Confucian Pilgrimage in Late Imperial and Republican China

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ABSTRACT
Known as the home of Confucius, Qufu represented a sacred space eliciting profound affective, intellectual, and performative responses from travelers. In contrast to the broad appeal of sacred mountains, Qufu specifically attracted educated elites. These pilgrims were familiar with and committed to the Confucian textual canon, yet their experience of Qufu’s sacred character was primarily through its physical locations, structures, and relics. Through travelogues and gazetteers, the continuing role of the Kong family as guides, and the influence of the space itself, norms of practicing and recounting the pilgrimage formed in the late Ming prefigured and shaped accounts through the Republican period by an expanding body of pilgrims including elite women, Western missionaries, and modern tourists. The late imperial status of Qufu as a sacred site laid the foundation for the tourism, commercialization, and environmental protection observed there during the Republican period.

Keywords: Confucianism, ritual space, pilgrimage, Qufu, Kong family, Shandong, travel writing

Introduction
Pilgrimage practices can provide new perspectives on a society through their combination of inclusiveness and division, and the occasion they offer for both departure from everyday routines and confirmation of long-held values and beliefs. Theoretical studies have focused on societies where pilgrimage is most conspicuous, particularly Muslim societies, where the hajj to Mecca is complemented by ziyara to holy shrines (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990, 5–6), and medieval Europe, where pilgrimages drew participants from all levels of society (Webb 2002, ix–xi). Even deliberately secularized forms can be instructive, as when the colonial bureaucratic career is schematized as a series of pilgrimage circuits culminating at the metropole (Anderson 2006, 53–58). In the 21st century the global scale of religious pilgrimage has only increased, even as some lament participants’ limited understanding of the sites they visit (Pazos 2014, 1–3).

The most influential theoretical framework aimed at capturing the capacity of pilgrimages to unite diverse social groups has been that of Victor Turner, who argues that through the shared act of pilgrimage, participants create an egalitarian “communitas” that replaces the social distinctions that normally divide them (Naquin and Yü 1992, 4–6). Recent studies of even paradigmatic cases, however, have critiqued the naïve idealism of this characterization, pointing to the economic,
political, and social distinctions that can survive and even intensify in the course of pilgrimage. Instead, scholars have come to emphasize how a sacred site “provides a ritual space for the expression of a diversity of perceptions and meanings which the pilgrims themselves bring to the shrine and impose upon it” (Eade and Sallnow 1991, 10). A limited version of Turner's insight is nonetheless useful as a starting point: the shared experience of pilgrimage is one kind of communal bond that can temporally or permanently complement, overlay, or replace other social relationships. Like other relationships, it can encompass inequality, hierarchy, contestation, and differing interpretations of the same act.

In China the scale of religious pilgrimage expanded dramatically along with other forms of travel during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. Growing numbers of people from varied walks of life embarked for “sacred mountains” like Mt. Tai, Mt. Miaofeng, and the island of Putuo Shan. At these sites, drawing their sacredness from a fluid combination of Daoist, Buddhist, and popular religious traditions, pilgrimage brought people normally separated by class, gender, occupation, and geography together into the same space and activity (Yu 1992, 225–27; Dott 2004, 106–23). In view of the diversity of both clerical and popular religion in China, scholarship on Chinese pilgrimages has been particularly insistent on the plurality of experience (Naquin and Yu 1992, 8–9).

Conspicuously absent from discussions of pilgrimage in China has been the cult of Confucius, raising the question of whether we can speak of “Confucian” pilgrimage practices, and if so, what significance they bear for Chinese modernity. This study addresses those questions with respect to Qufu (also called Queli), long known as the home and final resting place of Confucius and today a popular tourist destination (Yan, Dai, and Zhao 2012, 99–100). For the purposes of this study it is useful to consider Qufu as a sacred site in the Confucian religious tradition. As recent scholarship has made clear, the modern view of “Confucianism” as an areligious philosophy is at odds with empirical evidence concerning ritual practice in imperial China. That view is instead an artifact of the encounter between Jesuit missionaries seeking accommodation with those they hoped to convert and the rhetoric of certain late Ming Neo-Confucians endeavoring to redefine popular ritual according to their own “rationalistic” ideas (Jansen 1997, 48–54 and 63–75; Lagerwey 2010, 1–6). Widespread practices in the late imperial period—particularly rituals involving the offering of food to, and communication with, the unseen spirits (shen) of Confucius, his family, and disciples—better fit the modern label “religion” than such alternatives as “philosophy” or “non-religious demonstrations of respect” (Huang 2001a; Wilson 2002a, 251–59).

Scholars have begun to illuminate the history of Qufu within religious Confucianism. To take two representative and particularly rich recent contributions, James Flath has provided a comprehensive study of the architectural and ritual features of Qufu, emphasizing the role of the imperial court and Kong clan in their creation (Flath 2016), while Christopher Agnew has retraced in detail the history of the Kong clan, which claimed descent from Confucius (Agnew 2006). In a related series of studies, art historian Julia Murray has analyzed the sculpted and engraved images connected with Confucian veneration (Murray 1996, 2002,
2009). These investigations, and the other valuable research on which the present study has drawn, have consistently foregrounded a small number of historical actors with a continual and well documented presence at Qufu. Even Murray’s work, which has offered the general observation that “pilgrims” constituted a key audience for the sacred images and other relics of Confucius at Qufu, retains artifacts themselves and the records of their production and cataloguing by the Kong family and state officials as the focus of investigation (Murray 2002, 247 and Murray 2014, 60 and 93–94). The actions and perspectives of these “pilgrims” remain absent.

Written accounts by travelers to Qufu survive in abundance, however. They make clear that Qufu was not merely a place where clan and state rites were repeated year after year; it was a destination to which for many a single journey represented a memorable event. In the imperial period Qufu never attracted visitors in numbers and social diversity comparable to sites like nearby Mt. Tai, leading some scholars to downplay its status as a pilgrimage destination (e.g., Flath 2016, 165). Yet to the community of educated elites—small in proportion to the total population, but significant in aggregate number and dominant in cultural terms—pilgrimage to Qufu was of considerable importance. Its status as a leisure travel destination in the early twentieth century can thus be seen to have emerged not from the contingencies of modernization, but rather from the site’s position in late imperial practices of travel and writing.

