

A Concealed Reading for Early Chinese Christians: Text, Context, and Circulation of the *Discourse on Vegetarianism (Su shuo 素說)* in the Early Modern Period

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This article provides a new study on the profound cross-cultural encounters and adaptations between different religions in China.¹ The overarching goal is to analyse the philosophical relevance and value of the *Su shuo* 素說 (*Discourse on Vegetarianism*) in the context of the religious practices of vegetarianism and fasting that were adapted, reframed and used by Chinese Catholic converts starting in the early modern era. The *Su shuo* is the ninth section of the *Cang ju* 藏句 (*Concealed Sentences*), which is a forty-folio manuscript written on Chinese bamboo paper held in the ARSI (*Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*). In the text of the *Cang ju*, its author, Xiong

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Ding 熊定, refutes ten 'superstitious' beliefs and practices commonly present in seventeenth-century Chinese culture. The manuscript preserved at the ARSI is a copy of the now-lost original booklet by Xiong Ding, which was hand copied by a Chinese Catholic convert named Ruohan 若翰 (John). Based on textual evidence and the context of the manuscript, the *Cang ju* must have circulated in both non-Christian and Sino-Christian communities during the early Qing dynasty (1644–1912), therefore, between the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth century. This article also provides the first Chinese transcription and English translation of the *Su shuo*.

The Historical and Historiographical Context of the *Su shuo* 素說 in the *Cang ju* 藏句

Vegetarianism and Fasting in the Encounter between Christianity and Chinese Buddhist Culture

On the Eurasian continent, the practices of religious vegetarianism and fasting play an important role in the formation of practitioners' religious identities in Christianity,² Islam,³ Buddhism,⁴ and Daoism.⁵ In Chinese society, several different vegetarian and fasting practices were, and still are, widespread among different religious communities and have shaped their religious identities.⁶ This phenomenon has oftentimes been the result of the cross-cultural encounter between indigenous religious practices and 'foreign' ones.

During the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century, European Jesuit missionaries established friendships and cross-cultural interactions with several Chinese elites and commoners, which, at times, led to their conversion to Catholicism. One of many important religious changes that Chinese converts confronted in their religious life was the use of newly introduced dietary practices, especially fasting, required by the Catholic lifestyle. These practices differed from their previous Buddhist or Daoist dietary practices. This cross-cultural encounter eventually led Chinese converts to adapt and reproduce a way to accommodate Catholic vegetarian and fasting

2 Refer to Mathews, *Christian Fasting*; McKnight, *Fasting: The Ancient Practices*.

3 See Waines, *Food Culture and Health in Pre-Modern Muslim Societies*. For a general account concerning the Sufi tradition, see Hoffman, "Eating and Fasting for God in Sufi Tradition". For a more specific case study, refer to Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes*.

4 Refer to Shabkar, *Food of Bodhisattvas*. For a more specific case of Buddhist fasting in China, refer to Forte, "Il P'u-sa cheng-chai ching", 103–34.

5 Refer to Malek, *Das Chai - chieh lu*.

6 See Sterckx, *Of Tripod and Palate Food*.

practices. For example, Nicolas Standaert describes the spiritual efforts made by the Chinese Christian convert Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1557–1627). After Yang left his post in Huguang 湖廣 province, he “retired for meditation [for] a few days, fasting, wearing a penitential garment, having a general confession and receiving the Holy Sacrament”.⁷ Standaert, therefore, suggests that “religious practices such as fasting, penitence, and observing the Eucharist formed an integral part of [Yang’s] life”.⁸ As a result, Standaert concludes that this change in Yang’s religious practice reveals that newly adapted Christian practices replaced Yang’s previous Buddhist practices, as both religious teachings require practitioners to practice meditation and fasting.⁹

As the example given by Yang Tingyun shows, Catholic meditation and fasting practices in seventeenth-century China were key religious practices for Chinese Christian converts. These practices can then be seen as a bridging element for Chinese converts, in order to adapt to the new Catholic religious practice, as explained by Standaert. Hence, the way Chinese Buddhist practitioners and Catholic converts understood the real meaning of fasting became a crucial point of divergence when they soon realized that fasting is understood very differently within these two religions, since they are based on two very different doctrinal foundations. From the perspective of the European missionaries, as explained by Thierry Meynard, Buddhist vegetarianism and fasting led to a series of complex issues for missionaries in East Asia, in general, and in China, in particular:

When missionaries came to Asia, they encountered a very different kind of fasting that was rooted in the teaching of Buddhism and had spread to all segments of society. This fasting consisted in abstinence from specific foods, such as meat, garlic, onion, leeks, as well as from wine. Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) argued for the superiority of the Catholic fast because the Buddhist prohibition of killing life was founded on the belief in reincarnation. In many writings, Jesuit missionaries and Chinese converts attacked Buddhist fasting respectively as superstitious and in opposition to the ancient Chinese practice of offering meat to ancestors. Buddhists in turn accused Catholics of being insensitive to the suffering caused by meat consumption.¹⁰

7 Standaert, *Yang Tingyun*, 90 (modified).

8 *Ibid.*, 104.

9 *Ibid.*, 223.

10 Meynard, “Could Chinese Vegetarians be Baptized?”, 75.

Ricci himself practiced Christian abstinence from meat during Lent and on Saturdays, and on Fridays ate only herbs and legumes (*erbe e legumi*), even avoiding fish, eggs, and cheese.¹¹ Similarly, as suggested by Meynard, Ricci clearly insisted, on multiple occasions, especially in his *Jiren Shipian* 畸人十篇 (*Ten Chapters of a Strange Man*),¹² that abstinence from meat in Buddhism was different than that of Confucians and Roman Catholic Christians. A passage from the sixth chapter of the *Jiren Shipian* is particularly important in order to comprehend Ricci's argument on fasting:

時余篋中，適有舊稿一帙，中說天主教齋素三旨，即出帙觀之。其辭曰：因戒殺牲，而用齋素，此殆小不忍也。然齋有三志，識此三志，滋切滋崇矣。¹³

At that time, there was an old set of books in my book cabinet, which described the three aims of fasting in Roman Catholicism, so I took out the text to read it.

It said: 'To abstain from killing animals and to use vegetarianism is a very minor deed. However, the fast has three main purposes, and it is more urgent to know them and respect them more!'

According to Wang Suna and Filippo Mignini,¹⁴ the three purposes derive from St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* and are as follows:¹⁵ 1) to restrain the concupiscence of the flesh and to preserve chastity; 2) to support the purification of the mind and the contemplation of the highest things and 3) to self-punish oneself to atone for sin.¹⁶ As a result, for Ricci, religious fasting — and therefore also vegetarianism — should be based on specific moral conduct. Ricci also insisted that, for Chinese people's and his own Catholic religious fasting, the reason did not derive from the teachings of the Buddha, since the Chinese had practiced fasting during ancestral Confucian rites in antiquity.¹⁷ This led to much criticism

11 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 2, 535.

12 For the complete Italian translation, including the original Chinese text, see Ricci, *Dieci Capitoli di un uomo strano*.

13 For the original, see Matteo Ricci, Li Madou 利瑪竇, *Chongke Jiren shipian* 重刻畸人十篇, "齋素正旨非由戒殺第六", 40–41. See also, *Chongke Jiren shipian* 重刻畸人十篇 in Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚 ed., *Li Madou zhongwen zhuyiji* 利瑪竇中文著譯集, 470–73.

14 See Ricci, *Dieci Capitoli di un uomo strano*, 454, f. 8.

15 See *Summa Theologiae*, IIa – IIae, quaestio 147, articulus 1.

16 See Ricci, *Dieci Capitoli di un uomo strano*, 454, f. 8.

from Chinese Buddhist scholars, such as Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏 (1535–1615), who accused Ricci of misunderstanding Buddhist practices and ideas.¹⁷

Hence, vegetarian and fasting practices functioned as a bridge between Yang Tingyun's previous Buddhist practices and his newly adopted Catholic ones. For Chinese Christian converts, regardless of social and educational differences, the similarities between some Chinese Buddhist religious practice and Catholic practice seemed manifest. Such similarities might then be an important transitional and adaptive element when some Chinese people would decide to embrace Catholicism. This type of initial adaptation of Catholicism at the beginning of one's conversion process — as seen in the example of Yang — could then have been perceived as a touchstone for other less educated Chinese individuals in the transition from their previous religious practices to newly adopted ones. These individuals would usually have had fewer cultural references to a syncretic Confucian-Buddhist education and understanding, compared to more famous Chinese converts like Xu Guangqi 徐光啓 (1562–1633) and Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1571–1630). Conversely, often-times these similarities proved to be misleading. They also led to several misunderstandings and misinterpretations of doctrinal and practical issues, especially when the newly introduced Catholicism was first being accepted by Chinese communities. Therefore, it is not surprising that both the copyist of the *Cang ju*, the Chinese-Christian Ruohan 若翰, and the anonymous commissioner, who had Ruohan hand copy the text, found the *Cang ju* useful for clarifying various issues related to religious practice. Moreover, they both probably considered this text as paving the way for the acceptance of Catholic practices, providing robust arguments for the preparation of Chinese individuals to assent to Catholicism. This is supported by the fact that the text was copied to be given to other people. Correspondingly, Xiong Ding already criticized the easily and superficially, thus often 'superstitiously', understood and practiced Chinese Buddhist vegetarianism and fasting in the *Su shuo* section.

