SU SHI: COPING WITH THE FINAL EXILE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

December 2020

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a systematic examination of prose writings by Su Shi (1037-1101). Chinese history treats Su Shi as one of the Eight Great Prose Masters of Tang and Song. Su’s lifetime total of more than 4,800 prose texts is the largest number written among Northern Song (960-1127) literati. Although documentation on Su Shi is more substantial than for any other Northern Song literatus, this study fills a lacuna in Su’s final fourteen months of prose.

This study contributes to the broader body of scholarship by focusing solely on Su Shi’s prose writings after his final exile on Hainan Island (1097-1100). I examined all prose writings by Su Shi after his notification of amnesty. My goal is to seek insights into Su’s final period of prose composition, and how Su Shi expresses his views within these texts on themes that include spiritual transcendence, religious concepts, and a search for ultimate life values.

The 2010 verified dating of Su Shi’s literary production accounts for 248 prose writings after his Hainan exile. In this dissertation, twenty-four carefully selected texts from those writings are translated and analyzed as the best representing this period. Close reading of these chronologically ordered texts is supported by detailed explicating of annotations and historical circumstances surrounding each prose specimen. We obtain insights demonstrating evolving nuances in Su’s psychological, philosophical, and religious thoughts following his last exile.

This dissertation epitomizes Su Shi’s coping with challenges to his life’s previously-known identity. After his Hainan exile, Su’s prose writings document him confronting three prominent themes: an unanticipated retirement suddenly erasing his political value as a scholar-official, troubling truths for spiritually transcending death, and Su’s final identifications with the Three Teachings Sanjiao 三教 of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism for unity with the Way.
DEDICATION

To Liya 礼雅 and Lisong 礼颂,

live a bright and shining life.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is remarkable to complete the dissertation in this arduous year of 2020. While the post-pandemic transformation of the academic environment may be unpredictable, the rich years of interactions I had pre-pandemic with my committee members are truly a blessing.

I thank you, Sima Laoshi. As my dissertation Chairperson, you guided me through every step of the process with your expertise. I am still awestruck by the depth of your teaching.

I thank you, Professor Ames. I have been overwhelmed by your magnanimous sharing of the utmost wisdoms in this world, often with prodigious scholars of philosophy from across the planet, and whether it has been on the Manoa campus, in Beijing, Qufu, or Hawaii Kai.

I thank you, Professor Davis. The brilliant mind of yours has always taught us graduate students to consider more ways of thinking outside of the box. It was great fortune that I met you in your history seminar class during my very first semester at UHM.

My deep respect and appreciation also go to the other two meticulous scholars on my committee, our former EALL Chair, Professor Huey, and Professor Peng. Both of you always enlighten me with a wide breadth of astute insights into research and scholarship. A thank you also to our Graduate Chair, Professor Fukuda, and Cherry Lacsina for keeping the progress of my work on track during the academic library closures and other challenges in these times.

Special appreciation goes to Professor Dominic Cheung at USC. Thank you, Laoshi, for opening this world to me while nurturing us graduate students under your wing. My deepest gratitude is to this rare human being, Tsuyoshi Chitose, who has guided me on my path and shared with me extraordinary knowledge, which led my study up to this day.

先生、いつもお世話になっております.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................................................... ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................................................................... v

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................................................................. vi

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................................................................. vii

INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW OF POST-HAINAN PROSE ............................................................................................................ 22

CHAPTER 2. TRANSLATIONS OF SELECTED PROSE WORKS AFTER EXILE ................................................................. 33
  2.1 Three Letters to the Emperor ........................................................................................................................................... 33
    2.1.1 First of Three Memorial Letters - Fifth Lunar Month of 1100 .............................................................................. 39
      2.1.1.1 Su’s Controversial Inscription Concurrent to the First Memorial Letter ...................................................... 48
      2.1.1.2 A Sole Lun Treatise in Su’s Final Year after Amnesty .................................................................................. 60
    2.1.2 Second of Three Letters, the Eighth Lunar Month of 1100 ................................................................................ 66
      2.1.2.1 Coping with the Sudden Death of Qin Guan ............................................................................................... 79
    2.1.3 Third of Three Letters, the Eleventh Lunar Month of 1100 ............................................................................... 83
      2.1.3.1 Coping with the Sudden Status of Retirement ........................................................................................... 89
  2.2 A Daoist Trying to Dress in a Buddhist Robe .................................................................................................................. 94
    2.2.1 New Year’s Day, 1101: Prose in Transition from the External to the Internal ...................................................... 97
    2.2.2 Beginning Retirement with an Updating of Philosophical Views ........................................................................ 110
    2.2.3 Buddhism by way of Daoism .................................................................................................................................. 125
    2.2.4 A Consolidation of Final Philosophical Beliefs .................................................................................................... 130

CHAPTER 3. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS ............................................................................................................................ 152
  3.1 Four Themes in Su’s Prose after Final Exile ................................................................................................................ 154
  3.2 Varied Roles of Death in these Four Periods after Final Exile ................................................................................. 162
  3.3 Semantic Interpretations from Specific Textual Connotations .................................................................................... 164

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .................................................................................. 168

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................................................................................... 172
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Classifications of the 248 post-exile prose writings by Su Shi........................... 23
Table 2. The post-exile works written by Su Shi in formal classical literary prose ............ 24
Table 3. The months containing narrative-type post-exile prose writings by Su Shi....... 26
Table 4. Quantifying the transition in types of allusions of Su’s second memorial ........... 78
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Map of China depicting the time of Su Shi ................................................................. 38

Figure 2. Portrait of Su Shi by Li Longmian ................................................................. 141
INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Dissertation

The middle period of Northern Song (960-1127) was an unmatched era of renaissance in China. Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) argued that regarding the Northern Song, “neither the earlier two extraordinary dynasties of Han 漢 (206 BC – 220 AD) or Tang 唐 (618 – 907), nor the following dynamic dynasties of Yuan 元 (1279 – 1368) or Ming 明 (1368 – 1644), equaled the Northern Song in terms of intellectual and literary development.”

Chen Yinque 陳寅恪 (1890-1969) further demarcated the Song period as the peak of literary prosperity in China. The Song dynasty was also the era of literary giants, and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) was the giant among giants, whose contribution to Chinese culture was unmatched by anyone during his time. Since the Southern Song (1127-1279), scholars specifically extolled Su Shi’s prose as the illustrious model for the civil service examinations. According to Lu You 陸遊 (1125-1209), a common saying for exam candidates in Southern Song held, “Those familiar with Su’s prose, will enjoy eating lamb meat; those unfamiliar with Su’s prose, will be relegated to eating overboiled broth”

2 Since early 20th century, Chen Yinque 陳寅恪 is also spelled as Chen Yinke, and elsewhere as Tschen Yin Koh.
3 Chen Yinque 陳寅恪, "Songshi zhiguan zhi kaozheng" 宋史職官志考證, in Jinming guanconggao erbian 金明館叢稿二編 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 245-249.
5 Lu You 陸遊, Laoxuean biji 老學庵筆記, vol. 5 (Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 78.
This dissertation traces the prose writings of Su Shi written after he received the imperial notification of amnesty from his final Hainan Island exile (1097-1100). Su produced a total of 248 prose writings in his remaining fourteen months of life after Hainan. In his prose writings of this period, Su’s thoughts cluster around specific leitmotifs. Su’s prose writings stay close to a few central themes in this post-exile period, though several sub-themes also develop over shorter time frames before his death came in the summer of the following year of 1101.

For this dissertation, twenty-four prose texts are chronologically ordered and translated that best represent Su Shi’s total number of post-exile prose writings. These texts capture the continuity of the identified consistent themes, and reveal the details of Su coping with several challenges after receiving his imperial pardon. I present an orderly access to the content of Su’s texts. This access is through a methodology that identified categories in Su Shi’s post-exile prose writings. I employed a methodology integrating chronological dating, close reading, and elucidation of the recently appended allusions that display themes in Su’s prose content falling into consecutive groups.

_In toto_, this group of writings bears resemblance to a literary narrative of biographical prose telling the story of Su Shi’s coping with his life after the final exile. These post-exile prose writings follow Su’s chronicled aspects of his life as if it was a purposely constructed literary-narrative. The sequence of these translated works displays visible elements of Su’s character development, historical background setting, nascent challenges, and writings leading up to his final days of life. These carefully chosen selections well-represent Su’s post-exile prose writings, and form the basis of this study.
Su’s prose texts range across a variety of literary prose genres in this period, yet often follow a style described by Stephen Owen as, “sometimes polemically and sometimes not (...) systematic expositions of some question or position taken by the author.”\textsuperscript{6} Su often uses polemic as a rhetorical device when delivering provocative stances. Regarding Su’s literary strategies, I also describe original references where Su uses obscure allegorical allusions to express his positions.\textsuperscript{7} Contrasting with the category of poetry, Su expresses views more directly, with an unencumbered sense of freedom in this prose category of literature.

Consequently, consistent themes emerge in Su’s topics that transverse separate prose genres. His prose content, during this period of life, substantiates these themes through Su’s recurring reinforcement of topics. I employ a detailed numerical analysis for determining prose texts with the highest quantities of correspondingly annotated allusions across all of Su’s prose genres.

The period of this study is approximately over the fourteen months from the fifth lunar month of 1100\textsuperscript{8}, until Su’s death on the 28th day of the seventh lunar month (August 24) of 1101. Su’s numerical production of 248 post-exile prose texts provides a sound basis for informing this analysis of content for discovering a variety of Su’s perspectives as he entered his post-Hainan life.

\textsuperscript{7} For example, Su Shi resorts to allusions from rare classical texts.
\textsuperscript{8} The fifth lunar month of the year 1100, equates to the western calendar dates of June 10 through July 8, 1100.
Methodology and Theoretical Assumptions

The general historical categories of Su’s life fit into identifiable periods mostly defined by political events. Hatch noted: “It is conventional among Japanese scholars, the Kyoto school momentarily preeminent in the interpretation of Su Shih’s thought and literature, to organize the data of his life into three general periods: the decades of youth from 1047-1071, following his early political career to his first demotion under Wang An-shih’s reform regime; an intense period of literary and spiritual maturation from 1071-1085, culminating in the years of banishment in Huang-chou; and the incredible vicissitudes of his later political life from 1085-1101, during which he sustained himself by an unusual depth and elasticity of character.”

This dissertation presents a very accurate dating of Su’s post-exile prose. I use the 2010, newly published edition of Su Shi’s collected works, Su Shi quanji jiaozhu, 蘇軾全集校注. This meticulously annotated version of Su’s writings is especially helpful in identifying and explaining subtle and elusive historical allusions. This study incorporates a methodology beginning with collecting quantitative measures of the types of content in Su’s final fourteen months of prose writings. The frequency indicates repeated literary themes and recurring types of complex allusions in his post-exile prose texts. Consequently, Su’s takes positions in these works that appear as numerically measurable patterns.

After chronologically tabulating all of Su’s post-Hainan prose works, I identified twenty-four prose texts that characterize nearly every consecutive month of his prose writings. These

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10 Su Shi 蘇軾, Su Shi quanji jiaozhu 蘇軾全集校注, ed. Zhang Zhili 張志烈 et al. (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 2010; hereafter SSQJ).
representative examples contain the most numerous and diverse annotations of Su’s intertextual, allegorical, and metaphorical allusions. The methodology of this study sheds new light on the topics of Su’s prose, and his predominant choices of philosophical and historical allusions.

For this problem, I present these twenty-four selected texts in their sequential order. These selections are focused examples that well represent Su’s post-exile prose literature. Most conspicuously, these transcripts display in Su’s own words his life’s final identifications with the “Three Teachings” of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. In these examples, we find new themes emerging, and recurring themes transitioning after specific events in months and periods of his post-exile life.

For example, quantifiable tabulations show that after Su’s notification of amnesty, he averaged fewer than six prose texts per month in the immediately following four months. However, it was only in those four months that Su believed he was returning to the scholar-official world. Consequently, and only during that time frame, we find Su’s writings comprise allusions that are principally associated with Confucian ideology.

A month after this period of Confucian themed writings, a messenger delivered the disheartening news to Su Shi about the startling death of his colleague and dear friend Qin Guan 秦觀 (1049-1100). Consistent with that historical event, my tabulations indicate that Su’s writings suddenly increase over the following month to forty-two prose texts with predominantly Buddhist themes and allusions.

The numerical quantities of recurring themes show similar transitions in Su’s final seven months of life. One prominent leitmotif emerged after the imperial notification suddenly designating Su into an unanticipated category of retirement. After removal from official duties,
the content of Su’s prose works shows his emphasis on the greater context on the meaning of his life. Subsequently, Su’s writings in the last seven months of his life consistently offer the richest trove of philosophical allusions in his post-exile prose texts.

The directive designating Su Shi into a type of retirement allowed him to hold only a perfunctory title, and thus relegated his future to one becoming external to scholar-official matters of state. After Su’s removal from his previous identity with scholar-official duties, Su began to produce, on average, more than twenty prose texts per month for his remaining days. The numerical incidences of specific philosophical allusions in Su’s last seven months of prose pieces, statistically substantiate Su’s philosophical preferences within his value system. In contrast to earlier periods, the final six months of writings leading up to Su’s death contain intertextual references that are the most noticeably philosophical, and in that regard, defer most conspicuously to Daoist masterpieces.

This study examines Su’s allusions in these writings by the following procedures. First, these are prose texts with recently confirmed accuracy in dating to Su’s last year of life. I counted the number of prose texts that Su wrote for each month, as well as the number and types of the historical and/or philosophical annotated allusions in each work.

My analysis identified the predominant focus in Su’s prose writings through verified allusions. These allusions most often quote one or more of the three teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. The definition of a verified allusion in this study indicates that scholars determined it is a direct or near-direct quote from classical texts.

What I have not searched for in this study are any examples of implied philosophies. Writings that demonstrate just implications of philosophies, but are not direct references, are
neither argued nor included. Although credible subjective interpretations may well align with one of the three teachings, this study does not attempt to develop implied interpretations. Only references that are purely supported by annotated evidence are in this study.

After categorizing annotated allusions from the three teachings, I also investigated recurring themes. Background context helps for aligning any leitmotifs of these texts. I position Su’s prose writings in the chronological and contextual settings of his ongoing life-events.

In Su’s 248 prose writings, one text is sometimes considered a part of a series. These are categorized individually, as can be seen in the example of Su’s exaltation (song 頌) tributes for the eighteen arhats. Though connected by unified themes, these connected texts count as eighteen separate writings. Although closely related texts fall mostly within the same time frame that Su wrote them, occasionally there is a sequence of writings from incongruent periods that are labeled as a group by the collection editors.

This process of locating all genres of Su’s prose in the period after the exile necessitated creating an enormous spreadsheet to catalog aspects of these texts. My approach naturally developed into using visible quantitative measurements, and especially after sorting the numbers and types of Su’s allusions. These quantities show verifiable progressions of themes in Su’s prose. In the most prominent example, I discover a theme illuminating Su’s evolving expression on the three teachings. The frequency of Su’s chosen allusions displays his expressions moving away from topics buttressed by Confucianism into his later progression of comparisons concerning philosophical ideals of Buddhism and Daoism. Su’s references are then quantifiable as supporting evidence.
Previous Scholarship and Brief Summary of Su Shi Studies

Research on Su Shi has been quite substantial, and particularly in the past four decades. In the following brief summary, I trace contributions by scholars since the time of Su’s death up to the present. Su Shi studies have often categorized stages of Su’s non-literary life into historical periods, in addition to focused analyses of Su’s aesthetic life achievements in literature and arts. This study augments previous research hampered by difficulties in chronologically verifiable dating or by the lack of annotations in prose writings from Su’s life after his final exile.

Though Su was pardoned in 1100, and his death was in 1101, Su Shi (posthumously) again fell from political favor only four years later (1105), which resulted in an imperial ban on his writings. Despite that time of proscription, Su’s (banned) prose was still widely viewed among rising scholar-official candidates, as the exemplary model for the civil service exam essays, and thus made collections of his prose quite valuable.

In 1191, Lang Ye 郎曄 (fl. 1132-1187) selected and annotated prose by Su Shi in the Jingjin Dongpo wenji shilue 經進東坡文集事略. Lang’s was the more extensive and detailed of the only two primary collections of Su Shi’s prose during Southern Song. In his compilation, Lang selected and annotated 498 prose writings of Su Shi’s. Today, this collection has only a few incomplete copies in existence and is quite respected for its quality in annotations.

Su’s prose was differentiated in the early years of the Ming Dynasty, by the scholar, Zhu You 朱右 (1314-1376). At that time, Zhu grouped Su Shi as one of the eight most outstanding

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\] The other collection during Southern Song was the San Su xiansheng wencui 三蘇先生文粹.
prose writers from the Tang and Song Dynasties. Two centuries later, the circulation of this prose in a collection by Mao Kun 茅坤 (1512-1601) congealed the appellation of the “Eight Great Prose Masters of Tang and Song” (Tang Song Ba Da Jia 唐宋八大家). The eight great prose masters included Su Shi, his father Su Xun 蘇洵 (1009-1066) and brother Su Zhe 蘇轍 (1039-1112), [referred to as ‘the three Su’s’], Ouyang Xiu 歐陽脩 (1007-1072), Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), and Zeng Gong 曾鞏 (1019-1083) from the Song Dynasty. Included from the Tang Dynasty were Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819).

During the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), the 1822 extensive compilation Su Wezhong Gong shi bianzhu jicheng 蘇文忠公詩編注集成 was published by the scholar Wang Wengao 王文誥 (1764-?). Wang completed this edition with over thirty years of effort. His contribution provided critical assistance and a valuable basis for many twentieth-century scholars in Su Shi studies.

The 1986 six-volume collection of Su’s prose Su Shi wenji 蘇軾文集, collated and punctuated by Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (1923-2010), has been the preeminent collection used by modern scholars in Su Shi studies. Kong’s compilation was the most comprehensive up to that date. A significant contribution was in its compiling of scattered writings. It gathered more than 400 missing Su Shi prose texts in an appendix. However, Kong’s extensive edition is lacking in the annotation of Su’s prose works.13

12 Su Shi wenji 蘇軾文集, ed. Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986).
13 Zhou, preface to Su Shi quanji jiaozhu 蘇軾全集校注, 62–63.
Notable Japanese scholars have contributed essential works in Su Shi studies. The highly accredited 1967 work by Chikusa Masaaki 竹沙雅章 (1930-2015) on Su Shi is titled with its Japanese pronunciation (So Toba 蘇東坡).\textsuperscript{14} His wide-ranging works and research at Kyoto University also contribute much to the understanding of Song Dynasty Buddhism.\textsuperscript{15} The acclaimed Japanese scholar, Yoshikawa Kojiro 吉川幸次郎 (1904-1980) has also published widely in this area of Su Shi literature.

Scholarship in Su Shi studies written in the English language expanded significantly after the Lin biography, \textit{The Gay Genius} (1947)\textsuperscript{16}. Lin gives the first comprehensive account in the English language of Su Shi’s life and literature. Lin’s translation style in this work made the historical evidence quite accessible to the non-specialized reader through an emotionally warm recount of Su’s life. Biographical insights by Hatch in \textit{Sung Biographies} (1976)\textsuperscript{17} are also highly valued scholarship in English. Hatch demarcates intellectual and literary history in the times of Su Shi. Hatch well understands the relationship of Su Shi with the Northern Song rise of Neo-Confucianism. He describes Su Shi as “terribly victimized by partisans of the late reform regimes. One tries to get over the late period in Su Shi’s life as quickly as possible. The personality and literature peaked at Huangzhou; he was not afterward ‘becoming’ anything else.”\textsuperscript{18} However, as I will demonstrate in my dissertation, this is not so.

\textsuperscript{14} Su Dongpo is the popular style name still in use for Su Shi, and its Japanese pronunciation is \textit{So Toba} 蘇東坡.
\textsuperscript{15} See also the Masaaki 1982 work titled, \textit{Chūgoku bukkyō shakaishi kenkyū} 中國佛教社會史研究 (Studies in the Social History of Chinese Buddhism), and his 1987 journal article, “Sō Gen bukkyō ni okeru andō” 宋元佛教における庵堂 (Antang in the Buddhism of the Song and Yuan Dynasties).
\textsuperscript{17} Hatch, “Su Shih 蘇軾,” in \textit{Sung Biographies}, 1976.
\textsuperscript{18} Hatch, 953.
Egan’s 1994 monograph has contributed the broadest and the most multifaceted categories of modern approach for looking at Su Shi’s literary life.\(^1^9\) Egan closely traces the literary significance throughout the many separate periods of Su’s life. Egan acknowledges that “in recent years [the 1980s] a prodigious amount of scholarship has appeared on Su Shi.”\(^2^0\) To date, Egan’s survey is comprehensive in the treatment of Su’s life with distinct usefulness to its literary entirety. As recent as 2010, Egan professed: “The relatively underdeveloped condition of Song literary history must be mentioned here. Compared to earlier periods, … Song literary history is not well mapped or thoroughly understood.” Regarding surviving Song texts, “the literary history … will require decades of work by future generations of scholars to refine our understanding.”\(^2^1\) For such mapping, this dissertation contributes to contextualizing a period of literary history after Su’s final exile by chronologically employing representative prose writings in nearly a month by month sequence.

Fuller\(^2^2\) brings an analysis that bridges Su’s earlier periods of poetry with Song literati philosophical concepts of the time. Fuller explains the development of Su’s poetic expression that arose in harmony with historical events of Su’s earlier and middle periods of life. Bol\(^2^3\) provides a backdrop of historical understanding that helps to represent the deeper importance of culture in the Song Dynasty society, literature, and thought. Bol’s comprehensive work is among

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\(^2^0\) Egan, xv–xvi. See a detailed account within Egan’s preface that lists collections that have notably raised the levels of scholarship on Su Shi.


the best, if not the best, in explaining the Su Shi’s relationship with the rise of Northern Song Daoxue 道學. Bol brings to light multiple historical explanations for the Northern Song value system that was linked tightly to the idea of literary culture wen 文. Yet, some scholars submit that Bol does not satisfactorily address the substantially documented impact of Buddhism on Northern Song Neo-Confucian thought.

Grant, however, is recognized as substantially filling that void. Within her narrower focus, Grant gives an articulate summary of Northern Song Buddhism. Her work is the most comprehensive to date, explaining Su’s relationships with Buddhism. The breadth of her translations is quite impressive, so of course, areas of omissions, errors, and variances in dating have received scholars’ attention in book reviews. Qiu brings to light Japanese poets’ perceptions of Zhuangzi (369-286 BCE) Daoism in the Chinese poetic traditions of the Song, and how those views reached Japan by way of Buddhism. She explains how perceived notions of Daoist elements have become intertwined with views of Chinese culture.

Zhiyi Yang authors some of the most recent contributions relating to Su Shi. Her 2015 book Dialectics of Spontaneity unites philosophical premises through the aesthetic expression of spontaneity in Su’s writings. Regarding her understanding of spontaneity in Su’s writings, Yang at times includes views that may appear more in line with aesthetics’ ideas found in Western traditions. In a notable 2013 article, Yang also examines how Su Shi reinterpreted the

24 Beata Grant, Mount Lu Revisited: Buddhism in the Life and Writings of Su Shih (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1994).
25 Zhuang Zhou, Zhuangzi qianzhu 莊子淺注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007; hereafter ZZQZ)
meaning of “exile” when matching the works of Tao Qian 陶潛 (352-427) in Su’s famed poem-for-poem (he Tao 和陶) compilation.28

Many of the above texts developed out of scholarship initiated in their earlier dissertations. Other well-known dissertations on topics of Su Shi include those written by Cheang29 on the three periods of Su’s exile poetry. She argues Su’s writings signify his particular interpretation for embodying the Way. She provides interpretations arguing that Su’s exile poetry demonstrates indications of support for Confucian ideals. Tomlonovic30 also links Su’s poetry with his attitudes associated with his three periods of exile. In one section, through six literary pieces analyzing similar contexts of famous persons in exile, she links Su Shi to the underlying exile tropes that include Qu Yuan 屈原 (343-278 BCE) and Han Yu. Tomlonovic proposes that Su sought retirement as a new literary ideal that he voiced as a “returning home” gui 歸.

The enormous volume of materials from Su’s life, sustain development in diverse areas of interest within the life of Su Shi, and led scholars to create categories for research. These categories are dependent upon widely different constraints and include broader categories such as literary, historical, biographical, philosophical, political, and religious thought. Each of these areas invites development with further differentiation, such as evolving philosophical interpretations arising through semantic-laden themes in vocabulary.

Two examples mentioned in the works above include such semantic connotations suggesting multi-layered ideals. Fuller’s work delineates Su’s understanding of “inherent pattern” *li* 理,31 and Tomlonovic propositions a theme of *gui* “returning home.”32 In a similar observation of noticeable semantic connotations, this present study draws prominent attention to Su’s recurring self-directed use of the *Zhuangzi* antonomasia referents of a “useless person” *san ren* 散人, and later as “a person who has lost connection with the Dao” *chen ren* 陳人.

Egan recognizes the advancements resulting from reliable punctuation adopted in the 1986 six-volume collection of Su’s prose that was collated and punctuated by Kong Fanli. However, Zhou Yukai, editor for the 2010 prose collection used in my dissertation, explains that it is not clear how some of the writings were included or excluded in the Kong edition. The Kong collection also lacks differentiation and analysis of calligraphy and inscription materials, and some of the punctuation is open to questioning.33 Some inauthentic writings are also known to appear in the collection, but for understanding intertextual portions of Su’s prose, the lack of annotation is a chief concern.

My dissertation is indebted to this much-improved 2010 edition that also began in the 1980s, but was later enlarged through substantial funding to clear up the above problems. The remaining questions in primary sources for Su Shi studies involved the lack of accurate dating and apparent inconsistencies when verifying aspects of Su’s prose. As such, this new collection has fixed many mistakes and inconsistencies of previous research.

31 Fuller, *The Road to East Slope*, 80.
32 Tomlonovic discusses three aspects of the theme “returning” *gui* 歸 in Chapter 5 of her dissertation.
33 Zhou, preface, 63.
This 2010 collection is the first compilation of Su’s prose works that are both collated and annotated. These annotations and collation contributions add a new dimension to Su Shi studies. They supplement a verifiable increase of Su Shi writings that now total more than 4,800 prose text entries within this twenty-volume collection of Su Shi’s poetry and prose. Zhou articulates that the annotations of Su’s prose in this collection were mostly new and original, and only briefly consulted annotations in the ca.1191 Southern Song collection by Lang Ye.

Regarding accurate dating of Su’s writings, Zhou credits the advances that came about by Wu Xuetao 吳雪濤 in his 1990 tome, *Su wen jinian kaolue 蘇文繫年考略*. Wu dated 1,699 of Su's prose writings, which was the very first attempt of chronologically dating Su’s prose. Zhou underscores that accurately correcting dating for all 4,800 of Su Shi’s prose entries is among the goals of this 2010 edition.

The history of this 2010 compilation project began in the department of Su Shi Studies at Sichuan University in 1982, with only twelve people working on this undertaking until 1991. In 1995, the P.R.C. National Five-Year Plan (*jiu wu 九五*), allocated exclusive government funding for this massive venture. From that funding, and utilizing scholars from a consortium of other universities, the leading group of scholars from Sichuan University began completing this complex work. Their goals were to identify correctly, to date chronologically, and to authenticate longstanding problems of historical validity in writings by Su Shi.

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34 Zhou, preface, 66-69.
36 Zhou, preface, 63.
As for Su’s prose writings, Zhou also highlights the historical recognition of Su Shi as one of the “Eight Great Prose Masters of Tang and Song.” In editing this publication, Zhou emphasizes two remarkable points about Su Shi’s composition of more than 4,800 prose texts in his life. This quantity is the highest among all of the Northern Song literati, and the quality of Su Shi’s prose represents the highest achievement of the Song literary development.37

The Contribution of my Dissertation to the Field

The contributions of my dissertation derive from a focus that narrows within three limits. The first focus is identifying and looking exclusively at Su’s writings from his remaining fourteen months of life after amnesty from the Hainan exile. Previous scholarship has quite thoroughly discussed earlier periods in Su Shi’s life. I used the new accuracy in dating to chronologically arrange all of Su’s prose writings after his reprieve from the Hainan exile.38 My heavy reliance on this 2010 edition is due to the fact for improving upon most of the previous scholarship in Su Shi studies, which had been heavily dependent upon the 1986 Kong Fanli edition.

My second narrowing of focus is a concentrated examination of Su Shi’s prose writings. Previous scholarship in this post-exile period has tended toward Su’s literature in the category of poetry. This study examines Su’s more lucid form of literature in the prose category. Su’s prose writings allow us to read his more pragmatic expression, without requiring our analysis of his poetry’s more artistic caliber of rules and conventions. Su’s prose medium elucidates the distance between Su the person, with that of his poetic literary persona. As such, an additional

37 Zhou, preface, 25.
38 SSQJ.
contribution of this study is presenting Su’s prose literature. These writings demonstrate more straightforwardly Su’s thoughts and philosophical expression after his final exile.

My third focus further narrows to close reading and translation. In this dissertation, I adhere to conventional sinological analysis at this stage, without exploring subjective interpretation. I provide clarity to the abstruse and allegorical allusions Su includes in all of his more complex and most heavily annotated prose writings. These precise details about Su’s literary references and historical anecdotes bring new contributions for interpreting Su’s value system, and ideals.

The exhaustive annotations by Zhou Yukai were extremely valuable for my study, by revealing obscure allegorical content in Su Shi’s allusions. Additionally, I include known historical contexts for supporting a more in-depth interpretation of these texts. This study does not develop arguments of literary theory frameworks or interpretive insights of literary criticism. Nevertheless, this dissertation discovers many texts that invite future hermeneutic inquiry. In this regard, this study contributes to earlier recognized scholarly research by further illuminating the depths of obscure allusions in Su’s prose writings, and by providing details of the historical and philosophical references enumerated within the annotations.

**Dissertation Outline**

Su Shi’s prose writings after his final Hainan Island exile reveal narratives of how he coped with challenges after receiving his imperial pardon in early 1100. By chronologically ordering the multiple genres of Su’s prose writings, I demonstrate that his writings cluster around a few central themes.
The introduction delineates the scope of this study and describes areas that are within these boundaries. The methodology shows how this study draws on previous scholarship and adds to the growing field of work about Su Shi, through careful attention to dating and recent annotations. For categorizing themes found in these prose writings, I employ an orthodox sinological approach without arguing, at this stage, into further interpretations. This procedure allows different types of evidence to speak through Su’s own words and historical contexts. A brief overview summary lists prominent and well-recognized previous scholarship on Su Shi. Additional explanation demonstrates how improvements in the editing of verified primary sources were helpful to improve upon previous research in Su Shi studies. The three narrowed areas of focus in this dissertation specify how this study contributes to the field.

Chapter One explains details, through tables and a brief summation, concerning the various genres and types of literary style found in Su’s 248 prose works after his Hainan exile. This chapter presents an overview of broad-based information contributing to the research of Su’s prose writings. Three types of Su’s prose writings are delineated, and an explanation describes the literary strengths of each category. Three tables show the tabulated frequency of the first two more formal types of texts, along with a timeline showing the dates of their production. This chapter also displays some examples of the types of content in Su’s prose writings that were deemed as not sufficiently representative for inclusion in this dissertation.

Chapter Two of this dissertation demonstrates through a careful reading of twenty-four selected texts, the consistently encountered themes garnered from the total of 248 prose texts Su Shi wrote after notification of his amnesty. Consequently, this study adds an updated accuracy to this period of Su Shi’s writings by chronologically organizing the texts.
A synthesis of findings emerges that provides patterns and themes over this last year of Su’s life. There is a compelling interest to learn what transpired within this time frame. This period of prose indicates a conceptual framework of the hierarchically sustained philosophical values Su emphasized in his final months. These prose texts introduce Su’s contrasting endorsements toward a reorganizing of his belief system in accordance with his definition of life’s highest philosophical value systems. These writings answer questions about Su’s views on the three great philosophical teachings (sanjiao 三教) during his final year and the remaining months leading up to his end of life. We find that the themes in this period of prose writings predominantly surround topics concerning retirement, death, and transcending life by embodying the Way (Dao 道).

The first half of Chapter Two captures a biographical analysis of Su’s prose in the six months immediately following amnesty from his Hainan exile. This section follows specific examples of Su’s monthly prose production matched with his changing situation after the exile. A contextual framework for themes in this period is constructed around Su Shi’s three prose “Memorials” (biao 表) of gratitude to the emperor.39

The second half of Chapter Two exposes a noticeable change in Su’s philosophical orientation that happened in conjunction with him receiving an official form of unexpected retirement. The annotated allusions in Su’s prose writings within his remaining six and one-half months of life led me to discover a stirring and progressing transition. Su documented this

disturbing, and conceivably lamentable, disruption to his life purpose by receiving notice of this change in his scholar-official status. Su similarly lamented the loss to the empire by the death of Qin Guan.

Chapters Three and Four elaborate on the discovered themes and results of this dissertation. These chapters provide a synthesis of the findings that emerge in patterns and themes over this last year of Su’s life. One such pattern of interest displays Su’s final views on Buddhism and Daoism in his late stage of life.