Qufu did not fit the “mountain temple” archetype of popular pilgrimage destinations (on which see Naquin and Yü 1992, 11), yet like them its shrines were loci for the veneration of a central deified figure—Confucius—and a related pantheon. Visiting in 1637 after descending from Mt. Tai, Bi Ziyuan (1569–1638) made the parallel to sacred mountains explicit, writing that “its environs are like those of the Five Sacred Peaks” (1961, 3.29a). The pantheon enshrined at Qufu comprised men and women who gained association with Confucius through references in classical texts, augmented by former worthies in a ranked list compiled and repeatedly revised by the state. His immediate family members, male and female, were honored with their own halls in the shrine complex, while his chief disciples and their intellectual successors were represented by statues or tablets in the main shrine hall and side-buildings (wu) to receive “accessory sacrifices” (congsi; tabulated in Kong Jifen 1967, ff. 43–72), a grouping that has been seen as comparable—with important differences—to the register of canonized saints in the Catholic church (Huang 2001b).

Qufu’s special significance for the cult of Confucius brought both official patronage and regulation. Representatives of the imperial court held seasonal rituals there (Huang 2001, 49–87), and the Ming and Qing courts sponsored renovations to the main shrine complex as had the Tang (618–907), Northern Song (960–1127), Jurchen Jin (1115–1234), and Mongol (effective control 1215–1368) governments (Wang Fanghan 2013, 102). Yet state appropriation was the price of state support; indeed Huang Chin-shing has argued that “from start to finish, shrines to Confucius were a ritual system forcefully promoted by the government from the top down” (Huang 2010a, 142), a view prevalent among reformers in the
late Qing and Republican eras (Huang 2009, 553–54). The Tang court ordered shrines to Confucius established in counties and prefectures across the empire in 630 (Xin Tang shu 15.373, Huang 2009, 537); later dynasties continued this practice, and in the early seventeenth century it was estimated that spring and autumn sacrifices were offered each year at over 1,560 Confucian shrines (Lü 1937, 1a:18). These local sites were linked functionally to the imperial bureaucracy, as Shrines of Civil Virtue were contiguous with official schools where the sons of elite families prepared for the civil service examinations. Every few decades or even more frequently, the Ming and Qing imperial courts revised the rites at Qufu and shrines to Confucius across the empire. The number of dancers and bronze vessels used in rites might be altered, or the precise dates of sacrifices provisionally changed in accordance with astrological phenomena or events in the imperial family (Wilson 2002a, 53–72).

The most frequent form of intervention involved the list of figures who received sacrifices at Confucian shrines. The Ming court in particular sought to reshape the ritual status of Confucius and related figures, with the most lasting changes being imposed under the Jiajing emperor (r. 1521–1567) in 1530. At that time Confucius was stripped of the noble title King (Wang), an honor conferred by the Tang court in 739; this demotion continues to be reflected in Confucian ritual down to the present (Wilson 2002a, 56–67; Flath 2016, 121–22). Also in that year the statues and paintings of Confucius and other figures venerated in Confucian rites were ordered removed from all shrines outside Qufu (Sommer 2002, 126–27). In accordance with the filial principle that sons should not outrank their fathers, new honors were introduced for the fathers of Confucius and the Four Correlates (for more on the latter see below). Through the end of the Qing these men would be venerated in the Hall of Begetting the Sage (Qishengci) in the western, superior position to the Hall of Great Completion (Shryock 1932, 185–90 and 202–06; Lü 1937, 2b.111; Zhang Tingyu 1974, 50.1298–301).1

The late imperial state did have an institutional precedent for official recognition of pilgrimage sites in the form of a tax levied on each pilgrim, as was done at Mt. Tai and Mt. Wudang in Hubei. The system at Mt. Tai was particularly well-documented: from the 15th to the 18th centuries, inns around the base of the mountain collected a tax from each pilgrim, who received a tally that was subsequently inspected by officials at checkpoints on the path up the mountain. The fees collected were then used by officials for the repair of local shrines (Sawada 1982, 298–99, 303–05, and 308). No such system for taxing pilgrims to Qufu was ever implemented, however; indeed, a memorial in 1513 discussing the construction of a protective wall around the Qufu County seat suggested tapping the Mt. Tai pilgrimage tax for funds (Chen 1989, 22.43a–44a). That no similar tax was implemented for Qufu indicates that the state did not regard it as a pilgrimage site of the same type as Mt. Tai. This consideration, and the relative absence of inns at Qufu (Strassberg 1983, 3), suggests that pilgrims to the latter were considerably fewer. As seen below, however, the cultural importance of the Qufu pilgrimage

1 In shrines outside Qufu, the Qishengci was often built north of the Dachengdian.
among late imperial elites provided the precedent for a broader set of travelers during the transition to modernity.

**The Formation of Pilgrimage Practices at Qufu**

Qufu was located in the subregion of Shandong centered on Jining Prefecture, an area notable for its prosperous agriculture, success in the civil service examinations, and commercial links with the lower Yangzi via the Grand Canal (Esherick 1987, 12). While situated southwest of the province’s geographic center, Qufu was outside the area characterized by endemic flooding, poverty, and social unrest that lay farther southwest near the Jiangsu border (Pomeranz 1993, 7–8). Thanks to Qufu’s favorable environment, as a rule violent revolt did not begin there, although rebellions arising elsewhere might cause destruction to Qufu, as in 1214 and 1512 (see Chen 1989, 4.12a). The Kong clan dominated local society in several respects. Economically, their position as caretakers of the shrine complex and key participants in state rituals had brought them considerable agricultural landholdings over the centuries as well as exemption from taxation, corvée, and military service (Agnew 2006, 21–183). Politically, the senior branch exerted authority through the bureaucracy of the Kong family mansion (Kongfu), while the post of Qufu County Magistrate was reserved for members of the Kong clan until 1755 (Agnew 2006, 85–138).

During the late imperial period something of a standardized pilgrimage itinerary of Qufu developed. The sites visited can be organized into four levels radiating outward from the main shrine complex, which by the end of the Qing comprised over thirty-five buildings (Figure 1). The next level outward was the Kong clan’s Cemetery Forest (Konglin), containing the family’s graves from the Sage himself down to the current generation. Most graves lay in a section open only to family members, where even visiting emperors did not seek entry. Most pilgrims to Qufu did, however, visit the graves of Confucius, his son Kong Li (Boyu), and grandson Kong Ji (Zisi), along with the connected Offerings Hall (Xiangdian) and the site of the hut built by the disciple Duanmu Ci (Zigong) during his prolonged mourning at his master’s grave. At a farther remove were shrines to other classical figures in neighboring districts, most importantly the Shrine to Mencius in Zou County to the south. Finally, visitors might move among the

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**Figure 1. The Qufu Shrine Complex**  
Source: *Qufu xianzhi* (1774), 5.9b–10a.
natural landscape of Qufu, and particularly its mountains, which offered views of the man-made structures as well as historical and metaphysical associations of their own. The earliest extant prose record of a pilgrimage to Qufu, the Dong you ji by the thirteenth-century literatus Yang Huan (1186–1255), long remained the most thorough (Yang 1911, 1.12b–20a). While Yang recounted a maximal tour encompassing all four spheres of the site, the typical pilgrim wrote only of the shrine complex and cemetery grove.

