

Cheng Minzheng and the Rise of Huizhou Consciousness

In the winter of 1478, after thirteen years of service at the imperial court in Beijing, Cheng Minzheng finally visited his ancestral home, Huizhou. The Chenghua emperor approved Imperial Hanlin Academician Cheng's request to take a leave of absence, as his younger brother had just passed away in the village of Peiguo, in Xiuning County, leaving behind their aging parents. The key moment of this voyage, however, turned out to be Minzheng's visit to Huangdun (Yellow Mound), a rural canton in Huizhou's capital county, Shexian. There he went to see the main temple dedicated to his famous ancestor, Cheng Lingxi (514–568), and observed with great interest twelve sacred relics related to this deified Huizhou hero. Minzheng wrote a hymn for each of them and then distributed the verses to his kinsmen, many of whom responded with additional poems. These Huangdun verses were all compiled into a "huge collection" to be "shown to descendants," for which Minzheng wrote a foreword.

After conducting further research into the history of Yellow Mound, he observed that "Lord [Lingxi] originally lived in Xiuning's Huangdun, which was later ceded to Shexian."¹ To Minzheng, not only was Huangdun's county affiliation a matter deserving exegesis, so was its name. In an essay titled "Records from the Studio of Huangdun" (Huangdun shushe ji), he notes, "The Chengs, illustrious in the north, followed the Jin dynasty to move to the south by the time of Yuan-tan, who became prefect of Xin'an" (Xin'an was Huizhou's historical name). Given Cheng Yuan-tan's glorious achievements in governing Xin'an, Minzheng continues:

Local people requested that he stay when his term ended, and he was awarded a mansion in the prefecture's Yellow Mound, where his offspring stayed and settled. His twelfth-generation descendant, General Yunhui, Lingxi, posthumously designated as Lord Zhongzhuang [loyal strength], rose up as a commoner, organizing the militia to resist the Hou Jing [rebellion, 548–552]. Appreciating his achievements in protecting the prefecture, the locals too honored him with a shrine at Yellow Mound.

The Song house bestowed the title of Shizhong [permanent loyalty] on his temple, and his offspring thereafter increasingly prospered. Thus, the Chengs in Xin'an all honored the prefect [Yuantan] as the primary progenitor and Lord Zhongzhuang as the apical ancestor, calling themselves the Huangdun Chengs. My family also originated from Yellow Mound.

Having established the illustrious pedigree of his lineage, by highlighting Lord Zhongzhuang's contribution to Xin'an in particular, Minzheng turns to the crux of the naming matter:

And yet, after examining various genealogies and prefecture gazetteers, I was still unable to figure out why the mound was so named. Lately, I have arrived at an interpretation: The *huang* of Yellow Mound was originally the character *huang* [bamboo]. It was so named because the place produced great quantities of bamboo. At the time of the Huang [Yellow] Chao rebellion [875–884], the rebels left no living humans in their path, except in the prefectures and districts with mountains and rivers that carried *huang* [yellow] in their names. The Chengs who hid [in Huangdun] therefore changed the word *bamboo* [huang] to *yellow* [huang] so as to avoid calamity. After a long time, this [name] became engrained in custom. Alas, how could the place where the good administrator [Cheng Yuantan] and loyal official [Cheng Lingxi], who had been awarded a mansion and offered sacrifices, have been blemished by the surname of a ruthless rebel! For more than seven hundred years, no one even has found this wrong! I therefore wrote out two huge characters, Huangdun [Bamboo Mound], and pasted them on my ancestral residence . . . so as to let our descendants know that I was the one who had restored the original name of this place.²

After consulting with his father (a top official who in 1472 retired to Huizhou) about restoring the rightful name of Bamboo Mound, Minzheng even decided to style himself “Huangdun.” Upon his return to Beijing, he spread the bamboo story among his colleagues in the central bureaucracy, inviting them to write something to commemorate the event. Qiu Jun (1420–1495), the minister of the Board of Rites and Minzheng's mentor in statecraft, opened his celebratory poem directly: “This was the village in which Zhongzhuang once lived, where tens of thousands of shining stalks covered Bamboo Mound.” An impressive cohort of other top officials from the Beijing court, including Peng Hua (1432–1496), Liu Zhen (1434–1501), Fu Han (1435–1502), Ni Yue (1444–1501), Xie Qian (1449–1531), Fei Yin (1436–1493), and Wu Kuan (1435–1504), joined Qiu Jun to help Minzheng legitimize the “restoration” of “Bamboo Mound” by writing similar celebratory poems or essays. Minzheng again compiled these writings by “current gentrymen”—all prominent scholar-officials with metropolitan *jinshi* degrees—into a collection and wrote a “Preface for the Huangdun Records.”³

In late imperial China, it was common practice for Confucian scholars to compose poems or conduct “evidential research,” especially on things or places that were related to their native places or ancestral notables. Cheng Minzheng's case, however, turns out to be more than merely engaging in literati pastimes. There

were hidden agendas—or intangible significations—in his renaming of Huangdun, but let us start with the tangible or semitangible. Imperial Academician Cheng, by publicizing the Huangdun story and thereby deepening his ancestral pedigree, would surely be able to enhance his standing among his colleagues in the central government. But he was also mobilizing his official contacts to influence local matters and strengthen the Cheng prestige back home in Huizhou, a region noted for its concentration of great families and prominent lineages with (claimed or real) deep roots in and sensitivity to ancestral pedigree. Central and local powers were intimately entangled. In this instance, Imperial Academician Cheng was concentrating on Huizhou local matters. When a Confucian scholar took a new style name, it tended to signal his new resolutions. Minzheng's new style signaled his newly found self-identification with Huizhou, which was not his or even his father's birthplace, but still his ancestral fatherland. It initiated a series of his remarkable locally engaged endeavors that significantly contributed to shaping the regional consciousness of Huizhou.

Cheng Minzheng was among the mid-Ming literati who first expressed the stirrings of the “localist turn.” Seen from the standpoint of the neo-Confucian movement, it also marked the revival of literati “volunteerism” in various locally focused endeavors motivated by a commitment to “righteousness.”⁴ Underlying this revival was the inward turn of Ming neo-Confucians from an emphasis on textual studies to the cultivation of the moral self.⁵ According to Ying-shih Yu, there was a political dimension to this intellectual shift. In the treacherous political environment of the early Ming, Confucian scholars avoided political involvement, instead turning inward to moral cultivation. This collective mentality intensified, creating an intellectual propensity to jettison “getting the monarch to spread the Way” (*dejun xingdao*) in favor of “awakening the people to practice the Way” (*juemin xingdao*).⁶ Cheng Minzheng nevertheless aimed to spread the Way for both the monarch and the people. He was a “man who became aware and awakened first” (*xianzhi xianjue zhe*) in terms of both the philosophical positioning and the localist turn of the mid-Ming. However, his locally engaged endeavors were not purely motivated by a sense of “righteousness,” but were also shaped by the special situation of Huizhou.⁷ Cheng Minzheng focused on creating a new discourse by writing and rewriting the history of Huizhou and the Huizhou Chengs, anthologizing Xin'an historical documents, and compiling Cheng genealogies. This rewriting of history notably started with his renaming of Huangdun.

HUANGDUN, THE OLD XIN'AN PLACE

Huangdun was bursting with local and larger meaning for Huizhou. Several leading lineages claimed their original settlements in the place. One of the best documented was the claim by the Huang lineage. According to local folklore, their apical ancestor, Huang Ji, was appointed prefect of Xin'an by the first emperor of

the Eastern Jin (r. 317–322). He was buried in a place called Yaojiadun (“mound of the Yao family”), where his son built a hut around his tomb. Their descendants settled in Yaojiadun, and then renamed it after their surname to become Huangdun (Yellow Mound).⁸ Cheng Minzheng, in a preface he wrote for a Huang genealogy, acknowledged the settlement by the Huangs in Yaojiadun, though he skillfully avoided mentioning either Yellow Mound or Bamboo Mound.⁹ It appears that Huang Ji arrived in Xin’an slightly before Cheng Yuantan, who, according to a 1298 tomb inscription, became prefect of Xin’an in 319 and died there in 322.¹⁰ Huang Ji appeared to have served as the Xin’an prefect before Cheng Yuantan, even though *Prominent Lineages in Xin’an* (1551) mentions that Cheng Yuantan moved to the south during the Yongjia Disorder (304–311).¹¹ While we cannot be certain as to whether Huang Ji or Cheng Yuantan arrived in Xin’an or Huangdun first, the name Yellow Mound certainly testified to the Huangs’ original claim. The actual timing of the sequence matters less than the importance such arcane territorial stakes held for latter-day lineage luminaries such as Cheng Minzheng and his Huizhou audience. For Cheng Minzheng, erasing the Huangs’ monopoly of Huangdun worked to establish the Cheng precedence.

The real competitor for lineage preeminence in Cheng Minzheng’s time, however, were the Wangs, whom Minzheng acknowledged in yet another preface he wrote for a Wang genealogy as “the most renowned” surname with “the largest number of kin branches,” as expressed in a local saying: in Huizhou, “nine out of ten are surnamed Wang.”¹² Cheng Minzheng’s rewriting of the meaning of Huangdun may have worked to undermine—ever so slightly—the Wangs’ standing, too. One Wang branch did not move to “Yellow Mound” until the early Tang, several hundred years after the Chengs and the Huangs, although the apical ancestor of the Huizhou Wangs was claimed to be Wang Wenhe, who crossed the Yangzi River in 197 and thereafter settled in Xin’an, definitely earlier than either Cheng Yuantan or Huang Ji.¹³ By Cheng Minzheng’s time, the Huizhou Wangs normally claimed direct descent from Wang Wenhe’s Tang dynasty offspring, Wang Hua, a powerful regional warlord during the Sui-Tang transition period whose cult was dominant in later imperial Huizhou. Wang Hua was deified almost immediately upon his death in the early Tang, much earlier than the Song deification of Cheng Lingxi. It was Wang Hua’s twenty-first descendent, Wang Wei of the Huangdun branch, who petitioned the Song court in 1222 to construct a temple to Cheng Lingxi in Huangdun. The emperor approved the petition the next year and honored the temple with the name Shizhong, thereby starting the state-sanctioned worship of Cheng Lingxi in Huizhou. Because of Wang Wei, as *Prominent Lineages in Xin’an* later noted, the Chengs “became increasingly more prominent.”¹⁴ Minzheng clearly cared most about the Cheng side of the story. His Huangdun tour focused on Cheng Lingxi’s main temple and other mythologized relics, which, in his account, now appeared to dominate local religious life. For Minzheng, highlighting Huangdun shifted local audience attention to his deified ancestor, thereby making him a competitor with, if not a replacement of, Wang Hua in the local religious landscape.

Cheng Huangdun's strategy seems to have worked somewhat, at least in the eyes of a famous outsider. Not long after having enthusiastically responded to the "Bamboo Mound" episode, Qiu Jun was requested to write a preface for a newly revised genealogy for a Wang branch in Minzheng's Xiuning County. In this preface (1480), Qiu pays tribute to Cheng Lingxi as well as to Wang Hua. "In Xin'an," he writes, "only the two lineages of the Chengs and the Wangs are uniquely prominent. The ancestors of the two surnames [Cheng Lingxi and Wang Hua] were both notable heroes while alive and have since death enjoyed temple sacrifice in their home regions." The preface to the Wang genealogy was, of course, supposed to highlight the pedigree and accomplishments of the Wangs, so the author acknowledged some Song-Yuan notables in the Wang ancestry. He even confirmed Wang claims of direct descent from Duke Cheng of Lu (Lu Chenggong; r. 590–573 BCE)—a descendant of the Duke of Zhou.¹⁵

Herein lies a common strategy Huizhou lineages employed to build up local prestige: they claimed illustrious ancestry as far back into the ancient period as possible; the deeper the roots, the more prestigious the claim. Li Dongyang (1447–1516, *jinshi* 1464), Minzheng's colleague in the Board of Rites, in a 1488 preface he wrote for yet another Xiuning Wang genealogy, even repeated the Wangs' claim that they were descended from the mythical Yellow Emperor.¹⁶ Some Cheng genealogies made such claims for the Chengs too.¹⁷ As will be shown, Cheng Minzheng traced his lineage back to a prominent figure in the ancient Zhou dynasty, though not to the Yellow Emperor. He was an authoritative and innovative genealogist, and he understood the persuasive power of credibility in making claims about pedigree. His philological arguments about "Bamboo Mound" brought the seemingly incontrovertible force of erudition to bear on his ancestral pedigree, thus boosting a perception that the Chengs' roots in Huangdun, and the Huizhou region more generally, were the deepest—deeper even than those of the Huangs or the Wangs.