Chapter Three discusses four successive themes in this post-exile period. Each theme conjoins with support from the historical context surrounding the selected prose writings. Themes include the deleterious effects of the Hainan exile, and an unanticipated order into retirement. A larger theme develops concerning Su’s views on death, which show visible variations over four distinct spans of a few months each in his last year of life. Encompassing Su’s last seven months of life, his chosen allusions during this period reflect a final central theme. His intertextual references display his most fundamental beliefs and final identifications with each of the three teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism.

Significant subthemes that emerge after Su received notification of retirement are indicated by Su’s antonomasia designations that are both excerpted from the classic Zhuangzi. The semantic emphasis of Su’s self-labeling metonymy gives the needed context for analyzing the final seven months of his prose content. These signifiers expose Su coping with a belittled identity by his self-designation as a san ren 散人, and later worsening to that of a chen ren 陳人.

Chapter Four concludes this study with observations on how Su Shi coped with disruptions to his intended intellectual designs for directing his path in life after Hainan. Su
shows the strongest relationship in his final post-exile prose writings to specific passages from *Zhuangzi*. Through these intertextual allusions, Su displays how he bridges the limitations of words, how he expresses the inexpressible, and also how he responds for coping with challenges to his subjective views. As such, some of these included prose writings beckon for further development as scholarly studies entirely on their own.

These findings provide foundations for an assortment of avenues in future research. The discoveries introduced in this study on Su Shi after his Hainan exile are made possible by the recently verified dating and annotations for developing this method of analysis. This methodology reveals underlying patterns in Su’s erudite perspectives, multifaceted literary renderings, and his preferred choices of intertextual references drawn from across the breadth of classics in Chinese literature.
CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW OF POST-HAINAN PROSE

The following is a brief summary of literary prose categories found in the 248 prose works by Su Shi after his Hainan exile. Depending on circumstances, themes, topics, and his audience, Su’s prose types locate into three separate groups. After editing the eleven volumes of Su’s prose works used for this dissertation, Zhou Yukai outlines Su’s lifetime of prose writings as fitting into one of three main types:40

1. The first type includes formal classical literary and argumentative disquisition prose, such as in a treatise lun or examination writings ce. Su excelled at using metaphors and contrasts in making cogent and eloquent arguments. These genres best reflect Su’s literary competence.

2. The second type comprises narrative and biographical genres: commemoration ji, biographies zhuan, and preface letters shuxu. Su’s narrative genres of prose writings were not strictly limited to any particular form. This type best reflects Su’s great ingenuity.

3. The third type includes the informal style of short and simple essays, such as miscellaneous notes za ji, colophons, prefaces, short comments ti ba, and correspondence zhi du. These essays best reflect Su’s wisdom embedded within topics of his daily life.41

40 Zhou, preface to Su Shi quanji jiaozhu, 26–27.
41 It is the third type of prose that is predominantly examined in this study, and is the most prevalent category of Su Shi’s 248 prose writings after his release from the final exile. Included from outside this category of writings is Su’s single “treatise” lun 論 and four “memorials” biao that he wrote after his pardon. The third type containing these shorter writings clearly demonstrate Su’s progression of stated positions. Su’s polemic ceases being political, but instead, these writings show Su’s views on philosophical wisdom, and they largely convey his views on detailed ideals within the three traditions of Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist thought.
Table 1. Classifications of the 248 post-exile prose writings by Su Shi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Types of Prose Genre Categories</th>
<th>Post-Exile Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Formal Classical Literary Prose</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Narratives and Biographical</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Informal Style Notes, Essays, Colophons</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Su was most prolific in the first type of formal classical literary writing during his younger years surrounding the times of his examination essays. His famed essays were studied closely by rising scholars for centuries later, after establishing a new standard in the Northern Song. As seen in Table 1 above, among Su’s 248 post-exile prose works, only five are located in the formal category of the first type.

Four of those five formal entries are translated in their entirety in the next chapter of this study. Three of these formal types of classical literary prose are “memorials” biao 表 to the court. Su responds in these memorials to three imperial posting directives he received in the first six months after his amnesty.

After the first memorial, while Su was traveling to his first posting in Lianzhou, he wrote a formal “treatise” lun 论. This treatise on Lu Yingong extolls the propriety of a regent serving in the imperial succession. It was also the last treatise Su would write in his life. The remaining example in formal classical literary prose omitted from this study, is a memorial of condolence for the death of the Empress Dowager.
Table 2. The post-exile works written by Su Shi in formal classical literary prose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Text</th>
<th>Genre and Title</th>
<th>Edition Title</th>
<th>Included/Omitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th month, 1100</td>
<td>Memorial of Gratitude - Lianzhou Stationing</td>
<td>移廉州謝上表</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th month, 1100</td>
<td>Treatise on Lu Yingong</td>
<td>論魯隱公</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th month, 1100</td>
<td>Memorial of Gratitude – Yongzhou Stationing</td>
<td>謝量移永州表</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th month, 1100</td>
<td>Memorial of Gratitude - Yuju Daoist Temple</td>
<td>提舉玉局觀謝表</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd month, 1101</td>
<td>Memorial of Condolences - Empress Dowager</td>
<td>慰皇太後上仙表</td>
<td>Omitted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In asking how Su Shi coped with his exile experience, the sequence and timing of these works written in the type of formal classical prose give us further understanding of Su’s thoughts in his final stage of life. Egan comments on the literary approach to Su Shi studies regarding, “the deep significance that literary expression held in his [Su Shi’s] life. It is, actually, difficult for us to hold any other assessment of him in mind, so comfortable are we with our modern categories, and consequently we are apt to be dismissive of other evaluations or to discount them as mere bows to conventional valuations of conduct and moral cultivation over literary achievement.”

As Egan observes, looking beyond the themes of conduct and moral cultivation inherent within this type of Su’s writings, we detect other significance within distinctions of Su’s literary

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42 Egan, Word, Image, and Deed, 363.
prose works. One significant distinction is between this post-exile period and those of Su’s prose writings in the earlier stages of his life. Another distinction is that these writings provide this study with an enlightening basis for evaluating the total of Su’s post-exile prose writings. These aspects are valuable, and simultaneously do not discount that only these five formal texts refer directly to conventional intertextual valuations of conduct and moral cultivation.

In the narrative and biographical prose, listed as the second type in Table 1 above, Su has twelve post-exile texts. These typically have lengths upward from 600 to 1200 characters. The content of writings in this category all contain literary, historical, or philosophical allusions. They also appraise Su’s views on the inherent aspects of some persons, writings, or historical events. In a brief interesting example, Su was passing through Guangdong during his return northward from Hainan and wrote a commemoration ji 觀 record for a Chan Buddhist temple pavilion. 43

Of course, for commemorating the “Arhat Pavilion” Luohan ge 羅漢閣, Su includes requisite praise for Buddhist values. In this nearly 800 graph prose tribute, Su includes detailed examples for commenting on the “fetter of attachments” (ai 愛) to joys and possessions, and its absolving counterpart, the “relinquishing” (she 捨) of joys and possessions to others. Su includes a satirical view in his comments, which is not unusual in this genre of his writings. Su surmises that in comparison to other regions, the people of Guangdong and Guangxi are the best at the Buddhist virtue of “relinquishing” for two reasons. One reason is because of their fear of

43 SSQJ, 12:1254. Commemoration titled by annotators as the “Guangzhou dongguanxian zifu chansi luohangeji” 廣州東莞縣資福禪寺羅漢閣記.
the ocean. The other reason is from embarrassment, which Su claims arises from their wealth from ocean trade having made their life too easy.

According to Su’s literary production in this type of narrative and biographical prose, the twelve texts in this category average approximately one per month over his last year of life.

Table 3. The months containing narrative-type post-exile prose writings by Su Shi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>The months 月 of narrative prose writings by Su Shi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1100 年</td>
<td>6 月</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1101 年</td>
<td>1 月 (2 texts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chronological ordering of Su’s texts is essential in this study, for tracing his thoughts through his post-exile prose writings. Two of Su’s most detailed works in this narrative type, are representative as outstanding examples in this type of Su’s prose, and for displaying Su’s most complex themes. The first of these selections is one that Su wrote for an inscription on New Year’s Day of 1101: “Commemoration of Writing for the Nanhua Temple Abbot.”44 The second selection is the last of Su’s narrative prose in his life, and written just two months before he died: “Official Rejoinder on Wang Youan’s Virtue.” 45 The translations in their entirety for these works are in the next chapter. In conjunction with the sequence of Su’s life events, the explanation of these two writings is provided within their chronological time context.

44 SSQJ, 11:1243. Commemoration of Writing for the Nanhua Temple Abbot 南華長老題名記。
Su Shi was included in the new emperor’s general amnesty in 1100 that extended to all Yuanyou (1086-1093) period officials in exile. Su was the only scholar-official to be specifically exiled across the sea, into what Su and other government officials considered as the most odious of all conditions. As he made his way back onto the mainland, he traveled a winding path northward for most of the next twelve months. His return initially included his recall into a posted station of government service. Su notified friends of his good fortune that he had survived Hainan, and wrote many short works of prose that included his comments on sights he visited along the way. Subsequently, the greatest numerical count of Su’s 248 prose texts in this post-exile period is in the brief informal styles of correspondence.

Su’s short letters of correspondence (chidu 尺牘), encompass 63% (157) of the writings among his total of 248 post-exile texts. In this genre, Su is often delivering information or news without using any intertextual allusions. The following letter provides a brief example of these aspects. The average length of these short letters is just over 100 Chinese graph characters (hanzi 漢子). This example is a letter written only a couple of weeks after Su’s pardon and is slightly longer than most of his later letters in this category.

This type of prose is the most common among Su’s post-exile prose writings. In the weeks immediately after returning back across the sea, these communications characterize the content of Su’s prose letters during this time, both by their short length and their variety of daily life topics. In example, Su wrote a series of five letters over the next few months to a Fan

46 The Yuanyou period officials had promoted policies later deemed as overly critical of political factions in the imperial court. Su Shi was among the nine or so principal Yuanyou officials that were still alive by the time of his amnesty.
Yuanchang 范元長，who was the older brother of Qin Guan’s son-in-law. Su had encountered delays in boarding a sailing vessel and had only weeks earlier safely reached the mainland. His first planned stop after these years of exile was to again meet with his dear friend and fellow Yuanyou official, Qin Guan, in the region just north of Hainan Island in Leizhou 雷州.

Su had earlier sent regrets he could not arrive while Fan was still temporarily in Leizhou. Fan was in transit carrying the remains of his deceased father back home. Su had politely voiced his own shame, saying, “I am without any decency, when a dear friend met their end, and I am unable to even crawl to be present with support!”

Su writes to Fan a couple of weeks later, that Su hopes to try once again, to *personally* convey his condolences.

I heard rumors that I might be moved to a government posting in Huangzhou 黄州. If it is true, I shall pass through Wuzhou 梧州 to Guangzhou 廣州, but will wait in Huizhou 惠州 for my offspring (gurou 骨肉) to rendezvous with me there. I estimate that you and your brother's boat would be passing by Huangzhou, but I'm also afraid that you might take the land route in Hunan 湖南 without passing Jiangxi 江西, and then you would not pass by Huangzhou. I also don't know if I can arrive at Huangzhou before you?

Drifting from place to place despite one's own volition, with it not yet known where one will settle, how could I be confident to decide a day for us to meet again? My only wish for you sibling brothers is to have hearts like metal and stone, in straits but not broken, so that the grace of your deceased father will not die with your father's death. Choking up in front of this paper; words cannot express my feelings.

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47 *SSQJ*, 16:5455.
48 *SSQJ*, 16:5456.
The content in this letter is candid, and generally quite straightforward. Among Su’s 157 post-exile epistolary correspondence, the majority are similar to this letter in style and content. For this reason, I included only a very minimal number of this type of correspondence in this dissertation. However, one compelling circumstance called for their inclusion in this study. This instance is when a letter of this type gives needed background context, such as when Su is commenting on his physical state during his late weeks of life.

It is worth noting that Su often used a persona with a tone of irreverent playfulness in texts during his younger years. We notice that Su’s prose writings after his final exile resonate with less lightness in tone, and we see that overall Su’s topics and themes have matured.

Within the informal third type of Su’s prose genres, in addition to the 157 short letters of correspondence, Su also has 34 prose entries in the genre of colophons, prefaces, and short comments (tiba 题跋). Particularly during the last three months of Su’s life, prose writings in these two types show topics of more everyday interest.

Topics in these writings varied widely, such as on food, herbal treatments, symptoms and remedies of illnesses, boating challenges, and one mentioning Su’s historical research on ancient signet stamps. These works often have less than forty words, and though short in length, are possibly interesting as unremarkable but tangible examples of Su’s varied daily wisdom.

Some sample vignettes from these short writings are below, and often contain less than one full sentence on topics beyond mundane interest. For this reason, beyond these excerpts, many of Su’s 157 short notes to friends stray beyond the more narrowed focus of this study.

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49 Short letters of correspondence, chidu 尺 FedEx. 29
• Su writes thanks to Wang, the Daoist, for some small gifts; commentary notes that Wang had helped Su’s brother get rid of his gray hair.  

• Su recommended a person, by describing him as, “those horses who don't kick or bite mostly don't run very well either” 馬不蹄齧 多拙於行, meaning this person runs well, although he kicks and bites as well.

• Su commented to a friend on the qualities of his relative’s poem, and that if one inserted this poem into a Li Bai collection, who would be able to suspect it wasn’t actually Li Bai’s? Su clarifies that it is a poem from a person in his Su family clan.

• Su responded to thank a friend for his presents. Su also mentioned when returning the visit, a piece of meat would be enough, there is no need for alcohol.

• Already after 40 days stuck (from low river waters), our boats are still not moving…. Old and young were down with illness, by good fortune all recovered, deceased servants, are now totaling six persons, shocking.

• A friend wrote a poem for Su, and Su returned one along with a piece of green orange skin. Su said: "If I don't give this (piece of orange skin) to you, then there is nobody I can share it with." Su also explained that he couldn't visit today because it was his family's death anniversary to honor Su's father.

• Su mentions that he had been feeling old and might not have many days left. He wonders how life could again taste good, while he could only rely on the virtue of his wife to

50 SSQJ, 18:6541.
51 SSQJ, 18:6537.
52 SSQJ, 19:7735.
53 SSQJ, 16:5665.
54 SSQJ, 17:6363.
55 SSQJ, 16:5665.
forget his hundreds of worries, with an allusion to carts decorated with fish skin, that were used by the wives of officials during the Spring and Autumn Period.\textsuperscript{56}

And in Su’s final month of life, from within short letters of correspondence:

- Su giving relatives his travel updates: These two brothers intended to lend me 200 coins. I thought I hadn’t been in need like this, so had already refused. The brothers were very well-intentioned. Appreciated! Appreciated! It has been for many days extremely hot. I wrote this letter while sweating in the boat. Not able to write to each of the nephews, please extend the greetings. Your wife is at her older age. Please care for her more cautiously. Don’t let her get (even) a little ill. Fulfill the intention of your sons and grandsons.\textsuperscript{57}

- Su writes: I have been more tired and sickly. My servant has been responding for me in my letters. (My not responding personally) is hinging upon on your refined temperament. But still, I can’t say how petrified I feel.\textsuperscript{58}

- My fluid intake had excessive cold yesterday, with a night of violent diarrhea, at daybreak again still exhausted. Eating yellow yarrow \textit{zhou ㄓou}, it is very delicious.\textsuperscript{59}

- Lying down reviewing four unusual old-style signets, and overlooking this illness. About getting together tomorrow, I beg to cancel. I require feeling a little better, maybe after the rain passes, at a composed time. (In closing) I am stamping these (ancient) signets here for you to enjoy.\textsuperscript{60}

- This evening’s implements are joss sticks and candle, for an undertaking of supplication.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{SSQJ}, 16:5786.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{SSQJ}, 18:6641.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{SSQJ}, 18:6680.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{SSQJ}, 17:6467.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{SSQJ}, 17:6467.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{SSQJ}, 16:5831.
These short, informal style of prose letters indicate content that may clarify quotidian points of specific interest for differentiating Su’s last year of life into yet smaller temporal units. However, for including the majority of these letters, it would require introducing matters outside the focus of this study. The underlying content in these short note correspondences was more political in the first months just after Su’s amnesty. In contrast, the content in his final months most often correlates to life events such as retirement, health, and death. These short letters, in infrequent instances as such, do assist in presenting Su’s thoughts in a consecutive month by month change, and in those instances, are included in this dissertation in their chronological order.
CHAPTER 2. TRANSLATIONS OF SELECTED PROSE WORKS AFTER EXILE

2.1 Three Letters to the Emperor

The following translated works are important for interpreting and understanding Su’s prose writings in his last year of life. Su’s own words, through these literary selections of prose, candidly display changing motifs in his writing. I chronologically present these twenty-four representative works of Su Shi’s prose writing, as a comparatively straightforward record of Su’s thoughts in the historical contexts of his life after release from his Hainan exile.

All translations of these works by Su Shi, are my own. All translations of supporting annotation texts are also mine except for a few specifically indicated. In terms of my approach to translation, I attempt to maintain a balance between academic translation and natural English. Kroll describes that good translations are not demarcated as one absolute type, but should allow for interpreting underlying questions arising in the humanities.62 One such underlying question that this study contributes to answering is why Su may have chosen a specific allusion.

In parallel to these writings, Su’s life events stand as signposts for contextualizing these texts with his intended recall from exile back into official service. Compared to the other recalled Yuanyou officials, Su’s unusual sequence of experiences stands out due to the sudden spurts of three imperial directives, and then a sudden directive ordering him into a form of honorary retirement status. Subsequently, I give supporting explanations of Su’s deliberate intertextuality for contextualizing this prose production. In this first section, three official memorials, and five

62 Paul W. Kroll, “Translation, or Sinology: Problems of Aims and Results,” Journal of American Oriental Society 138, no. 3 (September 2018): 564. Kroll draws attention to different forms and purposes of translation as advancing or impeding the scholarly discipline of sinology, 559-565.
accompanying prose texts provide a structure for literary and biographical analysis. Additionally, these prose writings inspire a critical probing of new ground in research of Su Shi distinct from the categories of literary expression, such as poetry.  

Though claiming a dearth of “literary monuments” at the period of final exile stages from 1093 until Su died in 1101, Hatch indicated that Su did gain a “settled maturity.” However, at the same time, Hatch still expressed a view that “one tries to get over the late period of Su Shi’s life as quickly as possible.” However, given that Su’s erudition in the three teachings was unmatched in Northern Song, this study reveals his erudition as the primary leitmotif within the texts written in his last six months of life.

Su Shi responds to the Emperor in three formal memorials written during the first six months after his amnesty notification arrived. As Su was returning from exile, these three letters include showing his appreciation to the court. Su’s prose responses formally reply to the Emperor and court but also presents Su’s related thinking about the imperial directives for his return into the civil service fold of government. Analysis of these letters’ content reveals much about Su’s value system through his preferred intertextual philosophical allusions. These three memorials also indicate evolving changes in Su’s expression of his most earnest perspectives by demonstrating Su’s diverging choices in preferred allusions.

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63 Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed*, 374–78. See within Egan’s discussion of Wen 文 in “The Utility of a Multidimensional View.” “For later ages Su’s poetry is his primary achievement. No doubt he also intended posterity to know him by his poetry. Yet the significance he attached to his commentaries on the classics and other activities cannot be lightly dismissed. Certainly, the effort that went into them was not slight.” 377.  
64 Hatch, 953.
In the Northern Song era, Su Shi was famed for having an unmatched understanding of the three teachings. In this regard, this dissertation gleans an especially abundant amount of allegorical evidence concerning Su’s thinking during the last six months from within his prose writings. The transition between two overarching themes occurs somewhat naturally in accord with his geographical circumstances, and are divided almost precisely between the first half and second half of his final year of life. As far as we can accurately date his writings, Su’s prose displays a marked change in philosophical thinking between each of these two periods, which occurs between the last half of 1100 and the first half of 1101.

I begin the discussion with Su’s response to the imperial notification of his amnesty in the fifth lunar month of 1100. In addition to the translations of these three memorials, I include supplementary translations of associated texts for augmenting understanding of background contexts. Following each memorial, I translate supplemental writings and annotated allusions for assisting in heuristic interpretation.

In the first letter, Su initially expresses effusive gratitude for his reprieve from the three years of imperial censuring banishment to Hainan Island. Su voices additional gratitude in recognizing the imperial orders for him to return to service at a government posting in Lianzhou. Three months later, in the eighth lunar month of 1100, he then received a new directive to report to Yongzhou. Themes of the second letter, however, show Su’s philosophical references moving away from the strict Confucian protocols of the first letter. This change begins occurring only three months after amnesty. Su’s unconstrained language in writing soon after his reprieve, has invited speculation about the impact the Hainan exile may have had on him. It is conceivable though, that Su may not have seen himself as violating expected norms.
On the other hand, one may also speculate that the circumstances of Su’s Hainan exile had changed the priorities in his viewpoints. Uniformity, such as primarily writing only following official civil service exam doctrine, may not have represented to Su viable means for expressing truths. Peter Bol makes a wide-ranging argument that Su’s core values drove his methods of expression: “Su Shi’s dao required individuality and diversity for the realization of the common interest. (...) It was a universal way of thinking about values that did not require uniformity.” Bol devotes an entire chapter in his study to this unusual aspect of Su Shi.

Indeed, as seen at the end of his first memorial to the emperor, Su alludes to the current Song era as again upholding the “ideal of universal harmony.” In this sudden concatenation of official appointments, a third change-of-posting order arrived just three months later in the eleventh lunar month of 1100. This third imperial directive granted Su Shi with an in-name-only title near his hometown of Chengdu, but which in reality allowed him to settle anywhere he would like.

In examining the third letter, one can see that Su’s choices of allusions reveal perspectives diverging progressively further and further away from Confucian traditions. In one interpretation, the writing in his third memorial could be perceived as a comfort stemming from imperial granting of an in-name-only position at a Daoist temple as a type of retirement (gui tian). Another interpretation is that being removed from actual officialdom, Su would be less likely perceived as a threat by his detractors who were still located in the Emperor’s periphery.

65 Bol, This Culture of Ours, 254. See Bol’s very developed discussion of Su’s particular perspectives on embodying the Dao, in Chapter Eight titled, “Su Shih’s Tao: Unity with Individuality.”

66 This is a primary theme of argument developed by Tomlonovic in her dissertation on Su Shi’s exile poetry.
However, with this third directive, Su writes perhaps only half-jokingly that the imperial orders bestowed him the designation of a *san ren*, in an allusion to the fourth inner chapter of *Zhuangzi*.\(^6^7\) In that anecdote, the appellation *san ren* refers to Zhuangzi himself as a person not used, or more poignantly, a person who is not considered *useful* by society. After Su identified himself with this role, it becomes visible from that point in time forward, Su’s perspectives in his writings consolidate a shift in their *foci* and themes.

The following map was included by Lin in his 1947 book on Su Shi.\(^6^8\) It identifies the generally understood locations where Su wrote his post-exile prose works during his meandering path of *return* northward after his final Hainan exile. This map also displays a rendering of where Su Shi grew up, and where he had principal official postings during his lifetime.

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\(^{67}\) *ZZQZ*. 人間世, 53. See san ren 散人.

\(^{68}\) Lin, *The Life and Times of Su Tungpo*, vii.
Figure 1. Map of China depicting the time of Su Shi
2.1.1 First of Three Memorial Letters - Fifth Lunar Month of 1100

Su Shi wrote the first of three memorials of gratitude to the emperor in the fifth lunar month of the year 1100. That month, Su received the imperial order of amnesty from his final exile in Danzhou 儋州, on Hainan Island. The imperial directive ordered Su to a posting in Lianzhou. That directive carried the exceedingly symbolic meaning of Su’s return northward across the sea. His station would soon be back on the civilized, continental mainland, just west of the Leizhou 雷州 peninsula. Within six months, Su received two more unanticipated directives. Upon pardon from exile, Su responded to the imperial court with his effusive joy and apologized profusely for past transgressions. The many intertextual references are noticeable and mainly are allusions from Confucian texts.

移廉州謝上表
    Memorial of Gratitude for Emperor’s Decree and Lianzhou Stationing

    使命遠臨，初聞喪膽。詔詞溫厚，亟返驚魂。拜望闕庭，喜溢顏面。否極泰遇，雖物理之常然﹔昔棄今收，豈罪餘之敢望？伏膺知幸，揮涕無從。中謝。

    I was panic-stricken when I first heard that an imperial order was coming. [But] the words in the imperial edict are gentle and kind, which has reattached my frightened soul. Reverently gazing towards the imperial court, joy is seen on my face. In the extreme of adversity comes the encounter of great luck, although this is the law of nature; how could a sinner such as me abandoned in the past, dare hope to gain appreciation again today? Now overcome with emotion, I know I'm fortunate. While wiping away tears, I hopelessly lack a way to express my gratitude.

    伏念臣頃以狂愚，遽遭譴責。荷先朝之厚德，寬蕭律之重誅。

69 Though Huizong granted amnesty to Su Shi months after becoming emperor following the death of Zhezong, it was officially still in the Zhezong reign period yuanfu san nian 元符三年 (1100), i.e. the third reign year of Yuanfu.
70 Su’s Hainan island location of exile was also referred to as Changhuajun 昌化軍.
71 SSQJ, 13: 2827.
Submiting that I, your humble servant, a short while ago was condemned due to madness and stupidity. Burdening the profound virtue of the former reigning emperor, I was granted leniency from the severe punishment of the laws of Xiao. Being cast into the distant wasteland, it was only by chance that I escaped a boiling cauldron. Winds and waves for ten thousand miles, how could one endure all the frailty and disease? Smoke and stench for five years, (lucky that) my gasping for breath can still exist. Those who sympathize with me lament that my punishment is already extreme; those who hate me regret my punishment is too light. When inspecting ancient maps where the ends are marked as corners of the sea, that is where local customs are suspected as being not of this world. One day’s food allotted for two days, with scant provisions and insufficiently warm. Desolation in a hundred extremes, with ten thousand forms of stumbling around. Indistinct like intoxicated dreams, and already lacking any intention of returning alive; how could I imagine being blessed with leniency and permitted to bear the emperor's grace, as well as residing closer? Even though one might say it is luck, there definitely is favor in higher-up connections.

This is all because the Emperor your Majesty, is speaking substance engendering wisdom, sagaciously by heaven’s conferral. Past meritorious laboring outside (the court), consequently reached the local peoples’ respect; mollifying our homeland’s many hardships, and mirroring the early emperor’s virtue. Also, receiving the sacred mother’s loving guidance, it differentiates honorable men for whom to keep in residence. Every splendid stratagem emerges from perspicacious decisions. Sympathizing with your servant (myself) because of my sole unyielding and assisting few; inquiring with your
servant because of the multitude’s shunning and seizing on faults. Now (you are) permitting me to correct my errors and make a fresh start. Although heaven and earth have the power of divine force, they cannot resuscitate your servant (myself) to be reborn. Although my parents had conjugal kindness in raising me, they cannot save your servant from his inevitable death. Repaying that debt of gratitude may break the accusations (against me), but words, how can they betray my heart! Cleansing away the mud smears, already having encountered misfortune, now enlarging the opening of clouds for the sun, and recommence beholding transformation to a time of universal harmony. In this life, how dare I still beseech glory? Only by managing myself and knowing to seal my mouth.

Your indebted servant.

In this first of three memorial letters of gratitude, Su exclusively uses allusions aligning with Confucian moralities, and primarily references texts forming the basis for the Northern Song imperial examination corpus found in the Shisanjing 十三經 [Thirteen Classics]. In contrast, gradual changes invoking Daoist values take precedence in Su’s later two memorial letters. In a manner that, given his circumstances (off-shore exile), Su deems the most appropriate response is immediately conveying his great fear upon receiving some type of imperial notification. Su’s emphatic tone affirms that he stands in awe of the (new) Emperor’s power. Su attributes his fright as being rooted in his foolishness and then expresses his level of joy from the gentle and comforting message.

73 Shisanjing zhushu 十三經注疏, ed. Li, Xueqin 李學勤 et.al., 26 vols. (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000; hereafter SSJZS).
Intertextually, too, Su is signifying in this message that the Emperor is truly enlightened. In this opening paragraph, Su quotes vocabulary specific to the *Zhouyi* 周易, to impart the greatest of extents concerning his gratitude for the Imperial release from exile.

The weighty import of the *Zhouyi* conforms with Confucian standards as appropriate citation when addressing the Emperor. Su rhetorically asks how he now again is receiving the Emperor’s grace, and thus has his complete despair overwhelmed by restoring his faith in human hope. Su expresses his strong emotion and he again juxtaposes an emphasis of his personal wrongdoing in the past, within his current expression of overflowing gratitude.

In the second paragraph, Su again hearkens to the ethical authority of Confucian moralities for harmonizing and properly guiding society. His immediate emphasis again reinforces two observations. On one hand, he is acknowledging his past reprehensible behavior, and additionally, he is reverentially giving thanks for leniency due to the prior emperor’s virtue. Su said he not been subjected to the fully authorized potential of punishment by death.

Su proceeds to paint the harshness of what would be his final exile, as being cast into a place as remote as “the corners of the sea.” Su’s intertextual allusion comes from the *Shangshu* and signifies the Hainan Island depiction on ancient maps as the edge of the known world, which as well exalts the vast reach of the emperor.75

74 *SSJZS* vol. 1, *Zhouyi* 周易, 78, 83, 400. Su Shi uses two consecutive hexagram names (guaming 卦名) pronounced *pi* 否 (rather than fou) and *tai* 泰 that convey in this instance as the most extreme of antonyms in meaning. Interpretation for Su Shi’s usage in this memorial is found in the “Zagua” 雜卦 section of the *Zhouyi*: *Pitai, fan qilei ye*. 否泰, 反其類也.

75 *SSJZS* vol. 3, “Junshi” 君奭, in *Shangshu* 尚書, 517.
I must achieve King Wen’s goals without negligence. Extending to the vast reaches mapped as corners of the seas and where the sun emerges, there will be none not in accord.

Luo asserts that the crux of this Prince Shi (junshi 君奭) passage is, “The Supreme Thearch was inspired by King Wen’s virtue and granted him the Mandate [of Heaven]: King Wen was able to pacify his country [to the extreme remote points] and employ virtuous advisers.”

By this allusion, Su equates the current Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (1082-1135) (r. 1100-1125/26) to that of a sage king having Heaven’s Mandate and bringing enlightened present-day prosperity to the people. More specifically, Su is invoking the sage-like qualities of the immortalized King Wen. Su Shi further describes the dire subsistence of his exile by reference to a pillar of Confucian traditions, the *Liji* 禮記.

The *Ru* resides on just a single *mu* of land, a wall-encircled room, a wicker entrance with small wall openings, a thatched modest abode; simple garments for going out, and allotting one day’s food over two days.

Although Su is on one hand lamenting his exile difficulties, on the other hand, his selected reference recounts the conditions as moral signs of expected self-cultivation. The self-restraint expected of a scholar-official represented by allotting one day’s food for two days, conforms to rules of conduct attributed to comments by Confucius himself. One can interpret Su’s use of this

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allusion as subtly diminishing the impression of any complaint. By referencing this passage, Su is for a third time emphasizing his previous mistakes. Nevertheless, he inserts in this paragraph that his reprieve’s origin is also linked (in some undisclosed ways) to his higher career connections.

In the third and final paragraph, Su includes further references to the *Shangshu,* and closes with a self-deprecating dénouement attributed to Confucius as written by Wang Su (195-256), where Su admonishes himself that his life’s troubles could have been avoided by restraining his power of words. Su praises the perspicacity of the Emperor in understanding the needs and desires of the common people by another allusion from the *Shangshu,* praising the Emperor’s talents for bringing the populace into a state of concordant harmony.

The Duke of Zhou declared: Heed! Those leaders with noble character, are without overindulgence. Earlier sages understood the hardships of sowing the grains, and thus overindulgence; only then could they comprehend the drudgery of the commoners.

Su Shi distinguishes by this allusion that Emperor Huizong had indeed experienced going outside the court at a younger age to live among the common people and provide assistance.

Su further accentuates with support from the *Shangshu,* to praise the Emperor’s ability to create the ideal of a harmonious society,. This may be one of the most distinguished forms of praise for an emperor. It could seem perhaps an over-embellishment for Su to compare the new

78 *SSJZS* vol. 3, “Wuyi” 無逸, in *Shangshu* 尚書, 506.

eighteen-year-old Song Emperor Huizong, with the legendary Emperor Yao. Kern describes the “Canon of Yao” as addressing the more magnificent concepts assessing antiquity, and we find Su attributes that magnificence as corresponding with current society’s fortune. This is the fifth strongly-Confucian allusion that Su uses in his written expression to the emperor, and has perhaps the most potent meaning in admiration.

