

little ones! Revere them, take them to heart! Observe these distinctions, deeply ponder their meanings, so as to grow to maturity; and as you encounter them in learning, inquiring, making judgments and fine distinctions, and putting them into exemplary practice, you may with untiring efforts advance to become a person of genuine worth and possibly even a sage!

[Song Yuan xuean 69:2279-80 -dB]

CHENG DUANLI: DAILY SCHEDULE OF STUDY IN THE
CHENG FAMILY SCHOOL, GRADED ACCORDING TO AGE
(CHENGSHI JIASHU DUSHU FENNIAN RICHENG)

Following is a much abridged version of the syllabus for the Cheng Family School, published in 1315. It became the model for many family schools and academies in late imperial China and was widely quoted in educational manuals. Even allowing for the abbreviation of many details here, the basic reading list as shown below is itself comparatively simplified in contrast to the extensive curriculum in Zhu Xi's "Personal Proposals," and its later stages are oriented much more toward preparation for the civil service examinations, which were resumed in the same year. No doubt Cheng thought of this simplified version as only a minor concession in order to achieve practical coordination between what was taught in the schools and what could realistically be incorporated into the new examination system. Accompanying notes show that he still subscribed to Zhu Xi's basic aims and expected that more mature scholars would supplement this and continue with Zhu's larger program of liberal learning—as he put it, "solid learning for the sake of one's self." Yet, both in his own time and often in later times, many serious scholars would complain that preparation for the exams came so to dominate men's minds that this larger goal was sadly neglected.

A. Before entering school at age eight

[Assignments]

The *Primer of Human Nature and Principle* [as above] (*Xingli zixun*).¹²

[Method] Read the primer to learn three to five sections daily. . . .

[Cheng Duanli, "Chengshi richeng" (CSRC) 11; Meskill, *Academies*, p. 160]

B. Age: Eight to fifteen.

[Assignments]

Elementary Learning, plain text. [That is, the text without commentary.]

The *Great Learning*, classic and [original] commentary, plain text.

Analects, plain text.

Mencius, plain text.

12. Replacing the Tang period text *Mengzi* and the *Thousand Character Classic* (*Qianziwen*).

The *Mean*, plain text

Emended *Classic of Filiality* [as edited by Zhu Xi, who divided the old text into one section that he called the "classic" and fourteen sections called "commentary." He also deleted 223 characters, which he considered to be later additions to the original "classic" section].

Classic of Changes, plain text.

Classic of Documents, plain text.

Classic of Odes, plain text.

Ceremonial Rites (*Yili*) and *Record of Rites* (*Liji*), plain texts.

Rites of Zhou (*Zhouli*), plain text.

Spring and Autumn Annals, the classic and three commentaries, plain text.

[Method] Read each small section one hundred times; recite it one hundred times. Then recite a large section all the way through. Mornings, recite and review the book at the top of the list; evenings, recite and review in continual order the books already read. . . .

C. Age: Fifteen to twenty-two.

[Assignments]

The *Great Learning* by *Chapter and Phrase*; and Zhu Xi's *Answers to Questions on the Great Learning*

The *Analects* with collected annotations (*Lunyu jizhu*) [by Zhu Xi].

Mencius with collected annotations (*Mengzi jizhu*) [by Zhu Xi].

The *Mean* by *Chapter and Phrase* (*Zhongyong zhangju*); and [Zhu Xi's] *Answers to Questions on the Mean* (*Zhongyong huowen*).

[Method] Copy and read those portions of Zhu Xi's *Answers to Questions on the Analects* (*Lunyu huowen*) that correspond to the collected annotations.

Copy and read those portions of *Answers to Questions on the Mencius* (*Mengzi huowen*) that correspond to the collected annotations.

Copy and read one's [chosen] classic among the *Classic of Changes*, *Classic of Documents*, *Classic of Odes*, *Record of Rites*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

["Chengshi richeng," 11-14; Meskill, pp. 160-161]

[Method] Chart Number 1 may be used.

Chart Number 1. Daily Schedule of Reading the Classics

Student's Name: _____

Date: _____

Note: Fill in up to amount read each day. Nine days is one cycle.

Daily Schedule

1. First let the student recite books already read at the head of the list, going as far as the book read the previous day for one round.
2. Recitation before the teacher from the books read the previous day.
3. Personal receipt of the book for the day. . . . The characters are counted and the large sections marked out. . . . The large sections are divided into small

sections. . . . Let the student mark off a section in red . . . let him read each small section that has been corrected as to punctuation and pronunciation; and let him explain before the teacher [from the gloss?] the meaning of the faulty texts corrected.

4. Let the student read each small section from the book two hundred times and then recite it one hundred times. When he has completed that, a passage is selected and the student tested on reciting it and its corrections [from the gloss?]. [When he passes] the red marker is to be covered over with black and a following section marked. When a certain number of sections have been completed, let him recite and be tested on a large section all the way through.

5. Passages are selected from the books thought over during the evening and the student tested.

6. Personal elucidation of books already read. Let the student repeat the explanation of the general meaning and be tested on errors.

7. Nights of odd-numbered days: thinking over of books read. Also thinking over of books on the nature and principle.

8. Nights of even-numbered days: reciting in order all the books that have been read regularly during the round. Also reviewing books on the nature and principle.

9. Free day. Copy standard texts, punctuate phrases, and make tone marks on characters [that are capable of being read in more than one tone].

["Chengshi richeng," 1:2-7; Meskill, pp. 162-163]

Age: Fifteen to twenty-two [continued].

[Assignments]

Peruse *The Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Governance* (*Zizhi tongjian*) [Sima Guang's comprehensive history, taken as a model of historical writing].

[Method] Chart Number 2 may be used. [Deleted here.]

[Assignments] Read Han [Yu's] works. [As a model of style.]

[Method] Chart Number 3 may be used. [Deleted here.]

[Assignment] Next read the *Chuci*, with Zhu Xi's commentary.

["Chengshi richeng," 2:15; Meskill, p. 162]

D. Age: Twenty-two to twenty-five.

Method of learning to write examination essays [using method of Zhen Dexiu]:

Read aloud and peruse recent essays on themes from the classics and the "Answers to questions" for nine days. Write [your own] for one day. Read aloud and peruse recent essays on the meaning of the classics [*jingyi*, i.e., the prescribed form of examination essay] for nine days. Write [your own] for one day. Read aloud and peruse old-style rhyme-prose pieces for nine days. Write [your own] for one day. Read aloud and peruse edicts, proclamations, and memorials

for nine days. Write [your own] for one day. Read aloud and peruse problem essays [*ce*] for nine days. Write [your own] for one day.

["Chengshi richeng," 2:22; Meskill, p. 162]

[Method] Chart Number 4. Daily Schedule of Reading and Composition for the Examinations

[Note:] Every day fill in as far as has been done: read, examined, copied, and punctuated.