Visitors with official business in Qufu often advanced directly to the shrine complex and then proceeded to the cemetery. Such had been the case for Yang Huan, who visited with the county magistrate at a time when the preservation of Confucian rites was a matter of pressing concern (Yang 1911, 1.13b). The Ming official Shu Fen (1484–1527), en route to the capital where the newly enthroned Jiajing emperor had summoned him from a post in the decaying port city of Quanzhou in Fujian Province, began his visit to Qufu at the Hall of Great Completion by performing the shicai rites conducted twice monthly at all Confucian shrines (Shu 1961, 5.12; on the shicai rites see Feuchtwang 2001, 74). The same order was followed in 1684 by the Qing Kangxi emperor (r. 1661–1722), who performed the grander shidian rites (Kong Yuqi 1781, 3.8a), and in 1816 by the imperial relative Wanggiyan Linqing (1791–1846), whose primary task was to observe preparations for official seasonal rites (Wanggiyan 2011, 1.121).

Most pilgrims, however, toured the cemetery first and only then made their way to the shrine proper. This pattern is explained by geography. Travelers with the leisure to set their own itinerary often arrived in Qufu after visiting Mt. Tai to the north; proceeding southward, they first encountered the cemetery on Qufu's north side before arriving at the shrine complex. These three destinations appear on Figure 2 as C, B, and A respectively; though not to scale, the illustration reflects a late imperial consciousness of their relative positions. Pilgrims could find a connection with the legacy of Confucius on Mt. Tai as well. A passage in the Mengzi described how an ascent of its peak had transformed the Sage's perspective: “When Confucius climbed the Eastern Mountain, the state of Lu appeared small. When he climbed Mt. Tai, the entire world appeared small. Thus one who has seen the sea finds it difficult to be content with a river, and one who has been among the students of a Sage finds it difficult to be content with only words” (Mengzi zhushu, 42). Literati often composed verse at Mt. Tai comparing Confucius’s ascent of the mountain with their own (Dott 2004, 205–07), and those who proceeded on to Qufu carried their impressions of the mountain into their experience of the sacred precinct. While touring the Kong Cemetery Forest in 1629, the essayist and poet Zhang Dai (1597–ca. 1680) recalled with amusement an inscription on Mt. Tai that read “The Place Where Confucius Saw the World as Small” (Zhang Dai 1852, 2.3a). Visiting the same sites in 1637, Bi Ziyan identified the location of the Shrine to Confucius on Mt. Tai as precisely “The Place Where Confucius Made the World Appear Small,” although without mentioning the placard as the source of this knowledge (Bi Ziyan 1961, 3.24a). While only a minority explicitly invoked one site while visiting the other, the dominance of the mountain-cemetery-shrine itinerary suggests that pilgrims treated the journey as a series of personal experiences of the
legacy of Confucius, rather than the execution of a codified ritual program.

Travelers did not merely tour Qufu as they would any other famous landmark. They usually journeyed there seeking a connection with the sacred legacy of Confucius, speaking of their visits as “paying respects” (ye) and often being moved, even in spite of themselves, by the experience of visiting the site in person. Yang Huan found himself unable to contain his excitement at approaching the sacred precinct, exclaiming as he looked left and right, “That which had been pulled down; was that the Lu capital? That which is luxuriant and dense; was that the Confucius Forest? I could not help but be overcome with delight, which spilled out into my eyes” (Yang 1911, 1.13b). The poet Tang Shisheng (1551–1636) sighed, “A place that all my life I have longed to visit; is gaining a glimpse of it not fortunate?” (Tang 2000, 11.12a). At his departure the well-traveled geographer Wang Shixing (1547–1598) contemplated not the metaphysical concepts and ethical values in the Confucian canon, but rather the embodied practices evoked by the spaces and artifacts he had seen: “It truly made one think reverently of rites and music, and sacrificial vessels, and I could not bear to depart” (Wang Shixing 2006, 2.51). Even the influential essayist Wang Siren (1575–1646), most of whose account bears his characteristically irreverent tone (on which see Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1423), found himself moved at the conclusion of his visit. He sighed, “This far exceeds anything seen in past or present. Since my birth, I have dreamed of this [place] awake and asleep. Now with a day’s effort, I have gained personal satisfaction” (Wang Siren 1995, 5.67b). The Kangxi emperor followed this convention during his visit, displaying expressions of appreciation and awe repeatedly before his audience of court attendants and local guides (see Kong Shangren 1833, 18.12a and 18.13b). Although restrictions on the travel of elite women meant that most could hope only for a virtual visit by way of texts and images—what Wang Yanning
terms “recumbent travel” (2013, 21)—some made the pilgrimage in person. A rare account of one such visit appears in a poem by Xi Peilan (1762–ca.1820), foremost among the female students mentored by the influential author and literary critic Yuan Mei (1716–1797) (Chang 1997, 163), who visited Qufu with her husband Sun Yuanxiang (1760–1829) in the late eighteenth century. In the final couplet of her poem “Qufu,” Xi wrote, “Returning home someday, I will boast to my younger siblings: I too have visited personally the hometown of the Sage” (Xi 1915, 1.8a). By closing the poem in this way, Xi underscored that physical travel to Qufu was indeed valued among the literati class, yet also a privilege whose rarity for women could be a point of pride. By the end of the Qing, Qufu had become so closely integrated into the pilgrimage circuit that in 1900 even the Buddhist reformer Xuyun (d. 1959) proceeded from Mt. Tai to Qufu where he “made obeisance (li) at the Shrine to Confucius and his tomb” (Welch 1967, 400–1; Cen 1982, 10).

Beginning in the late Ming, educated society saw an expansion of interest in collecting and organizing information. The practice of the “investigation of things and the extension of knowledge” (gewu zhizhi), encompassing not only textual investigation of classical texts but also examination of both antique artifacts and natural phenomena, was considered a means of insight into the “principles of the Way” (daoli) that formed the metaphysical underpinning of Neo-Confucian thought (see Elman 2010, 375–87). In accordance with this intellectual trend, late imperial pilgrims saw the relics and flora at Qufu as containing and expressing the sacredness of the place. Literati pilgrims’ disinclination to mention the classical canon in this context is striking given its ubiquity in late imperial elite culture and the centrality accorded Confucius as author, redactor, and transmitter of canonical texts. Instead travelogues fixated on the tangible, material features of the shrine and the pilgrim’s personal experience of and interaction with them. Such objects bore a sacredness to Confucian adherents arising from their place in the life and death of the Sage himself, an understanding similar to that of “contact relics” and “relics of use” venerated in the Buddhist tradition (Murray 2014, 66–68).