曰若稽古帝堯，放勳放動欽明，文思安安，允恭克讓，光被四表，格于上下。克明俊德，以親九族。九族既睦，平章百姓。百姓昭明，協和萬邦。黎民於變時雍。

Resembling the ancient Emperor Yao, known as Fangxun, venerated, and bright, skillful, earnest, and peacefully harmonious, respectfully fair with agreeable restraint. These brilliant qualities meeting the four directions, were patterned on heaven and earth. Able to educate and later make virtuous; and thus endear the nine clans. The nine clans were then amicably harmonious, and even designating eminence throughout the hundred surnames. The hundred surnames all radiated brightly, cooperating to harmonize the innumerable clan domains. The common people then transformed to a time harmoniously concordant.

Su’s praise submits that the new emperor, Huizong, is following this same course as Emperor Yao’s praise in the Shangshu classic. This allusion infers that he – the Emperor – is making the people become bright, and causing the myriad states to transform into concordance. The utmost ideal reachable by the Son of Heaven is when people are transformed, thus enabling the time of Universal Harmony.

In Su’s closing sentence, he ends this memorial with an expression of his contrite intentions by recognizing what he considers as possibly the best method for correcting his own

many notable unfortunate circumstances. Su emphasizes by allusion that managing himself is only by knowing to seal his mouth. Confucius recounted an engraving on a statue with three seals over its mouth, *sanjian qikou* 參緘其口. 82 Located just to the right before steps entering the ancestral altar for Taizu Houji 太祖后稷 (ca. 11th century BCE), an inscription on the back of the bronze statue admonished the reader toward propriety and self-restraint. Confucius explained the engraving to his disciples and specified that though the carved text was vulgar (crudely worded), it did hit the mark. Similar to the way Su Shi was admonishing himself to adhere to propriety and self-restraint, Confucius then quoted to his disciples a passage that better represented the same meaning and recorded in the *Shijing* 詩經. 83

戦戰兢兢 Apprehensive with fear and trepidation,
如臨深淵 As if peering over a deep abyss,
如履薄冰 [Cautious] as if stepping on thin ice.

This *Shijing* passage imparts that if one keeps their mouth sealed and acts accordingly, then how is it possible for one’s mouth and tongue to then disrupt peaceful harmony *anle* 安樂, and bring forth calamity? Su Shi conveys his recognition that the source of misfortunes in his life has originated from himself. His recklessness and his lack of restraining himself when expressing his thoughts led to his exiles, calamity, and infringements upon his desired resolves in life. Su emphasizes with this closing allusion that he fully recognizes his unrestrained outspokenness is solely to blame for his transgressions, and that this recognition will be the source of reforming his behavior.

83 SSJZS vol. 5, “Xiaoya xiaomin” 小雅小旻, in *Shijing* 詩經, 868.
This first memorial from Su to the emperor radiates allusions compatible with fundamental tenets of proper Confucian statecraft. Su does not deviate far from two central messages that comply with these ideals. The first message concerns Su’s recognition of previous misconduct. Su chooses diction that emphasizes his faults, regret of burdens placed upon others, and his heartfelt gratitude for this pardon. In conjunction, however, he plaintively repeats in an almost formulaic manner that his final exile exceeded the level of appropriate severity. The severity specifically designed for Su in this Hainan exile resulted in later comparisons of Su Shi’s exile to the exile of the famed Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824). Fuller articulates this comparison:

“Doubt never seemed to disappear, however, until Su Shi’s final exile to Danzhou on Hainan Island. This act of vengeance by the reform clique placed Su Shi in an exalted realm with Han Yu of the Tang dynasty as a poet-exile who has earned his permanent place in history.” 84

Su delivers a second core message through his praise for the Emperor. The second message infers further complex aspects that all emanate from the emperor’s attainment of divine wisdom and far-reaching compassion. These allusions invite an interpretation that Su is confirming to the young eighteen-year-old emperor Huizong that he embodies these ideals of sage rulers expressed in the referenced historical classics.

However, a tugging presence in the first two letters is that Su is possibly making efforts to quash any potential second-thoughts the emperor may develop about rescinding his amnesty. Su makes it clear in this letter that there are still those around the emperor that hold hatred for Su. In that case, it can be construed that Su may be supplying the emperor with these classic

84 Fuller, *The Road to East Slope*, 4.
references that serve as credible literary resources for fending off any of those dangerous influences questioning the emperor’s decision.

During the first six months after the imperial pardon of Su Shi, these three memorial letters are signposts indicating topics Su deemed as most important to include. This first letter most prominently displays a mental state that is understandably still recoiling as if wondering whether or not this pardon is just a dream. His selected allusions and two central messages imply that Su did not want to endanger his new status of amnesty. This includes preventing adversaries from looking at this memorial letter, and purposely (as had been done in the past) misinterpreting his topics, allusions, or undertones in ways to make the emperor rescind his decision. For this reason, Su possibly selected all of these Confucian-oriented allusions that are less obscure in their meanings. Since these selections have difficult-to-misconstrue meanings, Su supplies premier ammunition to the Emperor. Huizong could safely use these for protecting his amnesty decisions from court detractors who may try questioning Huizong’s logic, and/or his youth.

2.1.1.1 Su’s Controversial Inscription Concurrent to the First Memorial Letter

Su wrote another more controversial prose work in that same fifth lunar month of 1100 after receiving notice of his reprieve. Su also wrote the “King of Mountaing Spirits Temple Stele” for inscription into stone at a Danzhou temple before he physically departed Hainan Island. A later debate ensued surrounding this text written only weeks after his first memorial letter. It displays significant contrasts with the memorial. It also delineates reference points for observing the scope of topics that Su was immediately thinking about at the time of his release from exile. This following stele inscription was not without disapproval among later Song scholars, as is seen in the additional commentary by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) included below the translation. Contrary
to Confucian standards in the first letter above, this inscription shows Su defying Confucian protocols by publicly writing about things that Confucius had admonished as topics not to be discussed by upright scholars (*junzi* 君子). For this reason, nearly one hundred years later, Zhu Xi commented on this stele inscription in a strongly reproachful tone.

峻靈王廟碑
King of Mountain Spirits (Junling Wang) Temple Stele

古者王室及大諸侯國皆有寶。周有琬琰大玉, 魯有夏后氏之璜, 皆所以守其社稷, 鎮撫其人民也。唐代宗之世，有比丘尼若夢恍惚見上帝者，得八寶以獻諸朝，且傳帝命曰：「中原兵久不解，腥聞于天，故以此寶鎮之。」則改元寶應。以是知天亦分寶以鎮世也。

The ancient royal family and the feudal dukes of more significant vassal states all had their treasures. The Zhou 周 kingdom had wanyan 琬琰 and dayu 大玉 (two emblems of fine jade); Lu 魯 had the jade pendant huang 璜 from the Xiahou clan 夏後氏. They were all used to protect their states 社稷 (viz, their altars to the gods of earth and grain) and guard their people. During the Daixong 代宗 era (727-779) of Tang 唐 (618-907), there was a Buddhist nun 比丘尼, who met the “Emperor of Heaven” in a dream-like trance and received eight treasures. Moreover, she transmitted the following message from the Emperor of Heaven when she presented the treasures to the court:

“The warfare on the Central Plain has been lasting for too long. The smell of blood has spread up to Heaven. Thus, these bestowed treasures are to quell.”

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85 SSQJ, 12:1883.
86 SSJSZS vol. 16, “Dinggong sinian 定公四年”, in Chunqiu zuozhuan 春秋左傳, 1778. The Duke of Zhou bestowed the Duke of Lu with the jade pendant from the Xiahou clan.
87 Biquan 本経; sanskrit: bhiksuni.
88 Ershisi shi 二十四史, vol. 10, “Suzong benji 肅宗本紀” 239 in Jiutangshu 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997; hereafter ESSS), 86. Su Shi gives the number as eight treasures in this stele inscription, whereas the official Tang history records thirteen.
89 Central Plain: middle and lower regions of the Yellow River.
Afterward, the title of the imperial reign was renamed to Baoying 寶應 era (762-763) (viz, treasure responding reign). From this, be aware that Heaven also distributes treasures to tranquilize the world.

自徐聞渡海，歷瓊至儋，又西至昌化縣西北二十里，有山秀峙海上，石峰巉然，若巨人冠帽西南向而坐者，俚人謂之山胳膊。而偽漢之世，封其山神為鎮海廣德王。五代之末，南夷有知望氣者，曰：

「是山有寶氣，上達于天。」

艤舟其下，斫山發石以求之。夜半大風，浪駕其舟空中，碎之石峰下，夷皆溺死。儋之父老，猶有及見敗舟山上者，今獨有碇石存焉耳。天地之寶，非人所睥睨者。晉張華使其客雷煥發酆城獄，取寶劍佩之，華終以忠遇禍，坐此也夫！今此山之上，上帝賜寶以奠南極，而貪冒無知之夷，欲以力取而已有之，其誅死宜哉！

Going from Xuwen 徐聞, crossing the sea (to Hainan), and passing Qiong 瓊 to Dan 儋, then continue to the west until reaching Changhua county 昌化縣. Twenty miles northwest of the county, there is a mountain standing erectly and elegantly in the sea. The precipitous rocky peak looks like a seated giant wearing a hat and facing the southwest. Local people call it the mountain arm. During the fake Han dynasty (917-971), they conferred this mountain god with the title of Sea Tranquilizing Vast Virtue King 鎮海廣德王. Near the end of the Five Dynasties (907-960), the southern tribes had a person knowing how to perceive pneuma (wangqi) 望氣, and this person proclaimed:

“This mountain has the quintessence of pneuma. It reaches up to Heaven.”

Then, the southern tribes moored their boats under the mountain to chisel off bits of rock accordingly. At midnight, and suddenly starting with huge winds; billows raised their boats high in the sky and smashed them into pieces at the foot of the rocky peak. All of

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90 Xuwen 徐聞 is the port on the southern tip of the Leizhou peninsula mainland, and the seaport town is just northward across the sea from Hainan Island.

91 Southern Han Nan Han 南漢 (917-971) . Su Shi disparagingly refers to it as the “fake Han” wei Han 偽漢.

92 Mo Di 墨翟, “Yingdici 迎敵祠,” in Mozi 墨子 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995) 232-233. Those who can tell the differences of Qi are able to predict success or failure, good or bad fortune: 凡望氣，有大將氣，有小將氣，有往氣，有來氣，有敗氣。能得明此者可知成敗，吉凶.
those tribal people drowned to their death. There still are some local people at Dan who saw the broken boats. But today only the anchor stones survive, and that is all. The treasures of heaven and earth are not meant for humans to gain simply by peeping out of the corners of their eyes. Zhang Hua 張華 (232-300) during Jin 晉 dynasty (265-420) sent his visitor Lei Huan 雷煥 (265-334) to Feng Cheng 酆城 prison to dig out the double-edged sword treasure to wear it. Was it not because of this that finally led to Zhang being [prematurely] killed?! At present above this mountain, the Emperor of Heaven conferred treasures to stabilize this most extreme Southern point; however, the greedy and ignorant barbarians wanted to take it by force for themselves. That they were all killed, is that not most indicative?!

Historically, during the [Northern] Song 宋, in the fifth year, the seventh month of the Yuanfeng era 元豐 (1078-1085), the emperor conferred the title, King of Mountain Spirits 峻靈王, upon this mountain. In the fourth year, the seventh month of the Shaosheng era 紹聖 (1094-1097), Su Shi was condemned and moved from Qiongzhou 琼州 to Dan 儋, until the third year, the fifth month of the Yuanfu era 元符 (1098-1100), when he was ordered to serve in Lianzhou. I [Su Shi] lived in banishment in Hainan for three years, drinking alkaline water and eating fishy food, tortured cruelly by hurricanes and fogs, yet I still survived. It must have been the protection of the spirits of the mountains and rivers. Sincerely again facing the west, with kowtow and then taking my

93 ESSS vol. 4, “Zhang Hua zhuan” 張華傳, in Jinshu 晉書, 36:1075. Zhang Hua’s guest, Lei Huan, was skilled in reading Daoist signs and able to perceive qi. He suspected there were treasure swords in Fengcheng.
leave, both writing down these stories (of the mountain) and engraving them into the stele. There is a pond in the mountain where purple-scaled fish live. But the local people do not dare to catch them. There are many lychees and oranges on the side of the mountain. You can eat them. However, if you take them away, then there will be storms and hail. [Following the above preface] this inscription pronounces [in rhyme]:

琼崖千里块海中，民夷错居古相容。
方壶蓬莱此别宫，峻灵独立秀且雄。
为帝守宝甚严恭，庇陰嘉穀岁屡丰。
小大逍遥远蝦龙，鵜鶘安栖不避风。
我浮而西今復东，铭碑暎然照无穷。

The Qiongya Island\textsuperscript{94} is a clump a thousand miles away in the sea. People and barbarians lived together, and since ancient times with toleration. This is a provisional palace of Mt. Fanghu 方壺 and Mt. Penglai 蓬莱\textsuperscript{95}. Mt. Junling 峻靈 standing alone, elegant and grand. Sternly and respectfully protecting its treasure for the Emperor of Heaven. Blessing bumper harvests of good grains year after year. Young and old, all free and unfettered, far away from sea monsters. Seabirds safely dwell without the need to take shelter from the winds. I floated to the west and now am returning to the east. This engraved stone monument will brightly illuminate forever.”

Su wrote this Junlingwang Temple Stele inscription within only weeks of his first memorial letter to the Emperor, but as can be easily seen, the content is strikingly different. Decades later in the Southern Song Dynasty 南宋 (1127-1279), Zhu Xi excoriated Su Shi posthumously about this inscription in the harshest terms. After Zhu Xi analyzed this writing, Zhu wrote that for an intellect such as Su this was unacceptable writing, and dramatically

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{94} Qiongya 瓊崖, historic name of Hainan Island.
  \item \textsuperscript{95} Yang Bojun, ed. 楊伯峻, “Tangwen” 湯問, in \textit{Liezi jishi} 列子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979; hereafter \textit{LZJS}), 151-152. Mt. Fanghu 方壺 and Mt. Penglai 蓬莱 are two of the five sacred mountains where the immortals dwell. The other three are Daiyu 岱輿 (Mt. Tai), Yuanjiao 員嶠, and Yingzhou 瀛洲. According to Liezi, the five mountains are millions of miles to the east of the Bohai Sea 渤海.
\end{itemize}
contrasts to conduct of a scholar. The details below explain Zhu Xi’s comments. The dating for this piece of Su’s writing and inscription onto a memorial stone tablet was also the fifth lunar month of 1100 before Su physically left his exile on Hainan Island. Su had received his imperial directive to report to Lianzhou, but was waiting out of fear, some scholars claim\(^6\), for nearly a month until one of the larger and thus safer big Fujian vessels became available for carrying him back across the sea.

Su’s message in this text appears as promoting that the Song era also had treasures compatible with historical treasures of other eras, and by correlation is holding the similarly described properties of treasures from other eras also. It was a Song Emperor conferring the title, “King of Mountain Spirits” to the entire rocky peak and it became a Song treasure eighteen years earlier in the Yuanfeng Reign (seventh lunar month, 1082). Su includes two other historical examples of comparable treasures as possible means of substantiating their current Song treasures equivalence in carrying a similarly auspicious weight of symbolic meanings.

Su commences with the first example by referencing a passage in the Shangshu. In this story of highly ceremonial preparations for the Zhou king’s funeral, jade and treasures of the major feudal states were all on display. Descriptions indicate their elaborate array of treasures:

\begin{verbatim}
越玉五重，陳寶，赤刀、大訓、弘璧、琬琰，在西序。大玉、夷玉、天球、河圖，在東序。胤之舞衣、大貝、鸞鼓，在西房；兌之戈、和之弓、垂之竹矢，在東房。
\end{verbatim}

Yue jade in five differentiated categories was arrayed with precious treasures. There were the crimson dagger, the prodigious teachings, the exceptional jade annulus, insignia gems of nobility, all positioned in the western vestibule; a great jade, jade of eastern tribes, the heavenly sphere, and the river diagrams, were all presented in the eastern vestibule. The

\(\text{\textsuperscript{6}}\) Lin, \textit{The Life and Times of Su Tungpo}, 386.
ceremonial dance regalia from descendants of the Yin, the giant cowrie-shell, and the
great drum, all in the western chamber; the spear of Dui, the bow of He, and the bamboo
arrows of Chui, all in the eastern-side chamber.\textsuperscript{97}

These Zhou Dynasty treasures symbolized sanctioned power in the kingdoms, encouraged a
nurturing comfort for the people, and above all linked their religious traditions to the gods of
earth and grain. Su Shi adds the next allusion that also references Zhou treasures as recounted in
the Zuozhuan: The Duke of Zhou presented the Duke of Lu with the jade pendant treasure of the
Xia Hou clan.\textsuperscript{98}

In Su Shi’s second example, he moves in time from the Zhou treasures to more than a
millennium later to speak of Tang Dynasty treasures. Su recounts a Buddhist nun living during
Tang, and as recorded in the official Tang history. Through a dream of celestial interactions, the
nun met with the Emperor of Heaven, who bequeathed to the nun eight treasures. As a technical
point in this account, it Su recounts the number of treasures as eight, whereas there were actually
thirteen treasures in the Jiutangshu account of the nun and the treasures from heaven.\textsuperscript{99} It is
thought-provoking that a Buddhist as a member of the foreign religion is credited with being the
intermediary between the Emperor of Heaven and the Tang emperor.

The transliteration for Buddhist nun from the Sanskrit word \textit{bhikṣunī} creates the Chinese
loanword of \textit{bīqūnī} 比丘尼. The nun delivered the message from the Emperor of Heaven that
the treasures were an incentive for peace and ending the period of too much warfare. Su

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{SSJZS} vol. 3, “Guming” 顧命, in \textit{Shangshu} 尚書, 591-592.
\textsuperscript{98} \textit{SSJZS} vol. 16, “Dinggong sinian” 定公四年, in \textit{Chunqiu Zuozhuan} 春秋左傳, 1778. The Duke of Zhou gifted
treasures of illustrious virtue to establish the vassal states in the early years of the Zhou kingdom perimeter, and
which included bestowing the Duke of Lu with the jade pendant treasure of the Xiahou clan.
emphasizes that the Emperor’s reign title was then in fact changed, in order to reflect the impact of the treasures, and was thus named the “Treasure Responding” Baoying 寶應 reign. Su proceeds that per this evidence, it is proof that Heaven also can use the distribution of treasures to make an era tranquil.

Su then returns in his narrative to the current mountain treasure at hand with a recap of its history. First he provides travel directions to its location for anyone from the mainland wanting to travel to see the treasure firsthand. He describes the mystical powers inherent within the mountain. Su refers to “Southern Han” (917-971) following the Tang, as the fake Han. At that time, the mountain god had a conferred title of Sea Tranquilizing Vast Virtue King. After a person knowing how to observe treasured qi energies validated this mountain having such heavenly pneuma, it led to the mountain god exacting death upon greedy people trying to steal its treasured magical properties.

Su follows with an additional historical example of magnificent treasures, with heaven-bestowed attributes of powers beyond humans’ understanding. Su recounts a similar sequence from the Jin dynasty history about Zhang Hua, author of the Bowuzhi 博物志, procuring a miraculous treasure sword through Lei Huan, a Daoist arts master who was able to observe qi. After digging up the two treasure swords, he gave one to Zhuang Hua and kept one for himself.

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100 Title conferred was the Sea Tranquilizing Vast Virtue King 鎮海廣德王.
101 ESSS vol. 4, “Zhang Hua zhuo” 張華傳, in Jinshu 晉書, 36: 1075. The Western Jin dynasty (265-315) writer Zhang Hua received from a Daoist adept, one of two miraculous treasure swords. Afterwards, Zhuang Hua was abruptly executed in connection with a political overthrow upheaval.
102 Fan Ning 范寧, Bowuzhi jiao zheng 博物志校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010). Zhang Hua’s written collection, the Bowuzhi 博物志 (290) (Records of Diverse Matters) is thought to have still been fully intact in original form in the Song Dynasty during the time of Su Shi.
Later history records that Lei Huan was accurate in predicting Zhang Hua’s premature death. Su Shi suggests it was Zhang’s dabbling with powers not meant for humans that caused him to meet an early end.

At this juncture, Su Shi shifts by employing an interesting segue hidden in his message. He first mentions the Song Emperor conferring a new title of King of Mountain Spirits 峻靈王, upon the mountain just eighteen years earlier, and which coincidentally was the year when the current Emperor Huizong was born. Then in a sudden modification, Su immediately begins recounting the dates leading up to the time when he was ordered into the lethal Hainan exile conditions. At this point, Su writes a sentence that later drew the ire of Zhu Xi in the following century. Zhu later expounded that Su Shi resoundingly contradicts Confucian precepts for cultivated scholars by saying that some “local Gods gave protection.” Su wrote that he surprisingly survived that place, and credited his survival to protection by the spirits of the mountains and rivers. Su concluded by mentioning evidence of some mystical and enchanted properties still existing on the mountain, before writing the verse for the stele inscription.

Su rhymed the final inscribed seven-character-per-line verse, which contains allusions to the Liezi103, Shijing104, Guoyu105, and Erya.106 Su’s verse inscription on the stone monument romanticizes Hainan island as a place that is difficult for civilized people, but he declares it is a place with myriad blessings from both heaven and immortals for those resident humans living there. In idyllic Daoist terms, it is a free and unfettered existence. In closing, Su promotes that

103 LZJS. Liezi jishi 列子集釋.
104 SSJZS vol. 5, “Xiaoya” 小雅, in Shijing 詩經.
this inscription into stone will brightly illuminate without end. Nevertheless, not all scholars agreed. During Southern Song (1126-1279), and more than half of a century after Su’s death, Zhu Xi makes the following critical analysis of Su Shi’s Junlingwang Temple inscription.

集評：朱熹
Commentary by Zhu Xi 107

東坡一生，讀盡天下書，說無限道理。到得萬年過海，做過昌化《峻靈王廟碑》，引唐肅宗時，一尼恍惚升天，見上帝，以寶玉十三枚賜之，云【中國有大災，以此鎮之】。【今此山如此，意其必有寶】云云。更不成議論，似喪心人說話。其他人無知，如此說尚不妨。你平日自視為如何？說盡道理，卻說這般話，是可怪否？觀於海者難為水，游于聖人之門者難為言。分明是如此了，便看他們這般文字不入。

Dongpo, for his entire life, had studied to the utmost of the whole world’s writings and had explained unlimited principled reasoning. Upon reaching an excessive number of years across the sea, he composed over in Changhua (Hainan) “Junlingwang Temple Stele”, drawing from the time of Tang Suzong (eighth Tang emperor reigned 756-762), about an absent-minded nun ascending to heaven, meeting the emperor of Heaven, who accordingly confers thirteen treasures to the nun, and then Su Shi inscribes his own words, “In the Central Plains there is a calamity, and these means will calm the disturbance.” Su continues, “Nowadays this mountain is like this, meaning it certainly is such treasure,” and so on. I must say again, this does not become a principled discussion, it resembles talk by a person who has completely lost their mind (loc. cit., 更不成議論，似喪心人說話). Other people lack the perspicacity of Su Shi, so their speaking in this way is valued as harmless. But Su ordinarily viewed himself in what capacity? Su speaks exhaustively of the highest patterned principles, however, his spoken words are said in this way, it is certainly bewildering is it not? Those who perceive the sea, have difficulties perceiving water, and those rambling in the gate of sages, have difficulties

with speech. Clearly, this [writing] is understood in such a way; in the case of seeing [Su Shi’s] engraved language like this, it does not agree with his capacities.

Zhu Xi comments in his closing assessment about the conflicting ironies with Su Shi’s brilliant capacities by reciting a passage by Mencius in the *Mengzi* 孟子: 108

孟子曰：「孔子登東山而小魯，登太山而小天下。故觀於海者難為水，遊於聖人之門者難為言。觀水有術，必觀其瀾。日月有明，容光必照焉。流水之為物也，不盈科不行；君子之志於道也，不成章不達。」

Mencius declared, “When Confucius ascended the Eastern Mount, Lu seemed small, and after ascending Mount T’ai, the whole empire seemed small. Similarly, for those having observed the oceans, it is difficult for water to compare with those perceptions., and for those entering the gateway into comprehension of the sages’ thought it is difficult for plain words to compare. The methods for perceiving water, require observing its undulations. The sun and moon have brightness, and that light must then reflect accordingly. Flowing water is such a thing, until it compensates filling voids it does not proceed forward. The consummate scholar sets intention on realizing the Way of the sages, but when not accomplishing coherent writing there will be no realization.

From this anecdote, Zhu Xi states that Su Shi had most certainly advanced through the stages needed for understanding doctrines of the Way, and thus, should clearly have understood the role of a consummate scholar’s conduct. Zhu recognizes the genius of Su Shi, and thus his metaphor indicates that Su Shi had metaphorically ascended Mt. Tai as had Confucius, and Su had also roamed within the gate of the sages. Zhu ponders that most people cannot achieve those heights like Su, so it is reprehensible that Su Shi would speak so ignorantly vulgar. Zhu struggles to comprehend why Su would violate the customs of *commemorative* writing. Zhu Xi refers to

four topics that Confucius and sages do not discuss. The subjects on which the Master did not talk, were: strange phenomena, feats of strength, turmoiled disorder, or spirit-like entities.  

In Zhu Xi’s commentary on the Analects, he wrote: Resolutely among Confucius and sages, there is that which they do not discuss 固聖人所不語. In Zhu Xi’s commentaries on these four topics, he explains his reasoning in that the first three do not carry the righteous parameters within inherent principles li 理: i.e. strange phenomena guaiyi 怪異, brutish feats yongli 勇力, actions creating disorder beiluan 悖亂之事. In the fourth category, he stated that as for supernatural beings guishen, zaohua zhi shi 鬼神, 造化之跡, those are phenomena sourced beyond human realms and are thus outside of our [human] comprehension. These are problematic to understanding, and so they should not be bandied about lightly. In this light, Su Shi appears as flagrantly violating these Confucian values. Thus, this was the foundation of Zhu’s negative comments. Though Su Shi wrote this at the time of his amnesty, Zhu Xi states that for a scholar reaching the erudite heights of Su, this appears out of character. By Su violating a taboo known by all scholars since the time of Confucius would undoubtedly appear as Zhu Xi wrote, “the talk of someone who has lost his mind.” In this level of inappropriate writing, it invites speculations on whether Zhu Xi’s assessment was correct that the Hainan period of exile was to blame for Su Shi descending into an unstable state of thinking, or to use a metaphor Su Shi writes about himself just months later, as wondering if his boat had become untethered.

109 SSJZS vol. 23, “Shuer” 述而, in Lunyu 論語, 102. Those things the master did not speak of were strange phenomena, feats of strength, turmoiled disorder, or spirit-like entities 子不語怪, 力, 亂, 神.
110 Zhu Xi 朱熹, Sishu zhangju jizhu 四書章句集注, Xu, Deming, ed. 徐德明校點 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 114.
This evidence suggests that though Su had just finished writing his memorial letter comparing the Song Emperor to the legendary Emperor Yao, this stele inscription is surprising in its content that firmly contradicts established Confucian principles. As far as considering whether Su had become untethered, Egan narrates that Su wrote during his first exile a letter that dismissed exile as just a commitment to self-cultivation. This suggests that the final exile in Hainan had extracted a much heavier toll on Su, than his previously experienced exiles. Egan comments on exile’s psychological implications through a thought-provoking historical insight relating Su Shi to the example of Confucius’s cherished devotee Yanzi who maintained happiness despite living in dire circumstances:

“Exile was certainly a challenge to Su’s moral fortitude and self-sufficiency. It had long been a central tenet of Confucian thought that one’s fortunes in the world ought not to affect one’s moral values: usually, this meant that deprivation or frustration in a career was no excuse for any compromise of values or of one’s commitment to continued self-cultivation.”

2.1.1.2 A Sole Lun Treatise in Su’s Final Year after Amnesty

Su wrote only one “treatise” (lun 论) in his final year of post-exile life. This treatise was completed less than two months after Su received his pardon, and gives clues to Su’s mindset just before he received a sudden second directive from the emperor. True to the work of a scholar-official, this treatise very much conforms to Confucian traditions and conforms to Su’s understanding of his intended recall into filling the same official roles of his life before exile. This treatise is dated as Su arrived at his designated posting in Lianzhou on the fourth day in the seventh lunar month, (western calendar: August 11) of 1100, and is one month before he receives his second imperial directive. The topic of Su’s treatise concerned an existing debate among

scholar-officials. Now that Su was returning to official service from exile, he weighed in on this topic concerning empress dowagers serving as regents. Later historians lauded the literary qualities in how Su constructed his compelling argument and his expression of didactic views for solving this emergent Northern Song rules-of-succession policy dilemma.

論魯隱公
Treatise on Lu Yin Gong\textsuperscript{112}

魯隱公元年，不書即位，攝也。歐陽子曰：「隱公非攝也。使隱而果攝也，則《春秋》不書為公。《春秋》書為公，則隱非攝無疑也。」

In the first year of Duke Yin of Lu (r. 722-712 BCE), it is not written of his succession to the throne, and he was thus a regent she 撮.\textsuperscript{113} Master Ouyang \textsuperscript{114} (1007-1072) conjectured: “Duke Yin was not a regent. If Yin was indeed a regent, then the Spring and Autumn Annals 《春秋》 wouldn’t have called him a Duke. Since the Spring and Autumn Annals write about him as a Duke, then Yin was undoubtedly not a regent.”

蘇子曰：非也。《春秋》信史也，隱攝而桓弑，著於史也詳矣。周公攝而克復子者也，以周公薨，故不稱王。隱公攝而不克復子者也，以魯公薨，故稱公。史有謚，國有廟，《春秋》獨得不稱公乎？

I [Su Shi] say: Not true. The Spring and Autumn Annals is a trustworthy history. It also documents details that Yin acted as regent and was murdered by Duke Huan of Lu (731-694 BCE). The Duke of Zhou (c.11\textsuperscript{th} century BCE) acted as regent and then returned the throne to the prince. The Duke of Zhou then died (after giving back the throne), and is thus not documented as a king. Duke Yin acted as regent but didn’t return the throne to the late duke’s son. Duke Yin died (before giving back the throne). Thus, he is documented as a duke. The history documented Yin’s posthumous title and the state

\textsuperscript{112} SSQJ, 10:472.
\textsuperscript{113} SSJZS vol. 16, “Yingong yuannian” 隱公元年, in Chunqiu zuozhuan 春秋左傳, 37.
\textsuperscript{114} Ouyang Zi 歐陽子, i.e. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修.
has his temple. How could the *Spring and Autumn Annals* be the only one not calling him a Duke?

然則隱公之攝也，禮歟？曰：禮也。何自聞之？曰：聞之孔子。曾子問曰：

「君薨而世子生，如之何？」孔子曰：「卿、大夫、士從攝主，北面於西階南。」何謂攝主？曰：古者天子，諸侯，卿，大夫，士之世子未生，而死，則其弟若兄弟之子次當立者為攝主。子生而女也，則攝主立；男也，則攝主退。此之謂攝主。古之人有為之者，季康子是也。季桓子且死，命其臣正常曰：

「南孺子之子，男也，則以告而立之；女也，則肥也可。」歎子卒，康子即位。既葬，康子在朝。南氏生男，正常載以如朝，告曰：

「夫子有遺言，命其圉臣曰：『南氏生男，則以告於君與大夫而立之。今生矣，男也。敢告。』」康子請退。康子之謂攝主，古之道也，孔子行之。

Then is Duke Yin’s regency appropriate according to the rites? I say: Yes, it is. From where did I learn this? I say: I learned this from Confucius. Confucius’ student Zeng 曾 asked: “If a king died and the eldest son was born, then what should be done?” Confucius said: “The minister 卿, senior officials 大夫, and other officials 士 should follow the regent, and gather at the south of the west steps facing the north.” What is called a regent? I say: In ancient times, when the emperor, dukes, ministers, senior officials, and other officials died before their eldest son was born, then their younger brother or brother’s son should be established as the regent. If the eldest child was a female, then the regent should become the successor. If the eldest child was a male, then the regent should withdraw. This is called a regent. The forefather who had done this was Ji Kang 季康 (fl. 577 BCE). When Ji Huan 季桓 (r. 603-577 BCE) was about to die, he commanded his servant Zheng Chang 正常 (fl. 577 BCE): “If the child of Nan Ru 南孺 (fl. 577 BCE) is male, then announce him as the successor; if female, then Fei 肥 (Ji Kang) can be the successor.”

Huan 桓 died, and Master Kang in succession ascended to the throne. After the burial, Kang was in charge of the court. Nan’s child was male. Zheng Chang carried the message to the court and reported: “The master had his last words and commanded his stableman that if Nan’s child was male, then report it to you

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116 *SSJZS* vol. 19, “Aigong sannian” 哀公三年, in *Chunqiu zuozhuan* 春秋左傳, 1921.
and other senior officials to establish [the son as] the successor. Now, a son was born. I came to report.” Kang [therefore] withdrew. The regency of Kang, is the ancient way 古之道, and the conduct of Confucius 孔子之行.