17 Refer to 是則齋素之義，不由釋氏始，不以殺牲，故明矣！ Therefore, the reason for undertaking a vegetarian diet and practicing fasting (for me and for you Chinese people) is neither because of the introduction of the Buddha's teaching (in China), nor because of avoiding killing animals as sacrifices. It should be clearly known!", translation by Zhenxu Fan. For the original, see Matteo Ricci, Li Madou 利瑪竇 *Chongke jiren shipian* 重刻畸人十篇, "齋素正旨非由戒殺第六", 40. See also, in Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚 ed., *Li Madou zhongwen zhuyiji* 利瑪竇中文著譯集, 470–73.

18 Lancashire, "Anti-Christian Polemics in Seventeenth Century China", 237.

He also points out many other ‘superstitious’ practices in Chinese culture in the other nine sections of the *Cang ju*.

Dietary Practices in Secular and Religious Life

Religious dietary practices were perceived differently by Chinese Christian converts and Roman Catholic missionaries. These practices were part of a complex set of factors that created a cross-cultural encounter between Chinese and European cultures, but also led to misunderstandings. They reshaped the interaction between European and Chinese cultures, and reframed the complex identity of Chinese converts who were curious about specific Catholic dietary practices, like abstaining from meat during Lent. The arrival of European merchants, missionaries and other individuals first in the Ming Empire and later in the Qing Empire generated an interest in their dietary practices, scientific knowledge, and religious beliefs among the Chinese.

Food played a pivotal role in the encounter between Chinese and Europeans, not only since it is regarded as daily nourishment, but also because dietary practice is considered a more complex set of actions with profound religious and cultural significance. Jesuit missionaries did not entirely refrain from providing Chinese people with information regarding ‘Western’ or ‘foreign’ food and food practices, which were mostly related to *mirabilia* and wonders from unknown distant lands. Jesuit missionaries were accommodating to the different situations encountered in China, in relation to diet as well. For example, on some occasions, they were given the opportunity — thanks to generous donations from their patrons or from wealthy Mandarins — to eat meat and drink wine, or to receive donations in the form of substantial quantities of *da mi* 大米 (lit. *big grain rice*).¹⁹ According to the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci,²⁰ the best quality of European wine in the Ming Empire was present in Suzhou 蘇州, and this wine was brought directly to Beijing from there.²¹

Apart from educating themselves about these details about secular Chinese dietary practices, Jesuit missionaries were particularly concerned about specific Christian practices associated with food. For example, after the shipwreck of his boat on 9 May 1605, Ricci

19 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 2, 156–151.

20 Matteo Ricci, * 6.X.1552 Macerata, SJ 15.VIII.1571 Rome, + 11.V.1610 Beijing (DHCJ IV, 3351–53).

21 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 2, 36. See also Bürkler, “Die Fasten- und Abstinenzpraxis in der chinesischen Mission”.

was extremely concerned about the loss of wine normally used for celebrating Mass. In fact, he stated that wine was particularly expensive, and he was forced, together with his religious brothers, to use wine very parsimoniously, diluting it with water for each celebration of the Eucharist.²² Similarly, other religious practices related to abstaining from certain foods or fasting were particularly important to the Jesuit missionaries in order to differentiate between indigenous practices and Catholic ones.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning a few specific examples of Christian religious fasting practices used in China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²³ Starting from the end of the sixteenth century, Sino-Christian communities grew significantly across the Ming Empire due to the missionary activities of the Jesuits. Catholic dietary practices and fasting became an important component of the new lifestyle adopted by Chinese converts, and their habits changed significantly. The Jesuit Nicolas Trigault²⁴ offers his own perspective on those changes. For example, he talks about an elderly Chinese Christian who lived together with a non-Christian rich man of royal lineage. According to Trigault, the rich man once asked the elderly Christian: “Does this Lord of Heaven that you worship provide to you rice and daily food? — and the elderly replied — He [i.e., the Lord] does. He provides food not just to me but also to you and to the whole world”.²⁵ Trigault refers here to the Body of Christ received at Mass. On other occasions, Trigault speaks about fasting as a form of penance adopted by Chinese Christians. In one case, an elderly woman lost her necklace and fasted for a few days until a priest gave her a new one to let her break her fast.²⁶ The *Cang ju* and the main topics discussed therein are discussed below.

A Brief Introduction to the *Cang ju* 藏句 (ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* I, 133)

The *Cang ju* is a pamphlet written by Xiong Ding 熊定, courtesy name Taizhen 太禎 — a scholar from Yichuan 宜川 in Shaanxi 陝西 — prob-

22 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 2, 280–81. Concerning the scarcity of wine for celebrating Mass, refer also to Yang, *Ite missa est*, 251.

23 See Bürkler, “Die Fasten- und Abstinenzpraxis in der chinesischen Mission”, 258–71.

24 Nicolas Trigault, * 3. III. 1577 Douai, SJ 9.XI.1594 Tournai, †14.XI.1628 Hangzhou (DHCJ IV, 3838–39).

25 Trigault, *Due lettere annue della Cina del 1610 e del 1611*, 60, translation by Antonio De Caro.

26 Trigault, *Due lettere annue della Cina del 1610 e del 1611*, 194.

ably during the seventeenth century.²⁷ Xiong Fei 熊飛, his second son, was the first copyist of the text, based on Xiong Ding's original manuscript. This original manuscript was lost but a later copy, hand copied by Ruohan and preserved at ARSI, suggests its strong connection to early Qing dynasty Sino-Christian communities.

In fact, as Albert Chan noted, the end of this text provides important information concerning the circulation of the *Cang ju*:

The last line of the manuscript, though damaged, still gives part of the name of another copyist, different from the son of Hsiung Ting, mentioned above: 撫州 [fu zhou] [...] 若翰抄謄 [Ruohan chao teng]. This makes it clear that the manuscript is not the original, but a copy made at a later date. The name Jo-han 若翰 is a transliteration for "John", probably from the Latin "Joannes", which indicates that the copyist (a native of Fu-chou in Kiangsi) was a Christian.²⁸

The copyist of the manuscript preserved in the ARSI was therefore *Ruohan* (John), and was most likely a Chinese Catholic convert. Looking at the last bamboo paper page of the manuscript, we can suppose that one of the partially damaged Chinese characters before Ruohan 若翰 was *zeng* 贈 (a person presenting and giving something as a gift to someone). Therefore, the last line of the manuscript should be read as "撫州 贈 若翰抄謄" (*Fuzhou zeng, Ruohan chao teng*), that is, "[someone from] Fuzhou [...] is giving this booklet as a gift, copied by hand by Ruohan". From this, Albert Chan deduced that the manuscript had been in circulation among Chinese converts. Noteworthy is that this circulation had a broad geographical range, connecting Xiong Ding, from Yichuan (Shaanxi), and a Christian copyist from Fuzhou (Jiangxi). It is clear that the characters *Ruohan* 若翰 (John) are smaller than the others in the last line of the manuscript, the line that is heavily damaged, on folio 38. This indicates that Ruohan was putting himself in a lesser position than the commissioner of this gift.

The manuscript copy of the *Cang ju* held in the ARSI also has a Latin title on the cover: *De Superstitionibus Ethnicorum a gentili Hium* (*On the Superstitions of the [Chinese] People by the Pagan Hium*). This title was probably added by a Jesuit missionary in China, or by a Jesuit archivist in Rome. The Latin title shows that the text was cor-

27 See Chan, *Chinese Materials in the Jesuit Archives*, 176; Menegon, "Le fonti per la storia della cultura popolare nella Cina tardo-imperiale", 83.

28 Chan, *Chinese Materials in the Jesuit Archives*, 177.

rectly understood as being related to superstitions. As Dudink points out, the manuscript of the *Cang ju* is classified under “the religious writings of Chinese Christians” in the ARSI:

Jap. Sin. I, 1–146 (nos. 001–212) has been well arranged: the Chinese Classics as the basis on which Christianity has to be (re)introduced, followed by the Chinese writings of missionaries, first the basic texts, viz. the catechisms (composed by Jesuits) and Ricci’s writings, then those of individual authors (Jesuits, Friars, and anonymous authors), texts in Manchu and finally the first results of the China mission: the religious writings of Chinese Christians.²⁹

This latter section on religious writings of Chinese Christians also includes the *Cang ju*. As we know, the Japonica–Sinica collection includes mostly texts from missionaries and Chinese Christians; a few anti-Christian texts can be found as well.

As Albert Chan noted, just before the *Cang ju* (I, 133) the ARSI shelves also hold an anti-Buddhist book edited by Wang Ruohan 王若翰 in 1689, with two parts: the *Piwang* 關妄 (*Refutation of the Buddhist errors*; I, 132) attributed to Paul Xu Guangqi 徐光啓 (1562–1633), and the *Pilueshuotiaobo* 關略說條駁 (*Response to Pilueshuotiao*; I, 132a) by the Chinese Christian Zhang Xingyao 張星耀 (1633–ca.1715). Albert Chan has hypothesised that the two Ruohans could be the same person. However, Wang Ruohan cannot be the same as the Ruohan that copied the *Cang ju*, because the former is now identified as Wang Shiqi 王世其, a Chinese Christian from Hangzhou, and not from Jiangxi as our copyist.

Nevertheless, the *Cang ju*’s placement in the ARSI next to Christian anti-Buddhist works calls our attention. Either the two documents were put together in China, or the archivist in Rome placed them side by side, since they are both related to Chinese religious practice. But while the book by Wang Ruohan is a refutation of Buddhist ‘superstitions’ from the point of view of Christianity, the *Cang ju* manuscript transcribed by the other Ruohan discusses a broader scope of religious practices, not limited to Chinese Buddhism.