Situated to face south onto the courtyard at the center of the shrine proper lay Qufu’s ritual focus, the Hall of Great Completion (Dachengdian, Figure 1 - A). There offerings were made to Confucius, the Four Correlates (Sipei), and Ten Savants (Shizhe) (Pan 1968, 5.27b–32b). The Correlates were Mencius, Zengzi, Yan Hui, and Zisi, while the Savants originally comprised the chief disciples of Confucius. Imperial decrees increased the Savants to eleven and then twelve with the addition of the Neo-Confucian founder Zhu Xi and Confucius’s disciple You Ruo in 1712 and 1738 respectively (Watters 1879, 31–32). In other Confucian shrines after 1530 these figures were represented only by written tablets, but the Qufu Dachengdian contained statues of all figures venerated there, dominated by a great statue of Confucius himself facing a set of bronze ritual vessels. Several other painted or engraved images of Confucius could be seen in various locations around the shrine complex, with the most noted being two said to be based on originals by the renowned painters Wu Daozi (ca. 685–758) and Gu Kaizhi (ca. 345–406) (Pan 1968, 49.14b–15b).

Pilgrims took a close interest in the statues and paintings of Confucius for
their claimed fidelity to his actual likeness, an interest that intensified after 1530. Some visitors took a critical view of the Confucius statue’s deviation from either classical texts or ritual correctness. Although the Ming court had also stripped Confucius of all aristocratic titles, his statue in Qufu retained the sovereign’s headdress bestowed by the Tang court and augmented by the Northern Song (Murray 2009, 379–80), a violation of rank rendered particularly incongruous by Confucius’s own insistence on ritual propriety. Some merely treated the disjunction as an anachronism, like Bi Ziyan who commented, “The monarch’s crown (mianliu) and embroidered robes (fufu) have the dignity of a sovereign’s dress” and excused the array of bronze ritual vessels on the offering table—excessive for a commoner—as relics of the Tang court’s enfeoffment of him (Bi Ziyan 1961, 3.26a). By implication, the excessive markers of status were justified on antiquarian grounds. Tang Shisheng complained that the regal visage and vestments of the statue failed to capture the homeliness ascribed to the historical Confucius. The Shi ji (1st century BCE) records an unflattering reaction by a stranger seeing the Sage for the first time: “His forehead is like [the sage-king] Yao, his neck like Gaoyao [celebrated Minister of Justice under the sage-king Shun], and his shoulders like [the virtuous minister] Zichan, yet from the waist down he is three inches shorter than [the sage-king] Yu. He is aimless like a dog that has lost its home” (Sima 1975, 47.1921–922). The Xunzi was less flattering still, comparing Confucius’s face to an exorcist’s mask (mengqi) with a square face and wild hair (Xunzi, 46). Recounting these classic descriptions for his readers, Tang complained that no trace of them was visible in the statue before him: “Now the image is bearded and wearing a sovereign’s crown (yanmian). In short, the sculptor had not consulted the sources” (Tang 2000, 11.11a). Whether in irony or sincerity, Xi Peilan drew attention to the improperly regal insignia still displayed on the statue in relation to the inferior ritual position to which as a woman she was relegated. In verse, she commented, “The crown is precious enough to overlook a sovereign (Tianzi)/Yet a woman’s headdress (jinguo) is too lowly to prostrate before the Monarch Unadorned (Suwang)” (Xi 1915, 1.8a). Here Xi joined in the established practice of visitors critiquing sights at Qufu against the classical record, while highlighting how experiences of Qufu were conditioned by gendered roles.

Within the sprawling shrine complex, the other sites that pilgrims noted most frequently were grouped around the Hall of Great Completion. In the courtyard before it stood the Apricot Terrace (Xingtan, Figure 1 – B); as recorded in the Zhuangzi, Confucius had once sat at the Terrace to teach his disciples (Zhuangzi 1954, 1023). Directly north of the Hall of Great Completion lay the Hall of Repose (Qindian) where the wife of Confucius, née Qiguan, received offerings. To the west was the Qishengci (Figure 1 – E), where the imperial court had gone to great care to ensure that the fathers of Confucius and the Four Correlates received proper recognition. Literati pilgrims paid these last two structures little attention, however, at most noting only their location. Even these terse descriptions were sometimes copied by one another: in describing the location of the Qishengci in 1637, Bi Ziyian merely reproduced Wang Siren’s 1617 account verbatim (Wang Siren 1995, 5.67a; Bi Ziyian 1961, 3.27a). The Hall of Chimes and Strings (Jinsitang,
Figure 1 – F) and Hall of Odes and Rites (Shilitang, Figure 1 – F) lay west and east respectively of the Apricot Terrace courtyard. The Shilitang was used for lectures and the reception of guests; it was there that the Kangxi emperor listened to discourses on the classics by members of the Kong clan during his 1684 visit (Kong Shangren 1833, 18.5a). Few ordinary pilgrims paid any notice beyond mentioning its location, or that it had once been called the Reception Hall (Yanbin tang) (e.g., Shu 1961, 5.75b). In contrast, nearly all travelogues made careful note of the Jinsitang, where instruments for ritual music were stored. Literati pilgrims regarded it with fascination as the site where classical texts had been hidden during the purge of books conducted by the First Emperor of Qin in 213 BCE. The texts were said to have been found in the walls of Confucius’s former residence when Prince Gong of Lu (Lu Gongwang, personal name Liu Yu, d. 128 BCE), fourth son of the Han emperor Jingdi (r. 157–141 BCE), had sought to demolish the building to expand his own palace. Hearing the sound of ritual music, he halted demolition and the hidden books were discovered (Ban 1962, 30.1706. Directly north of the Dachengdian pilgrims entered the Hall of Traces of the Sage (Shengjidian, Figure 1 – D), where stone tablets were engraved with scenes from the life of Confucius. Most visitors then proceeded to pay their respects at the Shrine to Yan Hui (Yanzi Miao), which lay northeast of the main shrine complex off a street named “the Humble Alley” (Louxiang) in reference to Yan Hui’s famed contentment with a modest life (see Lunyu, 6.52).