[Assignments]

Day	Morning	After Dinner	Evening
1-6	Read in order, the Four Books, Classics, commentaries, annotations, and "Answers to questions."	Read compositions of the type of the First Session [in the examinations] and books on the nature and principle, systems, ways of government, and ancient precedents. Go through them and begin again.	Following the forms in the <i>Sanchang sifei pianchao</i> [Compilation of the four genres in the three exam sessions], mark notable passages with circles and dots and make deletions and cuts.
7-9	Review Classics, <i>Lisao</i> and Han [Yu's] works.		
10	Write a paper for the first session.		Revise what you have written.

["Chengshi richeng," 2:40-41; Meskill, p. 164]

Note: From an egalitarian point of view the virtue and success of Cheng Duanli's basic syllabus, coordinated with the examination system, was that it established a process and standard widely available to everyone who could hope to follow this method anywhere in the empire, whatever his personal circumstances. From the point of view of those who were concerned about maintaining high standards of scholarship, leadership, and public responsibility, there remained a question as to how much real "merit" (or mediocrity) attached to this kind of meritocracy, based on such routinization of learning.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Education in traditional China was always male-oriented, but women's roles in the households, especially those of the ruling elite and the imperial family, were of such importance that much attention was given to their training for family roles and responsibilities. Moreover, since women played a key role in the early education of the young, it was essential for mothers and their female

surrogates (grandmothers, aunts, older sisters) to achieve a mastery of the classical texts and primers that they taught to the young males before the latter went off to school. Often great scholars and historical figures paid tribute, on this account, to the women whose educational influence had been crucial in their lives. Further, in the days when the transmission of classical learning was largely in the custody of particular families, there were spectacular cases of women in those families who ensured the perpetuation of the family tradition when no male was available or capable of carrying on. Thus education for women was strongly abetted by the centrality of the family and requirements of family life.

Women's education achieved a new level of importance with the rise of the Song learning and its Neo-Confucian extensions in the Ming, marked by the great spread of printing, literacy, and schooling. As we have seen, Zhu Xi's simplification and recodification of the classic Confucian canon had much to do with the propagation of the new culture, and it is not surprising that his Four Books (the *Great Learning*, the *Mean*, the *Analects*, and the *Mencius*) became the pretext for a similar compilation in the Ming of the Four Books for Women (*Nü sishu*). These consisted of Ban Zhao's Han period work *Admonitions for Women* (*Nüjie*); two Tang texts, the *Classic of Filiality for Women* (*Nü xiaojing*) and Song Rozhao's *Analects for Women* (*Nü lunyu*); and the Ming Empress Xu's *Instructions for the Inner Quarters* (*Neixun*). Later, during the Kangxi period in the Qing, a certain Wang Xiang substituted an instructional text written by his mother, *A Handy Record of Rules for Women* (*Nufan jielu*), for the *Nü xiaojing*, and it is his grouping that has come down to us in most editions.

The female authors of these texts, each in her own distinctive way, sought to advise other women on the Confucian Way for women, the *fudao*, or "wifely way." They accept the general assumption in Confucianism that all humans, male and female, operate in a highly contextual world of hierarchical relationships where behavior is dictated by detailed codes of ritual propriety. In addition, they accept the particular roles assigned to women according to the Confucian sense of their position in the cosmic and human orders. Like the earth, which occupies the inferior position below, women are to be subservient, passive, and yielding, while men are to be dominant, active, and strong like the superior force of Heaven. A woman's sphere of activity is the family, the family of her husband, and her duties in marriage are to assist her husband in serving his family in its broadest terms, that is, to honor the family's dead ancestors with periodic sacrifices, to obey and care for the husband's living parents, and to assist in the procreation of new life to keep the family's bloodline going.

Though the authors of these texts take the subservient but central role of women as their starting point, each has different aspects to emphasize and different ways of approaching the reader. The focus of this section will be on the content of these texts and the variety of articulations of the "wifely Way" found in them. Further work needs to be done on such matters as their historical

context and readership. Suffice it to say for now that the texts are written in a fairly literary style with frequent allusions to classical texts, which would indicate that they were meant for women of elite, leisured, cultured families. Eventually, however, much of their content did filter down to a broader audience in such popular rhyming primers as the *Elementary Learning for Women* (*Nü xiaoxue*) and the *Three Character Classic for Girls* (*Nüer sanzijing*).

BAN ZHAO: ADMONITIONS FOR WOMEN (*NÜJIE*)

This text was written during the Latter Han dynasty, when Confucianism became established state teaching and attempts were made to bring women into the mainstream of the tradition. One of the first such attempts was by the scholar Liu Xiang (79–8 B.C.E.), who compiled the *Biographies of Virtuous Women* (*Lienü zhuan*).¹³ Ban Zhao's work represents a second.

Ban Zhao (48?–116? C.E.), author of *Admonitions for Women*, was a highly educated woman, publicly recognized for her scholarship and intellect. She was called to court to tutor the women of the imperial family and also was instrumental in completing the dynastic history of the Former Han, which her brother left unfinished upon his death. Indeed, the volume and variety of her writings are impressive and leave no doubt that she served as the mainstay of her family's tradition of learning. In the preface to her *Admonitions for Women*, excerpts of which follow, she explains the circumstances and her motive for writing them. Other excerpts from the text emphasize wifely virtues but also the need for women to be treated with respect according to the rites. Education should not be for males only.

Preface

This lowly one is ignorant and by nature unclever. I was favored because of my ancestry and, relying on the teachings of governess and instructress, at fourteen I clutched dustbasket and broom [as a young wife] in the Cao household. Now more than forty years have passed . . . and at last I am released [from such duties]. . . .

Yet I am anxious for you, [my daughters] who are about to marry and have not been instructed over the course of time nor heard about proper behavior for wives. I dread that you will lose face [when you are living behind] another's gate and bring shame on our lineage. . . . Whenever I think of you like this, I am fearful and anxious and so have written these "Admonitions for Women" in seven sections. . . . Now that it is done, I urge you to study them. . . .

13. An English translation of this text is available in Albert O'Hara, *The Position of Women in Early China* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1945).

Humility

On the third day after the birth of a girl, the ancients observed three customs: [first] for three days to place the baby below the bed; [second] to give her a spindle with which to play; and [third] to fast and announce her birth to her ancestors by an offering. Now to lay the baby below the bed plainly indicated that she was lowly and humble and should regard it as a prime duty to submit to others. To give her a spindle with which to play signified that she should accustom herself to labor and consider it a prime duty to be industrious. To announce her birth before her ancestors clearly meant that she ought to esteem it a prime duty to see to the continuation of the ancestral sacrifices.

These three ancient customs epitomize a woman's ordinary way of life and the teachings of the rites and regulations. Let a woman modestly yield to others; let her respect others; let her put others first, herself last. Should she do something good, let her not mention it; should she do something bad, let her not deny it. Let her bear contempt; let her even endure when others speak or do evil to her. Always let her seem to tremble and to fear. [When a woman follows such maxims as these] then she may be said to humble herself before others.