Longevity of local pedigree was not the only means by which Huizhou lineages shored up their claims to Huangdun, however. The place exuded additional luster because of its association with prominent figures in the neo-Confucian tradition. Most notable was the connection of Zhu Xi's (1130–1200) ancestors to Huangdun. This leading neo-Confucian synthesizer, though born in Fujian, was to become the most illustrious native son of Huizhou. In a preface he wrote for his kin in Huizhou's Wuyuan County, Zhu Xi noted what he had learned from his father, a true Wuyuan native: "our family ancestors had settled in Yellow Mound" before moving to Wuyuan.¹⁸

For the Chengs, however, the significance of Zhu Xi's bond with Huangdun lay in yet another connection: he was an avowed disciple of Cheng Hao (1032–1085) and, especially, Cheng Yi (1033–1107); and the state creed of neo-Confucianism in late imperial times was often simply called the Cheng-Zhu school. Zhu Xi's aura aside, some of the Huizhou Chengs even claimed that Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, like themselves, were actually descended from Cheng Lingxi, or the Huangdun Chengs, despite the fact that they had been born and were active in the Luoyang

area in the north.¹⁹ Cheng Minzheng played a major role in publicizing and legitimating the claim, though he did not initiate it. This legitimating process would not be completed until the late Ming, by which time promoting the Cheng brothers' link to Huangdun was no longer simply a concern of the Cheng lineage, but rather a regional enterprise, since the claimed connection would confer prestige on the entire prefecture—or on any of its constituent counties.

During the Wanli reign (1573–1620), a cohort of thirteen Shexian gentrymen, led by Zhao Pang (fl. 1579–1615), compiled eight volumes under the title *Records of the Cheng-Zhu Native Place* (Cheng-Zhu queli zhi), with a foreword written in 1612 by the incumbent magistrate of Shexian, Liu Shen, to give the collection an official imprimatur.²⁰ The *Records of the Cheng-Zhu Native Place* champions the efficacious hills and rivers of Huangdun in nurturing such illustrious historical personages, while also enumerating the social and historical links of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi to Xin'an. The short introduction to volume one, "Record of an Efficacious Place" (Diling zhi), after noting the fostering of ancient sages in the special natural environment of their birthplaces, proudly points to the "twin links" of the ancestors of the "Cheng-Zhu three gentrymen," the "unprecedented genuine Confucians" (*kuangdai zhenru*) of Huangdun, now mostly written not as Yellow Mound but as Bamboo Mound. The volume also features an essay titled "Bamboo Mound," which is followed by the descriptions of six of the twelve relics linked to Cheng Lingxi on which Cheng Minzheng had written poems and of the two remarkable vestiges associated with Zhu Xi: "Zhu family street" in Huangdun and the "rainbow well" in Wuyuan.²¹ But it was the Huangdun link that enabled Zhao Pang and his compatriots to call their home county (and by implication the larger prefecture) the "Native Place of the Cheng-Zhu."

Huangdun was quite simply the cultural and spiritual center of Huizhou in the collective memory of many prominent, pedigree-sensitive local lineages. Cheng Minzheng keenly grasped the significance of the strategic locale by adopting the modified place name as his style in 1478. This self-identification with Bamboo Mound signaled the resolution of Cheng "Huangdun" to rewrite Huizhou history—the history of local places, local figures, local descent lines, the status of the Chengs in Huizhou and that of Huizhou in the entire empire. Before we assess the accumulative impacts of this rewriting upon local consciousness, we need to first look at the writer himself.

HUANGDUN, THE NEW HUIZHOU MAN

The most visibly erudite scholar of Ming Huizhou, Cheng Minzheng was perfectly suited to the task of rewriting Huizhou history for his mid-Ming generation. Born in Beijing to a prominent family, Academician Huangdun (as he was later customarily called in Huizhou) was highly successful and widely connected. An enormously gifted and energetic man, Minzheng exuded absolute confidence. He

mobilized his talents and fame with almost single-minded dedication to nurture a unique vision of Huizhou and the Chengs. To him, Huizhou, his ancestral Peiguo village, and the larger Cheng lineage were uniquely significant and beautiful. This vision framed his rewriting of the history, thereby helping fashion a new identity not just for his kinspeople but for all people of the region.

The only obstacle to Cheng Minzheng's claims for local supremacy seems to have been his outsider origins. He was neither born nor raised in Huizhou. But this outlier status gave him a firmer determination, more passion, and perhaps also a sharper perspective with which to complete his mission. Minzheng's immediate ancestors had moved north three generations earlier. During the Hongwu reign (1368–1398) Minzheng's great grandfather Ziling was relocated as part of a punitive military assignment, and eventually settled with his son Cheng (1390–1446) in Hejian Prefecture, in present-day Hebei Province.²²

Minzheng's father, Xin (1417–1479), grew up and attended school in Hejian. Earning the metropolitan *jinshi* degree in 1442, Cheng Xin became an important official in various provincial and military administrative posts as well as at the imperial centers in Beijing and Nanjing.²³ While serving in Sichuan, Cheng Xin brought his eldest son, Minzheng, to the attention of the governor, Luo Qi (*jinshi* 1430). The mythologization of Minzheng as a genius started there when he was just ten years old, and soon Luo Qi recommended the prodigy to the Tianshun emperor. According to local lore, upon entering the palace, the boy was unable to step over the threshold, at which the emperor joked, "The young scholar's legs are short" (*shusheng jiaoduan*). To this first line of an antithetical poetic couplet, Minzheng is said to have instantly responded, "Your Majesty's threshold is tall" (*tianzi mengao*). The emperor was so pleased with this response that he sent the young pupil to study at the Imperial Academy, with all expenses covered. Grand Secretariats Li Xian (1408–1466) and Peng Shi (*jinshi* 1448), in particular, doted upon him, and Li Xian eventually became his father-in-law. Given such outstanding connections, the gifted Minzheng passed the metropolitan exam in 1466 at the age of twenty-two with a rank of second place among a class of 353 successful examinees.²⁴

With bright career prospects clearly ahead of him, Minzheng was nevertheless not particularly suited to be a top bureaucrat, although he did rise from the post of imperial academician to lecturer to the crown prince, and eventually to vice minister in the Board of Rites. Minzheng gained a reputation for "often looking down upon his peers" and many colleagues "detested" him. He was impeached in 1488, whereupon he "returned home" to Peiguo for five years. Not long after he was called back to service, he became entangled in a deadly exam scandal in 1499. Minzheng, as one of the chief examiners of the metropolitan examination, was accused of leaking questions to two examinees, one of whom was none other than the future famous artist Tang Yin (1470–1524). Minzheng was imprisoned, although later absolved of wrongdoing, because an ugly power struggle lay at

the heart of the case (two of his colleagues who had responded to his Huangdun story, Fu Han and Xie Qian, were involved in a “plot” to take him down). Anger and humiliation soon led to his premature death, which earned him much needed sympathy and, eventually, a posthumous title as the minister of the Board of Rites.²⁵ Still, Minzheng’s reputation appeared to have never recovered from this infamous scandal: no important figures wrote a *xingzhuang* (formal biography) or official epitaph for him; only his friend, an insignificant scholar named Qiu Tong, wrote one. Later Huizhou and Xiuning gazetteers contain some biographic sketches, as does the official *Ming History* in its section on “Literati.”

If Minzheng cut a tragic figure as a high official, he achieved more success in his reputation as a first-rate scholar. Among the imperial academicians, according to a saying at the time, “Minzheng is noted for the wide erudition of his learning and Li Dongyang for the exquisite style of his essays.”²⁶ The versatile Minzheng left behind a remarkable record of publications. Among them are collections of poems; two important annotated compilations of neo-Confucian philosophical works, *Oneness of the Way Collection* (Daoyi bian) and *The Classic of the Mind-and-Heart, Supplemented and Annotated* (Xinjing fuzhu); two massive compilations of historical documents, *Ming Essay Selections* (Ming wenheng) and *Anthology of Xin’an Documents* (Xin’an wenxianzhi); and a massive collection of essays in *Collected Essays of Bamboo Mound* (Huangdun wenji).²⁷ Many of the writings within *Collected Essays of Bamboo Mound* are concerned with Huangdun’s beloved ancestral fatherland, though it also includes his lectures for the imperial princes concerning Confucian classics and policy recommendations to the throne. Indeed, along with *Xin’an Documents*, most of his written works are related to Huizhou, including the county gazetteer of Xiuning (*Xiuning zhi*; 1497) and two genealogies of the Chengs, namely *Composite Genealogy of the Xin’an Chengs* (Xin’an Chengshi tongzong shipu; 1482)—along with its massive companion *Records of Bequeathed Glories of the Chengs* (Chengshi yifan ji)—and *Genealogy of My Peiguo Cheng Branch in Xiuning* (Xiuning Peiguo Chengshi benzong pu; 1497).²⁸

After styling himself Bamboo Mound in 1478, this new Huizhou man fixated his mind on his newly adopted home region, especially when he was away from his Beijing office. Even his philosophic ponderings are mostly focused on the most famous native son of Xin’an, Zhu Xi. And yet, Minzheng also tried to reconcile the differences between Zhu Xi and his philosophical opponent, Lu Jiuyuan (1139–1194)—or rather, between the young Zhu Xi and the old Zhu Xi. Perhaps more importantly, however, Cheng Minzheng’s new philosophic positioning also further facilitated his local engagement.

A ZHU XI DISCIPLE EMBRACING LU JIUYUAN

During his first banishment from the center of power, Cheng Minzheng completed some of his most important works, mostly while in Peiguo, from 1489 to 1492. In

addition to compiling *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* (not published until 1497), he completed two philosophical books, *Oneness of the Way Collection* and *The Classic of the Mind-and-Heart, Supplemented and Annotated*. His foray into moral philosophy addressed a key issue at this critical juncture of neo-Confucian development in the Ming dynasty. That is, how to mediate between the two increasingly polarized streams within the neo-Confucian tradition: Zhu Xi's Learning of the Way (or School of the Principle) and Lu Jiuyuan's Learning of the Mind-and-Heart (or School of the Mind).

A disciple of the Cheng brothers, Zhu Xi created a single systematic program emphasizing "investigating things and extending knowledge" (*gewu zhizhi*), suggesting that one could reach the Way or moral principle only through intensive study of the classics. This greatest synthesizer of neo-Confucianism wrote and compiled a great body of philosophical, historical, and ritual works that eventually became a canonic collection. His younger contemporary Lu Jiuyuan had a different focus, advocating an intuitionist, meditation-like shortcut to reaching the moral nature of the mind. In Lu's view, Zhu Xi had overtheorized sagehood, thereby undermining moral practice by diverting attention to textual studies. Lu accused Zhu of being "fragmented and disconnected" (*zhili*), whereas Zhu criticized Lu for being "empty and loose" (*kongshu*) in the famous 1175 Goose Lake debate.

Some later Confucians had attempted to mediate between the different modes of learning of Zhu and Lu. Wu Cheng (1249–1333), a leading neo-Confucian from Jiangxi, held that Zhu and Lu actually shared the same teaching, as they both tried to develop a single all-encompassing doctrine around the learning of the mind-and-heart. Zhao Fang (1319–1369), a Zhu Xi disciple from Cheng Minzheng's ancestral fatherland Xiuning, went a step further by specifically noting that Zhu and Lu at first differed but later in life reached a consensus.²⁹ Cheng Minzheng substantiated Zhao's claim by annotating the letters between Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan (along with some comments by later Confucians) to show how these two Song dynasty neo-Confucian giants, who initially represented two opposite philosophical positions, eventually came together to reach an agreement on human nature and the approach to moral learning. His first philosophical foray carries a characteristic title, *Oneness of the Way*.³⁰

Cheng Minzheng outlined his position on the unity of the Way and its historical transmission at the beginning of the *Oneness of the Way* as follows:

In the universe there is only one Way. The vastness of the Way originates from Heaven; in humans it inheres as human nature and is contained in the mind. How could there exist two kinds of mind? It is just that when it is obstructed by the selfishness of physical constitution, the [moral] nature becomes unnatural [immoral]. Therefore, the teachings of the Confucian school consist in the restoration of human nature. The fundamental way of restoring human nature lies in regaining the lost mind. As for Yan [Yuan]'s "Four Do Nots,"³¹ Zengzi's "Three Reflections,"³² and Zisi's "honor

the moral nature [*zundexing*] and follow the path of inquiry and study [*daowenxue*],” as well as Mencius’s “if one first erects that which is great, one will not be deficient in the small [human nature],” these sayings truly are as if uttered by a single mouth. Indeed, if the mind is not concentrated, how can one exhaustively explore moral principle, and how can one expect to thoroughly conform one’s nature with the mandate? Beginning in the middle age, farther removed from the ancient sages, Buddhism and Daoism arose and meditation on the mysterious and enlightenment of emptiness was taken as lofty; etymological gloss prevailed and division of chapters and analysis of meanings was taken as worthy; florid words dominated and pleasing the public and winning acclaim was taken as an accomplishment. Therefore, the learning of the mind became obscured and failed to be practiced. Even the great Confucians like Dong [Zhongshu] and Han [Yu] were lacking in this, let alone others. Not until Master Zhou [Dunyi], born one thousand years later, elucidated the subtle meanings of the nature of the mind and promoted the ultimate power of moral practice was there a continuation of the proper transmission of Mencius. But actually, it was Master Cheng [Yi] who directly inherited it, so he said, “all the sayings and writings by the ancient sages and worthies are just meant to make people reign in the unrestrained mind, getting it again back into our bodies. [With the lost mind recovered], people will naturally seek to better themselves and discard lesser learning and thereby attain [the Way].” Therein lies the importance and the earnestness of his words, but what could be expected from subsequent scholars? In the end, no one was able to transmit the succession of the Way. Then, the two masters Zhu [Xi] and Lu [Jiuyuan] emerged after the corrosion of the Luo [Cheng Yi] Learning, and they lectured on their ideas along the east and west sides of the River, so that scholars under heaven all followed them. But the learning of the two masters could not help but differ in the early years and yet they reached agreement later in their lives. Scholars simply have failed to observe this evolving change, so as to assert that Master Zhu favored “inquiry and study,” whereas Master Lu favored “honoring the moral nature,” and that the two could not be reconciled throughout their lives. Alas, how could this have been good for moral practitioners? In fact, Master Zhu’s “following the path of inquiry and study” is surely based on “honoring the moral nature”; how can it compare to the argumentation of later scholars who exerted all their energy on dividing chapters and analyzing the meanings of words? Master Lu’s “honoring the moral nature” is surely complemented by “following the path of inquiry and study”; how can it compare with the quiet sitting of latter scholars whose minds were full of meditating on mysteriousness and awaking to emptiness? I genuinely fear that the learning of the nature of the mind will again be obstructed and submerged in the world, with scholars accustomed to thinking that the Way is not singular. It is on the basis of this examination that I have compiled the detailed [letters] in this collection.³³