While these sites bore names and stories evoking antiquity, the structures attracting the most comment in pilgrims’ accounts were either recently rebuilt or entirely new creations. Nearly all of the shrine complex had been burned in 1214 during the Mongol invasion and concurrent rebellions in Shandong (for the rebellions see Aubin 1987, 115–26; on damage to Qufu see Chen 1989, 4.12a). In 1499 much of the complex, including the Dachengdian, had burned again in a fire caused by lightning; the imperial court sponsored the construction project, which was completed in 1504 (Li 1781, 96.18b–19a). At that time the Jinsitang, one of the few buildings to survive the fire, was moved from the east side of the complex to the west (Li 1781, 96.18b–19a). Yet even the original structure had not been built until the eleventh century, and was not even given its evocative name until the twelfth (Pan 1968, 49.8a–8b; Kongzi wenhua dadian, 1407). Pilgrims’ travelogues typically identified the shrine’s Apricot Terrace as the very site where Confucius had taught, an identification encouraged by the gazetteer published by the Kong clan in cooperation with local officials (Chen 1989, 4.3b). Members of the Kong family evidently repeated the claim while guiding visitors around the shrine, as Kong Shangren did for the Kangxi emperor (Kong Shangren 1833, 18.12a). As the scholar Gu Yanwu (1613–1682) pointed out, available sources made clear that the Terrace in the shrine complex had been built 1400 years after the death of Confucius, and that the received record’s description of the location of Confucius’s teaching placed it far from the shrine (Gu 1975, 31.900–01). Seeking as they did a personal encounter with the legacy of the sage, however, pilgrims’ records of their visits to the site consistently expressed no doubts of its authenticity.

Yet it was a structure with no classical pedigree, the Shengjidian, that
came closest to rivaling the Dachengdian for attention in pilgrims’ accounts. The Shengjidian had been created in the early 1590s when representatives of the Kong family joined with local officials to complete a series of stone tablets engraved with images of episodes in the life of Confucius, and constructed the Shengjidian to house them (Murray 1996, 277–79). The images inside were chosen to magnify the importance of the Kong clan and their home area, through the engravings seen directly by pilgrims to Qufu and through reproductions of those scenes via rubbings and printing (Murray 2002, 243–47). The dissemination of this human, individualized, localized view of Confucius worked to decenter the abstract philosophy or state-centered ideology, reinforcing the experiential focus that had already come to characterize the practice of pilgrimage to Qufu.

Soon the Shengjidian and its pictorial narrative became obligatory parts of the pilgrimage, and remained so into the modern period. The first pilgrim’s mention of the hall was a brief note by Wang Siren on his 1617 visit (Wang Siren 1995, 5.67a). Two decades later, Bi Ziyian found the area around the various stelae in the northern part of the shrine complex already “full of persons taking rubbings and selling books, with people jostling to do business” (Bi Ziyian 1961, 3.26b). The commercial element introduced to the visit by these engravings in the late Ming proved a durable legacy over the centuries. On his 1865 visit even the missionary Alexander Williamson, despite considering Confucius’s renown undeserved and boasting of his own pride in preaching the gospel in the Sage’s home town, found himself carrying away rubbings of the Shengjidian’s hagiographic illustrations as he left the shrine (Alexander Williamson 1870, 226–27). Through and beyond the end of the Qing, the Kong clan continued to promote the viewing of the tablets, whether in situ by travelers or in printed reproductions. Both single images and bound sets circulated widely in late imperial China, with some but not all sponsored by the Kong clan (Murray 2009, 388–90).

The importance to pilgrims of plant and animal life at Qufu rivaled, and in some ways overlapped with, that of the human environment, with the most frequently noted such feature being the juniper (i.e., Juniperus chinensis) tree known as “The Juniper Personally Planted [by Confucius]” (shouzhi gui, Figure 1 – G). Until the early thirteenth century three such trees had stood in the shrine complex, but after the burning of the shrine in the 1214 Mongol incursion only one was recovered from the ashes; this was thenceforth referred to as the Reviving Juniper (zaisheng gui) (Kong Yuancuo 1989, 9.9b). A number of pilgrims marveled at the tree’s preservation, a convention developed among visitors of examining the visual and tactile evidence of its continued vitality, which was then hailed as indicating the exceptionality it enjoyed as a creation of Confucius. Thus Wang Siren noted solemnly, “It is dried out but does not rot” (Wang Siren 1995, 5.67a); while Tang Shisheng observed that although it was kept upright by steel chains, and “its branches and trunk were all dead,” yet the moist sap inside testified to the enduring legacy of the Sage (Tang 2000, 11.11b). Xie Zhaozhe (1567–1624) contented himself with visual investigation, observing that “after being burned to charcoal [in 1499] its ancient substance is like iron; its grain spirals to the left, and it neither grows nor dies” (Xie 1997, 8.21a). Zhang Dai went further, stroking the bark of the tree and
rapping on it to hear the sound it made (Zhang Dai 1852, 2.1b). Literati though they were, these men behaved not as scholars contemplating philosophical abstractions, but devotees seeking sensory contact with physical relics. The Kangxi emperor emulated the practice of these late Ming visitors, approaching the tree to rub the bark after his Kong family guides chronicled for him its miraculous endurance through successive disasters (Kong Shangren 1833, 9.9b).

In addition to viewing the tree as a living link to the Sage, pilgrims sought confirmation of the metaphysical and ethical patterns of human events in records of the tree's changing status. Those of a more literary inclination like Tang Shisheng and Zhang Dai tended to take at face value the chronicle in the 1505 Queli zhi (Queli Gazetteer) that drew parallels between the flourishing and withering of the tree and the health of monarchs and dynasties (Tang 2000, 11.11b; Zhang Dai 1852, 2.1a–1b). Xie Zhaozhe explained the phenomenon by writing, "As an artifact bequeathed by the Sage, its flourishing and decline are linked to the cyclical qi of Heaven and Earth. How can this be thought or spoken of in terms of common normality?" (Xie 1975, 10.3b–4a). The more skeptical Bi Ziyan noted that on careful examination the chronology of the tree's health diverged from political history, but argued even so that the solemnity of the many majestic trees at the site was "sufficient to attest to the unique greatness of the Sagely Way" (Bi Ziyian 1961, 3.26b–27a). Probably due to the political sensitivity of any potential predictor of dynastic decline, neither the Kangxi Qing emperor nor his guides mentioned this aspect of the tree's mythology.

Yet it was the Kong family cemetery that most fascinated visitors. As with Confucius's juniper in the shrine, plants and apparently natural features in the cemetery were invested by pilgrims with a transcendental meaning. Xie Zhaozhe was particularly fascinated by the pistachio trees (jie, pronounced kai by some; Pistacia chinensis), of which one noted specimen was said to have been planted by the disciple Zigong. After enumerating the properties and uses of their wood and shoots, Xie remarked, "I have never seen [pistachio] in other places I have visited . . . Indeed it is a remnant trace of sages and worthies" (Xie 1975, 10.2b–3a). The classic description of the site in the Shi ji held that "In Confucius's cemetery grove thorns, briars, and plants that prick one do not grow" (Sima 1975, 47.1945). Many pilgrims confirmed this observation, viewing the pristine arboreal landscape as a manifestation of its sacred power. For Bi Ziyian it was the trees that "have reached toward the sky for thousands of years," where "brambles do not grow and birds do not nest" that outweighed his doubts about the cosmological significance of Confucius's juniper (Bi Ziyian 1961, 3.26b–27a). That the grove could maintain this pristine character for eons after the death of the sage himself, argued Xie Zhaozhe, illustrated the principle of "living in accordance with the divine Way to set an example for others" (shendao shejiao), by which the grove was "protected by the numinous power of the place" (Xie 1975, 10.3b–4a).