自秦，漢以來，不修是禮，而以母后攝。孔子曰：「惟女子與小人為難養也。」使與聞外事且不可，曰：「牝雞之晨，惟家之索。」而況可使攝位而臨天下乎？女子為政而國安，惟齊之君王后，吾宋之曹，高，向也，蓋亦千一矣。自東漢馬，鄧，不能無譏，而漢呂后，魏胡武靈，唐武氏之流，蓋不勝其亂，王莽，楊堅遂因以易姓。由是觀之，豈若攝主之庶幾乎？使母后而可信也，則攝主何為而不可信？若均之不可信，則攝主取之，猶吾先君之子孫也，不猶愈於異姓之取哉？

Since Qin and Han, the rites have not been in adherence, and so Empress Dowagers have acted as regents. Confucius said: “females or trifling persons are frustrating to cultivation.” It is already inappropriate to engage them in external affairs, and is termed: “hens announcing daybreak, only subverts the family.” 牝雞之晨，惟家之索。” Let alone, how is it possible to engage them to act as regents and rule all under heaven? As for females ruling and keeping the country stable, this only happened during the ruling of Empress [Dowager] Junwang 君王后 (?-249 BCE) of Qi 齊 and Empresses Cao 曹 (1016-1079), Gao 高 (1032-1093), and Xiang 向 (1046-1101) of our Song 宋. These examples are one out of a thousand. Even Ma 馬 (40-79) and Deng 鄧 (81-121) from Eastern Han 東漢 (25-220) cannot pass without being criticized. However, the country could not bear the turmoil caused by those like Empress Lü 呂后 (241-180 BCE) of Han 漢 (202 BCE – 220 CE), Hu Wuling 胡武靈 (515-528) of Wei 魏 (386-535), and Wu 武氏 (624-705) of Tang 唐 (618-907). Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE – 23 CE) and Yang Jian 楊堅 (541-604) even changed surnames [changing the regime] because of women’s ruling. From observing these illustrations, how could they be similar to a [proper] regent? If the empress dowager’s regency can be trusted, why cannot people accept her as a [proper] regent? If both are untrustworthy, then a [proper] regent taking

118 SSJZS, vol. 2, “Mushi” 牧誓, in Shangshu 尚書, 337. The king spoke: “The ancients had a saying, 'Hens do not announce daybreak, hens announcing daybreak, only exact upon the family.' Now the Shang King Shou only follows his wife’s directions, and with wanton disregard, he is muddleheadedly abandoning his sacrificial duties.”
over at least would still be the late emperor’s descendent, and that is not as bad as someone taking over by a different surname.


Some say: “When the sovereign dies, the officers all should attend to their several duties, taking instructions from the prime minister for three years 君薨，百官總己以聽於冢宰，三年.” 119 What is the use of a regent?” I say: Not in this case. When the succeeding emperor is a grown-up but has not yet come out of the mourning (zhai you 宅憂), 120 then according to the rites must follow the prime minister. If the eldest son was not born yet, or born but too weak to be the emperor, then according to the rites of the three-dynasties and the teachings of Confucius, on no account should all the land under heaven be given to a different surname. But giving it to a [proper] regent, is that not the rites and the conduct of the Duke of Zhou? Therefore, Duke Yin is a [proper] regent.

鄭玄, 儒之陋者也. 其傳攝主也, 曰:「上卿代君聽政者也. 」使子生而女, 則上卿豈繼世者乎? 蘇子曰: 摄主, 先王之令典, 孔子之法言也, 而世不知; 習見母后之攝也, 而以為當然. 故吾不可不論, 以待後世之君子.

Zheng Xuan 郑玄 (127-200), an unrefined Confucian scholar, wrote about regents as “the prime minister 上卿 who substitutes for the emperor in holding the court.” 121 If the child born is female, would the prime minister succeed the throne? Myself, Su Shi says: A [proper] regent is the late emperor’s order and law, and is the model spoken by Confucius; however, the world has not understood. [The world is] used to seeing empress dowagers acting as regents and thus considers it as natural. Therefore, I am not able to

not discuss this doctrine, and thus elucidate this account for use by later generations of exemplary scholars junzi 君子.

The annotators of the collection used for this study make note of three historical comments\(^\text{122}\) on Su’s “Treatise on Lu Yin Gong.” Three eminent scholars from the three later dynasties of Southern Song (1127-1279), Ming (1368-1644), and Qing (1644-1912), gave the highest accolades to Su Shi’s argument, which illustrates the enduring strength of Su’s treatise. The Southern Song scholar, Huang, Zhen 黃震 (1213-1281) wrote that Su’s treatise shows extreme excellence, and Su’s argument that Duke Yin was not a “regent” is sufficient to break Ouyang Xiu’s theory.\(^\text{123}\) The Ming scholar, Mao Kun 茅坤 complimented in the strongest terms, that Su’s treatise inimitably penetrates to the bone, and that nobody had written to this remarkable level.\(^\text{124}\) The early-Qing scholar Chu Xin 儲欣 (1631-1706) wrote that Su acutely criticized the dynasties subsequent to Zhou (1046-256 BCE) for having empresses serve as regents and that Su’s article instructs future ages through this written prose.\(^\text{125}\)

A compelling reason to recognize these annotated reviews by famed scholars in later Chinese history is that they provide an unambiguous contrast to Zhu Xi’s remarks on the inscription prose Su Shi had written only a few weeks earlier. Zhu commented on Su’s “Junling Wang Inscription,” that Su seemed to have reached a degree of being mentally disturbed, or lost his mind. Zhu attributed as a significant factor, if not the primary factor, as one arising from Su’s

\(^{122}\) SSQJ, 10:479.
\(^{123}\) SSQJ, 10:479.
\(^{124}\) SSQJ, 10:479. Mao Kun is also known for solidifying Su’s appellation as one of the “Eight Great Prose Masters of the Tang and Song” Tang Song Ba Da Jia 唐宋八大家, through the wide circulation of personal collections and commentaries.
\(^{125}\) SSQJ, 10:479.
extended period of exile across the sea. These dialogues lead us to an inescapable question holding significant relevance to all of Su’s prose in his final year of life after the Hainan exile; was Su in an unmoored state of mind upon notice of his amnesty? In contrast, to Zhu Xi’s assessment, Su’s intellect is prominently praised for writing this clear and detailed treatise.

When evaluating these two bodies of work written just after the notice of amnesty, these questions do not easily reconcile when comparing their proximity in dating of less than one month apart. They reconcile better if analyzing the starkly contrasting qualities of these two pieces of prose. This is a question deserving further consideration and contextual analysis after contemplating other notable works in the entries below.

2.1.2 Second of Three Letters, the Eighth Lunar Month of 1100

After an ongoing and roving path northward, Su arrived at his designated posting in Lianzhou in the seventh month, the fourth day of 1100. Su’s above treatise on Lu Yin Gong is also dated to that same day. The context of Su’s travels back across the sea, through the previous month of 1100, combined with the displayed erudition within his treatise text above, suggests a sharpened mind had reemerged from the Hainan exile. Considering this state of mind, it assists in now contextualizing Su’s response to the second imperial directive that arrived just three months after the first initial directive. Su wrote this second memorial letter in response to a new directive that was now ordering Su to move to Yongzhou, instead of Lianzhou. Su received this imperial

<table>
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<tr>
<td>126 Zhu, Xi 朱熹 “Lunwenshang” 論文上. in Zhuzi yulei 朱子語類. 5375.</td>
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<tr>
<td>127 The 4th day of the seventh (lunar) month in the year 1100, equates to the western calendar date of August 11th.</td>
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</table>
notification and immediately tendered his official second memorial letter in reply during the eighth month of 1100. Recall that Su’s memorial letter of reply three months earlier to the directive assigning him to Lianzhou contained allusions that all conformed with Confucian traditions.

A perceptible change of mindset is detected in this second letter, and a more conspicuous modification occurring in this second memorial is that Su begins opting for Daoist allusions. He quotes from the Zhuangzi, and includes allusions to Liezi, and the *Huainanzi* 淮南子.

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### 謝量移永州表
**Memorial of Gratitude for Imperial Edict Transfer to Yongzhou**

海上囚拘 分安死所；天邊漸汗，詔許生還．
駐世之魂，自招合浦，感恩之淚，欲漲溟波． 中謝．

A prisoner confined across the seas, gradually resolving there as his death place; (suddenly) The grand announcement came to those ends of the Earth, and the imperial order permitted me to return alive. My soul is placed back into an official posting, since being beckoned to Hepu 合浦, (viz, Lianzhou 廉州), my tears of gratitude raise the sea and waves. Your servant is grateful for this favor.

伏念臣生而愚朴，少也艱勤．倀倀而行，不知所屆；衝衝而活，何以為生？言則招尤，動常速禍．顧己於時齟齬，使人費力保全．仁宗之朝早得名．神考之朝終見貸．謂宜飾躬自省，去惡莫為，而乃肆言元祐之間，放意太平之際．凡獲不虞之譽，宜任非常之辜．過既暴聞，眾知不赦．先皇帝明罰勑法，

使萬里以思愆；今天子發政施仁，無一夫之失所．凡在名籍，舉賜洗渝．

Your servant was born foolish and simple, and when he was young experienced hardship and diligence. Wandering about, not knowing where I’m going; acting like a

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129 *SSQJ*, 13:2831.
fool, relying on what for life? Speaking, then incurring grudges; acting, then often inviting misfortune. I consider myself and the times are uneven like upper and lower teeth that do not match (齟齬), while others are still strenuously saving me from damage.

I acquired fame early during the court of Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1022-1063).

Speaking fittingly of that, I should have self-reflected on my faults, eliminating my bad behaviors, and not have such conduct again. Yet I again spoke recklessly during the years of Yuanyou (1086-1093) and behaved wantonly in the duration of peace and tranquility.

All those obtaining unexpected praises, are also good at excessive sins. Faults [of mine] already exposed are well-known; everyone knows I should not be pardoned. The late Emperor's fair penalty through imperial orders sent me ten thousand miles away to ponder my transgressions. Today the Son of Heaven bequeathed this benevolent policy, and not even one person has lost their positioned place. Every person in that named registry, are all now bestowed with a cleansing ablution.

For bringing me back from the middle of the sea, although returning me to outside the five mountain ranges, I salute the munificence of the Emperor's kindness, and I understand the secretiveness of the divine transformation. In carrying along the damaged family (homeland), like navigating a reed boat. With water dragons and crocodiles hiding at the bottom, and unafraid of storms and billows. Then balancing our registered people, by not leaving their ghosts in foreign lands. All I can see are birds and beasts bowing their gratitude to heaven and earth. The sun its at its zenith; at its bare utmost point, and my heart is galloping back to the towering imperial court. The mountain pass connecting to my native place is just entering sight; I still have hope to return my bones to Mount Mei 眉山. In remaining life, without taking part in killing myself, this writing ends again, with a deep gratitude beyond death.
After more than a month traveling northward, Su Shi arrived at Lianzhou on the 4th day of the seventh lunar month. During that seventh lunar month, Su wrote only six prose texts. They include the Lu Yin Gong treatise above, and five other short prose letters, all of which were profoundly Confucian in theme. In the following eighth lunar month of 1100, Su received the second set of imperial orders. Su replies that same month, but with Daoist qualities in his choice of allusions, and thus diverging from the predominantly Confucian allusions in his first memorial letter in the fifth month, and his treatise written during the sixth month.

Once again, Su begins this memorial letter salutation with an allusion from the Zhouyi, but in this instance, possibly uses this allusion to confirm the appropriateness of his recent pardon. “The great announcement (渙汗) came to the ends of the Earth, and the imperial order permitted me to return alive.” Su asserts by using this reference that the correctness and magnanimity of the emperor’s decision are in harmony with divine intent. This hexagram’s divination pronounces:

His grand proclamation spreading like perspiration, spreading the royal storehouses, without any calamity. Su’s use of this allusion can be interpreted as a confirmation of the Emperor’s greatness, but moreover, as Su’s attempt at confirming to the Emperor about the correctness of his pardon. This same message was detected in Su’s initial memorial letter three months earlier.

However, by Su observing the rapid changes occurring within three months of his previous official posting, Su voiced lingering apprehensions. Su confided in a letter to his brother about his fears of potential dangers ahead. He felt adversarial jeopardies were remaining within

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131 SSJZS, 280.
the emperor’s coterie and among imperial court advisors in the capital. For that reason, he did not think it wise to either reside or be stationed too close to the capital.

In this letter’s second paragraph, Su again proceeds with self-criticism and acknowledges his many errors in life. His errors began from a young age, and contributed to leading his life lacking in harmonious synchronization with contemporaries. This allusion to the *Liji* accents Su assuming culpability for his past official roles where he attributes his actions as violating rules for regulating a state. “Your servant was born foolish and simple, experienced hardship even though working diligently when young. Wandering about (徬徨而行), not knowing where I'm arriving.” The full sentence includes comments attributed to Confucius as clarifying, “what is *li*? Namely, it is the affair of ruling.” The intertextual passage from the *Liji* asks:

治國而無禮，譬猶瞽之無相與？徬徨其何之？

Ruling a country without *li*, is in example, like a blind man going somewhere without someone accompanying? Aimlessly wandering about, how could one ever get anywhere?

Su conjures imagery by this literary device of reduplicating a verb, that works to infer his mistakes in finding his way were previously much like those of a blind man. Reduplicating verbs in Chinese seem “to have derived from the notion of “repetition” and its related notions of “plurality” and “continuation.” Using this textual device in a letter to the Emperor is something of notice, since Su did not, for the most part, use this phonaesthetic feature in his last

133 *LJZS*, 50:10.
year of writings outside of poetry. We may suppose that Su’s use of this wordplay was acceptable for primarily emphasizing his self-criticism.

In the same animated mood, Su continues with imagery extracted from an entirely different source, but again using reduplication of a verb, for “keeping a life like a fool” 衝衝而活. Su continues in this rather spirited manner, with another rhyming-sound disyllabic word dieyunci 疊韻词, composed of two mononyms semantically dependent on each other.135 “I consider myself and the times are like upper and lower teeth that do not match properly” (juyu 齦齬) In this major category of Chinese language descriptive rhyme words, when associated to physical appearances having apparent outward manifestations, [they] do for the greater part convey negative undertones.136 This literary phonaesthetics device works to accentuate Su’s contrition. Su is using the “truth conditions”137 of a conceptual metaphor for how “teeth” fit together for representing the “self.” Teeth, as a conceptual metaphor, is discussed in more detail in the final letter of Su’s three memorials.

Indeed, in these sentences, Su uses various means of communicating specific points of remorse and repentance to the imperial court. Su, in theory, could be engaging in these literary conventions to indicate a stronger emotional emphasis of his personal faults.

When Su recounts his past, he initially defers to Confucian texts, but when speaking of the future he then shifts to Daoist texts. Su addresses his recent imperial pardon by ostensibly

136 Yip, 186–189.
casting doubt on the perennial difficulty of making correct adjudications about an official’s conduct. Su writes, “All those who received unexpected praises (凡獲不虞之譽), are also good at carrying excessive sins,” in an allusion to Mencius.\(^{138}\)

Mencius said: With unexpected praise, there is also the condemnation of seeking perfection.

Su is possibly using this passage from *Mencius* for leveling his own circumstances. Mencius speaks in this chapter, about premises for honorable rule in the kingdom.\(^{139}\) This chapter is the culmination of virtues outlined in the first three chapters that successively build upon each other in a sorites style argument; they explain what makes good rulers and proper use of the rites *li*. Lau points out that this chapter of the *Mencius* extols that the “benevolence” of a great ruler may not be appropriately understood.\(^{140}\) This message works on Su’s behalf, as this chapter exalts values that are beyond the essential levels of the first three chapters. The implication is that Su is praising the young Song Emperor of having already attained the previous levels of development even though the Emperor is just eighteen years old, and has only been emperor for six months. However, Su extends the meaning beyond the original second half of the sentence. It appears as if Su is magnifying the possibility of misperceptions, that went beyond the severity of his faults.

The significant philosophical change occurring in Su’s next paragraph moves away from Confucian references, and into Daoist thoughts with a very cryptic allusion. In this final section,

Su draws an extremely Daoist reference about transmitting secret knowledge of esoteric manifestation. Su ascribes this ability as being secretly known by the Emperor. The *Liezi* quotation about those people having this power reads: 141

子列子曰：善為化者，其道密庸，其功同人.

Master Liezi held: “Those who are good at shape-shifting, their knacks are secretive, [though] they act like ordinary people.

This intertextual reference invites interpretations of why Su is ascribing upon the Emperor the shape-shifter insinuations arising in this nature of Daoist metaphysical thought. The context of the full passage has Liezi recounting examples of these profound abilities. The essay posits that the legendary sage rulers, the three kings and five emperors (*san wang wu di*) did not achieve their triumphs through particular virtue and deeds, but asserts their great successes came as a result of understanding the secret *hua* techniques. With this allusion, Su submits that the Emperor already has access-understanding of the mysterious “hua”. This esoteric Daoist thought from the *Liezi* designates a Master Yinwen who gives details in an explanation:

“昔老聃之徂西也，顧而告予曰：… "
In former times before Laozi went west, he imparted this knowledge to me. 142

The abilities gained from one’s understanding of the adroit ingenuity of hua, allow that person to move unconstrained between life and death, among other miraculous skills. Assuredly, the technical methods were not recorded in bamboo strips, so later generations have not had access

142 *LZJS*, 99.
to this knowledge. Su’s submission suggests that the state of the country is naturally in harmonious accord precisely because the Emperor has this miraculous knowledge.

Su blends a metaphor in the next phrase with an allusion. In Su’s rendering, he situates the Emperor as nimbly navigating tribulations of the court intrigues and overcoming any insurmountable challenges in dynastic governing. “Carrying along the damaged family (or country), sail by a bundle of reeds (航以一葦). [with] water dragons and alligators hidden at the bottom, storms and billows are not frightening.” The original “He Guang” 河廣 reference from the Shijing intones:143

誰謂河廣，一葦杭之
Who calls the He 河 (Yellow River) vast?
With a bundle of rushes, I [can] navigate across.

Su’s power of allusion that is strongly supporting the Emperor is from the Shijing and implies fearless leadership even though dangerous forces are lurking and submerged from vision. The Northern Song was already embracing much higher societal plurality in comparison to previous dynasties. Foreign lands especially to the west, and in the north, were appeased into peaceful coexistence by non-military approaches. This Song policy was contemporaneously viewed as an enlightened rule, which was purposely meant to distinguish Northern Song ideals from those of previous dynasties that had been attributed with unenlightened policies and led to ruin. Su exemplifies the Emperor as being effortlessly able to realize these ideals.

Nearing the close of the final paragraph, Su injects another evocative strain of Daoist thought. Once again, because of the way Su couches allusions within a context of his own making, he leaves his meaning open to multiple webs of interpretation, which may have been one of his goals. By keeping any definitive meaning obscured, the aesthetic value of a piece of writing was often enhanced. Politically, this had also proved to be detrimental to Su’s career in that his partisan enemies extracted meanings from his writing in ways to discredit his reputation, career, popularity, and influence.

The following allusion is an excellent case in point. Su conveys a topic that would suggest orientation with a positive Confucian context but instead links to Daoist writings. The images Su invokes conjure potential meanings that should be kept ambiguous, such as a meaning inferring criticism. In Su’s expression of words, he seems to conflate what a proper Confucian attitude would express, “The sun is still high; at the bare utmost point, my heart is galloping back to the court (魏闕).” However, Su sets up this thought using an allusion to the Zhuangzi: 144

身在江海之上，心居乎魏闕之下，奈何?
Physically I am located here above the river and sea, but my mind is dwelling under the city gate-towers of Wei, what can be done?

Su uses the Zhuangzi to express, “staying far away from court, but still thinking of them” – in this sense, it seems contrary to how the Zhuangzi generally portrays values that firmly resonate with Confucian associations. In considering the original verse, it is helpful to note the differences

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144 ZZQZ, “Rangwang” 讓王, 343-344.
in meanings compared to possible meanings that Su intends. In the Zhuangzi context, this anecdote recounts the ruler Prince Mou of Zhong-shan wrestling with mental conflicts when he engages seemingly-Confucian responsibilities. To free himself from his mental errors in thought, he seeks advice from Zhan, a spokesperson here for Daoist thinking. Included here is Graham’s interpretation of this passage in a true Zhuang-zian fashion, with Zhan appraising the Prince’s apparent limitations and providing an impertinent denouement in a somewhat withering conclusion.

“The [Zhong-shan] Prince Mou said to [Zhanzi], 'My body is here by the river and the sea, but my heart lingers on under the city gate-towers of Wei. What’s to be done?’ [Zhanzi replied,] 'Give weight to life. See life as heavy, and profit will be light to you.’ [The prince retorted,] 'Well though I know it, still I am unable to conquer myself.’ [The reply was], 'If you cannot conquer yourself, let go. Are there not aversions which are from the daemonic (神) in us? To be able to conquer oneself, yet force oneself not to let go, this is what they call being wounded twice over. Men who wound themselves twice over are the sort that never live long.’ Mou of Wei was a prince of ten thousand chariots, and to hide away in the caves of the cliffs was harder for him than for a commoner. Even though he had not attained the Way, we may say that he had the idea of it.’

This original passage does not appear to reconcile with Su’s memorial letter. In his letter to the Emperor, what underlying purpose would elicit Su to select such a passage from the Zhuangzi? It merits our consideration and intimates Su’s core Daoist ideology surfacing. From this letter forward, allusions increasingly reflect Daoist thought, even when Su is writing to express his thinking on Confucian and Buddhist themes.

At first glance, Su’s closing salutation seems prescient, since it suggests something that would come to fruition just three months later. Su subtly mentions his old home in the final sentence – appearing as if it was a sudden spontaneous thought. This suggests that Su was inviting consideration by the Emperor in making any future decisions of official postings to embrace Su’s desire for his remains to reach his old home in Meishan (Chengdu).

鄉關人望，尚期歸骨於眉山。
The mountain pass connecting to home is entering sight;
I still hope to return my remains to Mt. Mei.

A strong impression comes from Su injecting this reference to Chengdu, and it seems to stand somewhat out of place in his memorial letter of gratitude. It invites one to surmise political volatility at the imperial court, since Su was now being relocated only three months after his initial post-exile placement. At this point, Su could have reasoned it wise to insert plans for any future transfer-decisions beforehand and make his ultimate wish known. If this was the purpose of Su including this information, it was insightful. Indeed, three months later the third imperial directive assigned Su with a title in Chengdu.

In retracing Su’s path for a moment to a couple months earlier, Su had written two letters to his friend Fan Yuanchang (the relative of Qin Guan). Su mentions that he had just heard rumors that he might be moving to Huangzhou. It appears that this information is mentioned nowhere else in any of Su’s prose writings. Elsewhere, it is noted that Su meet together with his fellow pardoned colleague, Qin Guan in Leizhou between the 20th and 25th days of the sixth lunar month. This invites speculation that Su heard this rumor from Qin Guan’s sources, and is

146 SSQJ, 16:5456.
brought into discussion further below. Su closes again with a formulaic literary convention from
the Zuozhuan. Su figuratively extends this idiom of his loyalty to beyond death, by extending
this original image even further below the Nine Springs.\textsuperscript{147}

In Su’s second memorial letter, we can consider the categories showing how Su manifests
his allusions for conscripting Daoist texts to carry Confucian messages. These categories are not
the stock phrases that are usually associated with these philosophical themes. In a quantitative
count, this letter demonstrates a transition in which allusions Su used for the following purposes.

\textit{Table 4. Quantifying the transition in types of allusions of Su’s second memorial}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity of allusions for each purpose:</th>
<th>Yijing</th>
<th>Liezi</th>
<th>Shijing</th>
<th>Huainanzi</th>
<th>Liji</th>
<th>Fayan</th>
<th>Zhuangzi</th>
<th>Zuozhuan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) praising the emperor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B) expressing self-criticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C) expressing loyalty</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{SSJZS}, vol. 17, “Xuangong shiwunian” 宣公十五年, in \textit{Chunqiu zuozhuan} 春秋左傳, 772. Situated below the
“Nine Springs,” (or at the bottom of) the underworld in Chinese mythology, q.v. 結草於九泉之下耳.
In comparison to Su’s first memorial letter, the numerical incidences show a progressing change in the second letter by the higher quantity of thirteen Daoist allusions to *Liezi* and *Zhuangzi*.

Before Su departed Lianzhou on the 29th day of the eighth month, Su averaged a comparatively small number of only six post-exile prose writings per month. Of course, one was the very substantial treatise discussed above. The clarity of thought required for that type of formal treatise argument indicates that Su was actively engaging with his scholar-official capacities. Su also demonstrated his responsibilities by explicating complex passages from classics in order to improve the current Song state. Historians rate Su’s argument as superseding that of Ouyang Xiu’s, and that was an achievement not considered as a light undertaking.

### 2.1.2.1 Coping with the Sudden Death of Qin Guan

One month after Su received his second imperial directive, his writings show that disturbing news delivered a shock to his state of mind. Su documents his shaken thoughts when he was notified that Qin Guan had suddenly died on the eighth month, the 12th day (September 16) of 1100. It had been only six weeks earlier that Su shared time with Qin following their release from three years of exile. Qin was conceivably Su’s most dear friend. Qin’s death appears to have caused a tremor that influenced the content of Su’s writing from this point forward in his own remaining ten months of life. After encountering Qin’s death with such

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148 Su wrote the above-discussed treatise *lun* 隨 soon after his reprieve from Hainan exile, but did not write another treatise during his remaining twelve months of life.
surprise, Su’s writings suggest that Su was readjusting his considerations about just how sudden his own death may be in the offing.

Su writes with a tone of devastating shock, that he could not bring pen to paper. Su expresses the irony that though both Su and Qin had survived the past seven years of exile, Qin died only three months after regaining freedom. More than 100 officials from the Yuanyou period had been sent into exile. Su also captures the irony that of all exiled Yuanyou officials, and despite Su being sent into the most abhorrent of exile locations, he was one of only ten or so Yuanyou scholars still alive.

Su’s prose writings over the next few months show, through his topics and historical allusions, a transition taking root. His texts show him repositioning his perceptions of death, and how he situates himself in the world. On the 6th day of the ninth month (October 10) in 1100, Su writes to Qin’s relatives about this distressing news of Qin’s unexpected fate. Su expressed his frustration about not appropriately dispensing a letter of news, “for the reason that he could not bear to write yet” 故不忍下筆. About Qin Guan’s death, Su recounted bumping into an official who told him that Qin Guan stayed at Rong several days. On the day of his death, he was drinking wine, composing poems, with everything like usual. Qin is said to have gotten heat exhaustion (tired and sleepy), and suddenly died. while enjoying a pleasant day with folks at Guang Hua Pavilion 光化亭.

索水欲飲，水至，笑視之而卒.

With everything normal, [Qin Guan] was suddenly very thirsty, and requested water. When water was delivered, he just looked upon the person with a smile and died.

149 *SSQJ*, 17:6402.
150 *SSQJ*, 6403.
Su began writing an emotional tribute saying Qin was a modern-day first-class scholar; if Qin was alive, he really would have been useful for society. If not active in statecraft, he would have written some great scholarly texts for later generations to read. All his previous writings were already brilliant, but he was not finished; it should not be ended yet, how sad! Qin’s son really inherited his father’s manner, that continuing his father’s style is the only thing that comforts me. I [Su Shi] will be arriving at Tengzhou where Qin died, and will report more to Ouyang after that. Then because Qin died of heat, he reminded Ouyang to please take care in this high heat. At this height of sorrow, Su’s account demonstrates his underlying ethical belief that service to the age was the uppermost expectation for scholars like Qin and himself.

“Lamenting, oh, sorrowfully, oh, for Shaoyou (Qin Guan), [we are] unexpectedly mourning this outstanding person!” 哀哉少游，痛哉少游，遂喪此傑耶! On the 10th day of that ninth lunar month (October 14) in 1100, Su passed through Leizhou again and arrived in Rongzhou. He writes that he was unable to express the extent of their grieving and mourning, with his condolences. His expression of aching lament was amplified from the rare circumstances that Qin died while Qin’s other two brothers were on the road carrying back the remains of their deceased father. Now they must change their route because their brother Qin had also died. Su said he would arrive on 16th or 17th day to Qin’s place of death, and hopes they will stay until he arrives there. Su wrote he would stay on there at Wuzhou, because his own family members were also coming from Huizhou to meet him there.

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151 SSQJ, 16:5458.
Su had read an elegy in Qin’s own hand only months earlier when they met back in Leizhou on the 25th day of the sixth month. Now, in the ninth month, with these unforeseen circumstances happening so soon afterward, Su wrote a postscript elegy to attach to Qin’s own hand-written elegy. Su suggests that when they met three months earlier, he had thought Qin just didn’t care about if his life would end, but now the elegy Qin wrote seems to make more sense.

書秦少游挽詞後
A Postscript on the Qin Shaoyou Elegy

庚辰歲六月二十五日，予與少游相別於海康，意色自若，與平日不少異，但自作挽詞一篇，人或怪之。予以謂少游齊死生，了物我，戲出此語，無足怪者。已而北歸，至藤州，以八月十二日，卒於光化亭上。嗚呼，豈亦自知當然者耶。

Qin Guan and I departed from each other back in Haikang on the sixth (lunar) month, the 25th day. His manner and appearance were calm and at ease, without even the slightest difference from usual. However, in writing this piece for his own elegy, people are perhaps bewildered by it. I give an imposing appellation for Shaoyou (Qin), he had equalized death and life 予以謂少游齊死生, removing the differentiation between things and the self 了物我, in dramatically putting forth these words, they are not bewildering. Afterward, while returning northward, arriving at Tengzhou, on the eighth month, 12th day (September 17), Qin died upon the Guang Hua Pavillion. Alas, it well could also have been that he already knew his death would come soon. Hereupon is the record of his poem.

A principal perspective contained in the remarks Su immediately wrote concerning the death of Qin Guan, are those drawing from the second Inner Chapter of *Zhuangzi*: “Qiwulun” 齊物論. Su’s words proclaim Qin Guan had accomplished a high attainment in Daoist ideals; Su

152 *SSQI*, 19:7727.
153 *ZZQZ*, “Qiwulun” 齊物論, 12-33.
expressed Qin must have reached an equanimity towards death. Graham translates this superlative from Zhuangzi as, “Without an Other there is no Self, without Self no choosing one thing rather than another.”

Only two months before Qin’s death, the two friends rejoiced in their regained freedom from exile. Su questions whether Qin Guan had actually known at that reunion of his impending death, despite Qin having self-written his elegy in a manner implying sardonic jest. Su read Qin Guan’s self-written elegy at that reunion. It was sad, with tones of despair, within lines of five-character rhymed verse. Qin had written from a future point-in-time perspective as if he had in fact died while enduring the sadness of exile.

Su now raises the question, should he blame himself that he may not have understood what his friend was trying to communicate when showing Su this elegy three months earlier? Su also questioned the possibility of whether death did not carry any importance to Qin Guan, and therefore it had not been worth mentioning to Su when they met. In this latter case, Su recognized this as Qin’s high attainment of psychologically transcending death, such as spoken of in Zhuangzi. Su’s reflections on attaining such an enlightened view on death are detected within Su’s writings from this point forward in his remaining months of life.

2.1.3 Third of Three Letters, the Eleventh Lunar Month of 1100

In the eleventh lunar month, Su wrote his memorial of gratitude for a third (and final) imperial directive, that now specified his official posting title as affiliated with a Daoist temple in

154 Graham, *Chuang-Tzŭ*, 51. “Without an Other there is no Self, without Self no choosing one thing rather than another.” 非彼無我，非我無所取.
Chengdu. Further transformation in Su’s choices of allusions occurs in this third memorial letter. This third memorial shows Su increased the ratio of Daoist references to four of the eight in total.

In contrast to his first memorial letter that quoted the *Shangshu* “Yaodian,” Su now uses the *Zhouyi* to refer to the current stage of time for conveying the conditions of society. Another contrast with the second letter is in allusions on self-criticism. Su makes a noticeable change from previously referencing the Confucian text *Liji* in the second memorial, to a shift in this third memorial that references the Daoist text *Zhuangzi* for that purpose.

提舉玉局觀謝表

Memorial of Gratitude for Posting as Chief of the Yuju Daoist Temple

Your servant first followed the imperial order from Changhua Jun to move to Lianzhou, then again from Lianzhou followed another imperial order for a move to a Yongzhou position. Now in traveling to Yingzhou, again receiving an imperial order, for a position in Chengdu as *tiju* 提舉 (a type of Daoist Temple token position). Seven years in remote exile, [I] did not expect to keep intact, ten thousand miles but returned alive, it was just providential favor from heaven. Suddenly from a prisoner, [I am] reinstated as a member among aligned teeth *chi* 齲 of government officials. Your servant, Shi 軾, is grateful for your favor.

伏念臣才不逮人，性多忤物。剛褊自用，可謂小忠；猖狂妄行，乃蹈大難。皆臣自取，不敢怨尤。會真人之勃興，與萬物而更始。而臣獨在幽遠，最為冥頑。迨茲起廢之初，倍費生成之力。

156 *SSQJ*, 13: 2787.
From self-examination, your servant's talent is inferior to others', with a personality that is disobedient, and opinionated -- one may well say petty loyalty; acting savagely wild in rash ways, then treading into a great catastrophe. These were all invited by your servant himself, and I do not dare to hold grudges. Meeting the vigorous flourishing of an authentic person, together with all infinite things making regeneration. Your subject was alone in distant seclusion, in a most tenacious manner. Until now, it appears the beginning of rescindment, as many [of my] abilities were wastefully expended.