The Structure and Main Topics of the Cang ju

The *Cang ju* is divided into ten sections, in which Xiong presents arguments against ten different ‘superstitions’ held by his contemporaries. Xiong examines these superstitions from a Confucian

29 Dudink, “The Japonica–Sinica Collections I–IV”, 485.

perspective and rejects them from his own individual and highly critical perspective.

Xiong Ding named the sections of the text by combining the name of each superstition followed by the term *shuo* 說 (discussion, talk, speech, discourse). This indicated a semi-formal, semi-casual style in Chinese essay and prose writing to his readers. This style also suggests a dialogue rather than a formal essay — either as an open dialogue between several interlocutors, or as a monologue presenting a debate or discussion.

As the content shows, the *Cang ju* indeed adopts the form of a monologue. The author mentions his interlocutor only in the tenth section. The discussions and elucubrations in this *shuo* style suggest that the author aimed to present his personal — and ‘rational’, as he believed — understanding of the ‘superstitions’ of his time, supported by several arguments and counterarguments.

In the postscript of the *Cang ju*, Xiong Ding mentions the difficulties that hindered him from publishing the text earlier:

列公有賜序者，有賜跋者，有賜評者，俱未敢刻。恐此受罵之句有玷嘉言，容遲讀明刻上。或又有肯賜語，俯教謹乞。揮示容拜，領刻。

I have received prefaces, postscripts, and commentaries from friends, but I do not dare to publish them for fear that this work of mine might be unfavourably criticized and this might cause embarrassment to my friends. Perhaps I shall have them printed later. If I do so, and if others will be so kind as to make suggestions, let them please do so and I will consider having them published.³⁰

Three remarks can be made on this. First, before publishing this booklet, Xiong had received several constructive comments from his friends. Hence, we can infer that the author understood the necessity to educate more people about their ‘superstitions’. We can also suppose that Xiong was a member of a well-educated, well-established, and wealthy family. He therefore had the financial ability to publish this booklet (evidenced by the character *ke* 刻, signifying the action of carving the woodblock for printing a text) and a circle of friends who could provide feedback on his work.

Second, his social and cultural context restrained Xiong from including the writings of his friends as complements to his text, since he wanted to protect their reputations. He may have feared that, if

30 Chan, *Chinese Materials in the Jesuit Archives*, 176–77 (modified).

his booklet was harshly criticized and condemned after its publication, his friends would have been blamed as well. Most likely, the author, as well as his circle of friends, were in the minority and needed to be ready to receive criticism from other prominent intellectual groups.³¹

Third, Xiong was hesitant about the results of his work, and the language he used in regard to his writings is tentative. Still, he published his work, despite the potential risks. However, he contemplated including his friends' constructive comments in another version to be published at a later stage, and he even welcomed further commentary on his text. Probably, Xiong was determined to spread what he believed were very critical thoughts to a wider audience. Therefore, reading this postscript carefully, we can observe a certain tension between a liberal, rational, and discerning way of thinking, represented by the message of the author and his friends, and a more conservative and defensive way of thinking, represented by his pre-emptive attitude towards potential critics who might disagree with and condemn the text.

Although more accurate biographical information about the author is hard to find, Albert Chan has noted that the *Cang ju* mentions the famous playwright Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1617), author of the *Peony Pavilion* 牡丹亭 (1598).³² As we shall see, the content of the *Su shuo* presents a kind of syncretism between Buddhism and Confucianism,³³ and we can assume that the text was probably written between 1660 and 1690. According to Zhenxu Fan, in the *Su shuo* section, Xiong Ding's mention of *Yichuyuan chanshi yulu* — 初元禪師語錄, a text written by the monk Yichu Wuyuan — 初悟元 (1615–1678), suggests that Xiong wrote the *Cang ju* in the early Qing dynasty, rather than the late Ming dynasty. Two people wrote prefaces for *Yichuyuan chanshi yulu* during the early Qing dynasty before the book was pub-

31 See Paracka, "China's Three Teachings", 73–98.

32 See Chan, *Chinese Materials in the Jesuit Archives*, 177.

33 Xiong criticizes superficially-practiced Chinese Buddhist fasting, while expressing pity for those practicing it incorrectly at the end of the essay. This is a typical Confucian rhetorical argumentation, showing companionate feelings towards one's peers. More importantly, Xiong directly quotes Qu Yuan's (ca. 342–278 B.C.E.) *Li Sao* 離騷, *chang tai xi yi yan ti xi* 長太息以掩涕兮 ("Deeply I sigh, brushing tears away"), a famous motif in Chinese literature representing companionate Confucian morality, see ed. and trans. Gopal Sukhu, *The Songs of Chu*, 37. This remark concludes all ten sections of the *Cang ju*. Xiong also cites the well-known example of Confucian literati who were Buddhist practitioners in the Tang and Song dynasties to explain how his contemporaries should understand the genuine meaning and purpose of religious practices like fasting, the focus of the *Su shuo*.

lished. One of them was Shi Bo 施博 and the other was Tan Zhenmo 譚貞默. Tan Zhenmo wrote his preface in 1655 and also wrote an epilogue for the book in 1663. According to the two prefaces, Yichu Wuyuan went to the temple Yongzhen chanyuan 永正禪院 in Jiaxing 嘉興 in 1648. As a result, it is possible to imagine that the *Cang ju* was written after 1660, when the book by Yichu Wuyuan would have been available to Xiong Ding. Xiong Ding would consequently belong to a Confucian scholarly group, and perhaps may have even been a local literatus in his jurisdiction.

Xiong's writing style in the *Cang ju* is easy to read and comprehensible to a general, educated audience. However, it is not as elegant and classical as the highly celebrated scholars of the seventeenth century — additionally, his arguments are not very thorough or well-organized. Our assumption is therefore that the author was a learned — but probably average — intellectual. From this textual reading, we suppose that the author was revealing some provocative and critical beliefs he held that had remained hidden until then (*cang* 藏, to conceal, to cover) especially rejecting the superstitious beliefs and practices of his time. He also wanted to conceal (*cang*, to hide) the names of his friends, and their comments on his work and ideas. He also intended to preserve (*cang*, to save, to preserve things for later or future use) all the comments about his booklet and possibly publish them in the future. All of this has led us to render the title of his book in English as *Concealed Sentences*.³⁴

Based on our textual reading, a summary of the ten sections of the *Cang ju* follows:

1. *Di shuo* 地說 (Discourse on geomancy): Xiong Ding rejects the practice of geomancy common during his time, which he regards as a false theory imposed on the natural landscape. He condemns the social phenomenon caused by the 'superstitious' use of geomancy, which oftentimes led to damaged houses or graves, and even caused murders due to conflicts over land and property — especially those bringing good fortune.

34 Our translation of the booklet's title differs from the one suggested by Menegon. In fact, he translated the *Cang ju* as "Raccolta di frasi" ("Collection of phrases"), see Menegon, "Le fonti per la storia della cultura popolare nella Cina tardo-imperiale", 83. Albert Chan did not provide an English translation of the title. However, he opted for the phonetic transliteration *Ts'ang - chü*. See Chan, *Chinese Materials in the Jesuit Archives*, 176.

2. *Ming shuo* 命說 (Discourse on *ming* [fate]): Xiong Ding refutes the determinism of *tian* 天 (heaven), on *ming* 命 (fate or destiny), especially the correspondence between celestial objects and the *ming* of each individual. This belief was particularly popular in his time. He also condemns the damage to human lives caused by believing in *ming*, especially in relation to broken marriage, failed parenting, and self-defeating attitudes.
3. *Rang shuo* 禳說 (Discourse on sacrificial rituals):³⁵ In this section, Xiong Ding rejects the foundational theories and practice of *rang* 禳, i.e., sacrificial rituals for either preventing evil and misfortune from happening, or for exorcising evil and demons. The author presents his understanding of the human body as an organism and the natural causes that lead to illness. As a result, he rejects the superstitious belief of ascribing illness to anything else (i.e., *shen* 神 [deities and spirits], *gui* 鬼 [ghosts], celestial objects). The author also argues in favour of cultivating *de* 德 (virtue) by practicing sacrificial rituals and explains how *rang* shall be correctly understood in Confucianism, not for the sake of the rituals themselves.
4. *Ye shuo* 謁說 (Discourse on the worship of deities):³⁶ Xiong Ding opposes the worshipping of *fo* 佛 (the Buddha in Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism) and *xian* 仙 (Daoist religious deities and immortals) in order to seek good fortune. He favours the Confucian argument, suggesting that *de* (virtue) is the only thing a person needs to cultivate a good life. The author also urges people to do concrete good deeds rather than worshipping *fo* and *xian*.
5. *Li shuo* 曆說 (Discourse on the *Huang Li* calendar): Xiong Ding, in this section, rejects a divination guide and almanac that was traditionally incorporated into the Chinese lunar calendar, called *Huang Li* 黃曆. The author argues that the divination of good-fortuned or evil-fortuned specific days of the year in the *Huang Li* has no 'rational' foundation, and such divination is an obstacle to normal daily life. The author also provides counter-examples from historical figures and daily life.
6. *Fa shuo* 法說 (Discourse on spells and charms): In this section, Xiong Ding refutes the superstitious belief in and use of spells

35 Here the copyist probably mistook the character *rang* 讓 (to modestly decline, to give away) with the character *rang* 禳 (sacrificial rituals) only for the essay title. He did not make this mistake in later instances.

36 Menegon translates this as "visits to the temples" (*visite ai templi*). See Menegon, "Le fonti per la storia della cultura popolare nella Cina tardo-imperiale", 83.

and charms by presenting their falsity and illusory nature. He discerns the different meanings of *fa* 法 in Chinese Buddhist and Daoist religious beliefs and practices, respectively, in order to present and criticize the fallacy of spells and charms practiced in his time.