Let a woman retire late to bed, but rise early to her duties; let her not dread tasks by day or by night. Let her not refuse to perform domestic duties whether easy or difficult. That which must be done, let her finish completely, tidily, and systematically. [When a woman follows such rules as these] then she may be said to be industrious.

Let a woman be composed in demeanor and upright in bearing in the service of her husband. Let her live in purity and quietness [of spirit] and keep watch over herself. Let her not love gossip and silly laughter. Let her cleanse, purify, and arrange in order the wine and the food for the offerings to the ancestors. [Observing such principles as these] is what it means to continue the ancestral rites. . . .

Husband and Wife

Note in the following passage that though the wife's role is clearly subordinate, the complementarity and mutual responsibility of the conjugal relationship are stressed; if the wife as the embodiment of softness is to be compliant, the husband as the embodiment of strength is obliged to be self-controlled and not beat his wife. Further, the indispensability of one to the other becomes the ground for Ban Zhao's question: Isn't education as necessary for women as for men?

The Way of husband and wife is intimately connected with yin and yang and relates the individual to gods and ancestors. Truly it confirms the great principle of Heaven and Earth and the great rule of human relationships. Therefore the *Rites* honor the interrelation of man and woman; and in the

Odes the first Ode manifests the principle of marriage. For these reasons the relationship cannot but be an important one.

If a husband be unworthy, then he possesses nothing by which to control his wife. If a wife be unworthy, then she possesses nothing with which to serve her husband. If a husband does not control his wife, then he loses his authority. If a wife does not serve her husband, then right principles [the natural order] are neglected and destroyed. As a matter of fact, in practice these two [the controlling of women by men and the serving of men by women] work out in the same way.

Now examine the gentlemen of the present age. They only know that wives must be controlled and that the husband's authority must be maintained. They therefore teach their boys to read books and [study] histories. But they do not in the least understand how husbands and masters are to be served or how rites and right principles are to be maintained.

Yet only to teach men and not to teach women — is this not ignoring the reciprocal relation between them? According to the *Rites*, book learning begins at the age of eight, and at the age of fifteen one goes off to school. Why, however, should this principle not apply to girls as well as boys?

Respect and Compliance

As yin and yang are not of the same nature, so man and woman differ in behavior. The virtue of yang is firmness; yin is manifested in yielding. Man is honored for strength; a woman is beautiful on account of her gentleness. Hence there arose the common saying, "A man born as a wolf may, it is feared, become a woman; a woman born as a mouse may, it is feared, become a tigress."

Now for self-cultivation there is nothing like respectfulness. To avert harshness there is nothing like compliance. Consequently it can be said that the Way of respect and compliance is for women the most important element in ritual decorum. . . .

[If a wife] does not restrain her contempt for her husband, then it will be followed by scolding and shouting [from him]. [If a husband] does not restrain his anger, then there is certain to be beating [of the wife]. The correct relationship between husband and wife is based upon harmony and intimacy, and [conjugal] love is grounded in proper union. If it comes to blows, how can the proper relationship be preserved? If sharp words are spoken, how can [conjugal] love exist? If love and proper relationship are both destroyed, then husband and wife are parted.

Womanly Behavior

In womanly behavior there are four things [to be considered]: womanly virtue, womanly speech, womanly appearance, and womanly work. . . .

To guard carefully her chastity, to control circumspectly her behavior, in every motion to exhibit modesty, and to model each act on the best usage: this may be called womanly virtue.

To choose her words with care, to avoid vulgar language, to speak at appropriate times, and not to be offensive to others may be called womanly speech.

To wash and scrub dirt and grime, to keep clothes and ornaments fresh and clean, to wash the head and bathe the body regularly, and to keep the person free from disgraceful filth may be called womanly appearance.

With wholehearted devotion to sew and weave, not to love gossip and silly laughter, in cleanliness and order [to prepare] the wine and food for serving guests may be called womanly work.

[Hou Hanshu, 84, Chunghua ed., 2786–2789;
rev. from Swann, *Pan Zhao*, pp. 82–86]

Note that here, even though Ban Zhao preaches submission and dedication to her husband, the husband at least counts. Later, serving the husband himself becomes subordinate to caring for his parents. Also, for all the talk about submission to the husband, Ban Zhao has a greater sense of the complementary nature of marriage than later writers in this genre, who tend to put greater stress on the hierarchical nature of the relationship.

This text later became the prototype of other instructional texts for women, and Ban Zhao became canonized as the archetypal female wisdom figure, so much so that the authors of the two texts we examine next adopt Ban Zhao's voice rather than their own as the principal speaker.

MADAM CHENG: CLASSIC OF FILIALITY FOR WOMEN (NÜ XIAOJING)

In the Tang period the two most popular Confucian texts were the *Analects* and the *Classic of Filiality* (*Xiaojing*); thus it is not surprising that the two female authors of instructional texts for women written during this period would draw on these titles for their works, the *Analects for Women* and the *Classic of Filiality for Women*.

The first of these was written by the wife of a Tang official, Chen Miao, whose own family name was Cheng. She presented it to her niece upon her impending marriage to a Tang prince.

The text opens with Ban Zhao sitting at leisure, attended by a group of women. She asks them if they have heard about the greatness of filiality, especially as exemplified by the two wives of Shun, and how its practice by women consists of mastering the *fudao*, or "wifely way." The women confess their ignorance and beg her to instruct them in these matters. In the instructions that follow, the most striking feature is the extraordinary moral influence and leadership role attributed to women in the domestic sphere, particularly with respect to their husbands. Service to a husband goes beyond obedience and deference to him; it includes responsibility for his moral character and

the obligation of firm remonstrance lest he go wrong — points already made in the *Classic of Filiality* and the formulas of the *Three Mainstays*.

Her ladyship [Ban Zhao] said, "By studying [the classics] with thoroughness, questioning with deep penetration, and 'hearing much and casting aside the doubtful parts,'¹⁴ one can serve as a standard for others. If you are willing to heed such teachings and incorporate them into your behavior, I will set them forth for you. Now filiality embraces Heaven and Earth and enriches all human relationships. It moves ghosts and spirits and affects birds and animals. 'Show respect according to the dictates of propriety';¹⁵ 'think three times and then act.'¹⁶ Do not relax your efforts, do not harm your goodness. Be affable and gentle, modest and deferential, humane and understanding, filial and affectionate. Then you will have perfectly embodied correct moral behavior and be without blame. . . . [15a–b]

The next several sections, deleted here, discuss the "wifely Way" for the empress, the wives of high officials, the wives of feudal lords, and those of common people — paralleling the original text of the *Classic of Filiality*. Also, in parallel to the latter, each set of precepts ends with a quotation from the Odes, Record of Rites, or some other classic — also not reproduced here.