終蒙記錄，不遂棄捐。此蓋伏遇皇帝陛下，正位龍飛，對時虎變。神武不殺，豈非受命之符；清淨無為，坐獲消兵之福。聰明不作，邪正自分。使臣得同草木之微，共霑雷雨之澤。臣敢不益堅素守，深念往愆？沒齒何求，不厭飯蔬之陋；蓋棺未已，猶懷結草之忠。臣無任。

At the end, [my] dim-sighted record, failing to materialize and a relinquished contribution. This is an excellent chance for your majesty’s servant, in meeting the great dragon-in-flight emperor, at the time the tiger’s stripes transform. Having awesome military but not killing, how is it not an ordained talisman; purifying delusion through the doctrine of inaction (wu wei 無為), obtaining the fruit of good fortune of eliminating need for military and weapons. [Your Majesty] Hearing and seeing clearly, but not taking forceful, unnatural actions. Thus, your humble servant [Su Shi] together with grass and trees are all moistened by the thunder and rain. Your servant may venture, is it not beneficial keeping firmly to plainness, deeply remembering past transgressions? Without teeth how is there a request, there are no objections to eating humble foods. [My] coffin lid is not yet closed, and am still harboring in my bosom a loyalty beyond death. Your extremely grateful servant.

Su initiates this letter by reciting the sequential flurry of imperial directives sent to him over the previous six months. Without directly saying, Su conveys a sense of possible confusion existing by recounting these multiple decisions made at the imperial court level. Su then moves to emphasize the terrible suffering he had endured in this exile, and that Heaven’s providence
had saved him. Su’s tone suddenly changes to succinctly capture his gratitude for the overarching adjudication from his exile circumstances.

As a thought-provoking metonymy, Su again uses a conceptual metaphor of tooth/teeth *chi* 齦 to describe this desirable official appointment into the Chengdu position. He equates the scholar-officials as “aligned teeth.” Recalling in the second letter to the emperor (above), Su had equated himself as “unaligned teeth,” that did not match with the times 顧己於時齟齬. Within a cognitive linguistics model, Su both identifies his “self” as equivalent to one tooth, and also equates higher societal values with the physical environment of teeth working together. In this letter, the “aligned teeth” are the ideal of government officials in their capacities, and in relationship to the larger body of the country/emperor/citizens. In the “unaligned teeth” metaphor, Su indicates that his “self” is unaligned with the “times.” Here, Su infers that time is a conceptual structure that must be in proper harmony for a scholar-official (*shi da fu* 士大夫) of his status.

Near the end of this third letter, in another tooth/teeth conceptual metaphor, Su gives teeth an autonomous quality where having teeth can dictate actions to be generated in one’s self. He attributes teeth with states of eating. He wonders aloud to the emperor about how can the “self-directed quality” of what his teeth currently eat, move outside of their current action and causally move him to consider new future actions.

Su belittles his personal character flaws, and then borrows a phrase from *Zhuangzi*, “unmannered, and wildly carrying on in egotistical, presumptuous ways, only they tread in
accordance with propriety 充狂妄行，乃蹈乎大方.” 157 In Zhuangzi, this anecdote construes a positive meaning. Su altered this sentence to mean tread into great trouble 乃蹈大難. But despite Su’s ironic changes-in-wording, this can still be interpreted that Su wanted to express that no matter how wildly he might have behaved, he was still able to keep to the grand rules.

The following indicates a key juncture in Su’s life. Since this letter is essentially sending him back home, where he hopes to inter his remains, he utters that he had not reached his desired contributions. 158 Su directly states, “at the end.” An interpreted impression is that Su is approaching an assessment that his time of contribution in the world, is essentially finished. This is a crucial moment of recognition. This clearly mentioned transition point in Su’s prose can be seen as the beginnings of Su sailing on a different tack for his remaining months. In considering the psychological impact of this official posting on Su, bear in mind that the retirement age at this time in Northern Song was seventy years old. Su was only sixty-four years old at the time of this letter. Essentially, with receipt of this imperially designated position in Chengdu, this was in essence the official beginning of Su’s retirement. This key point is a critical element for the setting of Su’s prose writings in his remaining eight months of life.

Su praises the emperor in the first half of his sentence with a Zhouyi 周易 hexagram reference in the Qiangua jiuwu 乾卦九五 that states: the flying dragon is in the heavens; favorable to meet a great person 飛龍在天，利見大人 159; Su’s second half of his sentence

158 Su described that in the end, his dim-sighted record failed to materialize and had a relinquished contribution. 終蒙記錄, 不遂棄捐.
159 SSJZS vol. 1, "Qian" 乾, in Zhouyi 周易, 7.
comes from the *gégua* 革卦 hexagram, prognosticating: the great person like the tiger transforms 大人虎變.¹⁶⁰ These praises work to emphasize that the emperor is aligned with divined oracle truths.

Guiding principles from Daoism begin increasing as Su’s preferred allusions for carrying praise. Harking to the *Laozi* 老子, Su relates that the Song emperor(s) understood the *Daodejing* 道德经 ideal of unused military implements.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, in rulers’ attainment of *wu wei* 無為,¹⁶² Su commends the emperor for reaching this conceptualized Daoist ideal of harmony with the world. Su acclaims the emperor as both peaceful and one letting things take their own course 清靜無為, and also hearing and seeing clearly but not taking forceful/unnatural actions 聰明不作. Referring to *jiegua* 解卦 hexagram, Su attributes to the emperor as providing [Su], together with the grass and trees, to all (metaphorically burst out with life) the same as when moistened in spring by the thunder and rain.¹⁶³

Su again closes with his same previous formulaic literary convention. Su expresses his loyalty to the Emperor by the expression of tethered grasses *jie cao* 結草 indicating a deep loyalty to the bottom of the Hades-like realm of the Nine Springs.

¹⁶⁰ *SSJZS* vol. 1, ”Ge“ 革, in *Zhouyi* 周易, 240.
¹⁶¹ He Shanggong 河上公, *Laozi Daodejing He Shanggong zhangju* 老子道德經 河上公章句 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993; hereafter *LDDJ*), 303.
¹⁶² *Wu wei* 無為, the doctrine of inaction, is mentioned eleven times within the eighty-one sections of the *Daodejing* 道德經.
¹⁶³ *SSJZS* vol. 1, ”Jie“ 解, in *Zhouyi* 周易, 197.
2.1.3.1 Coping with the Sudden Status of Retirement

This third and final directive was seemingly in accordance with Su’s subtle suggestion in his second letter three months earlier. Su mentioned in that letter with the appearance of a spontaneous poetic tone, that the mountain pass leading back to his old home just came into sight, reminding him of his hope to return his remains there someday. These points of discussion invite speculations on what was happening politically in the capital regarding these rapidly changing imperial court decisions.

On the personal level, it leads to questions about how Su would now reconcile himself with losing the lifetime identity he had always relished. Upon entering this transition stage away from his scholar-official identity, Su prose text content reveals him coping with challenges of sorting out what his life purpose should be from this point forward.

Su begins to address his new station in life in the following letters; one can hear several issues echoing in his thoughts. He laments that many great scholars of the age are now lost. He implies that he himself is beginning to wrestle with what retirement status means. He writes as if he was entering unknown territory concerning his future identity, and struggled in reconciling his removal from the official status where he had always measured his life by government service contribution. Not just concerning a looming loss of identity, or of personal mortality, the following few short pieces of prose writings capture Su beginning to sort through evolving questions concerning his life-transition.

Su includes the news of receiving his new position in a letter of condolences. When looking at the first couple of sentences, the allusions identify Su’s disconcerted sorrows. Death
and loss are the two topics immediately following his announcement of the nominal title he received back in his old home realm of Chengdu.

與范元長
Note To Fan Yuanchang\textsuperscript{164}

某忽有玉局之除，可為歸田之漸矣。痛哲人云亡，誦殄瘁之章，如何可言。I suddenly received the position of Temple Chief (yu ju 玉局)\textsuperscript{165} and could return home and retire (gui tian 歸田). Mourning for the deaths of wise men; chanting the chapter of “Extermination and ruin” - what can I possibly say?

In this note of condolences, Su blends quotes from the Shijing and Liji to grieve for both of Fan’s relatives, namely, Fan's father and Fan’s in-law relative Qin Guan. The first allusion of “mourning for deceased [good] men,” comes from a refrain response in the \textit{Shijing}.\textsuperscript{166}

\begin{quote}
人之云亡，國邦殄瘁.
Men departed and it is said a loss, and it is our country’s ruin.
人之云亡，心之憂矣.
Men departed and it is said a loss, and our hearts are mourning.
人之云亡，心之悲矣.
Men departed and it is said a loss, and our hearts are in sorrow.
\end{quote}

Su renders the beginning of each line similarly, but the three modified endings imply the variety of reasons for Su’s distress. Su laments the country’s loss of talent, hearts in mourning, and hearts of grief. These three aspects simultaneously identify current emotional turbulences.

\textsuperscript{164} \textit{SSQI}, 16: 5461.
\textsuperscript{165} Egan, 218. Egan describes the \textit{yuju} position as a “titular office as overseer of a Taoist temple in Chengdu and permitted him [Su] to reside wherever he chose.”
\textsuperscript{166} \textit{SSJSZS} vol. 6, “Daya dangzhishen zhan'ang” 大雅蕩之什瞻卬, in \textit{Shijing} 詩經, 1483-1484.
expressed in Su’s writings. The “wise men” portion of the sentence is from the *Liji*, in words from a song that Confucius sang when he was about to enter his own deathbed.167

泰山其頹乎？粱木其壞乎？哲人其萎乎？
Mt. Tai has collapsed? The rafter pillars have broken? A wise man has died?

Su captures their sorrows within this single line. Su shares, in condolence, his grieving over the death of friends, and lamenting the loss of talents for the country.

Soon after, in the first two sentences of a letter replying to another friend, Su communicates in a self-mocking manner about how he really interprets the court’s view of Su by officially relegating him into this upcoming type of retirement.

**答彭賀州啟**
*Reply to Inform Peng Hezhou* 168

竄流海國，脫身齋鬼之林；灑掃真祠，拜賜散人之號。
Fleeing the island exile, freeing oneself from all previous restraints; sprinkling and sweeping the shrine, respectfully bestowed a title of *san ren* 散人.

喜歸田之有漸，悼報國之無期。
I am delighted at approaching my return to the fields, but mourn that it omits time for dedicating myself to serve the country.

Su includes a term mirroring his perceived status in the recent directive to Chengdu. He neither states clearly what his position title will become, nor mentions the name of his posting location,

167 *LJZS*: “Tan’gongshang” 栢弓上, no. 3, in *Liji zhushu* 禮記注疏, vol. 1, 7:17. Words to a song that Zigong heard Confucius singing just before entering his deathbed, and then which after seven days he died.
but only uses antonomasia. Initially, Su appears as half-jokingly conveying he will be a *san ren*, those useless persons “which by their own abilities make life miserable for themselves.”

This term is in a *Zhuangzi* passage about a huge and noble, but “useless” tree, carrying on a discussion within a “useless man’s” dream. The enormous tree served at an altar representing the god of the soil. The tree having been maligned this day, reproaches the man that night in his dream saying in disbelief about, “a nearly dead *useless man (san ren)*, yet he [this human] slanderously muses about a *useless tree!*” 而幾死之散人，又惡知散木！

Su injects his own situation, by choosing the symbolism of this vocabulary from the *Zhuangzi* allegory. Metaphorically, the allegory recounts in retrospect many of the same mistakes Su had brought upon himself in his own life, such as those resulting in his exiles. Su’s hopes and intentions in life were always to be useful. Though just like this tale, Su’s talents led to premature ends of his hopes and intentions, and his Hainan exile nearly led to the premature end of his life.

The sacred oak appeared in a dream and said to him: [Those trees considered useful] when their fruit ripens they are stripped, and in being stripped they are disgracefully abused, …by their own abilities make life miserable for themselves. … which by their own abilities make life miserable for themselves, and so they die in mid-path without lasting out the years assigned to them by Heaven, trees which have let themselves be made victims of worldly vulgarity.

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170 ZZQZ, “Renjianshi”人間世, 52-53.  
171 Graham, *Chuang-Tzū*, 73.
This transition point in Su’s thinking mirrors his recognition of the arguments in this intertextual allusion. By Su referencing this particular *Zhuangzi* passage, Su indicates he must implant a new perspective upon himself. The cognitive metaphor of the huge tree, epitomizes how Su was also considered a huge entity. Su points to his feelings of irony dictating his unwelcome acceptance of fate. This *Zhuangzi* passage could be just as viable by inserting Su as the speaker, in place of the huge tree. For people like Su (and the huge tree), *their productive ability made their lives bitter to them*. This remark is an issue that Su begins repeatedly voicing in his letters, as he looks upon retirement as a violating loss of his productive abilities.

Like the metaphorical tree, Su’s imposing stature in life reached great heights in his time, and he became an iconic figure revered by many. Recalling at this point, Su’s age was sixty-four years (*sui* 壬), and the Northern Song official retirement age was seventy *sui* at that time. It would be accurate to say that like the useful trees, Su did not complete the expectations equal to his abilities, and retirement was bringing a premature end to his time. Su received the destructive treatment of exile in the remotest of locations, and just six months after reprieve, Su enters into a new type of exile. The identity of retirement conflicted radically from how his personal views assessed his productive abilities.

The huge tree’s story offers advice for Su’s struggle to come to grips with retirement. Su was permanently losing the scholar-official identity he had been at ease clinging to throughout exile. Retirement brought something possibly more extreme than exile. Early retirement had, in actuality, brought upon Su a type of death. It was not physical death, but one manifesting Su’s identity through progressive states of expiry.
Su’s words appear as wrestling to discover some logic to refute his perception of *uselessness*, just as the *Zhuangzi* story’s master tries to quell the workman’s logic, “the reason of its being preserved is different from that of the preservation of things generally.” This logic does not appear in Su’s writings as a viable solution. Despite Su referencing *Zhuangzi* often, his prose texts indicate he did not yet seem able to embrace this outlook.

For the immediate future, Su continues to cast dispersions upon his new title of a *useless* “san ren” person. This theme of Su encountering a retirement-identity illustrates one major impetus for the direction of Su’s writings in his final six months.

**2.2 A Daoist Trying to Dress in a Buddhist Robe**

Su had not met his expectations of death, unlike the majority of the Yuanyou officials sent into exile. Su recognized several times in his writings that he was among the lucky few that had survived. Not only had he survived exile, but also that it was despite the explicit hostility toward Su. His enemies in the court had delighted in selecting the extreme circumstances particularly for Su. As the end of the year 1100 was drawing near, it had been six months since his pardon, and Su received his third, and final imperial directive. In the following section, Su’s writings indicate he was compelled to face a new transition after suddenly ordered into an early retirement.

The Northern Song world created by design a new system of scholar-officials *shidafu*. These officials held the highest fervor for their life-purpose of serving the country. Responding to the perceived failures of the Tang Dynasty, the civil design of the Northern Song was a progressive creation. Equally, in the Northern Song structure, Su’s role as a scholar-
official serving society was naturally, his raison d'être. Upon the moment he received this third and final directive, the existential grounding of his lifetime scholar-official identity was now suddenly erased.

Su’s writings in this final six-month period after the exile, show new inwardly-focused themes in his documented thoughts on overcoming, and even surviving unfamiliar types of psychological challenges. His writings move from his previous lifetime writings on topics predominantly external to himself, to topics concerned his life’s most deeply internal values. This transition point in Su’s prose writings begins appearing with discussions that primarily concern new justifications for his life meaning.

Besides retirement, a second existential matter arose. Su now saw death with a new acuity. Many friends had recently died. But it was the suddenness of death coming to his dear friend Qin Guan a few months earlier that Su continues to lament in prose letters. Su began selecting allusions representing intelligent ways of addressing death. Su’s writings from this time forward do not generally stray far from topics that were ultimately searching to identify more profound spiritual understandings of death. His writings indicate a developing search on transcending life, and also how his intelligence should guide him to embrace truly exemplary qualities when encountering his own approaching death.

Consequently, we discover transitions in Su’s writings that begin mirroring these two recent life-changing events – death and retirement. The following writings indicate these changes in Su’s mindset; though his health was stable at the beginning of the New Year in 1101, these two topics became the focus of his prose over the remaining six months of his life. Interpretation of the court directive can be viewed as an act of kindness in a positive sense, or in
a negative connotation one remanding Su into a position where officials are retired. Su repeats words of self-mockery in many writings over the next couple of months. His chosen allusions to Zhuangzi, convey that he viewed the court directive as relegating him with the negative epithet of san ren “useless person.” Su begins using this antonomasia to designate his new identity, and his writings communicate his apparent levels of sarcasm or disdain.

In reflection, a discernibly ironic situation occurred when analyzing the changes in Su’s three memorial letters to the emperor. In the first letter, his words showed overflowing joy at the news of release from exile. He recounted several times that he had not expected to return alive. He viewed the Hainan exile as in all likelihood ending his life purpose. In the second letter, his tone changes into one voicing more self-confidence – perhaps showing his certitude of a regained scholar-official status. With pardon from exile, he was now able to again join with the ranks of scholar-officials performing their appropriate duties. However, at the endpoint of his second letter, Su’s inserted the subtle remark/wish/suggestion, “The mountain pass connecting to my native place is entering sight; I still hope to return my bones to Mount Mei (眉山).” Soon afterward, when that wish was granted to him, it delivered the two conflicting emotions of both joy and distress.

In slight contrast to translations in the previous section of this study, the topics and content of this section allowed a direct translating style to encompass changing features in Su’s literary allusions. In the following section of this study covering Su’s final six months of prose writings, the content becomes noticeably less direct and almost exclusively displays Su explaining his evolving views on complex philosophies of the “Three Doctrines” (Sanjiao 三教).
2.2.1 New Year’s Day, 1101: Prose in Transition from the External to the Internal

Perhaps the most vivid illustrations of the philosophical transition in Su’s writings and thoughts are those immediately visible in two expository writings Su wrote on the lunar calendar New Year’s Day of 1101. Both of these two writings indicate Su’s focus on the two topics of retirement, and obliquely in the manner of transcending life-obstacles, death. Further details of these two writings follow the translations.

In China’s historical-cultural contexts, New Year’s day is traditionally the most auspicious day of the year; for his contribution on this auspicious day, Su captured his views on important, inspiring, and stirring thoughts for an altar inscription. In tracing Su’s written thoughts from this point forward, his writings indicate he was consolidating deeper philosophical values as he began these last six months of his life. The course of events to come during the first half-year of 1101, brought both misfortunes and joys as Su traveled northward.

In this period, Su was often traveling in his caravan of rented riverboats, and was almost daily visiting venerable temples, gravesites of relatives, and paying his respects to old friends along the way. Sometimes crowds accumulated along the river banks to view the famed scholar returning from Hainan exile. In the first few months of 1101, there were no indications that Su would soon develop a fatal illness. In the fifth month, he began suffering ongoing chronic illnesses, and the demise of his mortal existence became a definite possibility. Some scholars suggest Su may have drunk river water and developed a type of dysentery or cholera.

172 The lunar New Year Day of 1101 occured on the western calendar date of January 31, 1101.
In this section, we examine Su’s prose writings in conjunction with biographical contexts of events in his final six months. In tracing these writings, they indicate a consistent pattern developing in Su’s outlook. He almost exclusively began engaging a single question. What are the most deeply authentic realms when considering a significant life’s meaning? This final six-month period of writings shows Su primarily engaging life values where religion meets philosophy.

In the first illustration, Su includes in his formulaic preface for a shrine inscription the earlier metonymy coining his new official capacity as a (unused/idler) san ren. Su Shi includes clearly that it is he who was writing the following inscription, in his contribution of something honorable for ushering in the new year!

九成臺銘
Altar of Jiucheng Inscription 173

韶陽大守狄咸新作九成臺，玉局散吏蘇軾為之銘。曰:

The Chief of Shaoyang Prefecture, Di Xian 狄咸 is at the newly built Altar of Jiucheng 九成臺, and the Yuju 玉局 Temple’s “idler” san ren Su Shi, wrote this epigraph. It is here proclaimed:

自秦并天下，滅禮樂，《韶》之不作，蓋千三百二十有三年。其器存，其人亡，則《韶》既已隱矣，而況於人器兩亡而不傳。雖然，《韶》則亡矣，而有不亡者存，蓋常與日月寒暑晦明風雨並行於天地之間。世無南郭子綦，則耳未嘗聞地籟也，而況得聞於天?

173 *SSQJ*, 12:2151.
Since Qin 秦 unified the land under heaven, exterminating [Confucian] rites and music, the Shao pieces of music 韶 have not played for one thousand three hundred twenty and three years. Even if the instruments still existed, but only the players had died, the Shao would have disappeared; let alone with both the instruments and the players gone without being handed down. Although the [Confucian] Shao music is dead, there still are things that do not die, and that always move between heaven and earth along with the sun and moon, winter and summer, night and day, wind and rain. If the world had no [Zhuangzi] Nan-Guo Zi Qi 南郭子綦, then ears would not have heard the Notes of Earth 地顔, let alone hearing the Notes of Heaven 天顔.

使耳聞天顔，則凡有形有聲者，皆吾羽旄干戚、管磬匏絃。嘗試與子登夫韶石之上，舜峰之下，望蒼梧之眇莽，九疑之聯縈。覽觀江山之吐吞，草木之俯仰，鳥獸之鳴號，眾竅之呼吸，往來唱和，非有度數而均節自成者，非《韶》之大全乎？

If wanting to hear the Notes of Heaven, then all the things, that have shape and make sounds, should be my shields and battle-axes, feathered plumes, flute and sounding-stones, stringed instruments, and those made out of gourds. Endeavoring to scale the Shao Stone 韶石 at the foot of Mt. Shunfeng 舜峰, gazing at the big and small of Mt. Cang Wu 蒼梧 and the joining into Mt. Jiu Yi 九疑. Observing the to and fro that sends out and takes in between the river and the mountains, the grasses and trees bending down and raising their heads, birds and beasts wailing and howling, a multitude of orifices exhaling and inhaling 營窟之呼吸, a chorus singing and responding back and forth, not having beat measure but that is naturally self-rhythmed. Isn’t this the ultimate completion of the Shao?

174 It is believed that Shao 韶 was composed by the legendary sage and 22nd century BCE leader Shun 舜. It has been considered as the greatest piece of music throughout history, especially in Confucian teachings. It may be considered as one of the most important Confucian symbols of true harmony.
175 Graham, Chuang-Tzu. Nan-Guo Zi Qi appears in the first passage of the second Inner Chapter of Zhuangzi, and is observed by his disciple as dwelling in a state beyond the human condition. 南郭子綦隱几而坐，仰天而嘆，嗒焉似喪其耦.
The higher realms stand at the utmost extreme and bring harmony to all under heaven. People are harmonized; Qi responds; Qi responds then music is composed; then that is what is called “the nine parts of Shao being performed,” the appearing phoenix is then dancing composed with every manner of birds and beasts, however, this whole array is already marvelously revealed before us.

In Su’s writing of this auspicious New Year’s Day inscription, it is perhaps surprising how palpable the number of personal stances Su takes. This newly constructed altar was named in honor of the “Nine Parts of Shao.” However, Su immediately proceeds to deprecate the impermanence of the almost divine form known as Confucian Shao music. Su’s explanation alludes to Daoist realms as higher than Shao, and finally, Su attributes these higher Daoist realms of the “notes of Heaven” with what should be the true identity of Shao. He asks in this inscription, “Isn’t this the ultimate completion of the Shao?” In a contextual analysis, Su appears to be speaking to broader conversations. First, he condescendingly recognizes his retired status. In following proper protocols of introducing the inscription, Su honors the Shaoyang Prefectural Chief, but then immediately reaffirms his own “idler” functionary position as the unused san ren official writing this epigraph. This gesture subtly communicates that Su’s relationship with the world has changed. Although, despite his new status, the tone shows Su’s writing begins projecting more confidence than his writing tone in the previous six months after the pardon. Su may not have liked his new status, but his tone-change may reflect that he now had the freedom

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176 SSJZS, vol. 2, “Yushu yiji” 虞書益稷, in Shangshu 尚書, 153. The Shao contained nine chapters and part of it was played by Xiao 簫, so it is also called Xiao Shao《簫韶》九成, 凤皇来仪.
to express his thoughts more openly; whereas, Su’s previous six months had shown tones in his prose writings that were more stilted in expression.

Secondly, in looking at the textual elements of this inscription, Su chronologically builds a bigger picture from a historical premise that the official end of Shao music started with the Qin unification. Confucius had pronounced Shao as the most moving and majestic music he had ever witnessed. The Lunyu\(^{177}\) records that Confucius enjoyed the Shao so much that he forgot the taste of meat for three months. Su recounts that Qin had extinguished all the Confucian means of regulating society through rites and music (mie li yue 滅禮樂). Su opens by referencing these highest values of Confucian themes, but then leads into illuminating his views of the much grander Daoist system of natural order in the cosmos. Su’s sentences succinctly diminish both the Qin legalist systems, and in comparison, the higher-level Confucian systems of order. Su then builds upwards from these systems to present the contrasting excellence found in the higher attainments of music and natural harmony expressed in the Zhuangzi.

Su writes that the Shao music was contingent upon both the instruments and the musicians transmitting it to later generations. Su quotes Confucian passages from the Liji, that musical variations all manifest from the minds of men. However, the allusions Su includes here specify a philosophical disposition that music, like other ideals of mankind, is just responses to external causes. Su is pointing out this distinction between Confucian and Daoist traditions. In stating that this highest representation of Confucian ideals was dependent upon mankind, he

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\(^{177}\) SSJZS, vol. 23, “Shuer” 述而, in Lunyu 論語, 98. Confucius heard the Shao while he was in Qi, for three months [afterward] he did not know meat’s flavor. He said, “I never suspected music could reach to this [level of moving beauty]!” 子在齊聞韶，三月不知肉味，曰：‘不圖為樂之至於斯也!’
contrasts the higher form of Daoist ideals - in this case, music - as something not dependent on
the workings of humankind. It is beyond humankind’s control, and in general beyond
humankind’s considerations. Su equates the independent existence of the “Notes of Heaven”
with celestial movements of the sun, moon, wind, and rains.

This narrative to Su’s allusion is from the powerful opening story in the second chapter
of the Inner Chapters in the Zhuangzi. Some scholars suggest that this “Qiwulun” chapter of the Zhuangzi is the most philosophically compelling in content. In analyzing the
transition Su initiates for identifying himself at this time, and how this allusion augments Su’s
stance, it is helpful to look at how Graham contextualizes the “Qiwulun” chapter.178

The last word in the title Ch’i Wu Lun is sometimes understood as ‘discourse’
(‘The discourse on evening things out’), sometimes in its more basic sense of ‘sort out (in
coherent discourse).’ Comparison with the three-word titles of the other Inner Chapters
favors the latter alternative. Lun, ‘sorting out’, is the one kind of thinking always
mentioned with approval in Chuang-tzu. Outside Taoism it suggests grading in superior
and inferior categories, but Chuang-tzu detaches it from valuations, turns it into ‘the
sorting which evens things out.’

The theme of the chapter is the defense of a synthesizing vision against
Confucians, Mohists and Sophists, who analyze, distinguish alternatives and debate
which is right or wrong. It contains the most philosophically acute passages in the Inner
chapters, obscure, fragmented, but pervaded by the sensations, rare in ancient literatures,
of a man jotting the living thought at the moment of its inception…. with these
intellectual subtleties designed to discredit the intellect.

Su is arguably using this Zhuangzi reference for just the points Graham delineates above.
First, Su is using it as a discourse; it is a coherent discourse on sorting things out. Su appears
visibly grappling with how to sort out his new retired status. Su appears as still attached to a
mindset of his previous systems of thought. Identical to Graham’s description above, with duties

178 Graham, Chuang-Tzü, 48.
as a contributing scholar-official, Su had always approached life by intellectually grading things into superior and inferior categories.

In this New Year’s Day proclamation, Su’s Daoist allusion pervades the entire inscription. This prose work shows a mindset taking shape in Su’s writings reflecting his new status of retirement. Secondly, in the context of this rhetorical structure, Su is symbolically indicating a process of detaching from his previous identity in the world that had been required to adhere most strongly to Confucian taxonomies. The Confucian rules previously mandated Su towards taking intellectually logical approaches, and what he metaphorically represents in this inscription as Shao, are now plainly presented as inferior. Su expresses those structured Confucian views should be superseded per se, by these Zhuangzi understandings, which are designed to discredit the intellect.

Su positions for all future readers of his inscription, that though these Confucian systems either disappeared or are dead, “there still are things that do not die.” This writing and in the following six months of life, Su’s writings illustrate his transitioning into what he considers as the higher philosophical values of Daoism. He describes the Confucian systems as inherently undeveloped compared to hearing the Zhuangzi’s “Notes of Heaven” (tian lai 天籟).

Su's wordplay appears as beginning a process of relocating his identity. He appears moving away from his previous official duties relying on fundamental levels in Confucian basis of thought as a point of departure that is no longer suited for guiding his life. In the previous six months, Su’s writings do not reflect his measuring philosophical views for guiding his life. In Su’s historical past, his life events had usually been presented, and then followed with Su responding. More concisely, his life previously had usually been required to respond to external
events; in contrast, the norm in this period of Su’s writings begins turning to assess internal events. However, in his writings, this appears initially as Su confronting a challenge that is easier said than done. His previous value systems were dying a slow death. His writings reflect a continued attachment to processing with his logical intellect, right up to the day of his death.

Nevertheless, Su’s allusions in his prose writings from here forth, show he was increasingly accrediting Daoist views of as being the highest ideals for guiding a transcending life. His final sentence appears metaphorically as an admonishment to himself. Despite the highest forms of Confucian Shao music that had not been handed down from past generations, its ultimate nine-chapter version actually exists in the “Notes of Heaven,” and it has “always been displayed right in front of us.”

If just as the anecdote story in Zhuangzi portrays, we become aware of its existence, the whole array is already splendidly revealed before us as the tian lai 天籟 music of the Great Nature. Su’s admonishment to himself is that these guiding philosophies in Daoist ideals found in the Zhuangzi had always been displayed right in front of him. It was just that he had not recognized them, but now was communicating his transitioning into this new realization.

On that same day, Su memorialized another expository writing that also relates to the theme of his transition. For many years of life, Su had engaged as a lay practitioner in studying Buddhism to understand premises addressing illusory natures of life and death. After the shock of Qin Guan’s death, Su suddenly wrote profusely on Buddhist themes in his prose writings during the immediate two months afterward.

From this 1101 New Year’s Day forward, a noticeable pattern develops of Su assessing each philosophy’s highest approaches to meanings of life and death; Su’s writings in his last six
months appear to be probing for validations of whether the essences of Buddhism or those of Daoism, demonstrate as grasping the highest understandings on death. Reflected in these prose writings, Su often uses language from one of the “three traditions”\textsuperscript{179} to describe the other two traditions.

In the following example, Su uses Confucian concepts to explain Buddhist philosophies. Su visited with many Buddhists during his last six months of life. Nevertheless, as the months get closer to his death, his comments more definitively begin deferring to Daoist references as the highest means in language for explaining the values of Buddhism. By the time of his final days before death, he expressed that he ultimately regarded Daoist views on both death and life, as the most significant.

It is only fitting that on this New Year’s day, the most auspicious day of the year, Su pronounces his evaluation on ranking principles among two of the three teachings, and assesses that the philosophical qualities of Buddhism and Confucianism agree in essence. This second commemorative writing is also dated New Year’s Day of 1101.

南華長老題名記

Commemoration of Writing for the Nanhua Temple Abbot \textsuperscript{180}

學者以成佛為難乎？累土蕃沙，童子戲也，皆足以成佛。以為易乎？受記得道，如菩薩大弟子，皆不任問疾。是義安在？方其迷亂顛倒流浪苦海之中，一念正真，萬法皆具。及其勤苦功用，為山九仞之後，毫釐差失，千劫不復。鳴呼！道固如是也，豈獨佛乎？

\textsuperscript{179} The three traditions/doctrines/teachings sanjiao 三教- Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism.

\textsuperscript{180} SSQJ, 11:1243. See also Beata Grant translation in, Mount Lu Revisited, 172.
Do Buddhism acolytes think attaining enlightenment is difficult? Gathering dirt and carving sands, even children’s games, all of these are sufficient for enlightenment. You think it’s easy then? In the Vyākaraṇa 受記 attaining Buddhahood enlightenment 得道, even as enlightened as Bodhisattvas, or the great Arhat disciples, none of them were up to the task of diagnosing [Vimalakīrti’s] illness. How can this rightly be so? Just when they are in the middle of the [Buddhist] abyss of worldly suffering and its confusions, once they chant the true reality, the infinite dharma laws all become tools at hand. Regarding their diligent hard-work, it is like after raising a mound of nine fathoms, a slip-up the width of a single hair, can then lead to complete loss beyond redemption. Alas! The Dao is no doubt like this; how can it only just be in Buddhism?