As might be expected, the tomb of Confucius constituted a particular focus of pilgrims' attention. Literati pilgrims were familiar with descriptions in the textual canon of the structure of the burials of the Master, as well as his son Kong Li and grandson Kong Ji (Zisi) (Li ji 1965, 3.149; Sima 1975, 47.1945). Some like Bi Ziyian saw the structure of Confucius's tomb as conforming to, and thus
comfortably confirming, the accounts they knew from classical sources (Bi Ziyian 1961, 3.25b). In contrast, Tang Shisheng compared these texts critically to the configuration of the graves he observed and questioned the ritual propriety of their actual placement, reaffirming by his attention the seriousness with which these physical remnants were to be taken by any pilgrim (Tang 2000, 11.12a). Even the iconoclastic philosopher Li Zhi (1527–1602) viewed the three tombs as the supreme manifestation of the success of the Confucian Way: “The three grave mounds are clustered together, facing one another for ritual offerings; these have passed through the Zhou, Qin, Han, Tang, Song, and Yuan down to the present day. It appears they may continue thus for innumerable kalpas from now. Indeed, in the end this is the measure of a great sage’s insight, so what is there to envy in Buddhahood and Śākyamuni?” (Li 1984, 4.94–95). To Li—notorious for proclaiming the bankruptcy of Confucianism in his age and announcing his abandonment of it for a Buddhist vocation (Dictionary of Ming Biography, 807–17)—the traces of sagehood at Qufu raised a rare possibility for redemption of the Confucian tradition. The Kangxi emperor went so far as assuming a subordinate position vis-à-vis the tomb, kneeling to bow northward toward it as he offered libations to the spirit of Confucius (Kong Shangren 1833, 18.17a–b).

Perhaps the most dramatic reaction by a visitor to the tomb was that of the Scottish sinologist and missionary James Legge (1815–1897). The earlier translations of the Confucian canon that Legge published beginning in 1861 presented a strongly negative evaluation of Confucius and the tradition he represented. Legge compared both unfavorably to Christ and the Christian worldview, summarizing his evaluation of Confucius’s legacy with a quotation from the Book of Isaiah: “He that leads them has caused them to err, and destroyed the way of their paths” (Legge 1866, 103). In 1873 Legge traveled with fellow missionary Joseph Edkins (1823–1905) to Qufu, where the two were guided by caretakers to the tomb of Confucius (Edkins 1874, 80–82). References to the visit in Legge’s correspondence suggest that the experience was central to Legge’s subsequent transformation, at the age of 58, from contemptuous dismissal of Confucius to open admiration (Girardot 2002, 461). This change is reflected in the wholehearted praise Legge offered in the 1893 revision of his Chinese Classics, which today remains the standard English translation for several canonical texts, including the Li ji. There Legge wrote that Confucius “was a very great man, and his influence has been on the whole a great benefit to the Chinese, while his teachings suggest important lessons to ourselves who profess to belong to the school of Christ” (quoted in Girardot 2002, 461). In light of the accumulated precedents of profound affective and ritual reaction to the tomb by even the most skeptical and self-assured Chinese pilgrims, the intensity of James Legge’s response to the site is best viewed not as a foreign affectation but rather the conformity of a longtime scholar of the classical canon to the norms of pilgrimage under the guidance of the Kong family. The influence of the space itself must be considered as well; as seen below, through the Republican period the cemetery woods would draw favorable responses even from foreign travelers ignorant of or hostile to the Confucian tradition.
The Kong Clan
During his visit, Wanggiyan Linqing admired the flourishing of the clan of Confucius, commenting, “By now the descendants of Confucius have accumulated such that they surround the perimeter of the shrine’s outer walls. Even Yao and Shun did not prosper like this” (Wanggiyan 2011, 1.125). The living members of the Kong family were an essential part of the Qufu pilgrimage. They played an ongoing role there as caretakers of the shrine complex and cemetery as well as key participants in rituals, some but not all of which were sponsored by the imperial state. Some pilgrimage records include encounters with other families in the area claiming descent from pre-Qin classical figures, particularly Mencius, Yan Hui, and the Zhou dynastic rulers. All of these families might claim recognition as symbols of the era of sages, like the shrines themselves. Both culturally and politically, however, the Kong clan overshadowed all others by the economic and bureaucratic power that its members held generation after generation.

As glimpsed in some of the cases above, the Kong clan’s custodianship of the buildings and ritual implements made them de facto guides for any visitor they deemed worthy of admittance. Often the family hosted pilgrims for meals, like Yang Huan and Shu Fen, or for drinks like Wang Shixing (Yang 1911, 1.17b; Shu 1961, 5.76a–76b; Wang Shixing 2006, 2.51). Even Bi Yu (b. 1436), whose principal destination was Mt. Ni rather than the main shrine, began his excursion by meeting the current Kong patriarch (Bi Yu 1961, 5.16–17). The Kangxi emperor toured the shrine and cemetery under the guidance of Kong Shangren (1648–1718), a junior member of the Kong clan, rather than a venerable Hanlin erudite from the capital (Kong Shangren 1833, 18.10a–21b). In the nineteenth century their role as guides extended to shaping European visitors’ experiences of the site. Visiting in 1865 with his wife Isabelle (d. 1886), the Scottish missionary Alexander Williamson (1829–1890) noted the same sites and artifacts in roughly the same order as his Chinese literati counterparts, showing that his progression through Qufu was led by the Kong family representatives who hosted him (Alexander Williamson 1870, 224–30).

The experiences of female visitors were similarly managed by the women of the Kong clan. Isabelle Williamson wrote of being received by “quite a crowd of ladies with their attendants” representing the Kong household. In a gathering apart from her husband and the Kong clan’s men, her female hosts talked with her of the time they frequently passed in the Jinsitang, opined on politics past and present, and performed a song for her (Isabelle Williamson 1884, 146–48). The smoothness with which Isabelle was accommodated suggests an accustomed protocol among the women for entertaining visitors that complemented that of the clan patriarch and his male relatives. When Xi Peilan visited Qufu in the late eighteenth century she may have been similarly received in the Jinsitang by the Kong women, and like Isabelle Williamson given a narrative of its history that celebrated the Kong clan’s protection of canonical books from destruction by the Qin emperor. Unfortunately, the sole extant poem with which her visit is commemorated mentions no encounters with living persons (Xi 1915, 1.8a).