As expressed in this opening statement, Cheng Minzheng’s view of the Way and of its successive transmission (and discontinuity) from the early Confucians down to the Cheng brothers is largely identical with that of Zhen Dexiu (1178–1235), a leading neo-Confucian scholar who upon Zhu Xi’s death played a key role in winning official support for the Cheng-Zhu school and whom Cheng Minzheng greatly

admired.³⁴ Quite strikingly, however, Cheng Minzheng included both Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan as “two masters” (not just Zhu Xi alone) who inherited the Way, while at the same time documenting the different emphases of their learning in their early writings. The key sections of *Oneness of the Way* focus on how the two masters gradually reached an agreement starting in middle age, as shown in the letters from both admitting their own biased emphasis in earlier days. Notably, both the choice and order of the included letters appear to suggest that Zhu moved closer to Lu’s position later in life. The fourth section, focusing on their views at later middle age, opens with Zhu’s letter admitting that he had indeed overemphasized scholarly textual studies at the expense of “honoring the moral nature”:

Largely from Zisi onward, the method of teaching that has been highlighted and especially effective focuses on two things: “honoring the moral nature” and “following the path of inquiry and study.” Now, what Zijing [Lu Jiuyuan] has spoken about is exclusively “honoring the moral nature,” whereas what I have daily elaborated upon has a bit overemphasized the pursuit of “the path of inquiry and study” . . . I myself now realize that, although I’ve dared not to make irresponsible comments on moral principles, nevertheless I’ve often been ineffective at the key task of my own behavior and treating others. I should now work hard at self-examination to get rid of shortcomings and accumulate strengths so as to avoid falling again into this one-sidedness.

“From this letter,” comments Cheng Minzheng, “we learn why Master Zhu became the greatest synthesizer of the [Song] Confucians. Those biased, opinionated people who are used to making arguments to belittle others should be startled and awakened. But Master Lu also had letters discussing the need to incorporate illuminating lectures and daily practice into learning, which are in complete agreement with Master Zhu, showing no conflict as they did in their middle age. Below is Lu’s letter.”³⁵

Later in the same volume, after listing Zhu Xi’s seven other letters (intertwined with several of Lu’s letters and comments) where Zhu self-critiqued his former “fragmented and disconnected” approach, including a letter emphasizing “work on daily needs” (*riyong gongfu*), Cheng Minzheng commented, “Indeed, Master Zhu insightfully realized that he must rescue the scholars to overcome the ‘fragmented and disconnected’ flaw, and so in his letters he frequently referred to the issue, sending out warnings that were extremely alarming and sincere. This is what comes out of the talent of supermen and the learning of sages and worthies, who appreciated the justice of righteous principle, with no division between you and me. He is a paragon of virtue and learning who should be strictly followed for one hundred generations!”³⁶

To later followers of the Zhu Xi School, Cheng Minzheng made too many concessions to Lu Jiuyuan; some believed he even completely betrayed the understanding of Zhu Xi. Notably, in the heyday of Wang Yangming’s influence, Chen Jian (1497–1567) attacked Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming as “ostensible Confucians

and covert Buddhists” in his *Thorough Critique of Obscurations to Learning*. In the same treatise, Chen accused Cheng Minzheng of having paved the way for Wang Yangming to make his false assessment of Zhu Xi in his famous *Conclusions Reached by Master Zhu Late in Life*.³⁷ Wang Yangming, however, felt that his learning of the mind was “perfectly congruent with Zhu Xi’s.”³⁸ So did Cheng Minzheng, who must have exerted influence upon Wang Yangming. Cheng Minzheng was one of the cosupervisors (along with Li Dongyang) of the metropolitan exam in 1499 in which Wang Yangming earned the *jinshi* degree (criticism of irregularities during that exam was also the cause of Cheng’s impeachment and eventual ruin).

Cheng Minzheng was a devoted Zhu Xi disciple, both intellectually and emotionally, and was widely known to be so. As Li Dongyang noted in his preface to *Collected Essays of Bamboo Mound*, his former colleague in the Board of Rites was “well versed in a multitude of various books and yet had closely examined the learning of Master Zhu in particular, feeling that [Zhu Xi was] his teacher.”³⁹ Cheng Minzheng himself said it best in a private letter, “I’m stubborn and eccentric, but just love to read the books by Master Zhu; [I read them] while walking or sitting, so absorbed as to forget food and sleep.” He went on in the same letter to explain how he had been misinterpreted: “What has been compiled in the *Oneness of the Way Collection* is all based on Master Zhu’s mature sayings in his letters. Readers have not read them carefully, feeling that I was promoting Lu’s learning.”⁴⁰

Cheng Minzheng was obviously responding to criticism of his *Oneness of the Way Collection*, but his philosophical leaning with regards to Zhu Xi was genuine. He clearly acted within the Zhu Xi position, trying to incorporate Lu’s learning to enhance or restore what was in his mind the original, untainted learning of Master Zhu. Since Yuan times, and especially after Zhu Xi’s learning had become state orthodoxy in the early Ming, scholars had been using Zhu Xi as a stepping stone to fame and power, ignoring the moral cultivation that was intrinsic to the Cheng-Zhu School.⁴¹ From this perspective, Cheng Minzheng had shrewdly incorporated Lu to defend Zhu, all the while recognizing the degenerated and pragmatic use of Zhu Xi’s ideas. Moreover, in identifying with Zhu Xi’s ancestral place (where he now dwelled in banishment), the erudite Cheng Minzheng had succeeded in “following the path of inquiry and study.” Indeed, he was uniquely positioned to argue for the primacy of inner self-cultivation over the external investigation of things—that is, to call attention to “honoring the moral nature” so as to unite Zhu-Lu learning. After all, belief in the unity of neo-Confucian doctrine still prevailed. As Peter Bol notes, “we should not read the great doctrinal split between Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming that emerged in the sixteenth century back into earlier periods . . . , and there was not such a sharp distinction between a Zhu Xi school and a Lu Jiuyuan school,” both of which shared the common domain that was the learning of the mind or human nature.⁴²

This, then, is the backdrop to Cheng Minzheng’s annotation of a key anthology of classical and neo-Confucian passages on the mind, which he reissued in

expanded, commentary edition. The original anthology is called *The Classic of the Mind-and-Heart* (abbreviated here as *Heart Classic*) compiled by Zhen Dexiu; and Cheng's compilation is *The Classic of the Mind-and-Heart, Supplemented and Annotated*. Although this work was largely ignored in China (whereas it was enormously popular in Tokugawa Japan and Choson Korea), de Bary elevates the *Heart Classic* as a key to understanding the larger neo-Confucian Learning of the Mind-and-Heart, "which preceded the divergence of neo-Confucianism into schools of principle and of mind and which represents the original matrix from which emerged the thought of Wang Yang-ming."⁴³ Indeed, the *Heart Classic* was a systematic compilation of the ideas of sages and Cheng-Zhu masters on the mind, or moral refinement; it begins with a famous yet obscure four-phrase classic aphorism on the mind and ends with Zhu Xi's inscription on "honoring the moral nature."⁴⁴ Cheng Minzheng's *Supplemented Heart Classic* was a further enhancement of his understanding of Zhu Xi's emphasis on the cultivation of the inner self (to supplement the investigation of external things).

The opening four-phrase aphorism of the *Heart Classic* is taken from the *Book of Documents*, attributed to the sage-ruler Yu: "The mind of man [*renxin*] is precarious, the mind of the Way [*daoxin*] is subtle. Have utmost refinement [*weijing*] and singleness of mind [*weiyi*]. Hold fast to the Mean." Zhu Xi's preface to the *Mean*, quoted as direct commentary on this line, emphasizes the undividedness, or oneness, of the mind while acknowledging two different sources of consciousness, "depending on whether it arises from the selfishness that is identified with the physical form or originates in the correctness of the innate moral imperative. . . . 'Refinement' means discriminating between the two and not letting them get mixed. 'Singlemindedness' [Oneness] means holding on to the correctness of the original mind and not becoming separated from it."⁴⁵ The method to accomplish this task, as some later sets of quotations show, is to maintain an attitude of reverent piety (*jing*), which was the focus of both the *Heart Classic* and Cheng Minzheng's *Supplemented Heart Classic*.⁴⁶ Serious reverence (as the basis for both self-cultivation and social action), as de Bary expounds, could mean an intense concentration on the matter at hand, but could also, in keeping with the teaching of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, "invoke the ancient piety toward Heaven-and-earth as an undifferentiated reverence toward the whole creative power of the universe." Singlemindedness, or undifferentiated reverence, therefore, "is directed toward no specific object of worship but holds all things in proper respect . . . [and] one should deal with all persons as if they had a high dignity." At the same time, singlemindedness, as one quotation from Zhou Dunyi shows, "is having no desires." Put together, as de Bary argues, the *Heart Classic*, supplemented by Zhen Dexiu's other writings, "probably represents a more extreme view of human desires as evil, and a more austere, straitlaced ideal of human conduct than can be found in the Cheng brothers or Chu Hsi [Zhu Xi]," which later became "accepted as orthodox Chu Hsi teaching."⁴⁷

Cheng Minzheng's further elaboration in his *Supplemented Heart Classic* added Cheng Yi's view on human desires to the opening set of quotations. When asked about "the mind of the Way" and "the human mind," Cheng Yi replied, "They are none other than heavenly principle [*tianli*] and human desires [*renyu*]. Certainly it [duality] is, but it does not suggest the existence of two things. It just means that the mind of one person, when in accordance with the Way and principle, is heavenly principle, and when following sensual wants, it is human desires. It must be apprehended at this division."⁴⁸ Before quoting Cheng Yi, however, Cheng Minzheng illustrated *weijing* and *weiyi* with the key precepts selected from the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* in a way that resembled his elaboration in *Oneness of the Way*, balancing "following the path of inquiry and study" and "honoring moral nature." For Cheng Minzheng, the essence of the Cheng-Zhu Learning of the Mind-and-Heart, though hardly illustratable in words, can be best summed up by two terms: *jujing* (abiding in reverence) and *qiongli* (exhausting principle).⁴⁹ Sounding like Zhen Dexiu (again), Cheng Minzheng wrote a private letter to his student Wang Chengzhi discussing the meaning of his *Oneness of the Way*: "Indeed, 'honoring the moral nature' is a matter of 'abiding in reverence'; 'following the path of inquiry and study' is an effort of 'exhausting principle.' Nurturing each other, neither can be undone."⁵⁰ Little wonder, then, that toward the end of the *Supplemented Heart Classic*, Cheng Minzheng returned to the theme of *Oneness of the Way* by including dozens of Zhu Xi's letters, citing Zhu Xi as saying "honor the moral nature' while also 'following the path of inquiry and study' . . . these two must be both worked on with no partiality."⁵¹

Cheng Minzheng's *Supplemented Heart Classic* was thus also a supplement to his *Oneness of the Way*. And these two neo-Confucian anthologies were united in the philosophic doctrine that was grounded in the Cheng-Zhu learning of the mind-and-heart, and balanced cultivation of the inner self with investigation of external things. Cheng Minzheng is not listed in Huang Zongxi's (1610–1695) *Case Studies on Ming Confucians*, an authoritative account of Ming Confucian thinkers, but he clearly played a role in bridging Zhu Xi's intellectualism and Wang Yangming's populist appeal. If Cheng Minzheng cannot be deemed an original thinker, at least he was a consistent one, which was a remarkable achievement, especially given the diverging trends within Confucian interpretation in the mid-Ming. He was consistent in insisting on the oneness of the Way. Whether heaven and man, inner and outer, or moral cultivation and social behavior, there was but "one thread uniting them" with no difference between them as regards the practice of the Way.⁵²

This preoccupation with oneness—and with embodying the Way—pervades Cheng Minzheng's work. It was no coincidence that during his banishment, Cheng Minzheng anthologized not only philosophical sayings of sages and Confucian masters but also historical documents of Huizhou. Indeed, if the mind of the Way and the human mind were undifferentiated, there was no reason to separate one locality from the whole realm or to separate commoners from elites. This

inclusivity shaped Cheng Minzheng's compilation of both his philosophic works and *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*; in turn, it informed the "localist turn" of this former classics lecturer at the imperial court in Beijing.