子思子曰．「夫婦之不肖，可以能行焉；及其至也，雖聖人亦有所不能焉（七）。」孟子則以為聖人之道，始於不為穿窬；而穿窬之惡，成於言不言（八）。人未有欲為穿窬者，雖穿窬亦不欲也。自其不欲為之心而求之，則穿窬足以為聖人。可以言而不言，不可以言而言，雖賢人君子有不能免也。因其不能免之過而遂之，則賢人君子有時而為盜。是二法者，相反而相為用，儒與釋皆然。

Master Zisi 子思 [Confucius’ grandson] said: “Common men and women, no matter how much below regular standards of character, can carry it into practice; yet in its utmost reaches, there is that which even the sage is not able to carry into practice.”

Yet, Mengzi 孟子 thought that the sage’s way starts from refusing to break through [the neighbor’s wall], and the evil of breaking transpires through speaking or not speaking. Some do not have the desire to break through, although they broke through yet still do not have that desire. If requesting it from the heart of not desiring it, then even one who

181 SSQJ, 11:1244. From the Lotus Sutra Fahua jing fangbian pin 法華經方便品.
182 SSQJ, 11:1244. In the later Chan (Zen) Mahayana texts and sutras, a term for the prophecy indicating imminent achievement by a bodhisattva into Buddhahood.
183 SSQJ, 11:1244. Like Su Dongpo (Su Shi), Vimalakīrti represented the ideal lay practitioner of Buddhism. This reference refers to the Buddha asking Shariputra (and later the other 500 arhats) to diagnose Vimalakīrti’s illness, to which they all could not do. When Vimalakīrti was ill in bed, how could the Revered One of the World, who is benevolent, not to condescend sympathy? Buddha told Sāriputra: “You go visit Vimalakīrti and examine his illness.” Sāriputra replied: “Revered One of the World, I cannot bear the responsibility of diagnosing his illness.” Similarly, all 500 disciples independently told Buddha that they were not up to the task of diagnosing Vimalakīrti’s illness.
184 SSQJ, 11:1245. Allusion to the “Zhongyong” 中庸, in the Liji 礼記, that even ignorant common peoples resemble the sage, and are able to reach the same level. Thus, It is similar to the Buddhist saying at the beginning that even a children’s game can be sufficient to achieve enlightenment.
did the breakthrough can still become a sage. Speaks when one ought not to speak, or not speak when one ought to speak, even men of virtue sometimes cannot avoid doing this. If unable to avert this transgression and proceed, then men of virtue sometimes can be thieves also. These two teachings, are mutually opposite yet mutually complement each other. In this manner, Confucianism together with Buddhism\textsuperscript{185} are both the same way.

The honorable Abbot Ming, of Nanhua Temple, began his study into masters Zisi and Mengzi, then relinquished family and became a Buddhist monk 浮屠氏. Those who don’t know him think he fled Confucianism and converted to Buddhism. They don’t know he is especially Confucian. The Nanhua Temple is from the Sixth Patriarch of Chan\textsuperscript{186} receiving the transmission, and then spreading the abstruse subtleties in the four directions. Nanhua serves as a Risshu\textsuperscript{187} Temple. Until our Song era third year of Tianxi, the emperor first ordered Chan master Zhidu as head monk abbot administering Nanhua, up until now Sir Ming is the 11th generation Abbot of Nanhua Temple.

The honorable Abbot Ming told the lay Buddhist (jushi 居士), Dong Po:

“Imperial government officials carry out ways within the worldly affairs; Sramanas carry out ways withdrawn from worldly affairs. Those in-the-world are namely

\textsuperscript{185} SSQJ, 11:1244. Shi 般, i.e. an abbreviation for Buddhism, from the transliteration of Shijiamouni 釋迦牟尼, i.e. Shakyamuni.

\textsuperscript{186} SSQJ, 1244. Huineng, [the famed] Sixth Patriarchal of Chan:慧能. 禪宗第六祖.

\textsuperscript{187} Chinese, lusi 律寺; also known in the west by its Japanese pronunciation, the Risshu 律宗 sect of Buddhism.
the withdrawal from-the-world; they are the same - no difference. Now all the
government officials’ teachings are inscribed on walls, but the Sramana’s teachings lack
any [inscribed walls]. Let alone my temple 道場 which is the place that truly subscribes
to the Buddha; how could it not add rigor to His teachings? You write something for me.”

The lay Buddhist [Su Shi] affirmed: “It’s a promise!” Thereupon, for those who argue
against Confucianism and Buddhism as happening to hold the same view, take this
written note to be true. The Jianzhong Jingguo [Reign] First Year, New Year’s Day
record.

As a prelude to considering a close reading literary analysis of Su’s argument in this New
Year’s commemoration, it is valuable to mention a single critical commentary. The Southern
Song Dynasty scholar, Huang Zhen (1213-1280) wrote disapproving remarks about writings
where Su Shi attempts using Confucian terminologies for explaining Buddhism.

黃震云: 東坡為儒者言, 論天下事, 明白如見; 為佛者言, 談苦空法, 宛
轉無窮。惟以儒證佛, 則不可曉。如《南華長老提名記》授子思, 孟子之類是也。

Huang Zhen alleged: Dongpo [Su Shi] in the capacity of Confucian words,
discusses all worldly matters, unequivocally clear; in the capacity of Buddhist words,
speaks of suffering, illusion, dharma, meandering about without limit. Only when taking
up Confucianism for evidencing Buddhism, this is not suitable to make explicit. Such as
the “Commemoration on Writing for Nanhua Temple Elder” he attributes instruction by
[Confucians] Zisi, Mengzi, and such.\textsuperscript{188}

It is within this context, that after the emperor’s third imperial directive, in essence,
\textit{retired} Su Shi. Su’s writings begin appearing more focused on identifying variances between
these three major philosophies. In this writing, Su attempts to assimilate Buddhist concepts

\textsuperscript{188} \textit{SSQJ}, 11:1247.
within Confucian writings; but in writings after this New Year’s Day, Su’s explanations begin displaying only Daoist premises for explaining Buddhist concepts.

Su asks if the Buddhist goal of enlightenment requires tireless effort. He states examples showing that tireless effort is neither required nor a guarantee of success. Su argues with a surprising example of the Buddhist arhats lacking qualifications despite their diligence. After slipping in a Confucian reference, Su closes his introductory paragraph asking, “how can it only be in Buddhism” that can explain transcendence to this depth.

The second paragraph features Confucian explanations about transcending the concealed aspects of human conditions. Su’s comparison in these two paragraphs attempt to show the mutual consistency of Buddhism and Confucianism. Su suggests that his examples clearly affirm the support of Buddhism and Confucianism for each other.

In the third paragraph, Su intermingles praise for the temple elder and the temple’s famous links in history to the Sixth Chan Patriarch. However, with literary flourish, he includes a startling proposition that the temple abbot elder is especially Confucian.

As Su illuminates that the Buddhist abbot exemplifies Confucian philosophies, it appears Su is trying to equalize the validity of how the two philosophies both provide understanding of one of the highest attainments, i.e. transcending of the inherent fetters in the human condition. In closing, Su conveys a critical point that the temple abbot elder wished to make; “those [Confucians] in the world rushi 入世 ” carry out the same relationship to the human condition as “those [Buddhists] withdrawn from the world chushi 出世.” Thereupon, Su proclaims this
account as a valid reference source for anyone wishing to challenge anyone wishing to argue for any essential disparity between Buddhism and Confucianism.

During this first month of the new year, Su wrote more than twelve separate prose writings, and all fit in categories concerning at least one of three main topics. The majority of these writings were attempts at positioning Buddhism into descriptions using Confucian explanations or positioning Buddhism into comparisons with Daoist thought. Only two other compositions concerned either his new status in a retirement position or that he had been lucky to survive his Hainan exile.

2.2.2 Beginning Retirement with an Updating of Philosophical Views

On the 5th day of that new year month in 1101, five days after the previous two writings, Su passed through Nan’an Jun 南安軍. An admiring local official brought a copy of Su’s “Stone Chime Mountain Essay,” that Su wrote decades earlier, so Su wrote a spontaneous short postscript in-person for him.

In this addition to the original, Su diverges from the original message by again extolling the Zhuangzi “notes of heaven.” In the original artistic composition written seventeen years earlier (1084), Su voiced his subjective feelings in a prose style of writing capturing observations he made while traveling. Following a three-step composition process for constructing the text, Su first builds suspense by skeptical doubts, then follows with his investigation, before proclaiming a denouement. In distinct contrast to his original essay, Su writes this postscript to the original text but introduces the same prominent philosophical statement from Zhuangzi that Su had inscribed five days earlier on New Year’s Day.
跋石鐘山記後
Postscript on the Stone Chime Mountain Essay 189

錢唐、東陽皆有水樂洞，泉流空巖中，自然宮商。又自靈隱下天竺而上，
至上天竺，谿行兩山間，巨石磊磊如牛羊，其聲空声磬然，真若鐘聲，
乃知莊生所謂天籟者，蓋無所不在也。建中靖國元年正月五日，自海南還，
過南安，司法掾吴君示舊所作《石鐘山記》，復書其末。

In Qiantang, and Dongyang190 both have Water Music Caves. Spring waters
stream through the hollows and rocks, and is naturally melodious.191 From the Lingyin 靈隱 Temple and the Lower Tianzhu 下天竺 Temple, up to the Upper Tianzhu 上天竺 Temple, a creek moves between two mountains with huge rocks piled up like buffalos
and goats. The hollows and chime-stone-like sounds are just like bells ringing. Thus, I
know that which Zhuangzi termed the “notes of heaven” Tianlai 天籟 is actually
everywhere 無所不在. Written this 5th day of 1101, in my return from Hainan, and in
passing Nanan. The Official Wujun brought a copy of my [old original] essay “Stone
Chime Mountain Essay” Shi zhong shan ji 石鐘山記,193 and so I wrote this postscript
here at the end.

Su writes his revelation. Now Su knows the “notes of heaven” (and similar to the Dao)
are all-pervading. This gives the impression that Su is reviewing his current perspectives with
those he was holding sixteen years earlier in life. Sixteen years earlier, this composition was
playful and entertaining. Now, Su composes these three succinct sentences with a target of
revelation.

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189 SSQJ, 19:7439.
190 Qiantang 錢塘 and Dongyang 東陽 are both counties near Hangzhou 杭州.
191 Gong shang 宮商: two of the five tones on the musical scale.
192 Tianzhu 天竺: a transliteration of Indu, i.e. India.
193 “Stone Chime Mountain Essay” Shizhongshan ji 石鐘山記, is considered to be among the most famous, and
elegant prose writings by Su Shi.
Su was still in the Nan’an rural community on the 9th day of that New Year’s month. Su again writes a commemoration explaining Buddhist practices by using classical Confucian orientations. This ming 銘 inscription was for celebrating the construction of a new sutra repository at the Changleyuan 常樂院 Temple. Su praises the unlimited expanse of Buddhist teachings, but then suddenly states that his own method does not follow the manifold Buddhist methods.

In the closing sentence of this engraving, he unpredictably swings to the Zhuangzi tone of spontaneity, which is deeply divergent to any systems (such as to resident Buddhist monks) that levy demands on individuals. Su counters that he cannot contribute one coin of alms which equated in Buddhism to the paramita attainment of the realm beyond life and death; in metered response to this declaration, Su then injects a sudden ironic Zhuangzi-like witticism encouraging a distrust of logic. He does so by manipulating the principally Daoist expressive metaphor of water.

南安軍常樂院新作經藏銘
Inscription for Nanan Area, Changle Temple Newly Built Sutra Repository

佛以一口，而說千法。千佛千口，則為幾說？我法不然，非千非一。如百千燈，共照一室。雖各遍滿，不相壞雜。習學者，云何覽閱。自非正眼，表裡洞達。已受將受，則相陵奪。惟回屢空，無所不悅。是名耳順，亦號莫逆。以此轉經，有轉無竭。道人山居，僻介楚越。常樂我靜，一食破衲。達磨耶藏，勤苦建設。我無一錢，檀波羅密。施此法水，以灌爾睫。

194 David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1998), 140. An “expressive metaphor that extends an alternate context of the literal sense of a term – and a more radical trope called allusive metaphors that do not express per se, but allude to groundless hints or suggestions. [In Zhuangzi] as their referents are other allusive metaphors, this resembles language at one level, which is all allusive, functioning primarily as an undulating sea of suggestiveness.”

195 *SSQJ*, 12:2218.
A Buddha in one mouthful expresses 1,000 Dharma teachings. 1,000 Buddhas have 1,000 mouths, then how many teachings are said? My teaching is not like this, it is neither 1,000 nor one. It is like 100,000 lanterns, illuminating a single room. Although each one is sufficient, none interfere with the others. Consulting you assembled scholars, in your claiming how to view this understanding, this is not the zheng yan 正眼 197 profound core meaning of Buddhism, where within one’s outward show and inner thoughts, every cavity is reached. If received that way, then each other mutually competes and violates. Only Yan Hui 198 though always in need, was always without any indications of displeasure. This is called er shun 耳順, 199 “the attuned ear accordingly follows,” also called non-contradiction. Using this to turn the sutra wheels, one can keep turning without exhaustion. Monks are living in this mountain, here in this secluded border between Chu 楚 and Yue 越,200 in Changle Temple dwelling quietly, in tattered robes with one meal a day. The Dharmakaya Damoye 達磨耶 201 sutra repository has been tirelessly constructed. I have not one coin, for giving alms to the paramita “other shore” (boluomi 波羅密). 202 In giving this consecrating water, 203 use it [instead] to irrigate thine own eyelashes.

197 SSQJ, 12:2219. Zhengyan 正眼: abbreviation for the correct “dharma eye 法眼” that can perceive both past and future. In the Chan Sect this indicates the paramount true essence of miraculous righteousness.
198 SSJZS, vol. 23, “Yongye” 雍也, in Lunyu 論語, 80-81. The disciple of Confucius, Yan Hui 颜回 was impoverished but always remained cheerful. 子曰: “賢哉回也! 一簞食, 一瓢飲, 在陋巷。人不堪其憂, 回也不改其樂。賢哉回也!”
199 SSJZS, “Weizheng” 為政, in Lunyu 論語, 16. Confucius describes stages in maturity at each decade of one’s life. 子曰: “吾十有五而志於學, 三十而立, 四十而不惑, 五十而知天命, 六十而耳順, 七十從心所欲, 不逾矩.” Conficius said, ”At the age of fifteen, I set my intention on learning. At thirty, I was established. At forty, I had full self-confidence. At fifty, I was aware of one’s life span. At sixty, my ear attuned. At seventy, I could follow my mind’s desires, while not transgressing regulations.”
200 ZZQZ, “Dechongfu” 人問世, 59. “Chu 楚 and Yue 越” are mistakenly viewed as different in discussion by the moderator Zhongni 仲尼 (courtesy name for Confucius) in the Zhuangzi.
201 SSQJ, 12:2220. Damoye 達磨耶 sutra, i.e. Dharmakaya Sutra. Formation of a loanword from Bodhidharma in Sanskrit by using a combination of characters or words that suggests its meaning – as opposed to transliteration.
202 SSQJ, 12:2220. One of the six paramitas in Buddhist teachings, it can be compared that in giving alms to the monks, then is the same as arriving on the “other shore,” i.e. Paramita: the realm above life and death.
203 SSQJ, 12:2220. See abhiseka: consecrating by sprinkling water on the head, as the Truth that washes away filth and illusion.
Similar to previous compositions, we see Su construct a three-step literary argument. First, he exalts the immensity of Buddhist teachings but then inserts skeptical doubting by contrarily stating that his personal system does not subscribe to the same rules as Buddhism. In the second section of this text, Su then shares examples of his investigation. He highlights the flawed perspectives of many monastic searchers within Buddhism, in that they are missing the transcendent essence of correct view zheng yan 正眼.

Su then shifts to a more local issue at the temple, and uses two Confucian examples that appear he is speaking to an audience of young monks. As if the monks lack fundamental processes in their training, Su introduces Confucian reasoning for overcoming novice views and using inherent capabilities dependent upon one’s age. Su starts with the example of Confucius’ young disciple, Yanhui 颜回. Though Yanhui was known for extremely impoverished living conditions, he had achieved maintaining an enlightened outlook despite the most severe external circumstances. Su portrays Yanhui as living in the same conditions as these monks, and that for them to be a proper monk they should be like Yanhui!

Next, Su makes known the Confucian “attuned ear” er shun 耳順 passage. It explains that one’s age will automatically bring about a greater understanding of the world. For these monks, they can expect that at thirty years old, their will can become firmly devoted, but higher understanding of profound thinking will likely only come after each of their later decades of life.

At this point in the rhythm of Su’s theme, his observation casually pulls back to a larger vantage point and remarks on the overall scene at Changle Temple. However, he situates a hidden Daoist allusion to the circumstances of these devout followers of Buddhism. Su states that the temple resides in the mountains on the border between two ancient kingdoms Chu 楚 and
Yue 越. These kingdoms had not existed for more than 1,000 years but is a coded reference from a famous metaphor found in the *Zhuangzi*.

The *Zhuangzi* passage has a speaker Zhongni (in theory, Confucius) relating to a disciple who he is cautioning against privileging any *truth-claims*. In this sentence, the *truth-claim* can be interpreted in at least two distinct ways. Su can be cautioning any readers of his inscription on the sutra repository against naively taking their Buddhism practices as able to generate a higher and *different* outcome from some other teaching. He infers Buddhists should not discount Daoist perspectives.

In the *Zhuangzi*, this Daoist metaphor is commenting on the *nature of mind*. Simultaneously, it can be interpreted that Su is remarking that Changle Temple as an avatar of Chan Buddhism, is metaphorically located between the idiomatic locations of the ancient kingdoms Chu and Yue. As such, Chan Buddhism is not violating the *Zhuangzi* message admonishing against falling into the trap of the mind, such as using a limited perspective for privileging one belief in competition over another.

仲尼曰：「自其異者視之，肝膽楚越也；自其同者視之，萬物皆一也。」
Zhongni [Confucius] said, “When we look at them [things] from the viewpoint of their differences, from [the] liver to gall is as far as from Chu 楚 to Yue 越; if you look at them from the viewpoint of their sameness, the myriad things are all one.”

Su is delicately setting up his closing sentence with another Daoist metaphor inferring that Buddhist teachings are in *unity* with Daoist teachings, or are in reality encompassed within Daoist teachings. In this short passage, Su is building to a resolution for his point of main thrust

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204 Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, 76-77.
by using this Daoist metaphor. He is indicating that any inherent cognitive biases in Buddhist adherents, will despite their piousness, prevent their mystical transcendence into understanding higher truths. Moreover, Su simultaneously locates the Changle Temple in precisely the best symbolic location of circumstances for maintaining an open mind that steers clear of the trap of a differentiating-mind spoken of in the Zhuangzi.

Ziporyn describes this as a “state of universal oneness, that there is no division between this and that, that all things are to be viewed as one thing, or better, no thing, since ‘one thing’ is commonly defined in contradistinction to something else.”

We see Su using extremely adroit literary methods in both this inscription and in the next writing that praises the recluse Yang Xianxing. In both writings, Su ingeniously encompasses all three of the three traditions (ru, fo, dao 儒佛道), within a single sentence.

Not only are there multiple interpretations for the intended audience with the Chu/Yue metaphor, Su is also crafting allusions directly connected to all three traditions. First, Su situates the Chan temple as a metonym representing Buddhism; second, the speaker using Chu and Yue for describing the nature of mind is hypothetically Confucius, and third, it is from Daoism that Su takes this encompassing philosophical discourse found in the Zhuangzi. Similarly, a greater literary work of genius that demonstrates Su encompassing all three traditions is in the next example of a written tribute for a mountain recluse.

Finally, and adeptly, Su makes a closing proclamation that gives the impression of Su voicing his own personal philosophical message to any person reading this composition. The reader’s interpretive imperative compels a reader to step back and review what was just said. Su outrightly dispels any intention of following Buddhist protocol of a monetary offering, even though it promises transcendence beyond realms of life and death. He dismisses following the alms-giving process despite its guarantees for attaining the Buddhist prescribed methods of paramita. Su states he does not have one coin, for giving alms to the “other shore.” In giving this consecrating water, use it [instead] to irrigate thine own eyelashes, Su writes in a startling closing.

Su supersedes the Buddhist methods, by using a Daoist metaphor of water. By injecting this Zhuangzi manner of paradox, Su spectacularly shakes the reader back from complacency, for recognizing that oneself is falling into a trap of deeming false assertions, i.e. a perfunctory performance of Buddhist consecration by water.

In Daoist terms, and in the Daodejing, water is known for the virtue that water does not contend. In this sudden moment of spontaneity, Su also seems to argue against aspects of the Buddhist systems that levy too many rigid demands on individuals. Su’s oxymoron water metaphor suggests that by recognizing through Daoist sarcasm of the uncomplicatedness in irrigating one’s eyelashes, the readers visualizing such will be jilted from attachment to the

206 One of the six paramitas in Buddhist teachings, it can be compared that in giving alms to the monks, then is the same as arriving on the “other shore,” i.e. Paramita: the realm beyond life and death.
207 See abhiseka: consecrating by sprinkling water on the head, as the Truth that washes away filth and illusion.
208 LDDJ, 28-29. The highest excellence is to be like water. People of excellence have a nature similar to water. Water benefits everything without contention. 上善若水。水善利万物而不爭。
(Buddhist) consecration process. Hence, Su flouts the natural (Daoist) wisdom of water as a better metaphor for mediating transcendence.

In Su’s January of 1101 prose writings, this recurring instance is prominent. Su’s repartee exemplifies his underlying belief that the highest philosophical transcending of life and death are most consistent to Daoist ideals, and he metaphorically uses water to show ultimate transcendence is more likely attained by methods that are unencumbering. Su injects spontaneity that is triggered by a water metaphor. Su uses this characteristic he had attributed to all of his writings as resembling a gushing forth 209 of creative natural forces in harmony with the Dao.

This suggests that Su is not necessarily speaking to the monks at this point. He seems to be skillfully declaring his own personal recommendation of what he has determined to be the highest of the three teachings. As in other writings during the first month of this New Year, Su is again demonstrating a clever use of conventionally Daoist parlance to improve upon levels of Buddhist traditions.

Confucian teachings are appropriate for rushi 入世, “those entering the world,” and the Mahayana Chan Buddhist teachings for chushi 出世, “those withdrawing from the world.” These writings suggest that with the start of the new year in 1101, Su had moved from the official roles that previously required him to more strongly embrace Confucian methods.

209 See discussion of Su Shi and his use of a Zhuangzian spontaneity in water within his famous self-description of his own writing in: Yang, Dialectics of Spontaneity, 12-13. Su Shi describes, “My writing is like a fountainhead gushing out ten thousand buckets of spring water, surging forth without choosing the ground.(…) Even I know nothing more than that. 吾文如萬斛泉源(…)其他雖吾亦不能知也.
In the previous section of Su’s writings, and immediately after his pardon from exile, his letters to the imperial directives were within the confines of the Confucian rules. This was necessary because he was still in the fold of his scholarly government official role at that time. Afterward, we begin seeing in the writings during his final six months of life, that Su’s prose works exemplify that he has made a transition solidifying the lack of any identity-conflict with his retirement san ren status. As such, he was becoming free to expound on ideas that resonated most solidly within his belief systems.

As well as no longer subscribing to the Confucian ru shi methods, the Mahayana, Bodhisattva-style chu shi teachings also did not satisfactorily fulfill Su’s views of the higher truths, such as when he wrote about realms beyond death and life. In this regard, Su writes prose texts during these months that begin adhering more and more to quoting Zhuangzian perspectives. He indicates an affinity to Daoist ideas that do not heavily encumber people, that is, particularly people such as himself.

While Su was traveling during this New Year’s point in time, his prose writings begin displaying more and more plainly how he rated the three teachings. Su’s mind is on full display in his following prose by how he quick-wittedly captures core beliefs from all three teachings within four succinct sentences. This is perhaps the finest writing by Su Shi showing his adherence to place Daoism in the foremost position of contrast to the other two traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism.

In that first month of 1101, Su also passed through Qianzhou 虔州. While there, Su visited a much-admired mountain recluse named Yang Xingxian 陽行先. Yang was living in
seclusion in a huge cave named Tongtianyan 通天巖. After the visit, Su renamed it to “Jade Cliff” Yuyan 玉巖, and wrote the following tribute for the recluse, Yang.

玉岩隱居陽行先真贊
Encomium for Jade Cliff Recluse Yang Xingxian

道不二，德不孤。 無人所有，有人所無。 世之所爭者五，天嗇其三，而畀其二。 是以日計之不足，歲計之有餘也。

Dao is not divided, De is not alone. 
[He] not having what others possess, but possesses what others lack.

The ordinary world strives for the five virtues,

Heaven did not give [him] three, but offered him two.

If only calculated by days it is insufficient,

if calculated by years there is an abundance.

Su extrudes an attention-grabbing opening line in this composition that cursorily appears as incorporating Buddhism and Confucianism into the same fold with Daoism. Despite this writing being only four sentences long, it stands out for encompassing many profound points. For appropriate clarification, these points warrant a more detailed inspection.

The concept that “Dao is not divided” is equally expressed as “dao bu er” (道不二), or as “dao yi” (道一). This mindfulness is found in all three traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Su’s opening phrase uses both the Buddhist tradition “dao bu er” terminology and

210 SSQJ, 13:2525.
211 SSQJ, 13:2526-2527. The five virtues, i.e. ren yi li dao de 仁義禮道德. See ZZQZ, “Zhibeiyou” 知北遊, in Zhuangzi, 254.
follows with the Confucianism tradition providing the second half of the opening sentence with the *Lunyu* quote: “*De* is not alone, it inevitably is accompanied,” (德不孤, 必有鄰). 213

In initial appearance, Su succinctly captures core philosophical values from the two great traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism, in only one sentence. Readers may ask, where then is Daoism? In actuality, the complete first sentence is the Daoist meaning. The *Dao* followed by *De* sequence is only recorded in *Lao-Zhuang* 老莊 texts. Ames offers a prime example excerpted from the *Laozi*:

道生之，德畜之，物形之，勢成之。
是以萬物莫不尊道而貴德。道之尊，德之貴，夫莫之命常自然。

Way-making (*Dao* 道) gives things their life, and their particular efficacy (*De* 德) is what nurtures them., events shape them, and having a function consummates them. It is for this reason that all things honor way-making and esteem directed at efficacy, As for the honor directed at way-making and the esteem directed at efficacy, it is really something that just happens spontaneously. 214

Su imaginatively veils an overarching preeminence of Daoism by cleverly concealing it in plain sight. In stepping back to look at the first sentence, it becomes evident that the very first words referencing each of the other two philosophies of Buddhism and Confucian, has in fact the distinctive two Daoism values listed, - *Dao* and *De*! Su reaches a pinnacle in this philosophical writing. Within this single sentence, by illustrating thought from the *Zhuangzi*, Su Shi achieved ____________

in thought from the *Daodejing* is in “Yuandao” 原道, of *Huainanzi* 淮南子: The *Dao*, standing definitively then births all things. 道者, 一立而萬物生矣. The Buddhist context is in the “Dvādaśanikāya Śāstra” 十二門論疏上: The undivided *Dao* clear and quiet, hence is praised the one and only.一道清淨, 故不稱二.


hiding the world in the world, “that is the ultimate identity of an unchanging thing.” Su inventedly managed to include an uppermost premise of the Song world’s foremost three teachings, and contain them within this single sentence.

In the second sentence, Su entices the reader to raise a question. Su describes recluse Yang as not having what others have. It is an oblique way of arousing interest to ask, what does the recluse have? Heaven did not give Yang three of the five things people are constantly striving to attain, but only offered recluse Yang two. Why did heaven hold back on three? Su states that recluse Yang does not have what others possess in the way of ren, yi, and li (仁義禮), but Yang possesses what others lack in dao and de. When Su complimented Yang Xingxian that he did not have what others all have, but had what others all lack, it is an allusion to a Daoist view that ren, yi, and li are conceivable to perform, but dao and de are outside the range of normal human competence. Graham uses provocative words in a translation:

道不可致，德不可至；仁可為也，義可虧也，禮相偽也.

“The Dao is incommunicable; the De is impenetrable. But Ren can be contrived; and Yi can be left undone, Li are a shared pretence” 216

In the final sentence, Su is in fact quoting directly from the Zhuangzi to proclaim his assessment of these five values. “If only calculated by days it is insufficient, if calculated by years there is an abundance,” 日計之而不足，歲計之而有餘. 217 It gives further clarity by noting the following sentence of this Zhuangzi passage that Su did not include - but implied - to any of his readers in the know. Su leaves it unstated that by recluse Yang only having an understanding of the two is

216 Graham, 159. See "Irrationalizing the Way: 'Knowledge roams north.'” 知北遊.
217 ZZQZ, “Gensangchu” 庚桑楚, in Zhuangzi 莊子, 270.
sufficient for saying, “perhaps he is near being a sage!” (庶幾其聖人乎)! In Su’s quote, the meaning suggests that ren, yi, li gain short-term success “through the counting of days,” or quick benefits, but dao de cumulatively demonstrate very long-term merits, metaphorically translating years or its synonym ages, as “when counting in years” (歲計之有餘也). From this passage in the Zhuangzi, Su equates the highest of spiritual status to recluse Yang Xingxian.

Very novel writing within just four sentences! In ending with Zhuangzi, Su indicates that in contrast to Dao and De, the other three are comparatively less significant. By Su’s clever literary construction, we see in this short piece that Su is diminishing Buddhism. In these pieces, Su’s understanding of Buddhism appears as lacking in contrast to Daoism, and in this writing, he only briefly uses the single Buddhist and Confucian reference before drawing from Daoist references. However, on the surface, this writing still functions in giving impressions to readers that Su is portraying that all three traditions convey nearly the same thing. Of course, one may interject that this is written for a Daoist person, and thus Daoist praises are most appropriate, even though Su often does not write in ways considered as properly orthodox, or appropriate.

The extraordinarily subtle cleverness in Su’s short tribute to recluse Yang, involves looking more deeply at the previously mentioned quote from the Zhuangzi, of hiding the world in the world. Su literally crafts words that have hidden the world within these four sentences. His stratagem relates to a well-known passage addressing death and life in the Inner Chapters of the Zhuangzi. In relating its content here, it displays an underlying framework hidden in Su’s passage. Su shows he is remarkably adept at using his literary genius to speak through a belief

218 ZZQZ, “Gensangchu” 庚桑楚, in Zhuangzi 庄子, 270.
system with a Daoist core. From his lifetime of scholarly study, Su conceals all three of the great teachings within this short passage. Ziporyn describes this renowned Zhuangzi discourse as a holism that contains any, and all permutations:²¹⁹

夫大塊載我以形，勞我以生，佚我以老，息我以死。故善吾生者，乃所以善吾死也。夫藏舟於壑，藏山於澤，謂之固矣。然而夜半有力者負之而走，昧者不知也。藏大小有宜，猶有所遯。若夫藏天下於天下，而不得所遯，是恆物之大情也。特犯人之形而猶喜之，若人之形者，萬化而未始有極也，其為樂可勝計邪！故聖人將遊於物之所不得遯而皆存。善妖善老，善始善終，人猶效之，又況萬物之所係，而一化之所待乎！

“The so-called negative by seeing it as the work of the whole, the same whole that gives us the so-called positive. Thus, everything is good. The way to see this is to ‘hide’ the whole in the whole. That way nothing can fall out. If we place value in any part of the whole, in other words, we will be vulnerable to its loss. But if we place value in the whole as such, we will never be without it, for there is nowhere for it to go. (…) “The same agent (the great clump da kuai 大塊, i.e., the whole, the primal all-together hundun 混沌) performs what I from my limited perspective, call good and bad (life and death). Thus, if one is good, all are good.”

Su confirms by his preferred topics in his last six months of writings that he values Daoist ideals above all others. However, in these above two prose texts, we witness Su nimbly constructing his messages in a way that also includes both the Buddhist and Confucian views. By placing value in the whole of the Three Teachings, and including them in this short prose piece, Su follows a Zhuangzi viewpoint that he and any of his later readership will not be vulnerable to any loss. The myriad changes that transpire in all things, need not be limiting to one’s joy.

Specifically, Su addresses thinking of the potential loss for one if being limited in the highest understandings, such as those understandings that transcend differentiating between death and life. Consequently, in observing this powerful prose, this could be said to be the finest piece of all his post-exile prose written on this topic. It demonstrates Su expressing a formula of acceptable assimilation of Buddhism and Confucianism into complement with his Daoist core.

2.2.3 Buddhism by way of Daoism

A similar thematic structure follows in Su’s writings the following month, as he continued his journey returning northward. In the second month of 1101, Su Shi was still in the county of Qianzhou. The following writing exhibits Su again combining major philosophical themes on transcending life and death, as he writes a short passage that again integrates allusions to philosophical ideals within the Three Teachings.