Serving One's Parents-in-Law

In serving her parents-in-law, a woman gives the same respect [to her father-in-law that] she has shown her own father and the same love [to her mother-in-law that] she has shown her own mother. She keeps to this in accord with rightness and holds to it in accord with the rites. At cock-crow, she washes and dresses to start the morning off early. She makes sure her parents-in-law are cool in summer and warm in winter. She settles them in at night and checks on them first thing in the morning.¹⁷ She uses "reverence to straighten the inner life and rightness to square the outer."¹⁸ She establishes an order for the proper household rituals and then carries them out. . . . [17a]

The Three Powers

Referring to men and women as counterparts of and co-respondents to Heaven and Earth.

14. *Analects* 2:18.

15. *Analects* 1:13.

16. *Analects* 5:19.

17. "Summary of the Rules of Propriety" ("Quli"), *Record of Rites* A2; Legge, *Li Ki*, 1:67.

18. *Classic of Changes*, hexagram 2, *kun*.

Guard against idleness, hold fast to ritual decorum, and you will be able to make a successful marriage. Then, by your guiding of him with respect and love, your gentleman [husband] will not forget his sense of filiality to his parents. By your presenting him with a model of virtuous conduct, he will improve his behavior. By your guiding of him with a sense of modesty and deference, he will refrain from being contentious. By your leading him on with rites and music, he will become pleasant and easy to get along with. By your demonstrating the difference between good and evil, he will understand what conduct is not allowable. . . . [17a-b]

Governing Through Filiality

Her ladyship said, "The virtuous women of ancient times used filiality to govern the nine degrees of familial relations. They never dared demean the younger wives; how much more solicitous were they about their sisters-in-law! Therefore, they won the hearts of the whole family, which made it possible for parents-in-law to be well served. In managing the household, they dared not mistreat the chickens and dogs; how much more careful were they about the servants! Therefore, they were able to please all, high and low, which made it possible for husbands to be better served. . . . [17b-18a]

Chaste Behavior

Her ladyship said, "What a woman must take seriously is her person, for it is the source of all her actions. One who is good at cultivating her person¹⁹ will correct her thoughts, keep a careful watch over her motives, hold firmly to moral standards, and not allow one iota of selfishness to entangle her. She commits herself to correctness and composure, not erring even a little bit. She does not allow considerations of life and death to change her resolve, nor let the prospects of living in affluence or poverty affect her commitment to chastity. . . .

The Duty of Remonstrance

Note here how the duty of remonstrance takes precedence over obedience, as it does for the minister vis-à-vis the ruler.

The women said, " . . . We dare to ask whether if we follow all our husbands' commands, we could be called virtuous?"

Her ladyship answered, "What kind of talk is that! What kind of talk is that!

Long ago, King Xuan of Zhou was late rising to attend his court, so his wife threw down her jewels in the public tribunal [to take the blame]. King Xuan because of this started getting up early again. Emperor Cheng of the Han ordered his concubine to ride out with him, but she refused, saying, 'I have heard that in the Three Dynasties, wise rulers took only their worthy officials by their side. I never heard of them taking their concubines.' Because of her, Emperor Cheng changed his manner. . . .

From these cases, we can see that "if the Son of Heaven has ministers to advise him, even if he is neglectful of the Way, he won't lose his empire. If a lord has remonstrating officials, then even if he is neglectful of the Way, he won't lose his state. If a great officer has someone to remonstrate with him, then even if he is neglectful of the Way, he won't lose his home domain. If a scholar has a remonstrating friend, then he can't be parted from his good name. If a father has a remonstrating son, then he won't fall prey to what is against moral standards."²⁰ If a husband has a remonstrating wife, then he won't fall into evil ways. Therefore, if a husband transgresses against the Way, you must correct him. How could it be that to obey your husband in everything would make you a virtuous person?"

[*Nü xiaojing*, xia, 15a-21b - TK]

SONG RUOZHAO: ANALECTS FOR WOMEN

Song Ruozhao, author of the *Analects for Women*, was the second of five daughters of a high Tang official, Song Fen. According to her biography in the *Tang History*, her elder sister, Ruohua, actually wrote the text, but Ruozhao was the one who propagated it. She made it clear that she wished not to marry but rather to dedicate her life to the example of Ban Zhao in the work of instructing women. After an audience with the Emperor Dezong in the late eighth century, she was made a female scholar at court, assigned to instruct the royal princesses.

The importance of this text lies in its specificity of detail in spelling out the basic Confucian way of wifely perfection for those women needing more explicit guidance. By virtue of its practical approach, the *Analects for Women* was widely used and, along with Ban Zhao's *Admonitions for Women*, remained the most popular and influential instructional text for women in premodern times.

Establishing Oneself as a Person

To be a woman, you must first learn how to establish yourself as a person. The way to do this is simply by working hard to establish one's purity and

20. The preceding passage is quoted, though not verbatim, from the *Classic of Filiality* (*Xiaojing*). See ch. 10.

chastity. By purity, one keeps one's self undefiled; by chastity, one preserves one's honor.

When walking, don't turn your head; when talking, don't open your mouth wide; when sitting, don't move your knees; when standing, don't rustle your skirts; when happy, don't exult with loud laughter; when angry, don't raise your voice. The inner and outer quarters are each distinct; the sexes should be segregated. Don't peer over the outer wall or go beyond the outer courtyard. If you have to go outside, cover your face; if you peep outside, conceal yourself as much as possible. Do not be on familiar terms with men outside the family; have nothing to do with women of bad character. Establish your proper self so as to become a [true] human being.

Learning How to Work

To be a woman one must learn the details of women's work. Learn how to weave with hemp and ramie; don't mix fine and rough fibers. Don't run the shuttle of the loom so quickly that you make a mess. When you see the silkworms spinning their cocoons, you must attend to them day and night, picking mulberry leaves to feed them. . . . Learn how to cut out shoes and make socks. Learn how to cut fabric and sew it into garments. Learn how to embroider, mend, and darn. . . .

Do not learn the ways of lazy women who from an early age are silly and shiftless and who have a distaste for women's work. They don't plan ahead in making clothes to fit the needs of each season and hardly ever pick up a needle to sew. . . . Married, they bring shame upon their new family, who go around in ill-fitted, patched, and ragged clothing, so that meeting others they are pointed to as the laughingstock of the neighborhood. . . .

Ritual Decorum: Learning Proper Etiquette

To be a woman one must learn the rules of ritual decorum. When you expect a female guest, carefully clean and arrange the furniture and tea implements. When she arrives, take time to adjust your clothing, and then, with light steps and your hands drawn up in your sleeves, walk slowly to the door and with lowered voice, invite her in. Ask after her health and how her family is doing. Be attentive to what she says. After chatting in a leisurely way, serve the tea. When she leaves, send her off in a proper manner. . . .