7. *Shen shuo* 神說 (Discourse on *shen* [spirits]): Xiong Ding rejects false divination activities conducted in the name of various spirits. He presents a few definitions of *shen* 神 (spirit, deities) by quoting Confucian classics. The author also presents examples from popular literary works and historical facts showing human beings merely using the name of spirits to achieve their goals. However, he points out that his contemporaries waste their wealth on divination activities to summon spirits.
8. *Bu shuo* 卜說 (Discourse on coin divination): Divination using coins to summon *shen* (spirits, deities) is rejected here by Xiong Ding. Instead, the author presents how one should correctly understand the original meaning and purpose of using the hexagrams in the *Yijing* 易經 (*The Book of Changes*) for divination. The author also provides examples in history suggesting that several well-known people who learned divination simply did not foresee their own fates, and other famous people did not conduct divination, and even refused it, before taking important actions.
9. *Su shuo* 素說 (Discourse on vegetarianism): In this section, the author refutes the superficial practice of Buddhist vegetarianism of his time. He criticizes this practice by presenting his understanding of the original meaning of Chinese Buddhism, in contrast to the erroneous undertaking of a superficial vegetarian diet without knowing the importance of this practice in Chinese Buddhism. Similarly, he uses the Confucian norm for seeking the true meaning of life and shows the fallacy of Buddhist vegetarianism when understood too superficially.
10. *Yü shuo* 餘說 (Discourse on other superstitious practices): Xiong Ding rejects three other widely popular superstitions. Here, he introduces the anonymous interlocutor *ke* 客 (guest, visitor). There are four rounds of questions from the interlocutor and the author's responses. Xiong Ding regards only traditional medicine as not being superstitious, given its concrete origin and methodical treatment. On the other hand, three other groups represent superstitious beliefs that should be rejected: 1) ailments and sickness caused by supernatural forces, like the Daoist practice of seeking personal welfare determined by *yun qi* 運

氣 (luck) and calculated by *ganzhi* 干支 (Sexagenary cycle, Stems-and-Branches), the Daoist practice of *sixiang* 四象 (four symbols) for *fengshui* 風水 (Chinese geomancy), and physiognomy; 2) dreams; 3) *chen* 讖 (prophetic remark, augury, omen).

The ten sections are not followed by any conclusive remarks written by Xiong Ding himself. A more in-depth analysis of the manuscript is offered below to provide further information on its condition.

The Condition of the Manuscript

The manuscript of the *Cang ju*, preserved at the ARSI, was written on very thin Chinese bamboo paper. Several pages feature rough threads of thin grasses in the fabric of the bamboo paper. Hence, we assume the quality of the bamboo paper is the most common, or even cheap, Chinese bamboo paper used in seventeenth-century China. The entire manuscript is written in the *xiaokai* 小楷 style (regular script style written in small font), and the calligraphy is neat and nice.

The manuscript is one *juan* 卷 (volume) consisting of 40 folios. The last 2 folios are blank pages without any sign of written words. The first 2 folios and the last 6 folios have a supportive layer of papers inserted between the two bamboo paper folios, which may have been done for restoration by an archivist, since these folios are in a fragile condition and some characters are missing because of the damaged paper. Supposedly due to the restoration techniques used, the original binding holes on the last 6 folios no longer exist. These same binding holes are clearly visible on all remaining pages of the manuscript.

The manuscript currently preserved at the ARSI is not the earliest original manuscript produced by Xiong Ding. Rather, it is a handwritten copy produced later on by the aforementioned copyist. In the manuscript held at the ARSI, there are no page numbers to indicate their order. As a result, we have provided our own pagination of the folios of that text. Folios 33 and 34 have two tiny holes on the very first line of the text (i.e., the first line on the right side of the paper), but the holes do not prevent the text from being read. However, on folio 35, the first two lines have 5 characters obscured by the condition of the bamboo paper. On folio 36, 6 characters are partially damaged in the last two lines on the bamboo paper (the two lines on the far-left side), but the characters can still be discerned from the context. On folio 37, the two far-right lines have 9 or 10 characters heavily damaged. Some of them can be read, while others are unin-

telligible. On folio 38, 3 characters are partially damaged, and 5 or 6 characters are completely damaged and cannot be deciphered.

Terminological Clarifications on the Concepts of 'Superstition' and 'Heresy' in the Su shuo and the Cang ju

In the context in which Xiong Ding examines and rejects ten 'superstitions' in the *Cang ju*, there are two main issues deserving of our attention concerning his critical approach and perspective on these 'superstitions'. The first one is that Xiong presents himself and his perspective as 'rational'. This is presented especially in contrast to his contemporaries, who are described as following these superstitions. Therefore, their way of thinking is considered 'superstitious' by Xiong. Second, Xiong classifies these problematic 'superstitions' without directly defining them as heresies (*yi duan* 異端 or *yi dao* 異道), although he directly quotes sentences from previous Tang dynasty scholars, especially Han Yu, who condemned Buddhism as being heretical.

It should be noted that, in modern and contemporary Chinese, the term used for superstition is usually *mi xin* 迷信 (lit. being confused, lost, and mistaken in one's conviction and belief), originally a mere neutral term. This term was introduced into modern Chinese vocabulary at the end of the twentieth century from the Japanese language. However, Chinese classical language and various texts from before the twentieth century use a variety of other terms indicating the concept and deed of 'superstition'. In his *Cang ju*, Xiong uses a wide variety of terms and phrases to refer to 'superstition', through which he underpins a rational approach. Xiong clearly uses this vocabulary to support his criticism of his contemporaries who embrace these 'superstitious' beliefs and practices.

The key terms that Xiong frequently uses to describe the features of 'superstitious' thinking, beliefs and deeds are: *huo* 惑 (to confuse and mislead, to cause doubt), *miu* 謬 (error, exaggeration, fallacy; erroneous, ridiculous), *wang* 妄 (absurd, foolish, reckless; false), *gui* 詭 and *gui yi* 詭異 (deceive, cheating, defraud), *wu* 誣 (make false accusation; defame), *wu* 誤 (to mistake, to mislead), *qi* 欺 (to cheat, double-cross, deceive), *guai* 怪 (strange, weird, abnormal), *luan* 亂 (to mess up, to make chaotic, to confuse), *yu* 愚 (foolish, stupid), and *mi* 迷 (to confuse; to bewitch, enchant, infatuate). The classical idioms (*cheng yu* 成語) Xiong uses to strongly condemn 'superstitious' individuals and/or practices are: *wu ji zhi yan* 無稽之言 (baseless gossip; fiddle-faddle; sheer nonsense; silly remarks), *wu you xian sheng* 烏有

先生 (a complete falsification), *dian dao cuo luan* 顛倒錯亂 (the normal situation and condition being completely muddled and abnormal), *wei ben zhu mo* 違本逐末, a variant of *she ben zhu mo* 捨本逐末 (attend to trifles but be apart from and neglect essentials; be penny wise and pound foolish).

Xiong calls at least one of the groups embracing and fabricating 'superstitious' practices *huo shi hao shi zhe* 後世好事者 (the meddlers who falsify and fabricate things in later times). The methods these 'superstitious' individuals or groups use to harm others are presented as follows: *die chu gui yi zhi shuo, qu wu suo ping ju zhi shi, er zao xian pi jing ren zhi yu* 疊出詭異之說, 取無所憑據之事, 而造險僻驚人之語 (repetitively presenting deceiving and weird theories, falsely taking groundless things thus to invent elusive presentations that are seemingly surprising), *qiao shu qi zi, an shu qi zi* 巧書其字, 暗書其字 (cunningly fabricating their theories, guilefully fabricating their theories [which can be hidden in existing literature]), *cong kong shuo kong* 從空說空 (advertising baseless things based on nothing), and *nie yao nie xiang* 捏妖捏祥 (fabricating ill and good omens).

The negative and harmful consequences of following such 'superstitious' beliefs and practices, in Xiong's understanding, are: *wang yong wang lao* 枉用枉勞 (wasting one's effort and work), *huo luan ren xin* 惑亂人心 (confusing and cluttering one's mind-heart), *huo shi wu min* 惑世誣民 (confusing and defaming people), *huo shi qi ren* 惑世欺人 (confusing and deceiving people), *wei hu bu qian* 為惑不淺 (being deeply confused and misled), *jie yi wu you xian sheng wei xian sheng* 皆以烏有先生為先生 (regarding a complete falsification as one's guide or teacher), *mi zhen er cong wang* 迷真而從妄 (getting oneself lost in confusion to follow the absurd and false), *bu dan shi ren sheng yi sheng ju, er qie kai ren ji yu zhi xin* 不但使人生疑生懼, 而且開人覬覦之心 (not only causing people to become doubtful and fearful, but also provoking people to become gluttonous and to crave things that they do not deserve).

Xiong is strongly critical towards such 'superstitions', pointing out that many of his contemporaries do not actively seek out a rational approach based on their mind-hearts (*xin* 心). At the end of the entire text, the anonymous interlocutor *ke* 客 (guest, visitor) contemplates and answers the host who gave the ten arguments to refute current superstitions, namely Xiong Ding, in a concluding manner, with "Sir, your words reveals the rational reasoning in such an expressive way. How could people not believe in what you say! (*ke yue: zi yan ruo jin li, qi ru ren bu xin he!* 客曰: 子言若近理, 其如人不信何!)". Xiong's pur-

pose is to present his ten arguments, demonstrating reasonable and rational ways to critically assess contemporary superstitions to his interlocutor. Hence, Xiong presents himself as a person who strives for rationality and adopts such an approach to lead his life.