Even for those who did not travel in person to Qufu, the publishing
activities of the Kong clan influenced awareness of the legacy of Confucius and the sacred nature of the shrine. As noted above, the family’s printing of illustrated books exposed a broader audience to pictorial depictions of the Sage’s life. Other publications reinforced awareness of Confucius as a particular historical individual in a specific geographic setting, most importantly gazetteers. The 1505 *Queli zhi*, a landmark as the first comprehensive guide to the sites, artifacts, rites, and literature associated with Qufu published for readers outside the Kong family, was compiled by Ming officials in collaboration with the present Kong clan patriarch. The printing and distribution of that work served to assert the authority of both groups and claim harmony between them (Agnew 2006, 173–76), presenting a particular view of where authority in Qufu lay for the consumption of pilgrims before, or in place of, a visit in person.

**The Relationship between Text and Experience**

Previous knowledge that each pilgrim brought conditioned her or his experience of visiting Qufu and the manner in which the visit was recounted. An important shared store of prior understandings brought to Qufu by its visitors was drawn from the core texts of a literati education. Over the late imperial period, the increasing publication of gazetteers and other compendia of information on Qufu, along with the accounts of successive generations of pilgrims, spread more comprehensive and up-to-date information on its physical sites and artifacts as well as the literary tradition accumulating around them. Literati had been using local gazetteers to plan or supplement their journeys since the twelfth century (Milburn 2015, 8), and some Qufu pilgrims used the compilations in this way. Rather than describe the stelae he found in the shrine complex, for example, Tang Shisheng merely noted for his readers that “their texts are all contained in the gazetteer” (Tang 2000, 11.11b). While Li Zhi dwelt on the experience of visiting the site in person, it is clear that his account was supplemented by reading about the site. His account reproduced in full a poem by the Jin dynasty literati-official Dang Huaiying (1133–1210) that celebrated the shrine but was not inscribed on any of its stelae. Given Ming disregard for Jin literary and political figures—the Jin is tellingly absent from the chronology of dynasties Li recites in his rumination on the cemetery’s longevity—Li had probably been unfamiliar with Dang’s poem until encountering it in the 1505 *Queli zhi*, where it was one of two Jin poems included (Li 1984, 4.94–95; cf. Chen 1989, 11.42a). Paradoxically, then, Li Zhi’s account of finding authenticity in a personal visit to Qufu relied crucially on reading a compendium of texts about the place.

Other readers would use gazetteers in place of a physical journey. In his postface to the original 1505 *Queli zhi*, Xu Yuan (jinshi 1475, d. 1515) made explicit an intention to facilitate this kind of virtual travel, hoping that the published gazetteer “could penetrate into remote corners and peripheral areas,” where it could reach “the majority among those who concentrate on the learning of Confucius” who, he noted, tended to “live behind closed doors and in locked rooms” (Xu 1989, 1a–1b). The Qing period brought an increase in published works that served as enticements and guides for, or vicarious alternatives to, personal visits to Qufu. Sometimes these texts advanced competing interests, as when the Kong family
sponsored the compilation of the Queli wenxian kao (Investigation of Writings and Worthies of Queli) in 1756, which gave the state and its officials less prominence than had the Queli zhi (Agnew 2006, 178). Sober compilations of orthodox textual sources could also be used to counter individual pilgrims' more openly subjective narratives. Jiang Chaobo (1824–1875) began his preface to the 1868 Queli shuwen by declaring that dissatisfaction with Zhang Dai's celebrated travelogue had been a key motive for producing this new text, writing, “Much of what it says is vulgar (shijing); I have always wanted to amend it” (Jiang 1989). Despite the growing availability of information about Qufu, however, we have already seen that through the end of the Qing texts never replaced the role of human guides in shaping the visits of even exceptionally well-read pilgrims.

Transnationalization and Modernization
The European and American incursions of the nineteenth century brought a new category of visitor: elites who did not subscribe to Confucian values. Indeed many came in the capacity of Christian missionaries, like Alexander Williamson who wrote with pride of spreading the gospel in the hometowns of Mencius and Confucius (Alexander Williamson 1870, 221 and 223). As noted above, the accounts of the Williamsons convey the same itinerary, details, and observations as those of Chinese literati, showing how the experience of visiting was shaped by the Kong family caretakers. This aspect of European visitors’ experience in Qufu is clearer in the account by Joseph Edkins of his visit with James Legge in 1873; Edkins noted that they were conducted about the tombs by “the cemetery keepers,” members of the Kong family fulfilling one of their accustomed roles. This is no doubt why Edkins noted the Dachengdian, Personally Planted Juniper, Apricot Terrace, the Humble Alley of Yan Hui, and other standard sights, as though he were trailing behind Yang Huan, Tang Shisheng, or the Kangxi emperor (Edkins 1874, 81 and 83–84). Had pilgrimage to Qufu not become routinized within late imperial China, these visits would not have proceeded so predictably.

The better-documented flow of visitors during the early Republican period and the simultaneous growth of facilities in Qufu catering to travelers, while an important development, can consequently be seen as less of a wholly modern transformation than an intensification of late imperial trends (on the continuity at Shandong pilgrimage sites see Flath 2002, 46). In comparison with the throngs encountered at Qufu today, the number of visitors in the Republican era appears to have been modest. Standing in front of the Apricot Terrace in 1922, the Japanese professor Yamada Kenkichi (1860s–1937) could still write that “the entire courtyard was silent, with no people to be seen” (Yamada 1922, 9). Yet visitors were few only by the standards of other eras. Photographs by American zoologist Walter K. Fisher (1878–1953) at Mt. Tai—the paradigmatic late imperial pilgrimage site (Dott 2004, 105–49), where Fisher commented repeatedly on the crowds of pilgrims—appear deserted to the 21st-century observer (Fisher 1916, 526 and 528–33).