If you are invited to someone's house, understand your female duties and help with the preparation of the tea. After having talked for a time, rise to leave. Don't overstay your welcome. If your hostess presses you to stay longer to share a meal, conduct yourself with propriety. Don't drink so much that your face turns red and you get sloppy in the handling of your chopsticks. Take your leave

Rising Early [to Begin Household Work]

To be a woman one must learn to make it a regular practice, at the fifth watch when the cock crows, to rise and dress. After cleaning your face and teeth, fix your hair and makeup simply. Then go to the kitchen, light the fire, and start the morning meal. Scrub the pots and wash the pans; boil the tea water and cook the gruel. Plan your meals according to the resources of the family and the seasons of the year, making sure that they are fragrant and tasty, served in the appropriate dishes and in the proper manner at the table. If you start early, there is nothing you can't get done in a day!

Do not learn the ways of those lazy women who are thoughtless and do not plan ahead. The sun is already high in the sky before they manage to get themselves out of bed. Then they stagger to the kitchen, disheveled and unwashed, and throw a meal together, long past the hour. What is more, they are overly fond of eating and compete to get the tastiest morsels at each meal. If there is not enough of the best to go around, they steal some to eat later on the sly. Their inconsiderate manners are displayed to all their neighbors, to the humiliation of their parents-in-law. Talked about by everyone, how can they not be overcome with shame!

Serving One's Parents-in-Law

Your father-in-law and mother-in-law are the heads of your husband's family. . . . You must care for them as your own father and mother. Respectfully serve your father-in-law. Do not look at him directly [when he speaks to you], do not follow him around, and do not engage him in conversation. If he has an order for you, listen and obey.

When your mother-in-law is sitting, you should stand. When she gives an order, you should carry it out right away. Rise early in the morning and open up the household, but don't make any noise that would disturb your mother-in-law's sleep. Sweep and mop the floors, wash and rinse the clothes. When your mother-in-law wakes up, present her with her toiletry articles, withdraw while she bathes until she beckons you. Greet her and then withdraw. Prepare tea and broth; set out spoons and chopsticks. As long known, the aged have poor teeth, so you should be especially careful in the preparation of food for them, so that they might enjoy their old age with all sorts of delicacies, cooked in a manner that allows them to be easily chewed and swallowed. At night before retiring, check to see if they are comfortably settled for the night. Bid them good night and then go to bed. . . .

Serving a Husband

Women leave their families to marry, and the husband is the master of the

conjugal affections follow from this. While at home, the two of you should treat each other with the formality and reserve of a guest. Listen carefully to and obey whatever your husband tells you. If he does something wrong, gently correct him. Don't be like those women who not only do not correct their husbands but actually lead them into indecent ways. . . . Don't imitate those shrewish wives who love to clash head on with their husbands all the time. Take care of your husband's clothing so that he is never cold in winter, and of his meals so that he never gets thin and sickly from not being fed enough. As a couple, you and your husband share the bitter and the sweet, poverty and riches. In life you share the same bed; in death the same grave. . . .

Instructing Sons and Daughters

Most all families have sons and daughters. As they grow and develop, there should be a definite sequence and order in their education. But the authority/responsibility to instruct them rests solely with the mother. When the sons go out to school, they seek instruction from a teacher who teaches them proper [ritual] form and etiquette, how to chant poetry, how to write essays. . . .

Daughters remain behind in the women's quarters and should not be allowed to go out very often. . . . Teach them sewing, cooking, and etiquette. . . . Don't allow them to be indulged, lest they throw tantrums to get their own way; don't allow them to defy authority, lest they become rude and haughty; don't allow them to sing songs, lest they become dissolute; and don't allow them to go on outings, lest some scandal spoil their good names.

Worthy of derision are those who don't take charge of their responsibility [in this area]. The sons of such women remain illiterate, they poke fun at their elders, they get into fights and drink too much, and they become addicted to singing and dancing. . . . The daughters of such women know nothing about ritual decorum, speak in an overbearing manner, can't distinguish between the honorable and the mean, and don't know how to serve or sew. They bring shame on their honorable relatives and disgrace on their father and mother. Mothers who fail to raise their children correctly are as if they had raised pigs and rats!

Managing the Household

A woman who manages the household should be thrifty and diligent. If she is diligent, the household thrives; if lazy, it declines. If she is thrifty, the household becomes enriched; if extravagant, it becomes impoverished. . . . If your husband has money and rice, store and conserve them. If he has wine or foodstuffs, save and keep them for the use of guests when they come; do not take any to indulge your own desires. Great wealth is a matter of fate and fortune; a little wealth comes from persistent thrift. . . . Thus a couple may be blessed with riches and enjoy life.

Entertaining Guests

Most families have guests. You should have hot water and clean bottles, and keep the table clean and neat, ready for guests. When a guest arrives, serve him tea and then retire to the rear of the hall and await your husband's orders about the meal. . . .

Don't learn the ways of the lazy woman who doesn't attend to household matters anyway, so that when a guest arrives, the place is in a mess and she is unprepared to offer him tea right away. She is so flustered that she loses her head. If her husband asks the guest to stay for a meal, she is annoyed and loses her temper. She has chopsticks but no soup spoons, soy sauce but no vinegar. She scolds and slaps the servants around, to her husband's great chagrin and the guest's embarrassment.

[*Nü sishu*, *Nü lunyu* 2:1a-16b — TK]

EMPRESS XU: INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE INNER QUARTERS (NEIXUN)

The title of this work is suggestive of the carefully defined and limited sphere of women's allowable activity. The author, however, was no ordinary woman. She was the Empress Xu, wife of the third Ming emperor, Chengzu (or Yongle, r. 1402-1424), and daughter of the famous general Xu Da, who served under the founder of the dynasty. A redoubtable figure in her own right, she is described in the dynastic annals as a strong character, and as such was accorded a place of her own in the *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, which called her "a strong-willed and colorful person, with some of her father's spirit."²¹

At a time when Neo-Confucian teachings were giving a vital impetus to education, Empress Xu became dissatisfied with the conventional literature available for the cultivation of women and aimed to produce a guide of her own, based on the personal instruction she had received from her mother-in-law, the Empress Ma,²² wife of the dynasty's founder, Ming Taizu. In contrast to the stereotype of the arbitrary and abusive mother-in-law in China, Empress Ma was much admired by the later Empress Xu as a firm but humane and sympathetic mentor.

As a peasant woman married early to Taizu before his rise to power, the future Empress Ma was, like him, largely self-educated and eventually quite well read (not an altogether uncommon thing in traditional China, for many women did overcome the handicap imposed by a lack of formal schooling, just

21. Biography by Chou Tao-ch'ih and Ray Huang, in *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (hereafter DMB), pp. 566-569.