**湜長老真贊**

Encomium for the Temple Abbot Shi

道與之貌，天與之形。雖同乎人，而實無情。彼真清隱，何殊丹青？日日照月明，雷動風行。夫孰非幻，忽然而成。此畫清隱，可謂雨晴。

*Dao* gave him his appearance; celestial *tian* 天 gave him his shape. Even though similar to people, (he) contrasts as one truly *without fettering passions* 無情. He is genuinely untainted and reclusive, how is there any difference between him and the abbot in the portrait painting? The sun shines and then the moon brightens, thunder moves and then the winds go. Which one is not an illusion that suddenly stirs them into forms? This portrait both pure and hidden could even be called “rain and shine.”

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220 *SSQJ*, 13:2507.
Su Shi had been asked to write something at the Qingyin Chanyuan Temple 清隱禪院 on the Temple Abbot Shi (湜長). The Abbot Shi was also known for having established what was called in short, the “Qingyin” (清隱), for the Qingyintang 清隱堂 ”Unfettered Recluse Hall.”

In recognizing the high attainments of this Buddhist abbot, Su again privileges Daoist ideals for complementing this revered Buddhist. Su takes his first sentence directly from a Daoist passage, of a person transcendently unfettered. First, Su alludes to the Zhuangzi to introduce the Buddhist abbot as having been created according to a Daoist explanation for nature’s endowments of a person, “Dao 道 gave him his appearance; celestial tian 天 gave him his shape” (道與之貌，天與之形). 221 This leads to Su’s main point of emphasis. He attributes the temple abbot Shi, as having attained a central philosophical Daoist ideal explained in the context of this vocabulary. Su deduces that the Buddhist abbot has reached the enlightened understanding of no fettered preferences for liking or disliking (wu qing 無情), as described in the Zhuangzi.222

In the Zhuangzi passage itself, the definition is not self-evident in the two-character word, and Zhuangzi spirals his sophist-friend’s arguments to show that comprehension of wu qing resides outside logic. In this Inner Chapter passage, Zhuangzi is attempting to clarify to his older friend Huizi 惠子, (who is known as one of the greatest logic sophists of the time), 223 on the meaning of becoming transcendently unfettered from preferences.224

221 ZZQZ. “Dechongfu” 德充符, in Zhuangzi 莊子, 68-69.
222 ZZQZ. “Dechongfu” 德充符, in Zhuangzi 莊子, 68-69.
223 Graham, Chuang-Tzǔ, 5.
224 ZZQZ. “Dechongfu” 德充符, in Zhuangzi 莊子, 68-69.
When Su uses this term *wu qing*, he does not explain in his short writing how he is applying it as a complement for the Buddhist abbot. For readers of Su’s text, it would require that they are already familiar with this original Daoist treatise in the *Zhuangzi* to differentiate the *wu qing* meaning as different from what it conveys in Buddhist connotations.

Su leaves the meaning of *wu qing* unsaid, but the *Zhuangzi* passage itself shows the difficulties arising if someone follows logical thought for understanding the meaning of *wu qing*. This difficulty occurs despite *Zhuangzi* giving a long explanation to Huizi. To grasp the contextual meaning of this vocabulary *wu qing* in the way that Su uses it for the praise of the Buddhist abbot, it is helpful to observe Graham’s rendering of the original story’s text:

惠子謂莊子曰：「人故無情乎？」莊子曰：「然。」惠子曰：「人而無情，何以謂之人？」莊子曰：「道與之貌，天與之形，惡得不謂之人？」惠子曰：「既謂之人，惡得無情？」莊子曰：「是非吾所謂情也。吾所謂無情者，言人之不以好惡內傷其身，常因自然而不益生也。」

*Huizi said to *Zhuangzi*, “Can a person really be without characteristic human inclinations (*wu qing* 無情)?” *Zhuangzi* said, “That is so.” *Huizi* said, “But without characteristic human inclinations, how can they be called a human being?” *Zhuangzi* replied, “*Dao* gives one their appearance; *tian* gives one their form; how could they not be called a person?” *Huizi* responded, “Since calling them human, how are they without characteristic inclinations?” *Zhuangzi* replied, “You are missing what I mean by calling these inclinations. When I call one without characteristic inclinations (*wu qing* ), it means a person does not take either good or bad as preferences that do inward damage to themselves, always following a natural path, and not for benefiting their life.”

Traditional commentaries include notes about their understanding of Su’s allusion using *wu qing*. They note Su’s connotation meant that because the Abbot Shi has realized *wu qing*, he was therefore without any *difference* to the portrayed abbot in the painting. This reasoning still lends itself to varied interpretations of Su’s intended meanings. However, this connotation further accentuates the Daoist ideal of not relying on a valuing of the distinction of *differences* as
a critical component in life. It seizes upon this Daoist concept of the *mental-trap* arising to anyone forming analyzing thoughts or fashioning logical differences.

Graham’s summary of this seeming contradiction is that, “a Daoist is a thinker who despises *thoughts*, yet values, and finds the imagery and rhythm to convey, any spontaneously emerging process of thinking which he senses is orienting him in the direction of the Way.” By employing this Zhuangzi ideal of *spontaneity*, it also suggests an allegorical interpretation. Su is attributing the Buddhist abbot’s transcendent attainment with being as apparent as it is to the artistic rendering of the abbot in the portrait painting. Because this abbot and the abbot in the painting are both free from fashioning differences, they both are thus figuratively in harmony with this Daoist ideal of spontaneity.

The above six prose writings were all written over the first and second lunar months of 1101 as Su was beginning his status as a retired official. These writings demonstrate Su is most comfortable using Daoist examples for explaining Buddhist qualities. Su gives the appearance of having great respect for Buddhism. Nonetheless, his praises are repeatedly informed by Daoist understandings when complementing facets of Buddhist or Confucian intrinsic worth.

Beginning that year of 1101, transitions in Su’s writings become more evident; these writings demonstrate he was becoming more absorbed in these philosophical topics and pursuing understandings on transcendence. His freedom from official responsibilities becomes apparent through the choice of topics in his prose writings; these suggest he was partially acclimating to this new retirement position. Egan articulates, the emperor had “granted him titular office as

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overseer of a Taoist temple in Chengdu and permitted him to reside wherever he chose. [However] indecision over where he should now settle seems to have occupied him virtually until he died in the summer of 1101.”

During travel in the first few months of 1101, Su had several times changed his desired location about where to settle. Of note, the empress behind the throne, who was also essentially the person who helped Su be released from exile, suddenly died in the first month of 1101. Her death seems to have also had some bearing on Su’s decisions of where to live, possibly choosing to avoid his enemies in the capital as they would now have more liberty to again cause problems for Su.

Empress Xiang 向 (1046-1101) to Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1066-1085) succumbed to illness, and she died on the 14th day of the first lunar month in 1101. She had held court from behind the screen for the months after Zhezong 哲宗 (r. 1086-1100) had died the previous year during the first month of 1100. During the summer of 1100, the empress officially relinquished control of the court back to the eighteen-year-old Huizong.

In the second month, Su sent an official memorial of a condolence letter. Su referenced the Shangshu to praise the empress for returning control of the court to young Huizong. Su praised her methods and wrote, “returning control of the court to the young emperor was the appropriate way for the empire to last for ten thousand generations.”

226 Egan, Word, Image, and Deed, 218.
227 SSQJ, 13:2791.
229 SSQJ, 13:2791.
This event was perhaps Su Shi’s last prose writing in an official capacity. Su fittingly wrote within confines of Confucian decorum.

It was now springtime, but along the way, Su was encountering logistical difficulties for several months. His entourage included more than thirty family members, and they made much of their travels by hired boats on the river waterways. That Spring season brought unusually hot weather, and the boats were often mired in stagnant low water levels. Many in his group fell sick from dysentery-like illnesses. Su writes in the 3rd month, “Both young and old were bedridden with fever; fortunately, each is now recovering, [but] deceased servants are numbering six persons.” 長少臥病，幸而皆愈，僕卒死者六人. 230

2.2.4 A Consolidation of Final Philosophical Beliefs

Su’s progress northward finally improved, and he arrived in Jinling 金陵 on the first day of the fifth lunar month, 1101. Su’s writings continue exhibiting unease where he was wrestling with what should now be his life purpose. He had now moved beyond writing the disparaging term of a san ren “useless person,” and adopted a new moniker.

Once again drawing metaphorical vocabulary from the Daoist classic Zhuangzi, in Su’s use of antonomasia, he began equating himself to a chen ren 陳人. 231 This self-mocking status indicates that Su considers himself now as disqualified from credible involvement in the world.

Upon arrival in Jinling on that first day of the month, Su wrote two heartfelt prose pieces. Su emblematically labels himself in this following formal composition by portraying his life and

\[\text{230} \text{ SSQJ. 17:6204.} \]
\[\text{231} \text{ ZZQZ, “Yuyan”寓言, in Zhuangzi 莊子, 330.} \]
circumstances as a *chen ren*. Su’s self-directed denotation intones vocabulary inferring himself as someone having dilapidated honor. Su seeks to explain his *chen ren* meaning, in the following declaration, which is a rejoinder to three earlier short notes of gratitude \^232 that Su had sent to Wang Youan in the previous month. The allusion speaks plainly, and Su shares his despondency that he was now developing recognition and personal belief that he is someone who has lost connection to the *Dao*.

答王幼安宣德啟
*Communication Rejoinder on Wang Youan’s Virtue* \^233

俯仰十年, 忽焉如昨；間關百罹, 何所不有。頃者海外, 澹乎蓋將終焉; 偶然生還, 置之勿復道也。方將求田問舍, 為三百指之養; 杜門面壁, 觀六十年之非。豈獨江湖之相忘, 蓋已寂寥而喪我。不謂某官, 講修舊好。收錄陳人。粲然雲漢之章, 被此枯朽之質。欲其洗濯宿負, 激昂晚節。粗行平生之志, 少慰朋友之望。此意厚矣, 我心悠哉。如焦穀牙, 如伏櫪馬。非吹噓之所及, 縱鞭策以何加。藏之不忘, 永以為好。

In a twinkle of an eye ten years have already passed, and that time seems like just yesterday; within hundreds of sorrows, what have I not experienced. A short while ago across the seas, and anticipating it to be there in Dazhou (Hainan Island) as my end; then by chance I returned alive, was installed in a position, but it is not one for resuming the way (of official capacity). Placing an acquisition-request for farmland, asking for funds for raising three hundred fingers (thirty family members); (in the past) by shutting the door and facing the wall 杜門面壁 (in deep study), I have been observing affairs of right and wrong for sixty years. How is it in this wide world that I could be the only one forgotten? And one now already in desolation and mourning the loss of myself? Not in speaking now on some official title, but with emphasis on embellishing old friendships. Find included here some writings of a *chen ren* 陳人. Your (Wang Youan’s) exquisite writing is like the elegant verse of Yun Han, \^234 [but] is met here with these dried and

\^232 *ZZQZ*. 18:6542–6544.
\^233 *SSQJ*. 16:5170.
\^234 *SSJZS* vol. 6, “Daya Yun Han” 大雅雲漢, in *Shijing* 詩經, 1401.
decayed materials (viz, those of my own, Su Shi’s). Wanting these to cleanse away old burdens, and stimulate high spirits in these late years. My roughly executed ambitions throughout this whole lifetime, gave but few consolations to the hopes of one’s friends. These intents are deeply generous; my mind is unconstrained. As if overcooked grain kernels\(^{235}\), or like confining a horse to the stable, they cannot be restored by blowing (on the shrunken kernels to make them restored plump), and even whipping will not make the horse run. Store these not to be forgotten, always with close affection.

As a self-described chen ren, Su considers his life as having missed in grasping the Dao. Thus, according to Su’s allusion, he is not a proper man to be looked upon as proficiently wise. The approaching closing sequence seems to emit Su’s concern about his life meanings. What is Su’s interpretation of his chen ren status? His metaphor is the burnt kernel, or the stabled horse, which is opposite of the glorious “Yun Han zhi zhang” 雲漢之章, (considered representative of a preeminent class of elegance in the Shijing).

This allusion removes some of the ambiguity that Su wishes to communicate and therefore escapes the paradoxical limits of language. In this flow of self-reflecting philosophical thought, Su initially starts by comparing Confucian conventions. However, his tenor figuratively indicates him withdrawing from roles within the Confucian tradition, by using metaphors signifying that he is now retiring into roles aligned with the Daoist tradition. These are most often allusions to paradigms from the Zhuangzi. For contextually understanding the antonomasia Su is ascribing to himself, we look to the chapter titled “Yuyan” 寓言 (viz, imputed language /

\(^{235}\) Grain kernels, are literally “grain teeth” guya 穀牙. Su used variations of teeth metaphors in multiple writings in his last year of life.
metaphorical words) in the *Zhuangzi*. This chapter introduces this vocabulary and describes a
*chen ren* in the final two words of the first passage.236

重言十七，所以已言也，是為耆艾。年先矣，而無經緯本末以期年耆者，是非先也。人而無以先人，無人道也；人而無人道，是之謂陳人。

Venerable words occur seven times out of ten, and are a means for stopping further words, through the capacity reaped by venerable elders. Those elderly in years, but lack the depth and breadth from the beginning to end in hopes for age to make one venerable, they are not those [venerable] predecessors. Persons then lacking the accordance with predecessors, are persons without connection to the Way; and persons without connection to the Way, are those designated as obsolete *chen ren* 陳人。

Su fittingly draws both metaphor and language from his quiver, or should we more accurately say, from his *arsenal* of literary art, to work beyond the limits of words themselves. This feature throughout Su’s literature certainly helped place him in the category of a great master of prose. There are more than a few ways this “Yuyan” chapter title can be rendered in a philosophical translation, and for instance, Burton Watson translates the title of this chapter as “Imputed Words.”237 Watson’s translation captures a critical aspect that Su Shi suggests through his *chen ren* reference. The dictionary defines “Impute” as a word meaning to attribute to someone or something but usually suggesting negative overtones placing fault, blame, or discredit. It is a valid construal that Su is using the antonomastic qualities of this allusion to *impute*, or ascribe a discrediting of himself.

The other passages of the short “Yuyan” chapter indicate further examples of persons having lost or who are lacking unity with the Dao. The examples indicate this lost unity

236 *ZZQZ*, “Yuyan” 寓言, in *Zhuangzi* 莊子, 330.

transpires by someone adhering to “words” that then lead them to misleading understandings of human life. This allows for an interpretation that Su embraced this passage for best describing his own standing and relationship with the world – one that was now obsolete. These same streams of thought began consistently appearing in Su’s writings during this fifth month of 1101. This discredited chen ren view of himself does not appear in Su’s earlier writings. Moreover, this condemning self-reflection arose before his final severe illness set in much later in that fifth month, and cannot be attributed to thoughts arising out of illness or physiological suffering. In his last two months of writings, Su appears as reconciling the many examples in his life as proof of his not having grasped the Dao.

Furthermore, Su’s internal conflict does not appear as that of a literary persona. However, his tone does portray himself admitting as evidence the ironic folly in his life. The events of his life indicated to him that he is not a proper man, and history cannot look upon him as competently sensible. Su’s most prominent prose literature themes during his final six months of life display his considerations in analyzing aspects of his ultimate life meanings. The degree of change depicted by this chen ren epitaph inflects greater psychological discordance than the previous identity shift struggles that Su raised with his san ren epitaph six months earlier.238 This chen ren point of view emerges only in the writings of his final two months of life.

A second and much more detailed prose writing dated to that first day of the fifth month upon Su’s arrival in Jinling 金陵 is a eulogy tribute to the Buddhist Bodhisattva Guanshiyin

*Pusa* 觀世音菩薩.239 Su’s prose text content again reveals more authority in comparing values

238 A chen ren 陳人, in comparison to a san ren 散人.
239 *SSQJ*, 12:2243.
between Buddhist and Confucian methods. For these two teachings, he explains how their relationship should embrace one’s life purpose. In this encomium for the Buddhist temple, Su expounds that Confucianism becomes less than Buddhism. He does not directly mention Daoism, but similar to previous writings, he extends this same structure of argument with Buddhism represented as less than the Daoism that he illustrates through the *Zhuangzi*. On the surface level, the apparent philosophical argument displays core values of Buddhism and Confucianism. Nevertheless, in this Guanshiyin tribute, the ideal that Su describes as, “equal without differentiation” (*wu er 無二*), resonates with his previous underlying Daoist value of *wu qing*, that is, becoming *transcendently unfettered* from *differentiation* or *preferences*, seen in Su’s *Zhuangzi* allusion a few months earlier.

Su’s theme in this prose work moves beyond the comparison of Buddhist and Confucian virtues. It invites speculation on the symbolism of an underlying relationship between Su and the manifestation of this Guanshiyin image. There is a conceptual trail leading from Su’s preface into the main body of this prose text that have a linking relationship with the entire passage.

観世音菩薩頌
Encomium to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva

金陵崇因禪院長老宗襲，自以衣缽造觀世音像，極相好之妙。余南遷過而禱焉。曰：「吾北歸當復過此，而為之頌。」建中靖國元年五月一日，自海南歸至金陵。乃作頌曰：

Jinling Chongyin Buddhist Temple Elder Zongxi, after receiving the temple-abbot mantle, then made this Guanshiyin image, with the ultimate marvels of the Buddha’s

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240 *SSOJ*, 12:2243.
Heading south (into exile, seven years earlier in 1094) I prayed here at that time (to this Guanshiyin image). I said: “When I return northward I will again pass here, and will write an adulation tribute.” Recorded this year of 1101, the fifth month, the first day, returning from Hainan and arrived at Jinling. Thus, [I am] now composing this tribute and declaration:

慈近乎仁, 悲近乎義。忍近乎勇, 憂近乎智。四者似之, 而卒非是。有大圓覺, 平等無二。無冤故仁, 無親故義。無人故勇, 無我故智。彼四雖近, 有作有止。此四本無, 有取無匱。

Compassion [of Buddhism] is near benevolence [of Confucianism]; empathy is near justice. Self-restraint is near courage; equanimity is near wisdom. These four virtues are in resemblance, therefore ending distinctions. In a fully awakened consciousness, all are equal without differentiation (無二). In lack of enmity, there is humaneness; in lack of emotional attachment, there is justice. In lack of human foibles, there is courage, in lack of a self-imposed identity (無我), there is wisdom. These four [Confucian virtues] although near, have both a making and an ending [and are thus limited]. These four [Buddhist virtues] originate in nonexistence wu 無, [are thus unlimited] and are without exhaustion.

有二長者, 皆樂檀施。其一大富, 千金日費。其一甚貧, 百錢而已。我說二人, 等無有異。吁觀世音, 淨聖大士。 徧滿空界, 携攜天地。大解脫力, 非我敢議。若其四無, 我亦如此。

In viewing two elders, where both enjoy giving in charity. One is very wealthy, donating a thousand gold daily. The other is very poor, only donating one hundred coins. I say these two people are equal without difference. Oh, we beseech thee, Guanshiyin, Jingsheng Dashi. You fill the entire illusory realms, carrying along the heaven and
earth. The grand power of freeing people from worldly sufferings, I dare not remark. If these four virtues situate in *nonexistence*, then I shall be as well.\textsuperscript{244}

It is noteworthy, that seven years earlier on the seventh day, of the sixth lunar month in 1094, and concordant with Su’s exile from the court, Su had called upon this same Chongyin temple. On his way trudging south of the Lingnan 嶺南 Five Ridges 五嶺 area, Su had supplicated in prayer in front of this image of Guanshiyin. He had vowed that *if* a point in time came when he could return northward, he would once more supplicate, and compose a devotion tribute. This context suggests that Su had prayed to this image of Guanshiyin for protection, and asked for help to survive exile, and thus is now alive to return here again. Now he was fulfilling his promise to return gratitude for the favor of survival that Guanshiyin had bestowed him.

Su compares virtues in Buddhist teachings as being close to virtues in Confucian teachings. Su names Buddhism’s prominent virtues (*ci 慈, bei 悲, ren 忍 and you 悠*) as comparable to four [of the five] Confucian virtues (*ren 仁, yi 義, yong 勇, zhi 智*).\textsuperscript{245} After delineating virtues from both traditions, Su then diminishes the Confucian virtues in comparison to the Buddhist virtues. His fundamental reasoning, in essence, is to demonstrate that the four virtues in Confucianism are *finite*, in contrast to those in Buddhism that can be termed as *in-finite*.

\textsuperscript{244} Ned Davis, review of *This Culture of Ours*, by Peter Bol, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 39, no. 1 (1996), 74-78. Davis notes the incomplete translation by Bol on page 274 of *This Culture of Ours*, that leads to a misinterpretation, and results with a reverse meaning of this Guanshiyin dedication. Multiple translations elsewhere of this Guanshiyin encomium include that by Grant in *Mount Lu Revisited*, 175-176.

\textsuperscript{245} Su does not include the fifth Confucian virtue of *li 礼*. Conceivably, since Su would have known these five, he may have excluded *li* because there was no Buddhist virtue that quite equated.
One may ask, why did Su want to fulfill his promise to come back to this temple? The reason appears much like prayers he made when he left Hainan almost one year earlier. At that time also, Su prayed to local gods for protection while confined in exile and promised in gratitude to write an epigraph of praise. In this example as well, it suggests he may well be honoring Guanshiyin as having helped him to survive Hainan and wanted to return the favor for protection. Thus, if Su owed gratitude to this Guanshiyin for helping him come back, it was a redeeming of a vow (huan yuan 還願), or one could say Su was fulfilling his promise.

In interpretation, this suggests Su was in a spiritually connected dialogue with Guanshiyin. The loss of the negative values that Su lists, are Su’s avowal that he now had no resentment, or attachments to what he owned before, in all the losses, he now had no attachments. “I have no agony in my mind, and finally, I do not have my previous self-individualized identity (wu ren ).” This written list gives the impression that Su is reporting on his improved changes to Guanshiyin. Such a report appears to say, “back then when I prayed to you, in my personal dialogue with you [Guanshiyin], that old me [Su Shi] has changed. This is the new me, after all these sufferings.” Very much like a religious confession, Su seems foremost to be absolving his debt of receiving favor. At this time, Su’s writings show he was still trying to digest his status within his recent life changes, and reevaluating perspectives on attaining a transcendent understanding of life’s meaning. However, the reverberating underlying tone expresses that he was still struggling to actualize higher philosophical attainments.

Only a few weeks later, at the end of that fifth month, a dysentery-like condition would severely impinge upon Su’s fluctuating plans. However, before Su contracted what led to his
terminal illness, his entourage landed just below Jinshan Temple, finding a location to tether their boats. While moored in-waiting for higher water, Su wrote the following two pieces.

Su Shi had an exchange of letters to an unrelated friend also named Su. Over the previous four months of 1101, Su Shi had written several letters to a poet colleague, named Su Bogu 蘇伯固 (fl. 1089-1091), from their days a decade earlier when Su Shi was stationed as governor of Hangzhou. Su told his colleague two months earlier, that as long as I [Su Shi] had only looked upon three books, the Yi, Shu, and Lunyu, then I feel this life has not been in vain. Su again writes to his colleague, three times mentions his lamentation over the death of Qin Guan.

答蘇伯固

Responding to Su Bogu

Indebted for your letter, I am deeply moved by your toiling to ask about me, and that truly increases my gratitude, and also by knowing that your body is healthy. Today I arrived just below Jinshan Temple. Although extremely grueling, but as long as [our boats are] able to advance by inches, we will, for the time being, still ride in the larger boat with the young and the cargo. When [our boats are] absolutely unable to advance, we cannot decline using the smaller vessels. In remaining life, and not knowing where to

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247 SSQJ, 17:6362.
settle, everything still falls back to relying upon riding currents in accordance with the water trigram, or if an obstacle impedes, then neither one is of my doing.

The day I departed Yingzhou, and had already received the Jade Office imperial orders, I am beyond grateful, for truly bearing these extra blessings. Though I received pardon, [I am again aware how Qin Guan came to his end in such a way. My whole body is still intact, and if that is not heavenly luck, then what is it. However, my increasing pain about Qin Guan’s death is inexhaustible. Of the people demoted with him, more than half are now dead. The [two] most regrettable ones are Fan Chunfu and Qin Guan, and the entire world should feel sorry for losing these two, what is to be done! Ah, what is to be done! Ziyou [my younger brother] is probably already in Baling, after an appointment to an official position, and planning to follow the river back to Yingchang. My group has no chance to follow them. Yesterday, while in transit, I caught wind that you are down with dysentery, I wish you a healthy recovery.

While moored there, Su Shi had a second piece of writing when he paid his respects to the Jinshan Temple. Su was asked to write something on a portrait that his great admirer, the temple abbot, Li Longmian 李龍眠 had painted of Su Shi. It was at this time in Su’s final two months of life that he wrote the following colophon for that painting.

自題金山畫像

Written on My Portrait at Mount Jin

A mind resembling wood already turned to ash,
A body like an untethered boat.
If asking me of this lifetime’s outstanding deeds,
Huangzhou, Huizhou, and Danzhou.

Lin includes in his Su Shi biography the following portrait of Su Shi by Li Longmian.

248 SSQJ, 8:5573. This colophon is also quoted in pages 2, 3 of Tomlonovic (1989), and page 4 of Fuller’s (1990) The Road to East Slope: The Development of Su Shi’s Poetic Voice.

249 Lin, The Life and Times of Su Tungpo, 16.1. Painting by Li Longmian 李龍眠.
Figure 2. Portrait of Su Shi by Li Longmian
On a surface-level reading, this speaks ostensibly as a lamenting poem of anguish, about a life unfulfilled. However, as we have seen above in his other expository writings, Su often couched underlying messages reverberating from further beyond the actual words he selected. In interpreting this verse, would it be too ironic to reason that Su’s underlying message also intended to convey that *exile* had in fact been his best teacher? Implications that immediately come to mind about his three exiles are that those specific periods of his lifetime were indeed where his production accomplished many great literary achievements. Looking beyond these surface meanings, the implications of the two specific references in the first two lines illuminate a discovery. This exact vocabulary invites valid interpretations that contradict the initial impression. And thus, those familiar with the *Zhuangzi* can ably maintain that this colophon has irrefutably supported indicators that it is not a lamentation on Su’s part.

In observing the insinuations closely, where Su appears to be depicting negative attributes, I discover an opposite meaning below the surface - something very positive. In line with the contexts of Su’s recent allusions, these references are specific rapports in the *Zhuangzi*. They indicate two of the highest Daoist attainments through an appearance of a *mind resembling wood turned to ash*,²⁵⁰ and a *freeing from the tethers* to artificial bonds.²⁵¹ By considering these two transcendent realizations, the interpretation of Su’s colophon then becomes understood in quite a positive light. This context shows that Su is hiding words within the words of the text. His stated assessment of achieving truly outstanding deeds or high attainments, were in truth, results of his three exiles in Huangzhou, Huizhou, and Danzhou [Hainan] 黃州，惠州，儋州.

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²⁵⁰ *ZZQZ*, “Qiwulun” 齊物論, in *Zhuangzi* 莊子, 13.
²⁵¹ *ZZQZ*, “Lieyukou” 列禦寇, 375.
This colophon is quoted elsewhere extensively, but without much elaboration. A useful context shows that the first two lines of the poem are direct vocabulary from the Zhuangzi. Su selects the first core terms of wood and ash from the opening sentences in the second Inner Chapter, “Qiwulun.” Slingerland summarizes the context of this vocabulary by saying, “Metaphorically, then, [Nan-Guo] Zi-Qi’s meditative technique has allowed him (the subject) to escape the control of the Self— which is a common way to understand Zhuangzian spiritual attainment.” Equally, the Zhuangzi text makes a clear case for how Su’s colophon uses these terms of wood and ash to infer his realization of high spiritual attainment.

南郭子綦隱几而坐，仰天而噓，嗒焉似喪其耦。 颜成子游立侍乎前，曰： "何居乎？形固可使如槁木，而心固可使如死灰乎？"

Nanguo Ziqi sat leaning against a small table, facing up to the heavens, and ever so slowly exhaled, in a reverie as though he had entirely uncoupled from himself.

[His disciple] Yancheng Ziyou stood attending before him, said in astonishment: “How can this be? [He] firmly appears able to resemble a withered tree, and his mind indisputably can appear as if lifeless ashes?”

This strongly suggests that Su’s colophon is covertly alluding to these indicators of high Daoist attainment. Several other Zhuangzi passages attribute these techniques with the highest levels of a Daoist adept. Near the end of the last inner chapter in the Zhuangzi, Graham supplements by an analysis of these Daoist attainments in another allegory:

Lieh-tzu is the Daoist led astray by the fascination of magical powers. His teacher Hu-tzu is not interested in fortune-telling, since he can withdraw beyond life and death to that serenity with ‘a heart like dead ash’ and ‘a frame like withered wood,’ which is

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252 ZZQZ, “Qiwulun” 齊物論, in Zhuangzi 莊子, 13.
254 ZZQZ, “Qiwulun” 齊物論, in Zhuangzi 莊子, 13.
255 Graham, Chuang-Tzu, 98.
outwardly indistinguishable from death. As elsewhere in the Inner chapters the only technique assumed is the control of the *ch'i* by breathing which is very deep, ‘from the heels’ and so even that the adept seems not to be breathing at all. For the uninitiated who cling to life, the merest glimpse of this state overwhelms with the horror of self-dissolution in ultimate solitude.

In the second line of Su’s colophon, he again uses a precise phrase by the allusion of the *untethered boat*. This also is a metaphor for an unambiguously high spiritual attainment in the *Zhuangzi*.

巧者勞而知者憂，無能者無所求，飽食而敖遊，汎若不繫之舟．

The one who is skillful labors, and the astute one has anxieties. Ones without abilities lack that which is sought. [They] eat to satisfaction and saunter as they please, floating [along with the flow] *like an untethered boat*.

In considering Su’s particular mentions in this painting colophon, it calls earlier interpretations into doubt, and introduces new interpretation questions that are categorically worthy of further scrutiny. The veiled power of these particular allusions is substantial. As well, this same literary style of hiding meanings through constructions of wordplay is visible in Su’s earlier post-exile writings in the year 1101.

The significance of both of these *Zhuangzi* passages is that they convey some of the highest values attainable during human existence – within the Daoist teachings. With this in mind, and juxtaposed within the context of Su’s existing circumstances, multiple interpretations can now emerge for further analysis.

In a nutshell, the first allusion expresses the abilities of a transcendent master moving beyond the mundane human realms. The second allusion expresses the proper unfettered nature among the incognito sages in the world. The two allusions are not just indications of *Zhuangzian* philosophies, but are two selections depicting some of the highest premises from the *Zhuangzi*.

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256 *ZZQZ*, “Lieyukou” 列禦寇, in *Zhuangzi* 莊子, 375.
This clarification presents a novel finding here. These intertextual allusions suggest that Su Shi, with adroit intent and skillcraft, was stealthily defining his own existence with a positive meaning; this is directly opposite to traditionally negative interpretations of this colophon, and moreover Su documents it into posterity with this portrait of himself.

From the end of that fifth month and into the sixth month of 1101, Su’s physical health deteriorated as he contracted illnesses associated with dysentery. During his last two months of life, Su writes on several occasions about the bond of the physical body (shen 身) in both Buddhist and Daoist philosophies.

These philosophical contemplations intermingle in writings that begin describing his worsening physical health. The line of thought Su begins emphasizing in his last weeks of life, references the Laozi explanation that, “the great sufferings are caused by having a body, without a body then there is no illness.”

By middle of the sixth lunar month, Su’s condition was reaching a point indicative of imminent death. He writes to a friend, and within the text Su includes a powerful allusion on the end-of-life from the Zhuangzi Inner Chapters. This suggests that Su includes this particular reference to clarify for his friend about Su’s personal attitude toward an impending death.

與米元章
Letter to Mi Yuanzhang

某昨日飲冷過度, 夜暴下, 旦復疲甚。食黃蓍粥甚美。臥閑四印奇古, 失病所在。明日會食, 乞且罷。需稍健, 或雨過翛然時也。印却納上。

My fluid intake had excessive cold yesterday, a night of violent diarrhea, at daybreak again still exhausted. Eating yellow yarrow zhou粥 very delicious. Lying down reviewing four unusual old-style signets, and overlooked this illness. Tomorrow about

257 LDDJ, Daodejing 道德經 no. 13, 48-49.
258 SSQJ, 17:6467.
getting together, I beg to cancel. Require feeling a little better, maybe after the rain passes, at a *composed* time.\textsuperscript{259} Stamping these [ancient] signets here for you to enjoy.

In the closing words, Su associates his *composed* mindset with that of an “authentic person” *zhen ren* 真人 as described in the *Zhuangzi*. This reference principally discourses on the perspectives a sage holds concerning life ending with death. The context of this passage is especially germane to understanding Su’s perspectives during his worsening health condition:\textsuperscript{260}

古之真人，不知說生，不知惡死；其出不訢，其入不距；
翛然而往，翛然而來而已矣。不忘其所始，不求其所終；
受而喜之，忘而復之。是之謂不以心捐道，不以人助天。是之謂真人。

The authentic people of ancient times, did not know how to delight in life, and did not know how to fear death; they came out not especially pleased, they went in with no reluctance; hastily they went and hastily they came, and that was all there was. Not forgetting where they started, and not seeking where they would finish. They were pleased they received it, overlooking they relinquished it. It is this that is called not allowing the heart to abandon the Way, not allowing people to assist [in the work of] Heaven. They are thus called the authentic person *zhen ren* 真人.

