-funded temples nevertheless win premortem enshrinement, which rested on the local will? Compensating contributions of the sort for which “parental” officials earned premortem shrines cannot explain away all such cases, given how hotly communities resented iconoclasm and temple destruction. Rather, we must understand premortem enshrinement of officials as a religious, as well as a political, phenomenon. The close connection of the iconoclasts with violence not only against icons, but also against people, and specifically their connection with the dangerous thunder and lightning of gunpowder, suggests that – like the dynasty itself – these Confucians drew on dark martial power, as well as the civil, bright power with which we normally associate Confucianism. Their enshrinement propitiated and channeled that dark power.

With this hypothesis in mind, the living shrines to Wei Zhongxian look different. Consider: Wei had been an illiterate roustabout; having castrated himself to win entrance to the palace, he rose to rule the empire. That is impressive indeed. Wei had further evinced his spiritual power by displacing the powerful popular goddess Bixia Yuanjun, for one of his many premortem shrines occupied one of her temples. But this lady had the last laugh: she and Guan Yu, it is said, toppled Wei Zhongxian.<sup>131</sup> After his disgrace and suicide, he may have become a god, with a pale, unshaven face.<sup>132</sup>

Widening the focus to the Ming religious atmosphere, direct competition requires complicating the Jesuit portrayal of Ming religious harmony on which Voltaire drew. After an initial flurry of official intolerance, Ming officials mostly tolerated other faiths until about 1470. Then, in the high Ming period that encompassed Lin Jun’s career, at least a hundred or so

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<sup>131</sup> Zheng, *New Chats, er xin* 3/5 (529); Collection of Diagrams and Documents 64/14/a.

<sup>132</sup> Naquin, *Peking*, 166, 184, 246 n114.

officials are recorded as “destroying improper shrines.” In the mid-sixteenth century the movement subsided again.<sup>133</sup> The renewed toleration and developed syncretism of the later Ming may have been stimulated by the conflict, as the far more destructive religious warfare in Europe eventually produced the idea of toleration.<sup>134</sup> It may be no accident that Master of the Three Teachings Lin Zhao’en came from the same illustrious Fujian clan that had produced Lin Jun, one of the most violent and hated of the zealots.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> I demonstrated this temporal pattern based on seventy-eight cases in *Community Schools and the State*, 78. Chen, “Overlapping Margins,” documents 128 cases that follow the same pattern: twenty-three before 1465; eighty-four from 1465 to 1567; and twelve thereafter.

<sup>134</sup> Locke and his predecessors justified toleration of other faiths by pragmatic concerns, not by a deep principle. Richard Tuck, “Skepticism and Toleration in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 21-35.

<sup>135</sup> Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*, 62; Dean and Zheng, *Ritual Alliances*, 167.