22. *Mingshi* 128:3784-3788; biography by Chou Tao-ch'ih, in DMB, pp. 1023-1026; and biography of Hsü Ta (Xu Da) by Edward L. Farmer, in DMB, p. 606.

as Ming Taizu himself did). Moreover, as an empress, with several daughters-in-law under her charge, she conducted regular study groups on the classics for the women of the palace.

Taizu himself, as we have seen, was well known for his despotic rule, his hot temper, his violence and cruelty, his bloody purges, and his suspiciousness and vindictiveness toward any who opposed him or whom he suspected of treason. Yet there are numerous stories about how Empress Ma remonstrated with and restrained him, saving the lives of many who were unjustly accused. Such was the case when Taizu turned against one of his foremost Neo-Confucian advisers, Song Lian (1310–1381),²³ and ordered his execution. Empress Ma defended Song and got his sentence reduced to exile. In another significant case, when Taizu complained about Empress Ma's interference in state affairs, she refused to back off, saying that just as he had responsibilities as Father of the country, so was she as its Mother entitled to be concerned about the welfare of her children. Thus she turned the family/state analogy into one that set paternal and maternal care nearly on a par, with the latter a definite counterweight to the former. Empress Ma died a natural death after many others in the emperor's service had suffered unnatural ones, and she was said to have been deeply mourned by Taizu, who did not replace her as empress (and earlier defended her strongly for not having bound feet).

Empress Ma's view of her larger social responsibilities seems to have taken deep root in the consciousness of Empress Xu and pervades virtually all of the *Instructions for the Inner Quarters*, at each successive stage of which the "inner" or restricted conception of a woman's role gives way to a more expansive one. For anyone with a sensitivity to its Neo-Confucian meanings, the *Neixun* may be recognized as far from a rehash of conventional views covering the place of women in the home. Indeed, the very structure and thematic development of the work are reminiscent of the Neo-Confucian genre of instruction to rulers and noble men as found in Zhu Xi's memorials and lectures to the emperor, his *Reflections on Things at Hand*, *Elementary Learning*, and *Commentary on the Great Learning* and Zhen Dexiu's lectures from the Classics Mat, as well as the latter's monumental *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*.

The opening portion deals with women's self-cultivation. Yet instead of leading off with a gendered presentation of the strictly defined role of the woman (and most often of the wife in the home), the previous basis established here for any such role-playing or modeling is the making of a human self and the shaping of a human life, based on the Neo-Confucian principle of the shared moral nature in all human beings: "If you do not cultivate your own moral character, then your chances of managing your own family will be slim, how much less of your bringing order into the world" (3:7a). From this, the work goes on to many specific prescriptions on how this cultivation is to be accom-

plished in the woman's case, paralleling what is set forth for men in Zhu's *Elementary Learning*. Yet the thought that a woman should undertake this with the ultimate goal of "bringing order into the world" suggests how far beyond the confines of the home goes the aspiration for this Neo-Confucian education.

Subsequent chapters cite historical examples of women who played major roles in assisting founders of dynasties and great rulers in governing well (much as Fan Ziyi's *Learning of the Emperors* credits great scholar-mentors in similar roles). The standout case is, of course, Empress Ma. With such models to emulate, it is not too much, says Empress Xu, for women to aspire even to sagehood. Contrary to a widespread view that only men could achieve this goal, Empress Xu argued that all humans, female as well as male, have the same innate Heavenly endowment of a moral nature, which represents the potential for sagehood. It is a gift not just to certain specially favored persons or just to men, but something anyone could hope to achieve through learning—echoing the assertion of Zhou Dunyi in his *Tongshu*, and prominently quoted in Zhu Xi's *Reflections on Things at Hand*, that sagehood can be learned and should be striven for by all.

Altogether, this is a thoroughly Neo-Confucian work. Taking full advantage of literary genres and concepts developed by Song Neo-Confucians and of their doctrines as synthesized by Zhu Xi, it argues the case for women's education and their participation in the *Great Learning*'s social program, which proceeds from self-cultivation to the managing of the family, the ordering of the state, and the bringing of peace to the world. This is not at all to say that, for the Empresses Ma and Xu, the way for women is the same as for men, but that women could and should play a major active role in pursuing Neo-Confucian goals and thereby achieving their own self-fulfillment in some approximation of sagehood.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this woman's "classic" illustrates for us some of the ironies and ambiguities of the Confucian social involvement in general. On the one hand, as one of the Four Books for Women, it has a claim to some of the same canonical status as Zhu Xi's Four Books, and one could take it—in the absence of any serious rivals—as probably the most authoritative statement of a Neo-Confucian education program for women. We know, too, that it had considerable currency in Korea and Japan as well. On the other hand, we recognize it as an ideal prescription that could not at all be taken as a reliable description of conduct prevailing among women. That is not the function of classics and canons; they do not imitate life so much as propose models to emulate; thus there is always a discrepancy or tension between the two.

Preface

As a child, I was well instructed by my parents, reciting such classics as the

women's work. On account of the accumulated goodness and blessings of our ancestors, I by chance was chosen to enter the imperial harem. Morning and night, I served at court. The Empress Ma instructed all the wives of her sons, especially in the area of proper decorum and ritual. I respectfully accepted and tried to carry out her orders. Every day I received instructions from her, respectfully obeyed them, not daring to transgress even one of her rules.

I have respectfully served the present [Yongle] Emperor for thirty-some years. In doing so, I have tried to carry out completely my predecessor's [Empress Ma's] wishes by putting into practice her teachings on governance of the inner palace. . . .

I often read accounts in the histories, searching for virtuous wives and chaste women of the past. Although they are all praised for the greatness of their [innate] moral nature, still none among them has succeeded without having had some instruction. With the ancients, education had to have some method to it. [According to the *Record of Rites*,] boys at the age of eight entered elementary school and girls at ten received instruction from a governess. But no textbooks for elementary learning were passed down until Zhu Xi compiled and edited a text for this level [the *Elementary Learning*]. It is only in the area of elementary education for girls that there still remains no comprehensive text. . . .

There has been a recent increase in publications of female instructions but . . . better than any of these are the words of our illustrious Empress Ma's instructions, which stand above anything written before and which are well worth being passed down to future generations. I listened to them avidly and stored them in my heart. . . .

For a person to master sagehood, nothing is more crucial than nourishing one's moral nature so that one is able to cultivate one's self. Therefore I begin the text with "The Moral Nature" followed by "Cultivation of the Self." . . .

The Moral Nature

Being upright and modest, reserved and quiet, correct and dignified, sincere and honest: these constitute the moral nature of a woman. Being filial and respectful, humane and perspicacious, loving and warm, meek and gentle: these represent the complete development of the moral nature. The moral nature being innate in our endowment, it becomes transformed and fulfilled through practice. It is not something that comes from the outside but is actually rooted in our very selves.