Anthology of Xin'an Documents

Anthology of Xin'an Documents (Xin'an wenxian zhi) was Cheng Minzheng's most important work. The anthology, comprised of one hundred *juan* in two collections, covers representative (often short) writings, or "sayings," by Huizhou notables and worthies (collection 1) and their biographical sketches, or "deeds" (collection 2), from the fifth to the late fifteenth centuries.⁵³ It was (and still is) the best embodiment of the Huizhou tradition of anthologizing. Here, too, Cheng Minzheng had a precedent for his endeavors. And here, too, he turned to none other than his beloved neo-Confucian exemplar, Zhen Dexiu, and the latter's anthology of the Han and pre-Han belles lettres according to neo-Confucian principles. One of the first guidelines of Cheng Minzheng's *Anthology* reads:

Collection 1 completely follows the rules [regarding the selection criteria of historical essays] set by Zhen Xishan (Dexiu) in his *Wenzhang zhengzong* [Correct Tradition of Literature]. Of the writings [on institutions and rituals] by the former [Xin'an] worthies, those selected are only forthrightly pure and concerned with the established teachings; all others are not included, even if they have enjoyed great popularity.⁵⁴

The *Correct Tradition of Literature*, according to the *Four Treasuries* editors, initiated a new trend of literati anthologizing that emphasized the transmission or embodiment of moral principles (as opposed to the earlier, other influential tradition of anthologizing started by *Selected Literature of Prince Zhaoming* of the Liang dynasty, whose criteria of selection focused on the literary values of exquisite writings).⁵⁵

In collection 2, the biographies in various forms are all called *xingshi* (deed sketches), again following the precedent set by Zhen Dexiu in his *Correct Tradition of Literature: A Sequel* (Xu wenzhang zhengzong). If a selected biography was too long, Cheng Minzheng would shorten it by cutting out unnecessary details, "modeled on the rule Master Zhu set in his *Origins of the Yi-Luo Learning* [*Yi-Luo yuanyuan*]."⁵⁶ Indeed, the format of Cheng's *Anthology* is a combination of two sequential anthologies of "true and forthright essays." This format put his Zhen Dexiu-like philosophic position (or what he took as the genuine Zhu Xi position) into practice through compiling important, or representative, works by and on the former worthies of (and related to) his beloved ancestral place.

The *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*, as the editorial note of the eighteenth-century *Four Treasuries* put it, was a "gigantic project" produced out of the compiler's vast erudition in Huizhou history.⁵⁷ The modern edition consists of three thick volumes totaling 2,690 pages, and includes 1,087 essays and 1,034 poems (many of which marveled at the beauty of Huizhou's landscape). It was the first systematic anthology, and still is the largest and most comprehensive collection,

of Xin'an historical documents of various genres. Shaping or, perhaps, reshaping the basic contour of Huizhou history over the past one thousand years or so, the *Anthology* contributed significantly to the forging of Huizhou consciousness in the mid-Ming epoch.⁵⁸ At the same time, Cheng Minzheng's regional focus was also balanced by his concerns for "all under heaven." As he eloquently wrote in the preface to *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*:

Xin'an in our dynasty is in a key location [protecting the southern capital in South Zhili]. Situated at the foot of the Dazhang Mountain, it is marked by the steepness of its mountainous topography, overseeing other prefectures [in the lower Yangzi valley] from its uniquely lofty position. As noted by the former [Xin'an men] who measured it, Xin'an's altitude equals the peak of Tianmu Mountain [in Zhejiang]. Moreover, waters coming from Wuyuan enter westward into Po Lake; and waters coming from Xiuning enter eastward into Zhejiang. How marvelously steep and unfathomably deep are its mountains and rivers!

After marveling at Huizhou's fabulous "mountains and rivers," Cheng Minzheng moves on to highlight its even more fabulous sociocultural legacy (after noting that the Daoist "immortals who filled the region since Qin and Han times" were hardly worth the value of its marvelous natural landscape):

In founding our prefecture, Lord Zhongzhuang and Lord Wang of Yueguo [Wang Hua] rose up as commoners to organize righteous militias and protect their land and people from catastrophic disorders. In death they emerged as deities, displaying incessant efficacy for more than a thousand years. Toward the middle era, the Xiuning Chengs moved north to Luo and generated two masters [Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi], while the Wuyuan Zhus moved south to Min and generated the Cultured Master [Zhu Xi]. Carrying on the orthodox tradition of Confucius and Mencius, they restored the vanished learning for eternity. How outstanding and great are its historical figures!

Not long thereafter [in Xin'an] there emerged so many renowned masters and prominent Confucians, as well as a large cohort of [men and women noted for] their righteousness and filial devotion [*jiexiao*], military talents [*caiwu*], elderly wisdom [*yilao*], and maidenly chastity and ladylike elegance [*zhenyuan*]. Their names are enshrined in biographical sketches, and their deeds are widespread throughout the prefecture and local communities. But the texts recording them are scattered.

After a brief account of the anthologizing process that lasted for thirty years, Cheng Minzheng invoked the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, complimenting their having overcome difficulties to collect the records on archaic institutions and rituals. His anthology, he proclaimed in the end, would serve the public good for the entire prefecture and all under heaven:

All like-minded men of my calling, seeing former worthies' good words and righteous deeds collected in this anthology, should think thoughts of lofty virtue and further put them into physical and mental practice every day. [The virtues] will

thereby spread from one family to the four seas, causing words to match deeds and glory to correspond with substance so that our literary works and virtuous deeds do not disappoint our ancestral notables. Moreover, by reading and following the Cheng-Zhu directives, we shall look up to Zou-Lu [the birthplaces of Mencius and Confucius] so that the mountains and rivers of Xin'an and the cultured notables nurtured therein will elevate not only one community, but also will enjoy fame throughout the realm. This glory will then not be transitory but will be transmitted to posterity. This anthology thus will not be mere scraps of useless paper.⁵⁹

The preface makes multiple juxtapositions that powerfully highlight Huizhou's unique glories. Herein we see the pairing of the natural environs and the social landscape, words and deeds, like-minded living men and dead ancestors, north and south, one family/lineage and all under heaven. Moreover, Cheng Minzheng skillfully juxtaposes the two Cheng brothers with Zhu Xi (and the Xiuning Chengs with the Wuyuan Zhus), the ancestral place of Cheng-Zhu with Zou-Lu, the military commanders with civilian Confucians, Cheng Lingxi with Wang Hua, and the secular with the divine realms. Some of the juxtapositions seem to betray the author's implicit concerns, as will be analyzed in this and the following chapters. Here, we shall first deal with the explicit.

While focusing on Huizhou (or even just one family/lineage), Minzheng, who was temporarily banished from the central government, was never far away from "all under heaven." Metaphysically, there was no difference between locality and state as regards the cultivation and practice of Confucian virtues. After all, Minzheng was anthologizing Huizhou documents while reflecting on the oneness of the Way and the Cheng-Zhu interpretation of the mind-and-heart. His specific admission that he was following Zhen Dexiu's rule of essay selection—stressing the inherent message of Confucian ethics regardless of literary talent—seemingly reads like a cliché in the neo-Confucian tradition of literati anthologizing, but it was quite meaningful for his Huizhou-focused endeavor at this special juncture. *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* was in a sense a working out of Cheng Minzheng's new philosophical position of balancing *daowenxue* (follow the path of inquiry and study) with *zundexing* (honor the moral nature) in the realm of compiling historical documents. To be more accurate, his well-established *daowenxue* erudition allowed him to cover the essential documents of virtually all key aspects of the Huizhou past, whereas his new leaning toward *zundexing* allowed him to view the oneness between Huizhou local society and the entire empire, and between historical worthies and Confucian commoners. The unified pairing of center/locality with *zundexing/daowenxue*, with the latter supporting the former, is born out in the selected *Xin'an Documents*.

Collection 1 of the *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* covers various genres of writings, whereas collection 2 includes biographies on various exemplars of historical figures. One notable feature is the selection of a large number of writings by Zhu Xi, including thirty-eight essays, eighteen poems, and ten biographies. Among

the selected writings by Zhu Xi are two studio poetic inscriptions titled *Zundexing* (Honoring the moral nature) and *Qiu fangxin* (Seek the original mind), in addition to a hand-copied version of Zhu Xi's *Zundexing* inscription by Zhu Tong (1336–1385), a high-ranking scholar-official from Xiuning in the early Ming.⁶⁰ Also included is a compliment from another Xiuning native, Zhao Fang, to Lu Jiuyuan that is also included in *Oeness of the Way Collection*: “The Confucians said that his learning looks like *chan* meditation, whereas the Buddhists said that our dharma contains no such thing. Surpassing in this way, he alone corresponds to the original mind [*chaoran duqi benxin*], waiting for the arrival of the sage generation after generation.”⁶¹ Herein we see Cheng Minzheng's leaning toward Lu Jiuyuan's learning as well as his reemphasis on Zhu Xi's concern with “honoring the moral nature.”

But the *Anthology* as a whole is clearly also a product of his diligent pursuit of “the path of inquiry and study.” For Zhu Xi, the purpose of “inquiry and study” was meant not just to conduct textual studies, but also to “embrace the worthies from the four directions, observe the things from the four directions, survey the terrains and circumstances of the mountains and rivers, examine the traces of prosperity or chaos, gains or losses of the past and present.”⁶² Cheng Minzheng was a good student of Zhu Xi. His interest in the mountains and rivers of Huizhou was not just for their great beauty, but probably also rooted in Zhu Xi's brand of “the path of inquiry and study.” Moreover, as implied in his preface, Huizhou's marvelous topography partially accounted for its social glory. Zhu Xi is cited as noting that the Xin'an landscape of steep peaks and pure streams had helped nurture virtue among women and integrity among men.⁶³ In addition, *Xin'an Documents* contains two descriptions, or sightseeing records, of Mount Huang, along with other records and poems describing local scenes of hills and streams.⁶⁴

Natural environs aside, *Xin'an Documents* focuses on Huizhou's political accomplishments and social marvels. Included in collection 1 are documents ranging from diplomatic protocols, memorials, personal letters, commemorative records of numerous local sites (including academies, bridges, ancestral halls, religious temples, studios, belvederes, lakes, and mountains, in addition to Mount Huang), prefaces or postscripts to important books and genealogies, statecraft essays, short treatises and miscellaneous writings on various meaningful subjects, lectures, stele inscriptions on key Huizhou heroes, ritual scripts, aphorisms, and a large number of poems. Collection 2 starts with the biographies of the two major heroes of Xin'an Prefecture, Cheng Lingxi and Wang Hua, followed by local worthies and notables in various fields, including accomplished civil and military officials and local administrators, eminent Confucians, noted literati, commoners (including merchants, often of local leading lineages) with particular virtues or talents (including medicine or divination), and a number of female chastity martyrs and devoted women.