Moreover, Xiong does not consider Chinese Buddhism as being heretical. In the *Su shuo*, he only considers and criticizes how Buddhist vegetarianism and fasting are superficially and superstitiously practiced, due to the practitioners' misunderstanding of their original meaning in Buddhist practices. There are three main aspects to clarify this issue for our argumentation.

First, throughout the entire text of the *Cang ju*, Xiong does agree with some Buddhist teachings, and clearly supports their value. More detailed analysis on this point is given in the next section of this article. Second, Xiong himself does not criticize or condemn Buddhism as heresy (*yi duan* 異端 or *yi dao* 異道). These terms only appear in direct quotes referring to Han Yu's famous *Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha*. Third, there is a fundamental difference between Han Yu's approach and Xiong Ding's approach to understanding Buddhism. Han rejected Buddhism as being heretical, adopting a bold rhetoric with specific political and ideological motivations. He was a high minister and presented his *Memorial* to the emperor. His rejection of Buddhism, and that of his peers in the court, were mainly related to the debate on whether it was appropriate for the relics of the Buddha to enter the premises of the imperial palace. To the contrary, Xiong writes the *Cang ju* by merely adopting a very tentative attitude concerning the public acceptance of his arguments. He was deeply concerned about his friends' reputation had his booklet been harshly criticized and condemned after its publication. Xiong clearly has a rather local purpose to simply reveal the superstitions to his readers, with the hope of changing some readers' minds. In fact, his attitude is to *cang*, namely, to conceal, rather than to involve himself and his friends in a political dispute. In this sense, for a local intellectual like Xiong, there was no urgency to define Buddhism as heresy.

The *Su shuo* in the Context of the Debates between Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism

When our scope is expanded to the encounter between Chinese Confucian-Buddhist culture and Christianity in the seventeenth century in China, especially in the formation of early Chinese Christian mentality and identity, the debates on superstitious beliefs and the

supernatural were at the core of Jesuit discourse.³⁷ As shown by Qiong Zhang, the belief in demons and ghosts, including all discussions of popular folk religious beliefs, were familiar not just to ordinary people, but to Confucian literati as well, who promoted a more 'rationalistic' view of reality.³⁸ Hence, it is important to contextualize the *Su shuo* within a broader context that includes debates between the Chinese and the Jesuits involved in controversies concerning Christian dietary practice, especially fasting. In this regard, Jesuit missionaries pointed out that Chinese Buddhist fasting was superstitious, or that it was only practiced to avoid killing animals due to the belief of reincarnation. For the Jesuits, the core value of fasting lay in reasons of virtue. In the other direction, Chinese Buddhists strongly criticized Jesuit missionaries for misunderstanding, or even distorting, Buddhist teaching.³⁹

Within this complex intellectual, religious, and cultural context concerning dietary practice in seventeenth century China,⁴⁰ the *Cang ju* represents an important — and yet understudied — source for comprehending the significance of debates on vegetarianism and fasting among Chinese Buddhist practitioners on one hand, and the formation of early Chinese Christian identity on the other. As mentioned, the *Su shuo* discusses the superficial and superstitious understanding and practice of Buddhist vegetarianism and fasting from Xiong's individual and critical perspective.

Xiong's criticism in the *Su shuo* is written in a moderate tone (compared to other sections of the *Cang ju*). It mainly challenges and rejects the superficial and superstitious understanding of Chinese Buddhist practices such as the vegetarian diet — especially when it becomes a superficial practice. The argumentative apparatus provided in the *Su shuo* also uses this rejection to condemn the misunderstanding and misuse of the original teaching of a tradition. Xiong often favours Chinese Buddhism and the importance of Buddhist practices connected to morality. For example, he supports Buddhist

37 For this perspective, see Zhang "About God, Demons, and Miracles", 1–36. See also, Zhang "The Jesuit Heresiological Discourse", 31–60.

38 See Zhang "About God, Demons, and Miracles", 7–23.

39 See Yu Fu, "Religious Rivalry in the Seventeenth Century", 102–23; Lancashire, "Buddhist Reaction to Christianity in Late Ming China", 82–103. For a more general account of the conflict between Buddhist and Jesuit communities during the seventeenth century, see Gernet, *China and The Christian Impact*; Mungello, "Re-interpreting the History of Christianity in China", 533–52; Zürcher, "Confucian and Christian Religiosity in Late Ming China", 614–53.

40 Refer to Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion*.

vegetarianism when it is understood correctly, i.e., for the purpose of the Chan teaching of original enlightenment (*ben jue* 本覺). This is the original and correct meaning of Chan, in Xiong's understanding. Hence, the main criticism of Buddhist vegetarianism levelled by Xiong is not directed at Chinese Buddhist doctrinal rules. Rather, he criticizes the interpolations and misunderstandings of his contemporaries when practicing Buddhist vegetarianism, corrupting its original purpose within the Chan Buddhist tradition.

At the same time, Xiong does challenge contemporary Buddhist practitioners' vegetarianism, labelling this attitude as superstitious. This is because it deviates from the original Buddhist teaching regarding dietary practice. Likewise, he favours the positive aspects of certain Buddhist practices, like the Three Jewels (*san bao* 三寶) and Five Precepts (*wu jie* 五戒). For him, these practices are appropriate, and neither superficial, nor superstitious, because they prevent the practitioners from following evil. Yet, he directly criticizes and rejects self-proclaimed Buddhist practitioners and their superficial, and to an extent superstitious, vegetarianism. In fact, according to Xiong, their attitude is "to abandon the origin but to grasp the trivial" and their action is "confused in front of truth and blindly following the falsehood". Xiong holds that, if Buddhist practitioners lose their understanding of the original enlightenment, their practices of Buddhism consequently lose their core meaning, and vegetarianism is reduced to something trivial. Therefore, Xiong assertively criticizes the superficial and superstitious practice of Buddhist vegetarianism, because the laity completely misunderstand and misuse Buddhist dietary practices.

The writing style of the *Cang ju* offers an important account of Xiong Ding's moderate yet critical approach. He often mentions various historical events and anecdotes (*yong dian* 用典 in Chinese) and shows sympathy, as a Confucian scholar, for the people whom he criticizes at the end of each section, where he often uses a typical Confucian rhetorical closure. As stated, Xiong must have been a learned man in Confucian teaching. For this reason, he likely addresses his ten *shuo* (discourses) to a Confucian-educated audience. In the *Su shuo*, he opens his discussion by mentioning the words of Han Yu: "Confucians resolutely consider Buddhists to be heretics (*yi duan* 異端)". In presenting two different attitudes towards Buddhism, represented by two famous Tang dynasty literati: Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan ("Liu Zihou [Liu Zongyuan] argued that the nature of the Buddha cannot be rejected"), as the former rejects Bud-

dhism and the latter accepts it, Xiong states his understanding of the original and correct purpose of Chinese Buddhism when its vegetarian diet is observed. However, his purpose is not to comprehend Chinese Buddhism or to emphasize its relevance during the Tang dynasty — the most critical and flourishing period for the development of Chan tradition in China. On the contrary, it is merely a preparation for his arguments on vegetarianism.

Therefore, Xiong reminds his readers that practitioners of superficial vegetarianism should note the reflections of previous exemplary figures. With a warning tone, Xiong analyses five examples of Confucian scholars who lived during the Tang dynasty and the Song dynasty to demonstrate that orthodox Confucian scholars — who should be regarded as examples for his contemporaries — are the people who can correctly comprehend the original purpose of Chan Buddhism and internalize it in their Confucian self-cultivation.

Xiong's analysis in the *Su shuo* indicates that the debate between Confucian and Buddhist practices, in the given period, was already a Chinese cultural element. Similarly, when Buddhism was introduced to China from the fifth century, it was considered a heretical religion by some prominent Confucian scholars, but was then assimilated into Confucian-based Chinese culture. The attitudes of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan concerning the rejection and acceptance of Buddhism are used as a clear historical example in Xiong's arguments. Xiong strives to show that Buddhism, if correctly understood, can be assimilated into Chinese Confucian culture. As mentioned, the *Su shuo* tends to view any practice that misunderstands and misuses its original and traditional teaching as superstitious.

The Philosophical Relevance and Value of the *Su shuo*

Since the *Cang ju* was read by some Chinese Christian converts when Ruohan copied it, we can assume that those Chinese Christians, who had adopted a new, foreign belief and tradition, found useful ideas in the arguments provided in essays like the *Su shuo*. It is highly possible that early Chinese converts, like the ones reading and circulating the *Cang ju*, hoped for the sinification of Catholic practices, as successfully occurred with Buddhism much earlier. Similarly, these early converts may have found themselves holding similar positions to Xiong Ding on contemporary religious practices, which were at times considered to be tainted. For them, the *Su shuo* and the entire *Cang ju* was a warning and a reminder not to perform Catholic rituals and practices superficially and superstitiously.

Of the many religious practices, dietary practice and believers' motivations in practicing them are likely to generate disputes and controversies. Historically, dietary practice was one of the most controversial and misunderstood issues when Jesuit missionaries introduced Christian fasting to Chinese converts. For some Jesuit missionaries in China — like Adrien Grelon⁴¹ — the practice of fasting was directly associated to Buddhism and therefore, as illustrated by Meynard, “refusing to break the fast is akin to refusing to separate oneself from concubines or to discard Buddhist statues: it indicates that the convert has a flawed intention and is still attached to his previous life”.⁴² Given the nationwide persecution of Catholics at the time of the Canton Conference in 1668, it is likely that the *Cang ju* also offered Catholics, perhaps to European missionaries and Chinese converts alike, an important and critical perspective that originated from a local, lesser-known, if not unknown, literatus. The reading and use of the *Su shuo*, and the entire *Cang ju*, was therefore rather practical among converts, as it entailed a more careful approach towards various practices.