Of old, upright women ordered their feelings and nature based on moral principle (*li*), kept control over the workings of their mind, and honored the Way and its virtue. Therefore they were able to complement their gentlemen [husbands] in fulfilling the teachings of the Way. This is the reason they took *humaneness* to be their abode. rightness as their path of action, wisdom as their

guide, trustworthiness as their defense, and ritual decorum as the embodiment of it. . . .

The accumulation of small faults will mount up to great harm to one's virtue. Therefore a great house will topple over if the foundation is not solid. One's moral nature will have deficiencies if the self is not restrained.

Beautiful jade with no flaws can be made into a precious jewel. An upright woman of pure character can be made the wife of a great family. If you constantly examine your actions to see if they are correct, you can be a model mother. If you are hardworking and frugal without a trace of jealousy, you are fit to be an exemplar for the women's quarters. . . .

Cultivation of the Self

. . . In the Way of the ancients, if the eye looks at evil sights, then one becomes confused inside; if the ear listens to lewd music, one disturbs one's innate virtue; if the mouth utters boastful talk, arrogance takes over the mind. These are all dangers to the self. Therefore, the wife, while at rest, will certainly be correct so as to guard against harm; and when active in household affairs, will show no partialities so that she can fulfill her moral character.

. . . Now if the self is not cultivated, then virtue will not be established. If one's virtue is not established, rarely can one be an influence for good in the family—how much less in the wider world. Therefore the wife is one who follows her husband. The way of husband and wife is the principle of the strong and the weak. In the past, the reason why enlightened monarchs were careful about establishing marriage was that they valued the way of procreation and perpetuation. The prosperity or decline of the family, the rise and fall of the state are intimately linked to this. . . .

Diligence and Hard Work

Laziness and licentiousness are disasters to the self, while diligence and hard work without any letup are morally beneficial to the self. Therefore, farmers labor hard at their crops, scholars at their studies, and women at their work . . .

The *Classic of Odes* says, "A woman shall have nothing to do with public affairs [yet] she discards her silkworms and weaving [for this]."²⁴ This is a defect that comes from laziness. For persons in low and mean positions, it is easy not to be lazy; it is persons of wealth, in high positions, who find it hard not to be lazy. You must exert yourself with respect to this difficulty. Do not be remiss in your ease.

²⁴ Ode 264, reading *she* (to discard) for *xiu* (to abide).

Frugality

... The *Zuozhuan* says, "Frugality is the precious jewel of the sage." It also says, "Frugality is the fullness of virtue. Extravagance is the greatest of evils."²⁵ Each strand of silk comes from the labor of some working woman; each grain of rice comes from the hard work of a farmer. The efforts that went into the final product were not made easily. To use these without some sense of limits is to do violence to what comes from Heaven — there is no greater fault. ... Now those above lead those below, the inner [quarters of the palace are] a gauge for the outer [world of other women]. Therefore, the empress must value frugality in order to lead the rest of the palace women. The wives of princes all the way down to those of scholars and commoners must honor the value of frugality in running their households. If this happens, then not one person will go cold or starve to death; rites and rightness will flourish; and the change [for the good] in people's behavior will merit being recorded [for posterity].

Returning to the Good

Now the [principal] faults of women are none other than laziness, jealousy, and licentiousness. Laziness leads to arrogance and then filial respect vanishes. Jealousy leads to harsh treatment of others, whereupon cruelty and avarice take over. Licentiousness leads to self-indulgence and then one's chastity is ruined. These three are all impediments to one's virtue and injurious to the self. Even if you have only one of these, you should get rid of it as you would a grub and distance yourself from it as you would from hornets and wasps. If hornets and wasps are not kept at a distance, they will sting you; if grubs are not gotten rid of, they will eat your grain. If you don't correct your faults, they will compromise your virtue.

Looking Up to Virtuous Exemplars [of the Past]

Those who aspire to be sages flourish; those who walk in evil ways perish. ... If, in taking the ancients as models and trying to emulate them, you equal them, then you can be a sage. Short of this, you can be a worthy; and if you are not this [successful], you still will not have failed to follow what is good.

Pearls and jade are not what is precious [to a woman]; to emulate sageliness is. If your moral character is without any deficiency, you can order well your household. The Ode says, "The high mountain is to be looked up to. The great road is easy to be traveled on."²⁶ This is what I mean.

[*Nü sishu*, *Neixun* 3:1a-19b — TK]

ZHU XI: FUNERARY INSCRIPTION FOR MADAM YOU, LADY OF JIA'NAN

At first glance it appears that Song philosophers were interested only in men. Their most famous writings address issues of education and personal cultivation in the lives of men. Systematic treatment of women is missing from their philosophical treatises. Nevertheless, the Neo-Confucian agenda for social living reached to all aspects of society and thus included clear ideas about the role of women. These ideas are best understood by looking at the one genre of writing in which Zhu Xi and others addressed women exclusively. This genre is "funerary inscriptions" or "tomb inscriptions" (*muzhiming*) for women.

Funerary inscriptions are short biographies of a man or woman written after a person's death that describe in praiseworthy terms events and achievements in the person's life. They consist of two parts: the first is an introductory essay that contains most of the biographical information; the second is a short poem summing up the main points, usually in flowery or archaic language. Whether or not the inscription was visible for later ages outside the tomb, the text of it was preserved by the family and included in the collected works of the man who had written it (as far as we know, all the authors were men). If the author's works were published, these short biographical essays might be widely read by contemporaries and later readers.

During the Song, wealthy families sought to have famous men of letters or high officials write inscriptions for their deceased, hoping thereby to gain prestige and fame for them and their descendants. Such families might pay large sums of money for a prominent statesman to attach his name to such an inscription. Neo-Confucians, however, were especially opposed to accepting recompense for writing inscriptions and to writing inscriptions for people unknown to the author, people whose virtue in life could not be adequately verified. They argued that funerary inscriptions should celebrate only the lives of the worthy, and should portray a model of virtue to be followed by people in later generations, and should portray an accurate picture of the person's life.

Funerary inscriptions, when written for women, were usually for the principal wife in a household. Zhu Xi wrote seventeen inscriptions for women; from these we get a detailed picture of his ideas about feminine virtue. Foremost among these is a woman's duty to serve her father-in-law and mother-in-law. Filiality was a cardinal virtue for both men and women, but a woman had to transfer her filial devotion from her natal parents to her husband's parents. Service to in-laws entailed taking over all the household chores, to relieve any burden on the older woman, and caring for the couple in sickness and in health. Rituals within the family were strongly promoted by Zhu Xi, and a principal wife had an important role in them.

Closely related to serving her in-laws was a woman's duty to be subservient to her husband. We can conclude from Zhu Xi's inscriptions that he expected women to take on significant responsibilities within the household, but always

25. *Zuozhuan*, Duke Zhuang 24; Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, 5:107.

26. Ode 218.

within the framework of subordination to the men in the family. While praising women for good judgment and a general understanding of Confucian values, he did not believe them to be capable of higher learning and speculative thought, both of which were so important to men.