Herein we already see the inclusiveness of his coverage, which is not confined exclusively to men of letters or scholar-officials. In terms of its coverage, *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* looks more like local gazetteers than other anthologies of writings, such as the aforementioned *Essential Writings of Xin'an*, which focuses mostly on literati essays and poems (with few biographies). Still, there was a fundamental difference between local gazetteers and literati anthologies of local writings. The former was usually called for by the central government and sponsored by local or regional officials. Compilation was usually undertaken by local literati or scholar-officials from the region, such as the aforementioned Zhu Tong, who in 1376 compiled the new version of the *Xin'an Gazetteer* (Xin'an zhi, no longer extant), or Cheng Minzheng, who compiled the *Gazetteer of Xiuning* (Xiuning zhi, initiated and sponsored by the county magistrate Ouyang Dan). In contrast, the document anthologies were normally initiated by the scholars themselves, even if they also solicited official support or connections. Due to this genre distinction, the literati anthology of local writings more readily represented the regional consciousness than local gazetteers, even though both tended to glorify the region.⁶⁵

Genre distinction aside, the inclusiveness of Cheng Minzheng's anthologizing may also reflect his philosophic balancing of "the path of inquiry and study" with "honoring the moral nature," or his embracing the significance of internal cultivation, which in theory could work for everyone, not just learned scholars. While focusing on the famed and accomplished, the *Anthology* also covers biographies of "commoners," who were nevertheless unusual or who anticipated the future glories of their descendants, their immediate family lines, or their entire lineages. There is an account, for instance, of a Daoist immortal of the late Tang named Nie Shidao, a Shexian native whose descendants went on to earn five *jinshi* degrees during Song times.⁶⁶ But there was also an epitaph for an ordinary *chushi* (gentleman without an exam degree, a term later used to refer to an educated or righteous merchant) named Wu Bogang (1316–1400), who was noted for his virtue, including generosity and love for kinship, in his construction of an *yizhuang* (righteous estate) to assist kinspeople and cover ancestral rites.⁶⁷

Another biographic sketch, for Bao Chun (1297–1376), was by an equally obscure Ming figure from Shexian (Zheng Yixiao). Bao's Song dynasty ancestors were noted for their indifference to government service, but their commercial wealth dominated the local community in Shexian. Bao Chun suffered the loss of both his sons but managed to adopt three grand-nephews to continue the family line. At the beginning of the Ming dynasty, upon the return of peace to the region, he took the lead in building communal waterworks and urging kinspeople to obey laws, and he was widely commended for his virtues.⁶⁸

Another biographical epitaph on Bao Yuankang (1309–1352) of Tangyue in Shexian (written by Zheng Shishan [1298–1358], the famous Shexian neo-Confucian who followed Wu Cheng in the attempt to accommodate Zhu Xi with Lu Jiuyuan)

concerns a more notable figure, especially with regards to his contributions to home lineage and local scholarly and ritual activities. Bao Yuankang stood out for having done three things: he skillfully managed the family fortune he inherited from his father and generously assisted kinsmen; he helped recover one hundred *mu* of ritual land for the Zhu Xi Shrine in Wuyuan; and he built the Shishan Academy where Zheng Shishan would lecture.⁶⁹

Looking further into Zheng Shishan's writings, we find that he also authored an epitaph for Yuankang's father, Bao Jingzeng (1281–1335), a successful merchant, or commercialized landowner, whose fortune underpinned the prosperity of the Tangyue Bao lineage during the Yuan dynasty.⁷⁰ Notably, however, only the epitaph on Bao Yuankang is covered in *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*. Was this selection just a matter of preference? Or did it suggest Cheng Minzheng's penchant for scholarly involvement or kinship values over commercial success?

The answer becomes clear after reading two other selected essays regarding money or commerce and the preferred emphasis in some selected merchant biographies. One essay is a sardonic story by an obscure Yuan dynasty scholar from Xiuning named Wu Yingzi about a certain Kong Yuanfang, whose name literally means "a square hole at the center of something round" (surely a reference to a traditional Chinese copper coin). Mr. Kong used his riches to gain a high position and ended up being ruined; Minzheng appended a comment to the story: "he renounced virtue and righteousness" (*fangqi deyi*).⁷¹ Moral tension over trade is more markedly expressed in the other piece on "Biographies of Traders" (*Huozhi zhuan*), by the prominent neo-Confucian Zhao Fang. Zhao Fang developed his own unique reading of this famous chapter of the Han dynasty *Records of the Grand Historian* as a hidden critique of the economic policy of Emperor Han Wudi. Zhao strongly reiterated the conventional concern over the immoral consequences of the obsessive pursuit of profits in commercial engagement.⁷²

Two more examples further illustrate Cheng Minzheng's preference for selecting local worthies based on their contributions to local lineage institutions. The *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* includes an epitaph of Cheng Meng (1399–1465), selected from the biography section in the genealogical anthology of his home lineage, the Huaitang Chengs in Shexian. Cheng Meng authored the first slim-volumed Ming dynasty composite genealogy of the Xin'an Chengs.⁷³ Another epitaph included in the *Xin'an Documents* is for Cheng Jinghua (1379–1452), this time by the famed Qiu Jun, which emphasizes his leadership in local communities as well as in "building an ancestral hall to conduct ancestral rites" and "compiling the genealogy to clarify the descent line" of his home lineage, the Shanhe Chengs in Qimen.⁷⁴ It is quite clear that local worthies who had made notable contributions to lineage institutions were particularly dear to Cheng Minzheng.

The *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*, given its inclusive coverage, also includes biographic sketches of merchants. Even in these biographical sketches for merchants, however, we see Cheng Minzheng's preference for noncommercial matters.

One concerns a classically educated merchant, Cheng Decui, who followed his grandfather to migrate from Xiuning to Hubei and prospered in shipping and trade during the Song-Yuan transitional era. This self-claimed Song dynasty adherent (*yimin*) never cared about how much wealth he or his family had accumulated, but was genuinely interested in pursuing neo-Confucian learning. He traveled a long distance to join his Huizhou kinsman Cheng Ruoyong in order to study Cheng-Zhu learning under Rao Shuangfeng, who had been instructed directly by Zhu Xi's disciple, Huang Gan (1152–1221). Cheng Ruoyong, we learn from another biography included in the *Xin'an Documents*, was a Xiuning Chakou native who became the headmaster of the Anding Academy (Huzhou) and the Wuyi Academy (Fujian), attracting a large number of students, including Wu Cheng.⁷⁵ The merchant activities of Cheng Decui are overshadowed by his scholarly devotion and neo-Confucian links.

Another merchant biography, by the famous Shexian Confucian Cao Jing (1234–1315), concerns Cheng Kentang (1239–1310) of the Shuaikou Chengs in Xiuning, a prominent lineage known for its commercial success dating back before the founding of the Ming dynasty. Cheng Kentang gave up scholarly pursuits to engage in trade during the Mongol period. Due to his business acumen, he was able to pay off all of his family's debts. We are told that he was genuinely open-minded and never vied for material gain. He spent generously, purchasing land and building houses for ancestral rites, and he was willing to relocate his parents' grave for the sake of lineage interests, which was highly commended by his kinsmen.⁷⁶

Most notably, the *Xin'an Documents* includes a merchant biography written by Zhu Xi. Zhu Que, Zhu Xi's maternal grandfather, controlled almost half the shops in the prefectural seat in Shexian, and at the same time was a kind family-man possessed of remarkable devotion and brotherly love as well as righteous generosity; even when his business declined dramatically in his old age, he never reduced his charitable contributions. In particular, he was keen on noticing scholarly talent, and married his beloved daughter to Zhu Xi's father when the latter was just a young student at the county school.⁷⁷ The coverage of such a good and wealthy shopkeeper carried enormous symbolic significance, given his relationship with Zhu Xi. Here again, however, Cheng Minzheng, and Zhu Xi, emphasized the non-merchant-related aspects of this businessman.

Unlike later sixteenth-century Huizhou notables, Cheng Minzheng hardly ever authored a biography or epitaph on Huizhou merchants, even though he must have appreciated the value of commerce from his own family background and his social dealings in Huizhou.⁷⁸ His father-in-law, Grand Secretariat Li Xian, authored an epitaph on Minzheng's grandfather, Cheng Cheng. Cheng Cheng initially managed the tilling of land at home in Hejian while his younger brother Yu chose to engage in the urban moneymaking trade. Before long, Cheng's farming became more profitable than Yu's business endeavors (the land the family owned turned out to be extremely fertile). Yu wanted to switch back to managing farm land,

and so Cheng happily let his brother take over while he switched to commercial pursuits. Cheng Cheng's new endeavor succeeded, and the family became wealthy enough that his son Cheng Xin (Minzheng's father) was able to concentrate on Confucian learning, eventually succeeding in the civil service exam.

Notably, Cheng Cheng's commercial career is mentioned only for the purpose of illustrating his brotherly love in the epitaph, which goes on to note that after the death of Yu, Cheng Cheng took care of Yu's children as if they were his own while ensuring that Cheng Xin diligently studied the Confucian classics.⁷⁹ The way in which Cheng Cheng's commercial endeavor is mentioned reveals a pattern in literati records of merchants that prevailed up until Cheng Minzheng's time: they were profiled not for their vocation but for their virtue (including their love for or interaction with scholarly activities and regional prominent lineages). This pattern clearly guided Cheng Minzheng's selection of merchant biographies for *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*.

Like Cheng Minzheng's coverage of Confucian women, which more or less imitated an established tradition, his coverage of merchants was highly limited, reflecting the reality of a still subdued commercialization (which, like the female chastity movement, would not take off until the turn of the sixteenth century).⁸⁰ The vast majority of selected documents are penned by or concerned with great military heroes, eminent scholar-officials, notable Confucians, and local kinship leaders. The coverage of merchants, however, was meaningful in mid-Ming Huizhou. Even placed within their social networks, these recorded merchants were still commoners, and their inclusion best represents the comprehensiveness of the *Anthology* coverage. It facilitated the spread of the Confucian identity of the entire Huizhou society (not just of the gentry class) to both the locals and an empire-wide audience. It also anticipated the enormous relevance of good merchants (as well as devoted women) to future Huizhou kinship society. Like his mentor and friend Qiu Jun, Cheng Minzheng sensed the need to cover commerce as it was gaining momentum toward its sixteenth-century boom, while at the same time conveniently signaling Confucian warnings regarding avarice.

Cheng Minzheng would come to see the value of money and merchants in publishing *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*.⁸¹ The anthology was completed during his banishment in Xiuning, from 1489 to 1492, but was not printed until 1497. A lack of means was cited as one major reason for its delay. As Cheng Minzheng noted in his 1497 postface, following the endorsement of the governor of Southern Zhili Province and the support of local officials at the prefectural and county levels (from all six counties), descendants of local prominent lineages donated a large sum of cash in order to complete the publication of the gigantic project. Toward the end of the *Anthology* is a long list of 230 local benefactors from all six counties (Xiuning: seventy-seven; Shexian: forty-nine; Wuyuan: twenty-six; Qimen: forty-four; Yixian: twenty-six; Jixi: eight).⁸² It is not that difficult to identify merchants or those who were closely affiliated with merchant families when checking this list against local

genealogies. For the seven benefactors listed under Shuaikou village in Xiuning, for instance, at least four were merchants or affiliated with merchant families.⁸³ In fact, Cheng Minzheng was aware of the commercially active Shuaikou Chengs when he endorsed the 1486 expansion of the branch shrine to Cheng Lingxi in that village (first built in 1447 and then expanded to accommodate the enlarged lineage of six hundred kinsmen), noting the initiatives and contributions made by his wealthy kinsmen.⁸⁴ In his 1497 postscript to the *Genealogy of My Peiguo Cheng Branch in Xiuning*, Cheng Minzheng acknowledged the commensurability of farmers and merchants, although neither was equal to scholar-officials or gentry. As he put it: “learning can make you as great as a righteous official or prominent scholar, or at least a capable farmer or a good merchant [*lianggu*].”⁸⁵ In a preface to the lineage genealogy of another Xiuning Cheng branch in Wenchangfang, he wrote: “To be a good scholar when reading; to be a good farmer when farming; to be a good merchant when sojourning—all should work on the fundamental aspect of their respective vocations without negligence.”⁸⁶

Beyond valorizing the role of merchants, the *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* best illustrates the nature of the rise of regional consciousness in mid-Ming Huizhou. State officials, at every level, were involved in the compilation and publication of this “private” project, from beginning to end. Besides the status of the compiler (temporarily banished from the central government), officials at various levels not only endorsed the project but also directly contributed funds toward its publication. Among 230 benefactors were twenty provincial and (mostly) county-level officials. Surely, given Cheng Minzheng’s potential influence upon return to the Beijing court, it was to their benefit to offer such support.⁸⁷ After all, this regionally focused anthology promoted the orthodox Confucian values that were universally applicable, good for all under heaven.

Even the perceived biases of the *Anthology* eventually worked to contribute to the promotion of not just Huizhou regional consciousness but also universal Confucian teachings. In promoting Huizhou to an empire-wide audience, *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* paid more attention to the Cheng heroes and worthies. Xu Chengyao, a Shexian native who passed the last-ever metropolitan exam, held in 1904, would later comment on the work, “Cheng Minzheng was strongly entrenched in the vision of his home village and lineage. His records of the Chengs are extremely detailed, which nevertheless are rich enough to make up for whatever is lacking in the *Gazetteer of Shexian*.”⁸⁸ Collection 2 of the *Anthology* (covering the deeds of previous Huizhou worthies) starts with the entry on Cheng Lingxi, followed by one on Wang Hua, reversing the sequence of their placement in earlier anthologies such as the *Essential Writings of Xin'an*.⁸⁹ On the whole, Cheng Minzheng included far more documents on the Chengs than the Wangs—or any other author for that matter (except Zhu Xi, for self-evident reasons). Sixty-one Cheng authors and fifty-one Wang authors are cited in the *Anthology*.⁹⁰ Individual authors, moreover, could be cited multiple times in a more selective way so as

to favor the Chengs. Nevertheless, Cheng Minzheng still tried wherever possible, or necessary, to maintain a power balance between the two most populous and prominent surnames and their deified ancestors: Chang Lingxi and Wang Hua, signaling their unique significance for Huizhou history and culture (as will be further illustrated in the following chapters).⁹¹

Most notably, Cheng Minzheng covered Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi in collection 2 of the *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*, treating the two Cheng brothers as legitimate Huizhou natives. There are two epitaphs on Cheng Hao followed by a detailed *nianpu* (life chronicle) of Cheng Yi by Zhu Xi, which is further enhanced with a lengthy supplement by Cheng Minzheng. These three constitute all of *juan* 62B, titled Daoyuan (Origins of the Way). This is preceded and followed by two *juan* sharing the same Daoyuan title: nine biographies on all the Cheng notables from Cheng Lingxi onward constitute *juan* 62A, and three biographies on Zhu Sen (?-?), Zhu Song (1097–1143), and their famous descendant Zhu Xi constitute *juan* 63. The first four *juan* of collection 2 cover virtually all the Cheng figures, while also extending beyond kin boundaries to include Wang Hua and Zhu Xi (as well as Zhu's father and grandfather).⁹²

This favoritism for Cheng luminaries brings us back to the pairings Cheng Minzheng eloquently laid out in his preface to the *Xin'an Documents*: Cheng Lingxi and Wang Hua as the two most important deified regional heroes, and the two Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi as descendants of the two Xin'an or Huangdun lineages. The persuasive power of Cheng Minzheng's pairings lies in his use of what was already established to support the other complementary sets that were not yet widely accepted. In particular, to a local audience (especially those not surnamed Cheng), it would have been doubtful whether Cheng Lingxi was as powerful a local tutelary deity as Wang Hua or whether the Cheng brothers truly had blood ties with the Xin'an Chengs. These juxtapositions, then, when or if properly justified, could generate symbolic capital of enormous significance for the Huizhou Chengs.