Su’s choice of this allusion indicates he aspired to face death with the same convictions as those described for the authentic person *zhen ren*. He was holding fast to these convictions regardless of his long, difficult illness. Despite Su ordinarily rising above philosophical human fetters as he chronicled his final weeks of demise, he at times communicated that he was still suffering from underlying fears.

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\textsuperscript{259} *ZZQZ*, “Dazongshi” 大宗師, in *Zhuangzi* 莊子, 71.
\textsuperscript{260} *ZZQZ*, 72.

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某疲病加乏，使令轍用手啟通問。恃公雅度闊略細謹耳，然亦皇恐不可言也。

I have been more tired and sick. My servant has been responding to the letters. (My not responding personally) relying on your refined temperament. But still, I can't say how petrified I feel.

Within another note to a friend, Su again exclaims the irony of having survived exile in the hideous circumstances of Hainan, only to succumb to some unassuming illness. He writes, “while 10,000 miles over the sea and not dying, but return to retire in the fields, and catching a disease and unexpectedly having to worry of not even getting up. How is this not destined?!”

Eight days before his death, Su writes that he is leaving any possible recovery in the hands of heaven. He again references the *Zhuangzi*. Su writes after a passage describing his bleeding gums and other severe symptoms, that if he does not recover naturally by heavens will, then it is not his own culpability. He writes, “Mr. Zhuang heard of giving free rein to the world, and had not heard of overriding the world, if leaving it so it is natural I do not recover, then it is heaven, not my doing.” Su began conveying embarrassment about becoming more and more bedridden, and this led to limiting his visiting guests or writing correspondence.

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261 *SSQJ*, 17:6679.
262 *SSQJ*, 17:6325.
264 *SSQJ*, 17:5831.
與米元章
Correspondence with Mi Yuan

某一病幾不相見，今日始覺有絲毫之滅，然未能作書也。跋尾在下懷。

Since getting sick [I] cannot meet with you, today the illness is just starting to decrease, but cannot write letters. Your script at the end is harbored in my mind.

In Su’s final days, his old friend from Hangzhou, the Abbot Weilin of Jingshan Temple, arrived and stayed many days with Su until his end. The Abbot Weilin was also well educated and able to write fine poetic verse. Five days before death, Su wrote to Abbot Weilin.

與徑山維琳
To Abbot Weilin of Jingshan

I have been confined to bed for fifty days, every day increasing drastically, already dejected awaiting the end. The past two days feeling slightly revitalized, but cannot be certain. Suddenly saw your name card for visiting, and was in shock for quite a while. In this intense heat, how could it be for older people to come out and travel. Lately, have you been sleeping and eating well? I cannot sleep without support, nor sit for a long time. Can you dear teacher come by for a beside chat for a short while? Evenings are cooler, again another visitor, very tired, cannot end, sincerely.

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265 *SSOJ*, 17:6468.
266 *SSOJ*, 18:6775.
Three days before his death, Su began meeting with family and friends to make final preparations. Su again writes respectfully and philosophically about Buddhism to his dear friend the Abbot Weilin.

與徑山維琳
To Abbot Weilin of Jingshan 267

某嶺海萬里不死,而歸宿田里,遂有不起之憂,豈非命也夫!然死生亦細故爾,無足道者,惟為佛為法為眾生自重。

Crossing over the mountains and across the sea for ten thousand miles, and did not die; finally return and retired, and then having this worry of not ever recovering, is this not destined fate! Thus, death and life are just small incidents, not worth talking about; only for the sake of Buddhism, for the sake of Dharma teachings, and for the sake of all living creatures please take care of yourself.

The next day was the 26th day of the seventh lunar month in 1101, 268 and Su penned the final writing of his life. While bearing this context in mind, this writing is at the acute point just two days before his death. Later scholars remark upon this as proof demonstrating that Su held the Daoist philosophical system of beliefs as those he valued most. One day earlier, Su had just praised his dear friend Abbot Lin to continue being a treasured Buddhist force in the world. Nevertheless, at Su’s endpoint of life, Su makes clear to his Buddhist friend, that for himself [Su Shi], it is Daoism that directs his beliefs. Before reading Su’s final poem, it is beneficial to give the allusion context as Su references a passage from the Daodejing: 269

吾所以有大患者,為吾有身,及吾無身,吾有何患?
That which makes me susceptible to suffer grave illness, is myself having this physical body, if I am without this body, then how can any illness come to me?

267 SSQJ, 18:6776.
268 In the western calendar in 1101, the 26th day of the seventh lunar month fell on August 22nd.
269 LDDJ, Daodejing 道德經 no. 13, 48-49.
By Su quoting the *Laozi* as the crux of his message. This suggests the heights of Su’s level of spiritual attainment demonstrating that while Su was on his deathbed he could approach death in a state of equanimity. Staring at death, which would come only two days later, Su’s last writing in his life was a final poem for his friend Abbot Lin.

答徑山琳長老
Replying to Jingshan Abbot Lin 270

與君皆丙子，各已三萬日。
You and I born the same year [1037], each of us living 30,000 days.

一日一千偈，電往那容詰。
If each day chanting one thousand Buddhist *gatha* hymns, as fast as lightning passing, how could it allow for questioning? 271

大患緣有身，無身則無疾。
The great sufferings are caused by having a body, without a body then no illness.

平生笑羅什，神咒真浪出。
My entire life amused at Kumarajiva; 272 his *dhāraṇī* spells truly blurted out for naught.

Su’s literary structure begins in the first line by showing the similarity of Su and his friend Abbot Lin. They are both the same age. The implication is that though having similarities in age, there is no similarity in their ultimate belief systems. The second line infers that the dictated activities such as daily chanting of Buddhist hymns in actuality interfere with attaining transcendent understanding.

270 *SSQJ*, 8:5574.
271 *LDDJ*, *Daodejing* 道德經 no. 13, 48-49.
272 Fang Xuanling 房玄齡, “Yishuzhuan” 藝術傳, in *Jinshu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 95:2502. On his deathbed, Kumarajiva uttered three *dhāraṇī* incantation spells and instructed his devotees to chant the sacred spells that would then save him, and though they were chanted out, they did not save his life.
The third line annotation displays Su’s core Daoist value system. He quotes a passage from the Laozi (Daodejing), about contentedly relinquishing the body at death. In his final sentence, Su’s message is the pinnacle of defining his belief that there is folly in attempting to impose influence upon the natural process of meeting death.

At his end, Su argued as a Daoist. Su enjoyed an at-ease mind for transcending the release of the body, following his determination of the most authentic path. Su Shi died two days later on the 28th day of the seventh lunar month [western date: August 24th] of 1101. Su’s family and friends assembled in attendance with him on his final day. Su Shi was sixty-four years old.
CHAPTER 3. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This study aims to contribute by filling a void in the scholarship of Su Shi’s prose writings after his final exile. The findings presented in this study through the above prose works and translations come after the first step of identifying all of Su’s post-exile prose texts. These were any texts that Su Shi wrote in the fourteen months after he received the imperial notification of pardon from his Hainan exile.

The examined works in the previous chapter were selected as best representing the total body of Su’s post-exile prose writings. The quantity of these selections are presented and translated in a chronological sequence, perhaps many for the first time in English. Following the extreme circumstances of Su Shi’s Hainan exile, this study combines close readings, alongside historical and biographical contexts of this period of Su’s prose writings. The recently verified accuracy in dating accounts for 248 prose writings after Su’s Hainan Island pardon. This study discovered an array of significant findings including intersecting themes in Su’s writings as he coped with arising challenges in his quickly changing circumstances after his final exile. Additionally, a few secondary themes are also prominent in Su’s prose writings that consolidate over shorter periods after receiving amnesty.

A foremost theme indicates Su consolidating his knowledge into direct and unconcealed perspectives voicing his core philosophical values. The textual findings are detailed below. These translations and explications illuminate thoughts Su recorded in his prose writings during his last fourteen months of life. Certainly, these include Su’s highest principles for viewing death, including his final days approaching his own death.
Falling into one of the most significant ranges of analysis in Song Dynasty philosophical inquiries, these translations also reveal windows into understanding the evolving thoughts of this literary genius during his final days. In that regard, these writings convey two significant contributions to previous scholarship.

First, it substantially illuminates Su’s personal revelations in his last year of life. These prose writings chronicle his realizations that he then documented through his unique literary abilities. Secondly, Su’s literary prose reflects perspectives based upon Northern Song philosophical value systems of the time.

These textual records elucidate how Su’s views evolved on the values of the three teachings at this unique highpoint of Northern Song, and by way of Su’s well-recognized and nearly unmatched erudition among literati in the Northern Song. As such, this study provides a final view of Su’s understandings of the three classic Chinese traditions. Since ancient times, all three of these traditions support the highest reverence for people to live a venerable life.

Within Su’s post-exile writings, we discover that he documented a series of equally important life-changing events. After amnesty, his final exile could be called the first of several elements that he placed upon a metaphorical literary palette to use as markers in his life reference-points. Su then deferred in his prose, to the reference-point elements on this palette for validating and contextualizing equally life-changing meanings that he engaged.

Su repeatedly gave validation to the weight of new topics in his writings by specifying that he had not expected to survive his final exile; after amnesty, he positioned that Hainan exile experience upon this palette as one of the most weighty references. As Su encountered new psychologically challenging experiences involving death and retirement, he began by initially
giving these events equal positioning on that palette. These events gradually surpassed in adverse meanings beyond just equating those experiences in a similar vein as the extremes of his Hainan exile.

Thus, the events Su referenced from this palette began with his final exile, and then are followed with similarly impacting events he encountered over his final year of life. An important observation is that events occurring before his release from exile rarely had any mention in this last year of prose; and if so, those mentions lacked any of the same germaneness or implications of significance to his post-exile views on life.

3.1 Four Themes in Su’s Prose after Final Exile

For interpreting these prose writings after Su’s exile, these translations include historically related commentaries, annotations, and related prose within their chronological sequence. Rigorous consistency in findings and conceptual themes was one goal of compiling and analyzing all content within Su’s 248 individual prose texts. After that process, patterns appeared indicating themes that demarcated into categories of four distinct periods in Su’s writings over his last year of life.

In due course, these four periods openly invite being divided into smaller and smaller categories of analysis. Many are fascinating topics for future analysis; however, the amount of data in this study is already unwieldy, and such analysis is beyond the scope of this present investigation. This present study builds on previous scholarship. It also brings new knowledge by defining numerous contextual parameters and discovered topics in Su’s life after his final exile. As such, it illuminates these new items and areas that call to be developed by further examination and to critically appreciate Su’s prose that records much about his life after exile.
The first of these four periods began in the fifth lunar month of 1100 when Su received an imperial notice of amnesty. Within this first period, Su automatically undertakes plans for his return into the fold of official government duties. Su writes his feelings of deep joyous surprise, but juxtaposed are indications of disconcerting anxieties. This period of Su’s writings were later interpreted to infer that the Hainan exile had possibly disturbed him psychologically. Zhu Xi’s later analysis determined nearly half of a century later that Su appeared as becoming mentally unhinged as a result of the Hainan exile.

Within that same period in time, and in stark contrast Zhu Xi’s observations, Su displayed that he was a consummate polymath able to draw upon his sophisticated erudition by writing a much-lauded lun treatise. Written over the single month after gaining amnesty, Su’s reasoning in this treatise later garnered the highest possible compliments. Scholars praised it as surpassing even the former precedent written by another of the “Eight Prose Masters of Tang and Song,” and his original mentor, Ouyang Xiu. The juxtaposition of Su’s relatively few prose writings in the three months immediately after his pardon, would seem to invite psychoanalytic criticism. Evidence from this period of Su’s prose writings shows disunities suggesting unresolved anxieties, and infer fixations that have textual interpretations indicating a growing displacement of his identity.

The groundwork for further major impacts on his remaining life was embryonic at this time, and though perhaps unintentional, and some impacts strongly suggest they were instigated by his own doing. One such psychologically impactful event appears to have manifested through a revealing comment in Su’s second memorial letter of gratitude to the Emperor. Su’s remark suggests that Su himself was the impetus to bring about the sudden third imperial directive informing him to spend his remaining life in an early-retirement status.
This discovery is presented in this study and stems from the literary positioning near the end of Su’s second letter with a seemingly spontaneous and innocuous remark decoded as an essential textual symbol. Su’s letter closing with, “the mountain pass connecting to my native place is entering sight,” can be read as a riddle of “symbolic incongruity”273 and communicates to the emperor, “symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech.”274 Su creates the appearance of a fleeting insertion into this letter’s literary theme as a seemingly offhanded remark. While affirming auspicious gratitude and the Emperor’s awesome grandeur in patterns of the empire, Su suddenly interjects, “the mountain pass connecting to my native place is entering sight; I still hope to return my bones to Mount Mei.”

Later prose strongly supports the proposition that this single sentence put forces into motion that would come to dislocate Su Shi’s scholar-official identity. By close reading analysis, it appears the imperial directive of retirement, possibly impacted Su psychologically to reel to into further extremes greater than the psychological effects of his final Hainan exile.

The second of these four periods began four months later, in the ninth month of 1100, upon hearing news of the death of his dear friend Qin Guan. Su’s writings indicate his perspectives entered a change towards life (and death) after this event. Employing interpretive strategies to frame the content of Su’s prose content, we generally find Su embracing allusions

274 Tucker, 13. See also in, Freud, Sigmund. "On Dreams." Excerpts. Art in Theory 1900-1990. Ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood. (Cambridge: Blackwell Pub., Inc., 1993), 26. in Psychoanalytic Criticism, Freud wrote, “The dream-thoughts which we first come across as we proceed with our analysis often strike us by the unusual form in which they are expressed; they are not clothed in the prosaic language usually employed by our thoughts, but are on the contrary represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech.”
originating from classical texts’ understandings. In prose writings of Su’s previous scholarly life, death had always been a theoretical topic. After this death-event, Su’s writings suggest he was personally traumatized by the close proximity of death. Death now became exposed as something not answerable to the classical arguments of his previous understandings, and Su’s writings document him conveying this anguish in letters to friends.

After Qin Guan’s death, and over the next two months, archetypal motifs began emerging into a different pattern within Su’s prose. Consistently during that time, Su visited Buddhist temples, and for a short while wrote an abundance of commentaries and tribute praises on Buddhist scriptures and practices. Findings from this period display Su as absorbed in investigating Buddhist doctrines and practices for a relatively brief time of a couple months. This period of prose texts begins showing Su reexamining the relationship of his own views of his life’s existence engaging with his suddenly new encounter to the genuinely real aspects of death.

A compelling and significant finding of an overarching theme that psychologically challenged Su in post-exile life, occurred during the third period. Three months after Qin Guan’s death, a disturbing event to Su was the sudden imperial communiqué of Su into a “retirement status.” Su’s unease is seen congealing in his writings during the last lunar month of 1100. The most potent life-changing event after Su’s final exile arose correspondingly to this imperial order that erased Su’s future engagement with his life’s scholar-official identity.

By chronologically examining Su’s prose content, the close readings expose this retirement-event and provide scholarly attention to address this theme and its effects upon Su Shi and his constructs of identity. This thought-provoking textual finding adds a key component to scholarship on this period after Su’s final exile. Prose writings beginning with news of
retirement, textually verify Su’s displacement and his marginalized state of mind. Through the multiple numbers of references in his writings, Su’s interpretations of retirement display by antonomasia how he perceived retirement as a very negative comment upon his character. His references in these prose writings suggest retirement was a shock to his identity that was psychologically more disturbing than the more physically oriented shocks of his final exile on Hainan Island.

By New Year’s Day of 1101, the themes, content, and style in Su’s prose texts show that the status he had always viewed as his heaven-bestowed identity, was now in question to himself. Textual support contributes to an interpretation that exile had not intruded upon Su’s identity to nearly the degree as his self-designation of a useless person san ren 散人 status in his retirement. Observing once again, Su was sixty-four at this time despite the Northern Song retirement age officially being seventy years of age.

In recalling Fuller’s observation, it was Su Shi’s final exile on Hainan Island that historically placed him as reaching the “exalted realm of Han Yu.”275 When making comparisons between Su Shi and Han Yu, Spring coins an outstanding point on exile that, “the wish of reinstatement is the overriding desire of the political exile.”276 That desire for reinstatement into the contributing scholar-official capacity accurately captures the perception of identity shock to Su Shi. By identifying the major impact of this retirement event, translations of these prose writings generate new knowledge about Su’s life after his Hainan exile. Thus, by the discovery

275 Fuller, The Road to East Slope, 4.
of this evidence, it almost leads to a new question concerning Su’s scholar-official identity. This study began by asking, “How did Su Shi cope with his final exile?” At this juncture of Su’s prose writings, it could now include asking, “How did Su Shi cope with a sudden early retirement?”

By critically structuring literary parameters for the fourth period, we find a trove of the most philosophically rich period of writings after Su’s release from exile. These translated prose writings all occurred in 1101. Su’s allusions and literary principles of this period demonstrate Su’s philosophical views as expressed in radically different renderings than findings generally associated with studies of Su Shi. The “maturity” that Su gained in these final stages of his life, earlier mentioned by Hatch above, reflects another element of how this stage contrasts with earlier writings.

In some ways, Su’s maturity, or values of “blandness” *dan* 淡 in this period of writings, perhaps best reflects a description coined by François Jullien. “On this common ground of the *bland*, all currents of Chinese thought – Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism – converge in harmonious accord. None of these systems conceives of it as an abstraction (for the purposes of establishing a theory) or, at the opposite extreme, as [the] ineffable.”277 This processual means of blandness proposes a method for giving greater access to nadirs and zeniths of the *Dao*. Su’s writings resonate at this stage in showing an accord of his literary, religious, and philosophical belief systems for attaining degrees of a transcendent *Dao* realization.

The beginning of Su’s strongly philosophical theme in his post-exile prose writings coincides almost precisely with New Year’s Day of 1101. From that day until his death, nearly seven months later, Su’s consistently prominent writings are, for the most part, announcing his focus on attaining the highest possible understandings, or even preferably attaining a transcendent understanding of both life and death. Su begins writing more prose pieces comparing differentiations among the ideologies from the three teachings, and their applied efficacy to the human condition.

In essence, as Su assimilated into retirement status, his writings show that he was less and less bound to Confucian protocols or conventions. By extension, this offers that his views on the Confucian rules and classics were predominantly associated with government structures for society, and thus, now became relegated as peripheral to his new sphere of concerns.

On the other hand, in considering Buddhism, Su shows his respect in a much higher dominion. Until his death in the seventh lunar month of 1101, Su consistently maintained interaction with many Buddhist friends in their positions as temple abbots or traveling monks. Though granting that he always gave praise to the teachings of Buddhism over the course of writings during those last seven months of life, Su’s more significant emphasis on Daoism is now confirmed as apparent by Su’s prose writings in this study.

This study illumines that of the three teachings, it was Daoism in the end that held the highest value to Su Shi. Most often in this final fourth period of post-exile life, Su’s prose allusions reference the Zhuangzi. Even when accompanied at Su’s deathbed by his Buddhist

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278 The three teachings, Sanjiao 三教.
abbot friend, Su’s last writing two days before his death clearly shows Su confirming his Daoist core beliefs. To the utmost degree, he conveys that his Daoist philosophies gave him confidence -- without any doubts. He writes that he was contentedly secure in his Daoist beliefs for engaging the moments of death.

A major subtheme in Su’s writings also occurs within this final fourth period is described below in more detail. This theme involves Su reflecting on indications during his last few months of life, that in the course of his lifetime he had possibly become a *chen ren*. That is, he determined that he had become an antiquated person that had lost connection to the Dao. His writings indicate that he considered the possibility of this undesirable self-designation as more disturbing than his previously repugnant *san ren* status that reflected his uselessness in premature retirement. We find in his last two months of writings, however, Su’s *chen ren* identity-question did not appear as hindering or engaging his writings to any great extent during the weeks approaching his death.

Another significant finding is distinct at this point, and answers a question that has been asked in some scholarly circles, of what were the core views on Buddhism of Su Shi (Dongpo 東坡). These translations provide actual insight into Su’s views on the relationship between Buddhist and Daoist philosophies. A significant contribution to the field is made here by revealing the number of supporting prose writings during 1101 that substantiate a response to this question.

Thus, the translated prose writings in this study during his last year of life, indicate that in his core beliefs, Su Shi was not Buddhist at heart. His terminologies show he was versed in
Buddhist teachings. However, in his writings and choices of allusions throughout these writings, Su overwhelmingly designates Daoism as superior to Buddhism.

3.2 Varied Roles of Death in these Four Periods after Final Exile

Examined as a whole, the themes within the four periods described above do in many ways complicate conventional understandings of Su Shi. As this study began investigating through the lens of his post-exile prose writings about how Su Shi coped with the effects of his final exile on Hainan Island, the prevailing theme of death kept surfacing. This theme concerned Su’s perspectives on death. Su’s writings indicate individuated perspectives occurring, and each of Su’s views on death arise in conjunction to specific events within these four periods.

In the first period, death was a prominent topic in Su’s prose, but was still considered something beyond assessment, and was always lurking at bay with possibility through the unknown abhorrent conditions of the Hainan exile. This form of death was the obscure death that Su Shi felt he had luckily escaped. He had expected to die on Hainan Island, and he frequently wrote messages that he had resigned himself to this fate. Death, in this light, had always been the theoretical destiny referred to in the classics. This was a literary trope of the exiled literati, but it also possessed the psychological aspects that there was no way to escape linking death to an environment such as exile. His writings indicate that he still held this view during the first few months after release from exile. He alludes to ironies that he had possibly dodged fate. The textual indications are that Su was returning to those same points of view in the literati lifestyle that he had always known in his earlier adult lifetime.

However, in the second period, Su’s views on death change. Death suddenly debased his prior attitudes, and his writings confirm that his views on death emerged in contradiction to
logic. Su agonized to understand how his dear friend Qin Guan had suddenly died in such seemingly peculiar circumstances. They had both been among the few officials that had survived exile. In fact, as writings show, Su may have felt it was some sort of mocking fate that he evaded death in Hainan. Furthermore, Su and Qin had just reacquainted a few months earlier without Su detecting any inklings of health concerns. Su struggled to logically grasp how his friend had not followed the supposed academic progression leading up to one’s death. In fact, in the details surrounding his death, Qin Guan had violated all the rules for approaching death that Su had always held accountable.

In the weeks immediately following Qin’s death, Su immersed in activities with Buddhist monks and temples for more than one month. This month of writings shows Su exploring Buddhist teachings that could bring relief by better comprehending the close proximity of death, as he had just experienced with Qin Guan. Su’s writings display he began altering his perspectives on death from this point forward, and appears to begin measures for changing his philosophical approaches to life. Su’s change in approach is reflected through both the themes and the content of his prose. He begins writing in less obscure language, and soon after begins to predominantly expound his understandings for achieving the highest realms of an authentic life.

In the third period, Su’s concerns became focused on his encountering a previously unidentified emblematic form of death. This death was a metaphorical death of his scholar-official identity. During exile on Hainan Island, there had always been the hope that someday he would have reinstatement back into his scholar-official identity. However, with the third imperial directive of retirement, there was now a situation that contained no possibility for hope of returning into the official identity he had always embodied in his entire previous adult life.
Not yet reaching official retirement age, this peal reverberated as a different type of death knell, and for a couple months, it appears in his prose as more disturbing to Su Shi than anything he had previously encountered. Su’s prose letters indicate he was now confronted, confused, and challenged to understand what his new identity should be. Textually, Su’s prose content appears to reflect frustrated confusion in expressions that he sometimes voiced as sarcasm, and conceivably at times to the extents of showing tones of belligerence. One could argue that to Su, this death to his scholar-official identity was the engaging of a form of death while still being alive. It appears retirement was some vagary of a thwarted living existence that he had never considered, and he did not know how to approach this externally-imposed death to his previous existence.

The fourth period could then describe a silver lining to Su’s initial inharmoniousness with retirement status. Su appears to move beyond his previously narrower views of a self-identity. Su’s last period of prose writings indicates he became reconciled with his retirement status. This seems to have ironically enabled a frame of mind that then in all actuality, freed Su Shi from the baggage associated with the official roles of his previous identity. An examination of this period of prose, demonstrates Su was now free to focus on the highest understandings of life, and in conjunction, deeply comprehend appropriately wiser and new understandings of death. In essence, during this period, Su’s writings reflect that he efficaciously moved into transcendent understandings of death.

3.3 Semantic Interpretations from Specific Textual Connotations

In these prose writings after Su’s release from exile, several exposed subtheme topics invite further interpretation or investigation. Regarding the imperial directives that were recalling many
exiled Yuanyou officials back into service, it invites estimation of what was causally connected to the directive suddenly designating Su’s retirement. Su’s closing sentence in his second memorial of gratitude, also invites textual support to explain why Su may have interjected this seemingly spontaneous comment. These questions are open to what other reasons Su may have had for writing this comment. As well, it invites questions based upon conjecture that Su’s comment instigated steps for the court directive in an early retirement. This question is of interest because after receiving his notice of retirement, as a former premier leader serving the country, Su writes of his shock at this removal from his lifelong scholar-official identity.

Su’s comment is inserted just before the closing salutation of this second letter to the Emperor, which suggests that it was not an act of spontaneity. Was it physically true that he saw the mountain pass at this time, or is it a metaphor for another purpose? At this time, Su was in good health. Writings for the month afterward indicate that he did not yet have concerns that he would literally need to prepare for returning his bones, as if in preparation for his own death.

In the sight of receiving two imperial directives within a short span of only three months, Su may have surmised a period of volatility in the court decisions about his future official stationing. If this conjecture is correct, Su may then have viewed the timing was right for communicating his desire to return to lands closer to his birthplace.

Su acknowledged his previous rash behavior in the three memorials, and for that reason, it also raises a question of whether Su may again appear as presumptuous by injecting his personal desires. On the other hand, since the court had not been absolutely resolute about his

279 Su’s final sentence insertion at the end of his second memorial letter, “The mountain pass connecting to my native home is entering sight; I still hope to return my bones to Mount Mei.”
stationing location, the court may then also be open to hearing Su’s own proposition. Despite brazenly insinuating where he desired to be located, his later writings indicate he had not considered that in even the most remote possibility he would be retired.

For this question, and from the Emperor’s standpoint, the reason the court decided to retire Su suggests several possibilities. One potential motive is that the ruling of retirement may have been considered as an act of kindness. The empress behind-the-throne was still alive at that time, and she had been a powerful person helping Su. On the other extreme, it may indicate the level of political-faction turmoil among capital officials. The retirement decision could well have been encouraged by vindictive desires of Su’s enemies, or as well by protective friends; both of whom were wishing to guarantee removal of Su from interactions with political court intrigues. Either way, it would seem unlikely that anyone at court would view Su receiving this directive of retirement as one granting a status that Su would consider abhorrent.

Another subtheme surfaces after the notification in late 1100 of Su’s retirement status. This occurs as Su begins equating himself to a “useless person” san ren. In his prose content, Su’s textual placement of this negative antonomasia indicates its severity as a major topic in his mind, and as one indicating it was a direct violation to his lifelong identity.

This subtheme of retirement gives way in the fifth lunar month of 1101, to a subtheme of “a person who has lost connection to the Dao” chen ren. The philosophical contexts of a chen ren indicate a major shift in how Su viewed his own life’s meaning. The philosophical meaning of this term, strongly suggests that the identity Su had previously felt violated by a san ren retirement, had now become inconsequential.
Su’s earlier confrontation of a *san ren* identity had been an identity held accountable only to the official world of government and society. Of course, Su also attributed a *chen ren* status as an extremely unfortunate negative. However, a *chen ren* status differs greatly; it was an identity that was held accountable to much higher philosophical standards that are above and beyond human limitations of the official world of society. This change in the negative characteristics of this *chen ren* antonomasia submits that Su’s philosophical bearings had also changed in the last six months of life.

Though he initially railed against retirement, it may have paradoxically facilitated his ability to see beyond his previous scholar-official life perspectives. His writings demonstrate in both his Daoist and Buddhist viewpoints - that shedding the clinging attachments of the scholar-official world was a path better facilitating comprehension of how to transcend questions of life and death.

Perhaps ironically, Su living in the severe Hainan exile environment had not been the medicine needed to facilitate his release from the mundane, red-dust *hong chen* 紅塵 *samsara* of self-identity and worldly-attachments. However, in a simple twist of fate, this study indicates that it is viable to say that it was the court-directed premature retirement that ended up essentially performing this religious and philosophical function for Su Shi.
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This dissertation reveals how Su Shi coped with disruptions to the intended intellectual designs he had for directing the path of his life after amnesty from his final exile. The prose works studied here trace Su’s responses for coping with a variety of impacts on his internal views. In this study, through these post-exile examples of Su’s literary prose expression, we discover new evidence about the final underlying core beliefs of Su Shi.

This dissertation answers some previously unanswered questions. Su Shi displays his core views on contexts of the human dilemma that emerge through his choices of textual allusions. A study of these annotated allusions appeals for further investigation such as the specific selections garnering passages from the Zhuangzi. The discovery of Su’s weighting this period of writings with these particular allusions is both significant and of interest to Su Shi studies, and as such, a scholarly contribution to our knowledge.

Contextualizing greater historic detail is another area that could develop from this study and give a further in-depth analysis of the 248 prose writings identified in this period. These works presented here are properly fertile soil inviting development of broadly different themes through methods such as literary criticism, critical thought, literary theory, and the hermeneutics of experience.

Harmonizing seamlessly with vignettes from this study, Egan assesses veiled aspects of Su’s literature endorsing that, “the deep patterns of the world were, in the end, beyond human knowing: although Su affirmed that humans could translate the patterns of encounter into the
Su’s final seven months of writings in this study exhibit Su using varied genres and literary approaches for expressing these existing “deep patterns” li 理 of the world.

James J. Y. Liu further explains that traditionally, “Chinese critics believe that the Tao is naturally manifested in literature, rather than that it wants to be manifested.” Liu happens to use the exact example from the Zhuangzi that we see in this study (when Su remarks on the death of Qin Guan). The Chinese metaphysical view of the Dao follows the inseparability of perception with that of the object of perception. Liu explains that, “some Chinese metaphysical critics, as we have seen, affirm the solidarity of ‘I’ (wo) and ‘things’ (wu),” as that which is derived from the Zhuangzi’s Daoism. In this study’s prose text example, we see Su applying this Zhuangzi ideal of equanimity towards death in the case of his dear friend Qin Guan. In Su’s last months, as he was moving away from the disappointing san ren into the more disparaging chen ren self-appellation, we see a display of Su more closely engaging the traditional metaphysical view of the Dao.

Su also deems his understanding of how his literary conventions manifest, as something “inexplicable.” Many of the included prose writings presented in this dissertation can be developed as a scholarly study almost entirely in isolation. Su’s self-described writing style uses “the image of water, describing [how] his prose transformed moments of private experience into public texts: ‘my writing is like a spring of ten thousand gallons, it does not choose its path,’” but

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282 Liu, 59. Pinyin: wo 我 and wu 物.
always says what it should, stops where it should, and that is all I know. Thus, Su’s writing style calls for scholarly interpretations mirroring Su Shi’s mind on these themes. Palpably, in this final period, Su employs a variety of literary methods to express the inexpressible. Words are but one of Su’s apparatuses. Since the meanings that Su wants to express are beyond the capacity of words alone, and to understand this literature, we must take into account Su’s drawing upon his other literary devices.

By establishing this basis of Su’s post-exile prose writings, this study can advance the further development of analysis and critical thought, as is warranted for this great writer Su Shi. For emphasizing this point, Liu states, “to pursue the paradox further, I would say that just as all literature and art are attempts to express the inexpressible, so all theories of literature and art are attempts to explain the inexplicable.” The content in this period of Su’s prose, such as the New Year’s inscription on the *Zhuangzi’s - Hearing the Notes of Heaven*, shows Su writing multiple pieces and genres that attempt to communicate the inexplicable. In these realms of thought, we see that these prose writings and these narrowed smaller vignettes invite many new questions.

Hence, the prose writings in this study are generally Su honoring a person, a revered place, or way of perceiving higher values in the world. Each of these types of writings is an accessible source for understanding more about Su’s literary means for apprehending the deep patterns of the world. Additionally, the overall perception gathered from these writings, in comparison to earlier periods in life, is that Su experienced some changes in how he approached the discerning of truths.

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283 Fuller, *The Road to East Slope*, 3–4.
284 Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature*, 3.
In juxtaposing this period of prose writings selected for this study, with earlier periods of writings in Su’s life, we find that these prose texts after his release from the Hainan exile cannot accurately epitomize the life of Su Shi. In that same regard, we see that in isolation, neither can earlier stages of Su’s writings ring true as typifying his life. In the course of the fourteen months of prose works presented in this dissertation, these literary texts display multiple examples of substantial philosophical changes in the perspectives of Su Shi.
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Abbreviations


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