Since women were to confine themselves to the home, that became their sphere of activity and they were responsible for the smooth working of the household. If a woman became the wife of the eldest son or head of the household, she might become the manager of a large family enterprise. Such a woman might find herself with significant responsibilities for keeping the family budget balanced.

Responsibility for the financial management of the household went beyond personal frugality, which was a virtue urged in nearly all inscriptions for women and helps to explain the Neo-Confucian emphasis on widow chastity. When her husband died, a woman's duties as household manager increased. She was needed more than ever to hold the family together and preserve its economic viability while she nurtured the sons to manhood. Remarriage of widows was common in the Song, but it violated Zhu Xi's ideal of how a family should operate.

Finally, motherhood and childhood education were celebrated and promoted by Zhu Xi and other Neo-Confucians. A woman's education of her children began even while they were in the womb with chanting of the classics and *sūtras* and vigilance over emotion. When the children were small, the mother taught them moral values, polite behavior appropriate to each sex, and in many cases elementary reading and writing (an indication that many women were at least partially literate). As they grew older, she was to find teachers for the boys and supervise their further education. When sons achieved success in the outside world, the mother received full credit. In fact, inscriptions for women often end with lists of children and details of the success of the sons. In the final analysis, the consummation of a woman's virtue was in the visible results it produced in her sons.

This epitaph was written by Zhu Xi for a woman he had not known personally, at the request of a family, one of whose members had studied with the Cheng brothers. The qualities that he extols fit with those honored in the previous readings, especially Ban Zhao's *Admonitions*, twice referred to herein. The important role of women as bearers of culture is evident. After rendering an account of her family, Zhu proceeds as follows:

Madam You was by nature quiet and modest. A cousin of her father, Madam Ruan, on account of her womanly virtue, was a teacher of girls. When Madam You was young, she studied with her. She was taught the *Admonitions for Women* of Ban Zhao, and she mastered the ethical principles therein. When it came to the arts of needlework and writing, she quickly surpassed others in ability

her dearly and married her to the honorable Mr. Huang. In serving her father-in-law and mother-in-law and performing the family sacrifices, she was diligent and reverent and never remiss. Her father-in-law liked having guests. On festivals and holidays, relatives and old friends filled the house. Madam You served them with great care and never relaxed for a minute lest she cause her sisters-in-law to toil in her place. Her mother-in-law was by nature strict. Her sons' wives waited on her by her side, and in twenty years she never gave them leave to be seated. Madam You alone was able to fulfill all her wishes. She presented the washbasin and comb, kept her [mother-in-law] warm in winter and cool in summer, all according to the rules of propriety.²⁷ When her mother-in-law was sick, she would only take medicine offered by Madam You. When Madam You performed a task, her mother-in-law would point to her as a model for the others.

At the time of her father-in-law's passing, Madam You's husband was poor. The elder and younger brothers looked at each other and planned to sell some land to pay for the funeral. Madam You told them, "Do not destroy the patrimony of your ancestors!" She then withdrew and sold her own private possessions to meet [the expenses of] the occasion. Because of this, Mr. Huang was able to take care of [the funeral] without troubling the rest of the family.

Mr. Huang was honest and guileless, grave and reverent as a person. Madam You assisted him with obedience and firmness. They respected each other like guests and conferred together on all matters. Madam You treated her relations on both sides of the family with humble respect and decorum. She liked to speak of their good points and did not take pleasure in hearing about their faults. When relatives fell into poverty, she would help them out to the best of her ability. Each day she recited the *Admonitions for Women* and other classical texts to admonish herself. She was also a believer in Buddhism. While pregnant, she sat properly in a quiet chamber, burning incense and reading Confucian and Buddhist texts. She did not utter hasty words or give angry looks, saying, "This is how the ancients instructed the child in the womb." Her children were thus born virtuous and talented. [After they were born] her instruction was also excellent. When they were barely able to speak, she took them on her lap and taught them the *Classic of Odes* and the *Classic of Documents*. As they got older, she invited in teachers and selected friends for them. She reiterated their lessons and encouraged them fully. Madam You's cousin [Mr. You Zuo, 1053-1123], the Censor, studied with the Cheng brothers of Henan. His good deeds and honest virtue were admired by other scholars. Madam You often said to her sons, "Look at your uncle. If you follow his example you can become fine gentlemen."

In the year *renzi* of the Shaoxing period (1132), on the twenty-third day of the fourth month, Madam You died of an illness. As she lay on her deathbed,

27. "Summary of the Rules of Propriety" ("Quli"), *Record of Rites A2*; Legge, *Li Ki*, 1:67.

her husband looked at her and wept. Madam You said, "Life and death, meeting and parting [follow each other] like day and night. Why are you so distressed?" She was fifty-six years old at that time.

There follows an account of her two sons, whose successes in the jinshi examinations and at court were attributed to her teaching. Zhu concludes with the following encomium:

The Yous of Changping
 For generations had virtuous members
 Though the world did not know them
 The locality gained from their humanity.²⁸
 As for how literati women ought to be,
 Here was a paragon of the inner quarters.
 She matched [her husband's] virtue and gave birth to worthy children,
 So that blessings and rewards were many.²⁹
 As court ministers and provincial prefects,
 [Her sons] were virtuous and talented.
 They were enfeoffed with districts,
 And the state thus prospered.
 By illustrious order I write
 To illumine this tomb.
 The stone is cut, the words are carved,
 To bequeath the standard to later generations.

[Zhu Xi, *Wenji* (SBCK) 9:13b-13a — BB]

²⁸ *Analekts* 41.

²⁹ *Classic of Changes*, hexagram 2, *kun*.

Chapter 24

SELF AND SOCIETY IN THE MING

With Zhu Xi's curriculum established in most Ming schools and academies (albeit in much-abridged form), as well as in the civil service examination system, it is understandable why the editors of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries should later have observed that the intellectual and moral formation of educated persons in the Ming was all based on Zhu Xi's version of the Four Books and also why scholarship in the Ming mostly developed along lines already set by Zhu Xi. Much of it was cast in the language, concepts, and structure of the *Great Learning* and Zhu's Commentary: it remained largely within the terms of Zhu Xi's discourse.

Although the pattern of schooling and examination was well established, this by no means prevented the further development of thought by individual teachers and scholars, some of whom maintained their independence of the state by refusing to serve in office, either out of dissatisfaction with the routinized learning of the examination system or out of unwillingness to be associated with the despotic actions of Ming rulers like Taizu and Chengzu. Thus, for all the limiting effects of Ming autocracy and bureaucracy, and contrary to the dominant early twentieth-century Western view (much influenced by Hegel and Marx) that late imperial China was stagnant and wholly unprogressive, there was actually much new intellectual and cultural activity in the Ming, stimulated by economic growth, social change, and the spread of education and literacy, encouraged by both Zhu Xi's works and the populist views of Ming Taizu, who,