I will deal with the issue of the Cheng Lingxi–Wang Hua juxtaposition in chapter 5. Here, it will suffice to look at the issue of pairing the Cheng brothers with Zhu Xi as native sons of Huizhou or, more accurately, of claiming Huizhou (or, more specifically, Huangdun) as their shared ancestral place. First, this localist look into the Huizhou ties of the Cheng brothers elevated both the Huizhou Chengs and Huizhou Prefecture as a whole, as it powerfully promoted, or helped legitimate, the image of Huizhou as the Cheng-Zhu ancestral place—that is, as a Confucian heartland for both local and empire-wide audiences. This was one key expressing of the rising Huizhou consciousness. Second, due to this logic, or strategy, on the part of Cheng Minzheng, in which the promotion of the Chengs at the same time also glorified the entire prefecture, his promotion of the Cheng surname succeeded in Huizhou. It eventually paved the way for the compilation, and publication in 1551, of another monumental record that further developed Huizhou

identity as an epicenter of Confucian kinsmen and kinswomen, *Prominent Lineages in Xin'an* (to be explored in chapter 2). And third, Cheng Minzheng was not the first to claim that Xin'an was the ancestral place of the Cheng brothers. The *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* includes a document by his Yuan dynasty kinsman from Wuyuan, Cheng Wen. This postface, written for a collection of genealogical documents compiled by the descendants of the Cheng brothers in Henan, links the Cheng brothers directly to Cheng Lingxi, or the Huangdun Chengs.⁹³

It was Cheng Minzheng, however, who played the most important role—in the most innovative way and at the most opportune moment of mid-Ming rising regional consciousness—in establishing the bloodline between the Cheng brothers and the Huizhou Chengs. Even before compiling the *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*, in a more visible and apparently more convincing way, he had successfully worked to build a commemorative shrine to the two Cheng brothers in Xiuning and compiled the most detailed, up-to-date composite genealogy of the Huizhou Chengs, which incorporated the branch of the Cheng brothers. Cheng Minzheng's involvement in the construction of home kinship institutions and of the Cheng Shrine was itself a key component of his localist engagement and of the development of Huizhou kinship society and regional identity as a whole, and thus calls for further analysis.

LINEAGE INSTITUTIONS

One area that demanded much of Cheng Minzheng's attention in his Huizhou-focused endeavor was to perfect home-lineage institutions, especially the compilation of the genealogies of the Huizhou Chengs. As he stated in 1482, "I have focused my attention on genealogical learning most" over the past "twenty years."⁹⁴ This focus can be attributed to two factors, one universal and the other specific to the development of Huizhou kinship society. The genealogy was central to the lineage institution, which had been an expansion of the extended family for the Song-Yuan neo-Confucian masters and thereafter became a local expression of the neo-Confucian movement. In the early Ming, Song Lian, Fang Xiaoru, and other top scholar-officials advocated for lineage formation and genealogy compilation, holding that lineage institutions, which in the Southern Song had been considered appropriate only for official and literati families, ought be spread to all families.⁹⁵

For Huizhou, despite the later claim that the region had been a stronghold of prominent clans and great families since Tang and Song times, the building of lineage institutions came rather late. According to Joseph McDermott's study of Huizhou lineage history, it was still highly exceptional in Song-Yuan Huizhou to find a lineage with a genealogy, an ancestral hall of any sort, or a collective practice of maintaining graves. But around the mid-Ming, lineage order began to gain the upper hand against other rural institutions (such as the village worshipping

association and Buddhist temples) and, eventually, by the late Ming, gained predominance in Huizhou villages.⁹⁶ Cheng Minzheng drew on previous works, but also made tremendous contributions to promoting this victorious advance of kinship organization in Ming Huizhou.

Above all, his contribution to the development of local lineage institutions lies in his masterful compilation of genealogies and lineage documents, which at the same time also provided him with the most workable channel to demonstrate, or claim, the Xin'an connection for the two Cheng brothers. In early 1482, upon completion of the three-year mourning period for his father, Cheng Minzheng contacted the kinsmen of various branches for his plan to compile a composite genealogy covering all of the Xin'an Chengs. They all supported it and their representatives lent him individual genealogies and lineage documents (which Cheng Minzheng had himself spent the "past twenty years" collecting). After six months of cooperation, with direct assistance in compiling and copying from fifty-six kinsmen (including Cheng Zuyuan of Shuaikou who, as noted earlier, later also contributed money to the cutting of the *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*), the *Composite Genealogy of the Xin'an Chengs*, in twenty *juan*, was cut and published in 1482, along with its massive companion *Records of Bequeathed Glories of the Chengs*, a thirty-*juan* anthology of historical documents relating to the Xin'an Chengs.⁹⁷ The composite genealogy covers more than ten thousand kinsmen of forty-four Cheng branches (some of which settled outside of Huizhou, such as in nearby Raozhou and Guangxin in northern Jiangxi). By definition, this massive composite genealogy was inclusive, covering all kinsmen, commoner or scholar, who could be proved to have descended from the same ancestry. While Cheng Minzheng was not the first genealogist in Huizhou to cover commoners, this inclusive coverage nevertheless corresponded with his philosophic position as a Cheng-Zhu disciple embracing the populist Lu Jiuyuan learning of the mind-and-heart.

Cheng Minzheng was truly an innovative genealogist in many ways, and his erudition gave his composite genealogy a solid evidential foundation. The *Composite Genealogy of the Xin'an Chengs* was the first fully developed extant genealogy in Huizhou that used the ancestral tree (*putu*) format of the lesser descent-line (*xiaozong*) rule to reach and cover the great descent line (*dazong*) of unlimited generations—backward to the first known apical ancestor and forward to every related concurrent kinsman. The "modern" Chinese genealogical protocol began in the Song, following the ruins of the great clans of the Tang aristocracy, spearheaded by Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) and Su Xun (1009–1060), and emphasized the lesser descent-line rule of covering five generations.⁹⁸ In the fifteenth century, there was a revival in worshipping the apical ancestor, and Huizhou lineages were especially sensitive about their ancestral pedigree. Cheng Minzheng combined the lesser descent-line ancestral tree format and the great descent-line coverage to meet the needs of the prominent and populous Xin'an Chengs and the larger Huizhou kinship society. This genealogical format exerted a major influence upon the subsequent Huizhou genealogies marked by the *tuzhuan* (five-generation

ancestral tree format, plus biographic sketch for each kinsman) pattern to cover all kinsmen (not just prominent figures in the ancestry) of unlimited generations in unlimited *tuzhuan* sheets.⁹⁹ As Cheng Minzheng determined that Ouyang's and Su's format of "one *tuzhuan*" did not reveal the composite feature of the descent line from the archaic ancestor, he borrowed the format of chronicle tables used in official histories (especially *History of the Han* and *History of the Tang*) and applied it to his *Composite Genealogy*.¹⁰⁰

Cheng Minzheng's work also marked the first major composite genealogy not only for the Xin'an Chengs but also for the entire Huizhou kinship society. To be sure, it was built upon previous works, as best illustrated by the thirty-nine prefaces or postfaces to the previous Cheng genealogies covered in the composite genealogy, including three composite versions compiled in the Tang, Song, and Ming, respectively.¹⁰¹ Of these three, only Cheng Meng's edition is extant; titled *The Various Genealogies of the Xin'an Chengs Threaded Together* (Xin'an Chengshi zupu huitong), it is about one hundred sheets in length.¹⁰² Cheng Minzheng's genealogical work broke new ground, not just for its state-of-the-art format, but also for its sheer size and the quality of the publication, and especially for its contents.¹⁰³

Key to the composite genealogy is a substantial essay in which Cheng Minzheng presents thirty-seven "genealogical clarifications" (*pubian*) in response to what he viewed as the "errors" of the previous Cheng genealogies, especially the three composite versions compiled in the Tang, Song, and Ming. The *pubian*, as well as the generational charts and documentation of the *Records of Bequeathed Glories of the Chengs*, authoritatively reconfirmed the ancient ancestry of the Chengs, tracing the earliest Cheng progenitors to the Zhou dynasty. Following Cheng Yi's identification, Cheng Minzheng demonstrated, with ample documentation, that the Chengs' first progenitor was Xiufu, the Zhou minister of war, who, after having assisted King Xuan of the Zhou (r. 827–781 BCE) achieve the revival of the dynasty, was enfeoffed as the Earl of Cheng (Chengbo), and whose descendants used the fief's title as their surname.¹⁰⁴ The next claimed and recognizable descendant of Xiufu was Cheng Ying (?–583 BCE), an unusual paragon of righteousness popular throughout Chinese historical and literary lore.¹⁰⁵ Cheng Ying's forty-first-generation descendant was Cheng Yuantan, whose twelfth-generation descendant was Cheng Lingxi.¹⁰⁶

More notably, several key clarifications are intended to demonstrate the direct, albeit tenuous, blood ties not just of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi to Cheng Lingxi but also of Cheng Minzheng's Peiguo Chengs to the two Cheng brothers. It was not novel for Cheng Minzheng to link the Cheng brothers directly to Cheng Lingxi. In addition to the aforementioned Cheng Wen, Hu Bingwen (1250–1333), a prominent neo-Confucian from Wuyuan, had also made the claim in his commemorative record to the Shrine to Local Worthies in the prefectural seat.¹⁰⁷ Cheng Minzheng not only added new twists to the link, but also used the genealogical tree and historical documentation to visually represent it and to set the stage for his new claim about the blood ties of the Xiuning Chengs to the Cheng brothers. One *pubian*

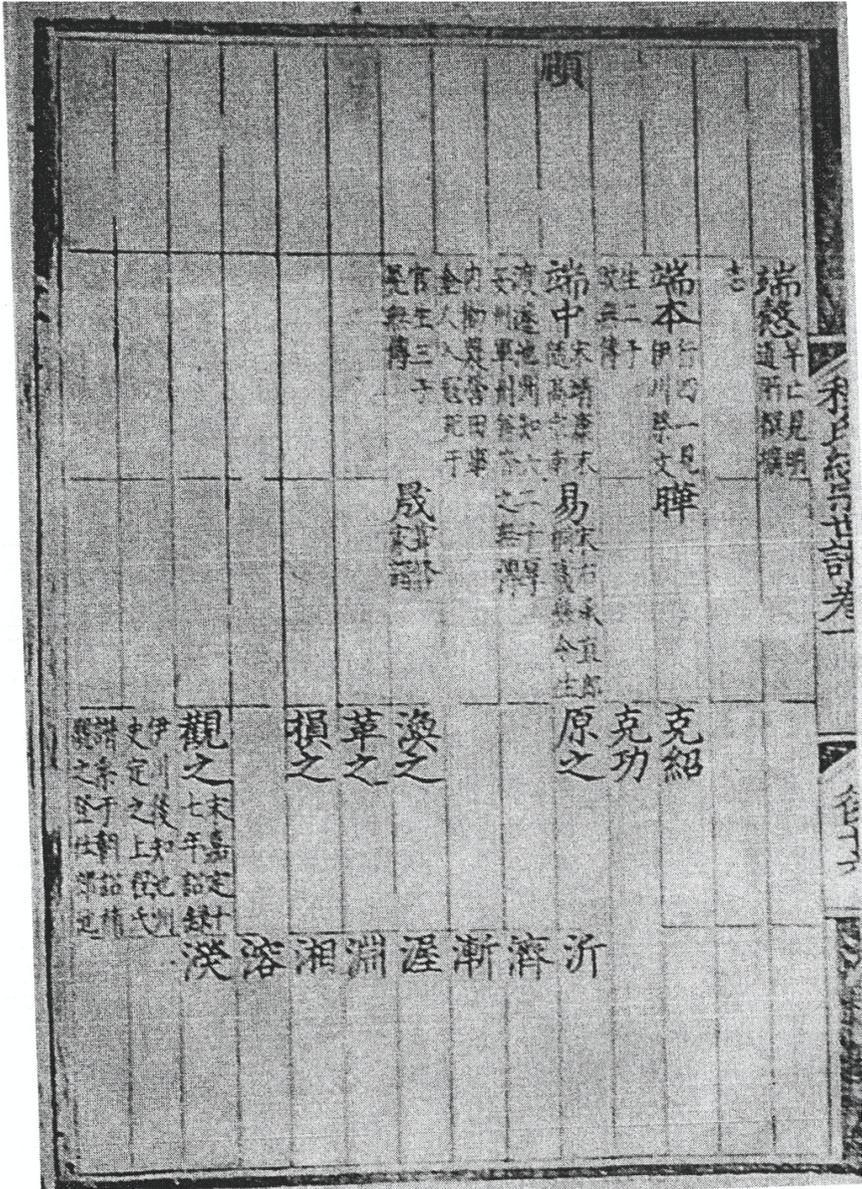


FIGURE 1. Cheng Yi and his descendants. The top register features Yi of the Cheng brothers; his son Duanzhong is indicated as having migrated to Huizhou's neighboring prefecture of Chizhou after the Song court was forced south. One of Yi's great grandsons, Guan zhi, became prefect of Chizhou. XACST 1.2.16b. Courtesy of Shanghai Library.

takes pains to show the movement of the descendants of the Cheng brothers south to Xiuning and nearby Chizhou and Jiankang in the early twelfth century, where they eventually converged again with their original kinsmen in Xiuning, including

(through adoption) the Peigu branch.¹⁰⁸ The kinship ties between the Chizhou Chengs and the descendants of the two Cheng brothers were further alleged in their ancestral tree.