From this perspective, Xiong's discernment of superficial and superstitious vegetarianism potentially raises the practice of fasting to a more spiritual level, suggesting that people may choose not to fast since the most important element for spiritual cultivation is the ‘fasting of mind’. This, among other things, could be a common bond between Buddhism and Confucianism. In the background of the *Su shuo*, Xiong may have been questioning the exaggerated emphasis on fasting in Pure Land Buddhism in general, and in the vegetarian campaign launched by the monk Zhuhong in particular. Xiong may have wanted to remind his contemporaries that vegetarianism is never an aim in itself.

As mentioned above, one of the three functions of fasting for St. Thomas Aquinas was the purification of mind, and we might interpret this purification as the letting go of any ideology that keeps the body and mind prisoner. In the Christian sense, people need to fast to eliminate the temptations of power as much as possible, and instead welcome Christ. Although Xiong does not mention it in the *Su shuo* (he himself probably did not have a very profound understanding of Chan, apart from sporadic notions from its core teaching), in Chan Buddhism, fasting and the vegetarian diet are

41 Adrien Grelon, * 29.IV.1618 Aubeterre, SJ 1.VI.1643, + 3.III.1696 Jiangxi (*DHCJ* II, 1812).

42 Meynard, “Could Chinese Vegetarians be Baptized?”, 79.

simply used to facilitate the practice of mindfulness. Unfortunately, in the dialogue with Chinese Buddhism during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, both foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians often took up harsh judgments against Buddhist fasting, as it was associated with the concept of reincarnation in Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. As Xiong points out in the *Su shuo*, the Chinese largely misunderstood or were unaware of the purpose of Buddhist vegetarianism which is to facilitate the practice of mindfulness, and practiced Buddhist vegetarianism to an extent as a superstition for seeking and accumulating good karma. Hence, the non-polemical approach of the *Su shuo* takes on great relevance and value. Perhaps the Chinese Christian Ruohan and the commissioner who decided to gift the text of the *Cang ju* to others were touched by the method Xiong used to deal with polemics, including the ones about vegetarianism. Ruohan and the commissioner may have even wished that missionaries and their fellow Christians would adopt such an approach. From an historical perspective, a Jesuit missionary who could have particularly appreciated the *Su shuo* is Prospero Intorcetta,⁴³ who advocated welcoming fasters into the Church in Canton in 1666.

Reading the *Cang ju*, one might be puzzled by the presence of this text among the other Chinese Christian writings, which tend to be very polemic against vegetarianism and Buddhism in general. To the contrary, the *Su shuo* exhibits a great spirit of tolerance when discussing the enduring debate about vegetarianism between Confucianism and Buddhism. Unlike Han Yu or Liu Zongyuan, Xiong Ding refrains from engaging in the controversy with arguments for or against vegetarianism, and his essay deliberately avoids talking directly about vegetarianism until the very last lines. Instead, Xiong positions vegetarianism in the broader context of the spiritual practice of Chan Buddhism. The conservative Confucians who rejected Buddhism and its fasting misunderstood Buddhism, choosing polarizing views and positions that, according to Xiong, misled them. Yet, following this argumentation, superficial and superstitious fasters are also misled, perhaps in the conviction that this would be beneficial for their karma and their future reincarnations. Therefore, the *Su shuo* provided individuals with various degrees of literacy, including probably even a few commoners, with easy-to-under-

43 Prospero Intorcetta, * 28.XII.1625 Piazza Armerina, SJ 31.XII.1642 Messina, † 3.X.1692 Hangzhou (*DHCJ* III, 2059–60).

stand critical and rational thinking to re-examine their deeply rooted daily Chinese cultural elements.

Conclusion

Stemming from this study of the *Su shuo* section, further study of the *Cang ju* text will provide more insight about a local Chinese scholar in seventeenth-century China. Xiong Ding adopted a peculiar critical approach, leading him to 'rationally' criticize superficial and superstitious religious practices in his society. We might imagine that the circulation of his booklet was rather limited, and therefore his work would probably have been destined to oblivion or forgotten in old book stacks. Unexpectedly, the Chinese-Christian copyist Ruohan gave new life, and probably also new meaning, to his work, allowing it to be preserved until now. At a time when the Qing dynasty government discouraged non-uniform practices, Xiong offered a rational disagreement and critique of the syncretic Buddhist-Daoist-folk-religious practices of that period. Moreover, very interestingly, his booklet offers his readers a rational, critical, and tolerant approach to different religious practices.

Studies on the early encounter and adaptation of Christianity and Chinese traditions in the seventeenth century often provide intellectual debate and theorization from the most famous missionaries and elite scholar converts.⁴⁴ These include historical controversies that caused diplomatic crises and often a systematic persecution of Christians in China. Stemming from this historical background and this well-established scholarship, we offer a new perspective from a less elitist context. Rather than emphasizing the already well-known ideas present in higher intellectual groups of the Ming and Qing dynasties milieus, we offer an account of a more local context. Unexpectedly, the local and limited context of the *Su shuo* provided a more tolerant, and even understanding approach for non-Christian Chinese to embrace and tolerate new religious practices adopted by an increasing number of Catholic Chinese individuals at that time. Recently, celebrated scholars like Michael Puett have emphasised the critical approach to religions in China.⁴⁵ Xiong Ding, despite his local perspective, was a critical scholar *ante litteram* who served as a stepping stone for a more open approach towards the adaptation of Christianity in the seventeenth century.

44 Refer to Gernet, *China and The Christian Impact*.

45 Puett, "Critical Approaches to Religion in China", 95–101.

Summary

This article presents a critical analysis of the *Su shuo* 素說 (lit. *Discourse on Vegetarianism*). Published for the first time, the full text is given in Chinese, followed by a translation of the work into English. The article includes an examination of the text's philosophical relevance and value in the context of religious practices in seventeenth-century China. The *Su shuo* is one of ten sections in the manuscript, *Cang ju* 藏句 (*Concealed Sentences*), preserved at ARSI. This ten-part work is a pamphlet written by Xiong Ding 熊定, most likely during the seventeenth century in China, where the author rejects superstitious beliefs and practices, including geomancy, predetermined fate, and folk deity worship, among others. The article outlines the text's probable later use by a group of Chinese Christians through the commissioning of a transcription for gift circulation. It shows how the text's author rejects superficially-practised Buddhist vegetarianism and fasting in cases where practitioners have no understanding of their real meaning: without directly quoting the classical texts of Chan Buddhism to support his argument, the author emphasizes the importance of knowing the core teachings and spiritual goals of Buddhism as the only reason for following Buddhist practices like vegetarianism and fasting. Taken together, the analysis, Chinese text, and English translation reveal the *Su shuo* as an important source for exploring the complex history of encounters and adaptations between different religions in seventeenth-century China.

Sommario

Questo articolo propone l'analisi critica di un testo denominato *Su shuo* 素說 (letteralmente, *Discorso sul vegetarianismo*) e ne offre l'edizione cinese e la sua prima traduzione in inglese. In questo articolo vengono esaminati gli aspetti più rilevanti del testo e la sua importanza dal punto di vista filosofico, in particolare all'interno del contesto delle pratiche religiose presenti in Cina nel diciassettesimo secolo. Il *Su shuo* è una delle dieci parti del *Cang ju* 藏句 (*Sentenze Celate*), un manoscritto ora conservato presso l'ARSI. Il *Cang ju* è un pamphlet scritto da Xiong Ding 熊定 molto probabilmente intorno al diciassettesimo secolo. In tale testo l'autore rigetta credenze e pratiche superstiziose che includono, tra le altre, la geomanzia, la credenza in un destino predeterminato ed il culto di divinità popolari. Il *Cang ju* fu probabilmente utilizzato da un gruppo di cristiani cinesi in un periodo successivo, e il copista Ruohan 若翰 (Giovanni) trascrisse il testo sotto richiesta di un committente. L'intenzione del

committente — che a causa delle condizioni del manoscritto non può essere identificato — fu quella di donare tale copia ad altri.

Nel *Su shuo*, Xiong rifiuta sia il vegetarianismo che il digiuno buddhista nelle loro forme più superficiali, cioè quando i fedeli non comprendono appieno il loro significato. Benché non menzioni direttamente i testi classici del buddhismo Chan per corroborare la sua argomentazione, Xiong mette altresì in luce l'importanza di conoscere e seguire la tradizione buddhista, i suoi insegnamenti essenziali e il suo fine spirituale ultimo come unica condizione per pratiche quali il vegetarianismo e il digiuno. Il *Su Shuo* è dunque una fonte di grande interesse per comprendere il discorso complesso legato agli incontri e agli adattamenti tra diverse religioni presenti in Cina durante il diciassettesimo secolo.

ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* I, 133: “*Su shuo*”, *Cang ju*.
 “*Discourse on Vegetarianism*” in the *Concealed Sentences*

Translated by Zhenxu Fan, revised by Antonio De Caro
 and Thierry Meynard

Confucians resolutely consider Buddhists to be heretics; Han Tuizhi criticized Buddhism in his *Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha*,⁴⁶ and in his Letter to Meng Jian, he sharply rejected Buddhism. However, Liu Zihou⁴⁷ argued that the nature of Buddha cannot be rejected and that Buddhism is often coherent with *The Book of Changes* and *The Analects*, so that the Buddhist teaching is not different from Confucius’ teaching. Han Tuizhi and Liu Zihou were contemporaries, but had different understandings regarding Buddhism; how did this happen?