How much pedigree did this composite genealogy, especially given its illustrious ancient ancestors and its identification of the Cheng brothers with Huizhou, add to Cheng Minzheng's descent line in Huizhou and add to Huizhou in the whole realm? And how did the added pedigree further enhance Cheng Minzheng's status among his colleagues in Beijing? The juxtaposition of these two questions speaks to the broader reach of Minzheng's Huizhou-focused endeavor, although we will not consider the second question until reaching the end of our story about Cheng Minzheng's localist turn. For now, let us address the first seemingly self-evident question by looking at his preface to the *Composite Genealogy* to see how it enhanced his descent line while also enhancing the entire prefecture of Huizhou in terms of its moral fabric and empire-wide fame.

The preface opens by noting the disappearance of noble families and their genealogies following medieval times. It then states that the Xin'an Chengs were surely such a noble descent line by listing the illustrious ancestors from Xiufu through Cheng Ying, Cheng Yuantan, and Cheng Lingxi down to the Cheng brothers who recovered, or "inherited," the tradition of the sages with their "learning of the Way." So illustrious was the Xin'an Cheng descent line that one kinswoman stood out, having mothered Zhu Xi's father. After briefly noting the process of compiling the *Composite Genealogy* and its enormous coverage, Cheng Minzheng continues:

Should we just use the great prosperity of our noble lineage to distinguish [ourselves] from others in the four directions or glorify our offspring? Only because the progenitor made unusual contributions was he awarded the surname; [another ancestor] performed absolute loyalty so that he was able to keep the surname; still [another ancestor] had an enormous achievement so as to benefit the homeland [of all Xin'an]—all of this has made our surname notably prominent down to the present. Therefore, in spite of my own unworthiness, and with the assistance from the worthy kinsmen of many branches, I have fulfilled my resolution to unify the entire descent line and completed the genealogy. Is it not a great fortune? All of the kinsmen [now covered in the genealogy] should henceforth never forget to think of the fountain of water and the root of tree, and should devote ourselves to the virtue of respecting the ancestors, honoring the descent line, and harmonizing the lineage [*zunzu jingzong muzu*]. We should maintain our inherited enterprise [and name], read our inherited books, protect all of the resting places of the ancestral bodies [graves] without losing [ritual land], and judiciously follow the rectification of the names without disordering [the generational hierarchy]. Once the descent-line system has been established, social ethics should spread and moral teachings prevail. . . . If this should be the case, then [this compilation] indeed is not just the fortune of one descent line alone!

Cheng Minzheng ends the preface with a powerful forward-looking statement marked by his characteristically broad "all under heaven" vision (foretelling what he would state in his preface to the *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*): "How in the

future can families all under heaven not learn from the Cheng descent line” about establishing lineage institutions and practicing Confucian ethics?¹⁰⁹

Besides gaining pedigree, Cheng Minzheng also used the genealogical project to set an example for others to follow and largely succeeded. In addition to spreading the *tuzhuan* genealogical format, he popularized the motif of “respecting the ancestors, honoring the descent line, and harmonizing the lineage,” which was to become the stock expression of subsequent Huizhou genealogies that set the descent-line rule or moral guidance for Huizhou kinship society.¹¹⁰ In more general terms, with the Cheng brothers now genealogically affiliated with the Xin’an Cheng descent line, the entire region shined. Cheng Minzheng prevailed because he promoted the Xin’an Chengs along with the entire prefecture at the same time. Cheng Minzheng succeeded in capturing for Huizhou the fame of being the “ancestral place of Cheng-Zhu”—the heartland of Confucian kinship society—a key dimension of emerging Huizhou identity.

Indeed, Cheng Minzheng developed a strong sense of mission to build a “harmonious” kinship society in Huizhou out of his neo-Confucian conviction. He authored at least twenty-two prefaces or postscripts to other Huizhou genealogies as well as numerous records commemorating men and women who made notable contributions to or glorified through unusual virtue home lineages in Huizhou.¹¹¹ The *Records of Bequeathed Glories of the Chengs* covers many records on the construction or rebuilding of the branch shrines for Cheng Lingxi. Moreover, out of his immediate responsibility, Cheng Minzheng led projects perfecting the lineage institution for his home descent line at Peiguo.

After his father’s death, Cheng Minzheng built an ancestral shrine for Cheng Xin in 1480 to the left side of the Chapel of Southern Hill (Nanshan An) near Peiguo. The Chengs and other benefactors had donated pieces of land to the chapel, noted Cheng Minzheng, which now totaled over eight *mu* and received annual rent from tenants and bondservants tilling the ritual land. First erected in 319, the chapel was rebuilt with financial support from local laymen during the Chunxi period of the Song dynasty (1174–1189) and again during the Jingtai period of the Ming dynasty (1450–1456). At this focal “praying place for the entire community,” the Buddha was worshipped in the central shrine along with the two popular deified historical heroes, Guan Yu on the left wing and Zhang Xun on the right.¹¹² Indeed, according to Cheng Minzheng, the chapel was well selected to enshrine Cheng Xin’s soul, not just because of the popular deities worshipped there but also because of the date of its first construction, 319, the same year in which Cheng Yuantan had become prefect of Xin’an. Clearly one of the oldest religious institutions in Xin’an, or, as Academician Huangdun put it, the “oldest” with the “most serene” setting, the chapel was another reminder to local people of the deep ancestry of the Peiguo or Huangdun Chengs of Xin’an.¹¹³

The ancestral shrine was not just to honor his father; it was also a central piece of the home-lineage building in which Minzheng was engaged. Cheng Xin’s

shrine, given the syncretic setting, was not purely Confucian, nevertheless it still functioned as a freestanding ancestral hall (away from dwellings) for the Peiguo Chengs as well as Cheng Minzheng.¹¹⁴ In addition, Cheng Minzheng organized a Village Worship Society in 1482, initially consisting of thirty-six households of various surnames, to worship the deities at the Chapel of Southern Hill, now including Cheng Xin. He also helped set up additional ritual land and lineage corporate estates (*shetian*) for about two hundred Peiguo kinsmen to cover the spring and autumn sacrifices to the Earth God.¹¹⁵

Complementing all these lineage-related projects was *Genealogy of My Peiguo Cheng Branch in Xiuning*, printed in 1497, the same year in which *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* was finally cut. With the genealogy adding to a freestanding ancestral hall and corporate ritual land, all the key ingredients of the mature lineage repertoire were in place for the Peiguo Chengs.¹¹⁶ The 1497 genealogy was significant for other reasons too. In addition to perfecting a genealogical format for the subsequent single-lineage genealogies to follow, Cheng Minzheng now felt justified in adding to his own branch genealogy two important seal inscriptions, first partially introduced in 1482 in the Huizhou-wide *Records of Bequeathed Glories of the Chengs*. The first, attributed to Cheng Yi, is titled *Chuanzong yinming* (Inherited Seal and Inscription). The seal consists of the four characters, *Chengbo zhihou* (descendant of Earl Cheng; that is, Xiufu or Qiaobo). The inscription reads:

My apical ancestor Qiaobo [Earl of Qiao] was initially enfeoffed at Cheng; his descendants took the title of the fief-state as their surname. My departed father selected to settle near Cheng, restoring the title of Earl [posthumously bestowed]; the offspring called themselves "descendants of Earl Cheng." The third month of 1103, inscribed by [Cheng] Yi.¹¹⁷

The second seal, *Yichuan houren* (descendant of Cheng Yi), was the personal seal of the grandson of Cheng Yi, Cheng Cheng, whose descendants, according to Cheng Minzheng, had migrated back to Huizhou's surrounding areas and merged with their Xiuning (and especially Peiguo) kinsmen. As with *Records of Bequeathed Glories*, Cheng Minzheng placed the two seal inscriptions at the very beginning of *Genealogy of My Peiguo Cheng Branch in Xiuning*.¹¹⁸ This served as further proof, for the genealogist, that the Cheng brothers were firmly established as descendants of the Xin'an Chengs, not just in genealogical terms, but more visibly with the newly constructed Cheng Shrine that was officially endorsed.

THE CHENG SHRINE IN XIUNING AND THE CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

Cheng Minzheng was strategic in terms of his use of a multidimensional approach to drive his message home. He did not just rely on textual work, but also built a physical shrine named after the Cheng brothers in Xiuning in honor of local

worthies to more visibly cement the link of the two Cheng brothers with Huizhou. As it turns out, the construction of the Cheng Shrine was not just a central piece of his Huizhou-focused enterprise, but in the end also paved the way for his most important policy proposal regarding the issue of canonizing the Confucian tradition as enshrined at the Confucian Temple in the capital. Moreover, one single thread running through the two projects, at both the local level and in Beijing, was Confucian moral teaching, which reflected his metaphysical positioning as embodied in two soon-to-be-compiled anthologies of philosophical sayings by ancient sages and neo-Confucian masters.

In the process of compiling *Composite Genealogy of the Xin'an Chengs* and *Records of Bequeathed Glories of the Chengs*, Cheng Minzheng came up with a plan to materialize the Xiuning ties of the Cheng brothers. Earlier, Henan Provincial Administration Commissioner Cheng Tai (*jinshi* 1453), Cheng Minzheng's elder kinsman from the village of Shanhe in Huizhou's Qimen County, had recommended to the imperial court that the Cheng brothers' shrine in their Henan home region be refurbished. The renovation started in 1478; after Cheng Minzheng paid a visit to the refurbished shrine, he wrote a commemorative piece complimenting Cheng Tai's contribution to spreading neo-Confucian teachings.¹¹⁹ Perhaps inspired by his tour to the new shrine in Henan, Minzheng began in 1481 to work on the construction in Xiuning of a Cheng Shrine in the style of honoring local worthies.¹²⁰

In the twelfth month of 1481, he first wrote of his intention to Lou Qian (*jinshi* 1466), the imperial commissioner of Southern Zhili Province, emphasizing two points: first, as verified by the historical documents (including imperial conferral of honorary titles), the two Cheng brothers were descended from Cheng Lingxi. Cheng Yi's offspring moved back to Chizhou, and then Xiuning, in the Southern Song, eventually merging with the Peiguo Cheng descent line. Second, a new Cheng Shrine in Huizhou would be a project on which the rectification of local customs and promotion of Confucian teachings could truly rely (*chengyi fengjiao suoxi*); it would also encourage local students "to move their hearts toward the Way" (*xiangdao zhixin*). Lou Qian, Cheng Minzheng's *tongnian* or same-class graduate of the metropolitan exam, responded enthusiastically after apparently having been assured that the Cheng brothers did indeed have a relation to the Xin'an Chengs, reemphasizing that the two Cheng brothers had made the most important contributions to the Confucian tradition by resuming the learning of the Way from Mencius after the interruption of fourteen hundred years and by taking the promotion of "this culture of ours" (*siwen*) as their personal responsibility. Lou further instructed the new magistrate of Xiuning, Ouyang Dan (*jinshi* 1481), to supervise the project. Again, Cheng Minzheng wrote a commemorative essay, repeating what he had emphasized in his correspondence with Lou.¹²¹ When the project was completed, dozens of prominent magistrates and local worthies of Xiuning, including Cheng Minzheng's father, Zhao Fang, and Chen Dingyu (1252-1334, a famed Confucian scholar mentioned in the following chapter), were

worshipped along with Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi at the Cheng Shrine. Later, when Ouyang Dan asked Cheng Minzheng to preside over the compilation of the *Gazetteer of Xiuning*, Cheng Minzheng gained another officially sanctioned medium for promoting the ties of the two Cheng brothers to Cheng Lingxi and Huangdun.¹²² He used three personal seals to sign his 1491 preface to the gazetteer; they were, in order, “Huangdun” (Bamboo Mound), “Keqin” (his alternative name), and “Yi-Luo yuanyuan” (Origins of the two Cheng brothers), the last of which was meant to echo, if not directly copy, the title of a key work by Zhu Xi.¹²³

By 1488, Cheng Minzheng was reaching the zenith of his political career at the imperial court. The new Hongzhi emperor (r. 1488–1506) treated his former tutor with respect. Imperial mentor Cheng Minzheng was buoyed with optimism about his prospects for political advancement. His friend Qiu Jun had just been promoted to head the Board of Rites after submitting to the new emperor his famous *Supplement to “Expositions on the Great Learning.”* In early 1488, another scholar-official, Zhang Jiugong (*jinshi* 1478), submitted a memorial revisiting the status of the Confucians enshrined in the Confucius Temple. Zhang recommended the removal of Xunzi from the temple along with some early interpreters of the classics whose writings were unacceptable to the followers of the Learning of the Way. The emperor sent it to his court for discussion, but the proposal was not accepted. Cheng Minzheng supported it, however, and so he submitted his own more substantial “Memorial on the Assessment and Correction of the Ritual Code” (*Zou kaozheng cidian*). This was Minzheng’s most important memorial in which he articulated a guiding principle for the enshrinement criteria. The memorial begins:

The ancient sage-king’s rule of all under heaven heavily relied on coding the rites, which promoted virtues and rewarded merits [*chongde baogong*] so as to spread moral teachings and beautify the hearts of the people. . . . [Those qualified to be enshrined] must have had their writing in accordance with their behavior and their reputation in agreement with their life: they must make real contributions to those in alignment with the sage without any immoral trace in public records. This [criterion] is meant to uphold the meaning of promoting virtues and rewarding merits.

In other words, Cheng Minzheng placed personal moral quality and conduct above contributions to classic annotation or exegesis as the criteria for selecting the enshrined figures. Based on this new criterion, Cheng Minzheng expanded on Zhang’s proposal for removals from and additions to enshrinement, all according to Cheng-Zhu judgments. Notably, Cheng Minzheng also recommended enshrining the fathers of Yan Yuan, Zengzi, Zisi, Mencius, the two Cheng brothers, and Zhu Xi, to be worshipped along with the father of Confucius, King Initiating the Sage (Qisheng Wang).¹²⁴

Emphasis on spreading moral teachings was the single thread that united Cheng Minzheng’s efforts at both the local and national levels: locally for constructing the Cheng Shrine in Xiuning and nationally for reforming the enshrinement criteria

at the Confucian Temple. Both efforts showcased the commitment of Cheng Minzheng to the Learning of the Way, especially articulated by the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi. Both efforts, of course, also revealed the practical concerns of Cheng Minzheng, one to elevate his descent line in Huizhou and Huizhou in the whole realm, and the other to fulfill at the center of power the responsibility of a loyal scholar-official and to further his political standing at this opportune moment with a newly ascended emperor.

And yet, while having succeeded at the local level, Cheng Minzheng failed miserably in Beijing. His memorial was almost instantly rejected (although eventually accepted and acted upon forty-two years later in 1530), partly because his proposal was too ambitious for such a fundamental issue regarding the canonization of the Confucian tradition and partly due to court factionalism. Moreover, barely two months later, this factionalism further led to his being dismissed (he was viewed as too ambitious on account of his sweeping reform proposal for the Confucian Temple). The stated accusation for the impeachment, ironically, pointed to dissolute or immoral faults in Cheng Minzheng's personal life, including sleeping with both the concubine of his uncle and a sing-song girl (possibly more than one) and "shamelessly" teaching them the *Book of Songs* and the *Book of Documents*.¹²⁵ We have no way to verify the credibility of the accusation. Cheng Minzheng did not even try to plead innocence, despite being urged to do so by some top officials, including Qiu Jun. His silent acceptance of the impeachment did not necessarily admit to the accusation, but more likely signaled his maturation in handling a political fall (as he may have known that self-defense could lead to a harsher punishment).

Upon return to Xiuning in banishment, he worked to clear his reputation by reestablishing himself as a leading scholar of his age with the compilation of some of his most important works. The *Oneness of the Way Collection* and *Classic of the Mind-and-Heart, Supplemented and Annotated*, with their balancing of "following the path of inquiry and study" with "honoring the moral nature," were partially meant to further prop up the guiding principle of his memorial on reforming the Confucian Temple. At the same time, they may have also served as a self-examination of his purported previous imprudence through revisiting the thoughts of former sages on human nature and moral cultivation. *Anthology of Xin'an Documents*, while presenting Huizhou as a model Confucian society, further supported and substantiated his philosophical position. Eventually, these works helped his return to political grace when in 1492 Beijing's power alignment shifted to his favor, with Qiu Jun being promoted to the grand secretariat.¹²⁶ Cheng Minzheng never stated that he intended to use his philosophic and locally focused works to pave the way for a possible return to the center of power in Beijing, but that ultimate outcome should be revealing enough for us to understand Cheng Minzheng's presumed unstated intention.

Indeed, Cheng Minzheng always had empire-wide matters at heart while acting on a local stage: from renaming the place of Huangdun to compiling *Anthology*

of *Xin'an Documents* and the Xin'an Cheng genealogies. These compilations affected, or were affected by, his standing as an interpreter of Confucian thinking. We see the convergence of Cheng Minzheng's local and national interests most pointedly in the interpenetration between his contribution to the construction of the Cheng Shrine in Xiuning and his most important policy proposal presented in the "Memorial on the Assessment and Correction of the Ritual Code." In other words, state and society were seamlessly interconnected in Cheng Minzheng's localist endeavors.

CONCLUSION

Let us return to the opening story about Cheng Minzheng and his adoption of a new style name. The 1478 home visit of Sir Huangdun initiated a series of locally focused endeavors. Cheng Minzheng's self-style of "Bamboo Mound" was an individual choice, but it most vividly represented the rise of regional consciousness for Cheng Minzheng's generation. This becomes clear when compared to the style name of his father, Qingzhou (Sunny Islet).

In 1472, on the occasion of celebrating Cheng Xin's resettlement in his ancestral place, Cheng Minzheng had a volume of scenery and congratulatory poems by concurrent magnates collected and sent to his father, for which Cheng Xin wrote a foreword, "Record on a sunny islet" (Qingzhou ji). Cheng Xin first notes that when he was admitted to the official school in Hejian in 1433, he learned from the *Book of Songs* the meaning of *zhou*, a livable island. Realizing that the prefectural seat of Hejian looks exactly like an islet and inspired by an outing in this moment of great prosperity, Cheng Xin arrived at the idea of taking Qingzhou as a new style name. In 1450, he first visited the ancestral tombs in Xiuning on his way to an official appointment. While staying with some local elders at the foot of Zhi Hill, he crossed the nearby islet of Wenxi on a sunny day. Wenxi was so much like Hejian, except more beautiful. It was, he writes, truly worthy of the title Qingzhou, and the moment inspired him to resettle in his ancestral place after retirement. In 1472, his eldest son built a house for him in Peiguo. Cheng Xin, meanwhile, had purchased a piece of land in Xiuning with a pond islet, where he built a pavilion. Sitting in the pavilion, he imagined, would grant him a vision of the shared feature of both Hejian and Xiuning. On the occasion of prefacing the poetry volume his son collected for him, he happily reveals the origin of his style name.¹²⁷

This self-styling of "Sunny Islet" seems to have foreshadowed—and perhaps inspired—the son's style name of "Bamboo Mound." However, there was a subtle yet fundamental difference between the two. Cheng Xin's style name, while celebrating the peaceful prosperity of the empire, signals his love of one particular natural feature that was shared by two locales: his birthplace and his ancestral fatherland. If it somehow symbolized a stirring of localist interest in the mind of a top official in the mid-Ming, it was also marked by the ambiguity of Cheng

Xin's regional identity. This ambiguity was also refracted in the actual planning of his retirement or local engagement. Even after his visit to Huizhou in 1450, he still set up a ritual land of five hundred *mu* back in Hejian, partly to maintain the tombs of his parents, partly to support his kinspeople and local tenants, and partly to prepare for his retirement there.¹²⁸ This estate in Hejian would later go unattended and fall barren, much to Cheng Minzheng's shame.¹²⁹ But how could it have been otherwise, especially after Cheng Xin purchased a piece of land in Xiuning, resettled there in retirement, and then died, leaving as his main trustee Cheng Minzheng, who was now completely focused on Huizhou?

Herein lies the main difference between the style names of the father and son. Cheng Minzheng's style was not derived from his love of natural scenery, but of his love of the Huizhou cultural landscape embodied in one place: Huangdun. It was not a simple invention of a new beautiful name, but an adaptation of, or reinscription over, one key locale. This was based on his profound understanding of Huizhou history and local kinship configuration, which, in combination with his insightful appreciation of the larger trends of the mid-Ming, signaled his new resolution. The two different styles marked the changing times between the two generations. Sunny Islet, while possibly signaling an initial rise of localist interest, still represented literati pastoralism, whereas Bamboo Mound was a straightforward (and simultaneously sophisticated, calculated, and erudite) expression of self-identification with Huizhou.

The year 1478 demarcated for Huizhou the localist turn of the mid-Ming, although the local engagement of its chief promoter must have started a bit earlier.¹³⁰ Cheng Minzheng's two most important Huizhou undertakings, the compilations of the Cheng composite genealogy and *Xin'an Documents*, had their forerunners in Cheng Meng's *Various Genealogies of the Xin'an Chengs Threaded Together* (1451) and Jin Dexuan's *Essential Writings of Xin'an* (1460). The evolution from these mid-century predecessors to Cheng Minzheng's works parallels that from Sunny Islet to Bamboo Mound in terms of their fundamental differences. The *Composite Genealogy of the Xin'an Chengs*, along with its massive companion *Records of Bequeathed Glories of the Chengs*, not only set the new standard for subsequent Huizhou genealogies but also firmly established the Huizhou ties of the two Cheng brothers and thus enhanced the already lofty pedigree of the Cheng descent line in the region. The *Anthology of Xin'an Documents* richly illustrated the established tradition of political and intellectual magnates with empire-wide influence (including the Cheng-Zhu masters), while also covering local figures whose contributions were limited mainly to their respective lineages. Cheng Minzheng's two magnum opuses contributed significantly to the reputation of Huizhou as the Cheng-Zhu ancestral place and paved the way for the formation of Huizhou identity as the Confucian heartland of kinship communities.

It is revealing that the man who best embodied and contributed to the rise of regional consciousness in mid-Ming Huizhou was not its native son, but a

Hanlin academician with empire-wide renown working at the imperial center, representing more state power than local society—or, we might say, he represented both. Cheng Minzheng identified himself with his ancestral place, but he broadcast his Huizhou stories to his colleagues in the central government, and they, in turn, endorsed his Huizhou endeavors by writing poems, prefaces to local genealogies, and epitaphs for local notables. These intriguing facets of Bamboo Mound's localist turn defined the rise of Huizhou consciousness from the very beginning—the presence of the state was intrinsic to the mid-Ming formation of regional consciousness.

The concrete undertakings of Cheng Minzheng's Huizhou engagement further illustrated the interpenetration between local and national interests. His engagement in the matters of the Cheng descent line was the expression not just of his interest in enhancing one family's pedigree and one lineage's solidarity but also of his "all-under-heaven" vision in setting a model for other families to follow with regard to establishing kinship institutions and purifying local customs. The mingling of personal, regional, and dynastic interests was most clearly embodied in his projects to identify with the Cheng brothers and his proposal to rectify the figures worshipped in the Confucian Temple. The rich documentation of Xin'an history and its strong kinship tradition was not just to glorify and promote Huizhou and its leading lineages, with the Chengs on the top, but was also intended to cause Confucian virtues to "spread from one family" and one region "to the four seas." After all, in Cheng Minzheng's metaphysical vision, as conveyed through his philosophical anthologies, there was no difference between the locale and the entire realm. Indeed, personal, familial, regional, and empire-wide practices were inherently united in the Confucian tradition from the very beginning. "Cultivate the self, regulate the family, administer the state, and establish peace under Heaven"—this was the gentlemanly ideal formulated in the *Great Learning*. Cheng Minzheng repeatedly lectured to the imperial prince on this key classic, and he found heroes in Zhen Dexiu and Qiu Jun, who further illuminated this classic in important writings for their own times, the *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning* and *Supplement to the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*, respectively.¹³¹

While Cheng Minzheng contributed to shaping Huizhou consciousness, his Huizhou-focused projects were still transitional from the perspective of the subsequent formation of a new Huizhou identity as a land of "prominent lineages," with its core increasingly consisting of mercantile lineages. Notably, he built his father's shrine in a local Buddhist chapel (as opposed to the free-standing ancestral hall erected in the sixteenth century), and the coverage of merchants and women in his works was limited. As we will see in the following chapters, with the development of Ming society and economy and Huizhou mercantile lineage culture, the localist reach continued to deepen and widen. And so, too, did the interpenetration between the state and local society.