For the time being let us discuss about Buddhism. Buddhism considers that the original enlightenment is the ultimate aim, that everything is empty, hence the trace of signs and omens cease, that vastness is everywhere, hence one’s dependence has no basis, that no single grain of dust is able to stand, hence the myriad dharmas perish, that there is neither confusion nor enlightenment, neither cultivation nor confirmation. On the contrary, the people nowadays who discuss Buddhism write books to establish their theories. As a result, odd and perplexing ideas multiply, and heretical views follow, one after the other.

When Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī generated the view that there is a Buddha and there is the Dharma, then he was immediately thrown into the two iron mountains.⁴⁸ If Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī made [such a mistake], let alone others? The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* displays in detail the fifty *skandha* demons. For if a practitioner fabricates a sacred exegesis while in an enlightened mind state, then his exegesis is distur-

46 Refer to Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824), courtesy name Tui zhi 退之, *Jian fogu biao* 諫佛骨表 (*Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha*). For English translations, see Xiong, “Han Yu. A Memorial on the Relic of the Buddha”, 355–58. See also, De Bary, Bloom and Chan eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, 583–85.

47 Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819), courtesy name Zihou 子厚.

48 The author of the *Cang ju*, Xiong Ding, refers to the following: “文殊菩薩忽起佛見法見被世尊威神攝向二鐵圍山”, “As it is said that when Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī suddenly generated the view that there is a Buddha and that there is the Dharma, he was immediately seized by the magnificent power of the Horned One and thrown in the two iron mountains”, translation by Zhenxu Fan. See *Yichuyuan chanshi yulu* 一初元禪師語錄, v. 65, 3, 卷下. The Yichuyuan chanshi 一初元禪師 was a Buddhist monk known also as Yichu Wuyuan 一初悟元 (1615–78).

bed by the many demons.⁴⁹ When conjecture, calculation, and differentiation are generated in a practitioner's mind, there are eight erroneous affirmations.⁵⁰ When a practitioner deliberately establishes views or positions, [this would become the cause of ignorance and misconceptions; when a practitioner does not deliberately establish views or positions,] anyone may open the path to enter Nirvana.⁵¹ In the Nirvana, how is it possible to have a theory of existence and a theory of non-existence, a refined theory and a coarse theory to confuse a practitioner's path to the original enlightenment?

The *Vimalakirti Sutra* says that one should undertake the religious life under the six heterodox masters, and follow the way they prescribe.⁵² Dazhu "explained that 'since one's delusions arise from the

49 See the original full paragraph related to the *ji shou qunxie* 即受群邪 (i.e., [the practitioners'] exegesis is disturbed by many demons) in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, "楞嚴經卷九：又以此心。成就清淨。淨心功極。忽見大地十方山河。皆成佛國。具足七寶。光明徧滿。又見恆沙諸佛如來。徧滿空界。樓殿華麗。下見地獄。上觀天宮。得無障礙。此名欣厭。凝想日深。想久化成。非為聖證。不作聖心。名善境界。若作聖解。即受群邪。" Tong Li 通理 ed. *Lengyanjing zhizhangshu* 楞嚴經指掌疏, 616.

50 The author Xiong did not quote direct passages from the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* on the concepts of *shengjidu* 生計度 (i.e., when conjecture, calculation, and differentiation are generated in a practitioner's mind) and *bian* 邊 (which should be understood from the concept, *erbian* 二邊 which includes *youbian* 有邊 that things exist, and *wubian* 無邊 that since nothing is self-existent, things cannot be said to exist. Hence *youbian* 有邊 as one extreme of 'existence' is the opposite extreme being of *wubian* 無邊, 'non-existence'). Instead, the author provided a rough summary of his own understanding of these issues mentioned in *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

51 This sentence is very problematic, due to the inaccuracy of the author Xiong's presentation of the concept of *lizhijian* 立知見 (i.e., when a practitioner deliberately establishes views or positions) as directly related to *jieniepan* 皆涅槃 (i.e., anyone may open the path to enter Nirvana). This sentence is not a direct quotation from the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, either. Our first hypothesis is that it is a summary of a general idea that the author either read from the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* itself or gathered from a more general understanding of Buddhist ideas, however, it seems that he misunderstood the relation between *lizhijian* and Nirvana in the original sentences in *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. The second hypothesis is that the copyist of this manuscript made a mistake when he hand copied the text. For the original version of the sentence in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, see "楞嚴經卷五：佛告阿難：根塵同源，縛脫無二，識性虛妄，猶如空華。阿難！由塵發知，因根有相，相、見無性，同于交蘆。是故汝今，知見立知，即無明本；知見無見，斯即涅槃，無漏真淨，云何是中更容他物？" Shou Pei. 守培 ed. *Dafodingshou lengyanjing miaoxinshu* 大佛頂首楞嚴經妙心疏, 413

52 See the original text paragraph from *Vimalakirti Sutra*, "維摩詰所說經卷三：若須菩提不見佛，不聞法，彼外道六師：富蘭那迦葉、末伽梨拘隄梨子、刪闍夜毗羅胝子、阿耆多翅舍欽婆羅、迦羅鳩駄迦旃延、尼犍陀若提子等，是汝之師。因其出家，彼師所墮，汝亦隨墮，乃可取食。" See also, Huang Baosheng 黃寶

six sense organs, they are called the six teachers. Believing that one can seek the Buddha outside of the mind is a heterodox view".⁵³ Buddhist practitioners should examine themselves [according to such true teachings as what the *Vimalakirti Sutra* and Master Dazhu Huihai taught]: Am I following [the perceptions arisen from] the six sense organs? Am I not following [the perceptions arisen from] the six organs? Am I seeking the truth outside of my mind? Am I not seeking the truth outside my mind? [With this self-examination] a practitioner may know the answer by himself.

Today the practitioners of vegetarianism should notice the reflections of the monk Fo Yin when he recalled the life experience of his friend Su Shi [Su Dongpo].⁵⁴ Fo Yin wrote: Mr. Zi Zhan [i.e., Su Dongpo]'s knowledge is enormous, and his writings are extremely refined and beautiful. He spent decades to earn his reputation; however, in the blink of an eye, such a reputation may vanish; taking such a path for life, he could not know his origin, fate, and destiny; his brilliance and his endeavors would be of no use; why a person as brilliant as him would not seek the true and original self?⁵⁵

生 ed., *Fanhan duikan weimojie suoshuojing* 梵漢對勘維摩詰所說經, 75–76. For the English version, see "The Disciples' Reluctance to Visit Vimalakirti: "Take this food, reverend Subhuti, if, without seeing the Buddha, hearing the Dharma, or serving the Sangha, you undertake the religious life under the six heterodox masters; namely, Purana Kasyapa, Maskarin Gosali putra, Samjayin Vairatiputra, Kakuda Katyayana, Ajita Kesakambala, and Nirgrantha Jnaniputra, and follow the ways they prescribe.'" Thurman, *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti*, 27.

- 53 Dazhu in this sentence refers to the Chan Master Dazhu Huihai 大珠慧海 (c.a. 619–907). See the original text passage and translation, "維摩座主問: '經云: "彼外道六師等, 是汝之師, 因其出家, 彼師所墮, 汝亦隨墮, 其施汝者, 不名福田, 供養汝者, 墮三惡道, 謗于佛, 毀于法, 不入眾數, 終不得滅度, 汝若如是, 乃可取食。" 今請禪師, 明為解說。' 師曰: "迷徇六根者, 号之為六師。心外求佛, 名為外道, 有物可施, 不名福田, 生心受供, 墮三惡道, 汝若能謗于佛者, 是不着佛求, 毀于法者, 是不着法求, 不入眾數者, 是不着僧求, 終不得滅度者, 智用現前, 若有如是解者, 便得法喜禪悅之食。'" The teacher, the master, *shi* 師, refers to Dazhu Huihai. See Hong Xue 弘學 ed. *Zhongguo fojiao gaoseng mingzhu jingxuan* 中國佛教高僧名著精選, v. 2, 927. Once an expounder of the *Vimalakirti Sutra* observed: "The *Vimalakirti Sutra* says: ... 'Since one's delusions arise from the six sense organs, they are called the six teachers. Believing that one can seek the Buddha outside of the mind is a heterodox view.'" Lok To and French, *Entering the Tao of Sudden Enlightenment*, 66.
- 54 The Buddhist monk Fo Yin (1032–98) 佛印 was one of several Chan monks who befriended Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101).
- 55 For an account of the letter the monk Fo Yin wrote to Su Shi, the author of the *Cang ju* indirectly quoted a passage from the *Jüshi fendeng lu* 居士分燈錄 (*A Record of the Ritual of Diving Oil Lamps by the Lay Believers*, two volumes, 1632). The *Jüshi fendeng lu* is a collection edited and published by Zhu Shi'en 朱時恩.

If a practitioner is seeking the true and original self, even if he might not be able to reach the land of Tathagata, he would still achieve to ride above the clouds in the wagon led by the phoenix, and to wander freely in the ethereal realm. As the example of Su Shi's life shows, if anyone has even an extremely short moment of realization in his mind, he could become suddenly aware. [Su Shi writes in one of his poems that] "The burbling sound of the creek water is the long and broad tongue of the Buddha; the clear and clean mountain view is the pure Dharma body of the Buddha". Hence a clever person would be able to reach the sudden moment of awareness immediately if he were guided correctly. Words are unnecessary to awake such a person. For instance, Lu Gen was awakened to know the dream-like nature of the worldly phenomena when his Chan master pointed to a peony. Pei Xiu was awakened to comprehend the spirit of Chan when he saw a portrait of a monk and thus asked where to look for the real monk. Zhao Bian was awakened to understand the origin of the self and the myriad things when he was shocked by the thunder while meditating at night. Shangu was awakened to grasp the ubiquitous and emanating nature of truth when he experienced the fragrance of the Osmanthus.⁵⁶

Later on, from 1905 to 1912, it was included in a collection entitled *Dariben xucangjing* 大日本續藏經 (*The Kyoto supplement to the Manji edition of the canon*) as its 147th volume. The *Jūshi fendenglu* itself includes anecdotes of many famous Chinese Confucian scholars, poets, and ministers, when they came to understand the true meaning of Chan, during their encounters with Buddhist monks or at the moment of their own reflection and sudden realization. The time span of the Confucian scholars whose anecdotes were collected in the *Jūshi fendenglu* ranges from the Tang dynasty (619–907) to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). The *Jūshi fendenglu* was probably a widely popular book when the *Cang ju* was compiled. For the original text — with the notable exception of the anecdote that Fo Yin wrote a letter to Su Shi, see “了元致書云。子瞻中大科。登金門。上玉堂。遠放寂寞之濱。權臣忌子瞻為宰相耳。人生一世間。如白駒過隙。三十年功名富貴。轉盼成空。何不一筆勾斷。尋取自家本來面目。萬劫常住永無墮落。昔有問師佛法在甚處。師曰。在行住坐臥處。著衣喫飯處。屙屎撒尿處。沒理沒會處。死活不得處。子瞻胸中有萬卷書。下筆無一點塵。到這地位。不知性命所在。一生聰明。要做甚麼三世佛。則是一箇有血性的漢子。子瞻若能腳下承當。把三二十年富貴功名賤如泥土。努力向前。珍重。珍重。” *Jūshi fendenglu* 居士分燈錄, BNF (Bibliothèque nationale de France), Département des manuscrits, Chinois 995.

56 The four historical figures mentioned here are: Lu Gen 陸亙 (764–834), Pei Xiu 裴休 (791–864), Zhao Bian 趙抃 (1008–84), Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105) (known also with his art name Shangu Daoren 山谷道人). These four examples of people's sudden moment of awareness are all taken by Xiong Ding from the recorded anecdotes in the *Jūshi fendenglu*. See *Jūshi fendenglu* 居士分燈錄, BNF (Bibliothèque nationale de France), Département des manuscrits, Chinois 995.

They were awakened through their encounter with the senses, and this way came to understand the original enlightenment. These people are a good example of truly harmonized Confucian and Buddhist understandings of the world and of the truth!

[Looking at my contemporaries,] why are they limited in their own partial opinions? Why are they not willing to know their wrong understandings and then discard their mistakes? Their attitude is to violate the origin but to grasp the trivial. They are confused in front of truth, and they blindly follow falsehood. However, the practitioners of vegetarianism do not lose their innate goodness because they are able to take refuge in the Three Jewels. They do not walk on the path of moral evil because they are able to respect and follow the Five Precepts. Their actions can be seen as a cause of their calmness and purity, and as a result of their merits and good deeds. I can only feel extremely pitiful for the people who exhaust their life-long will and strength without being able to know the great path that leads to the original enlightenment. Although I truly do not want to sigh deeply and long for them, I cannot do anything but have pity and sorrow for those people.

Chinese text transcribed by Zhenxu Fan, revised and punctuated by Lai Yueshan:⁵⁷

《藏句·素說》

儒固以佛為異端者也；韓退之《諫佛骨表》及《與孟簡書》闢之甚矣。而柳子厚又謂：浮圖有不可斥者，往往與《易》、《論語》合，不與孔子異道。二公同時，而所見各別，何與？姑以佛論之。佛以本覺為宗：空空絕朕、湛湛無依、一塵不立、萬法俱泯、無迷無悟、無修無証者也。而世之談佛者，著書立說，反紛紛多奇議；是異端中而猶有異端者也。文殊起佛見、法見，即落二鐵圍山，又況其他乎？《楞嚴》說五十種細微魔事，以其於妙明中作聖解則受群邪，生計度則八邊見，立知見則皆涅槃；其中寧容說有說無、說精說粗，以亂其本覺哉？《維摩經》云：外道六師為汝之師，彼師所墮，汝亦墮隨。大珠解曰：迷循六根，號為六師；心外求佛，名為外道。學佛者自審之：果循六根乎？非循六根乎？果心外求乎？非心外求乎？可以知矣。

今之持素者，當知佛印遺蘇長公書曰：子瞻讀萬卷書，下筆無點塵，三二十年功名轉盼成虛，自己本命元辰不知下落，一生聰明將作何用！胡不究取本來面目？縱不得如來地，亦可以乘鸞駕鶴，遨遊太虛矣。因而一

57 The authors of the article present the transcription of the *Su shuo* text by adopting standardized traditional Chinese characters. For readers who are interested in checking the variants of many characters used in the manuscript, please see Figs. 1-3.

念回機即省：溪聲便是廣長舌，山色無非清淨身。所以伶俐人一點即通，不在多說也。諸如：陸互見牡丹而知如夢，裴休見儀真而悟高僧，趙抃聞雷聲而識心源，山谷聞木樨而會無隱；皆於見色聞聲處，達取本覺，真儒釋一貫矣。胡為拘一偏局促之見，不肯知非便舍？是違本而逐末、迷真而從妄也。然持素者，能受三飯，則不失乎善；能遵五戒，則不蹈于惡；亦清淨之因、福德之果也。獨惜其竭一生之心志，而不能知本覺之大道，雖欲不為之長太息，而亦有所不能己也。

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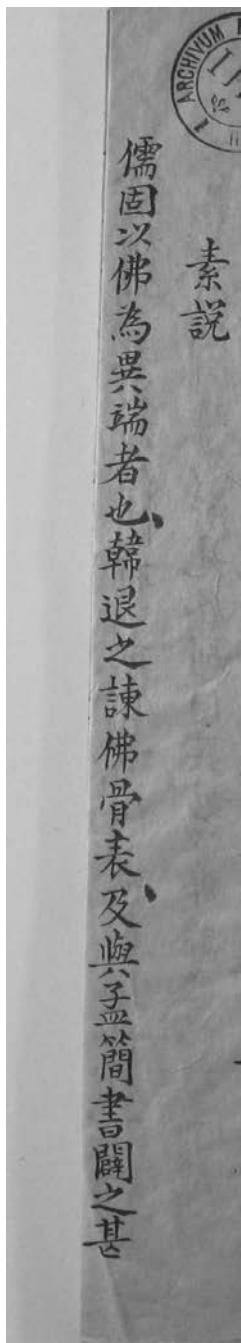


Fig. 1: ARSI Jap. Sin. I, 133, f. 31 (opening section of the *Su shuo*)

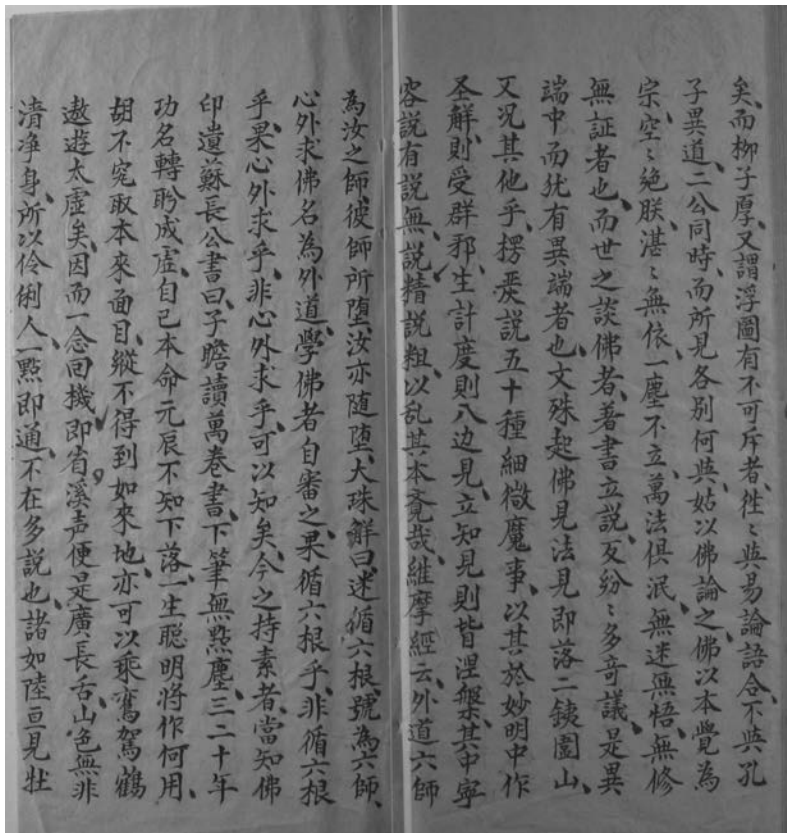


Fig. 2: ARSI Jap. Sin. I, 133, ff. 32, 33

丹而知如夢、裴休見儀真而悟高僧、趙抃聞雷声而識心源、
山谷聞木樨而會無隱、皆於見色聞声處、達取本竟、真儒
釋一貫矣、胡為拘一偏局促之見、不肯知非便舍、是違本
而逐末、迷真而從妄也、然持素者、能守三皈、則不失乎善、
能遵五戒、則不蹈于惡、亦清淨之因、福德之果也、獨惜其
竭一生之心志、而不能知本竟之大道、雖欲不為之長太息、
而亦有所不能已也、

Fig. 3: ARSI Jap. Sin. I, 133, f. 34 (conclusion of the *Su shuo*)