Given the violence of the period, some interruption in leisure travel is to be expected. The internal military conflicts following the fall of the Qing had not left the region around Qufu untouched; on his way to Qufu from the railway hub
at Hanzhuang, the student Liu Shijie (d.u.) noted, “In the fighting of 1913 this had been the site of military action between northern and southern forces. Even now its scars fill the eye, and I could not help but be moved” (Liu 1932, 10.8). Yet visitors continued to arrive nonetheless. Domestic travelers still circulated along the route leading through Mt. Tai to Qufu; Harry Franck scorned the “air of making an easy living out of pilgrims” he perceived at those two sites, the sensibility he brought from Roaring Twenties America leading him to prefer the “more manly attitude” toward economic development displayed in Zou County by the construction of an electric plant. “Pilgrims do come to [Zou County],” he allowed, “for it is on the direct line of places of pilgrimage through this holy land of China; but Mencius has only dozens or scores of visitors where Confucius has thousands” (Franck 1923, 286). The appeal to a primordialist vision of nationalism by such figures as Kang Youwei (1858–1927), who advocated for a form of Confucianism to be adopted as a national religion (Takeuchi 1987, 54; Xiao 1997, 34), provided new motivation for a young generation of domestic pilgrims like Liu Shijie. Visiting with classmates in 1914, Liu participated in rites for the birthday of Confucius orchestrated by Kang Youwei and led by the current patriarch of the Kong family. Liu and his classmates changed out of their school uniforms into loose tunics for ease in kneeling, and in his record of the visit Liu decried calls for the abolition of the rites. Regarding Confucius himself Liu was moved by an idealizing nostalgia, writing, “In my humble opinion, there has been no one like Confucius among mankind… with a virtue to match Heaven and Earth, demons and spirits, and the sun and moon” (Liu 1932, 10.10). The reverence Liu expressed was reflected in the physical condition of the shrine complex. Entering its buildings one by one, the consistently derisive Franck admitted that “Given the ramshackle, filthy condition of a very large number of Chinese temples, the care with which all these were kept up was striking” (Franck 1923, 282). Franck was one among a growing number of visitors from abroad who joined domestic pilgrims in Qufu during this period. At least one hotel began offering transport to the cemetery and shrine among its regular services to foreign guests, who normally arrived in Qufu from the port cities of Qingdao and Yantai or the inland transportation hub at Jinan (Japan Tetsudōshō 1924, 137).

The latter route was codified in the English-language Guide to China published by the Japanese Ministry of Railways (Tetsudōshō) in 1915 and revised in 1924, whose title page promised its availability “at the best bookstores and principal tourist agencies in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, the larger Continental countries, and throughout the Far East.” Even a traveler so self-consciously representative of an “American” perspective as Harry Franck relied heavily on the Japanese ministry’s Guide, which he called “the nearest approach to a guide-book of this region to be had” and borrowed liberally from it in his own account of the shrine and cemetery (Franck 1923, 280–87). The Guide prescribed a sequence of sights within the Qufu shrine complex and cemetery matching the route of most late

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2 Although Franck “uses the term ‘white supremacy’ without apology,” his account displays a range of concerns and anxieties representative of the interwar American political and cultural milieu. See Clifford 2007, 136-39.
imperial pilgrims: travelers were directed first to Mt. Tai, then to the Kong family cemetery where the Guide identified the principal graves, and only afterward to the shrine complex. The book’s characterization of Qufu as “the Jerusalem and the Mecca of Confucianism” would seem an odd analogy to Japanese readers, but did convey the role of pilgrimage in the site’s importance (Japan Tetsudōshō 1924, 137).

Notably absent from travelogues after 1911 is any statement to the effect that the fall of the Qing state had removed previous impediments to visiting the sites at Qufu, illustrating again that access had been mediated not by the state but by the Kong clan. What did draw ubiquitous comment from early Republican visitors was the presence of vendors catering to visitors interested in Confucius and the shrine, with texts and images foremost among the goods for sale. Liu Shijie complained in 1914 of Qufu residents’ cheerful willingness to sell maps of the cemetery and shrine to Japanese visitors, “expressing their self-satisfaction at finding good customers” rather than sharing Liu’s own indignation at recent Japanese seizures of territory and mining rights in Shandong (Liu 1932, 10.9). The second edition of the Japanese Ministry of Railways’ Guide to China—revised to reflect these changes in territorial jurisdiction—pointed travelers to the vendors of stele rubbings as “perhaps the only shops [in Qufu] which attract the notice of visitors” (Japan Tetsudōshō 1924, 137). Walter Fisher observed the rubbing process with great interest, observing that those making them “worked with the abandon of a bill poster [pasting advertisements onto a wall] and left a goodly amount of the pigment on the stone.” On-site sales of volumes of these images by “the priests”—i.e., the Kong clan—testified to the flow of both visitors and cash (Fisher 1917, 491). Five years later Yamada Kenkichi complained that the interior of the Shengjidian was too dim to see all of the images clearly, but found people taking rubbings inside. These, along with reproductions of other stelae in the complex, he found for sale in a building beside the Shrine to Yan Hui (Yamada 1922, 12 and 18); the allocation of indoor space for the sales being a measure of their regularization. None of these accounts specifies the identities of those taking the rubbings, but by 1934 sale of the reproductions was monopolized by the shrine’s caretakers, and the same was likely true earlier as well (Flath 2016, 167).

The fall of the Qing ended state financial support for the rites and maintenance of the shrines at Qufu, while the disintegration of the order that the imperial state had maintained made it increasingly difficult for the Kong clan to collect rent on its landholdings. The difficulties of any period of political instability surfaced, including tenant refusal to pay, a weak legal system unable to enforce payment, and civil authorities who appropriated agricultural surpluses for themselves; these were now exacerbated by modern anti-Confucian movements that made withholding money from the Kong clan excusable and even patriotic (Kong Demao 1982, 111). The loss of income, compounded by war and natural disasters, drove the Kong family deeply into debt. The modernization of communications aided somewhat in maintaining the shrine complex, bringing donations for the construction and repair of shrine buildings around Qufu from as far away as Hong Kong, particularly after the family mansion and cemetery were heavily damaged in the 1931 fighting between the forces of the warlords Feng Yuxiang (1882–1948) and
Yan Xishan (1883–1960) (Kong Demao 1982, 113; for background of this conflict see Eastman 1986, 124–30). The Kong family’s economic situation did not improve until the Japanese occupation of Qufu from 1938 to 1945. Writing in the 1980s, Kong Demao credited the donations of Japanese officers with a significant role in returning her family to solvency (Kong Demao 1982, 123–25).

Despite the declining political and economic power of the Kong family, Qufu continued to be treated with a veneration beyond mere cultural interest. From the late nineteenth century onward Shandong underwent dramatic deforestation, due in part to the state’s abandonment of the Grand Canal which had once allowed the economical transportation of firewood. The rural population in southwestern Shandong was now reduced to scouring the countryside daily for even small plant stalks to burn as fuel; some trees had been protected by their location near religious institutions, but from 1901 onward “modernization” movements led to the loss of many of these as well (Pomeranz 1993: 8, 15, and 137; Pomeranz 1988: 427–34). After 1911 the Qing state no longer existed to enforce imperial-era bans against gathering firewood in the Kong cemetery forest, while the military governors who subsequently controlled Shandong showed little interest in historic sites (Flath 2002, 46). It is clear that the sanctity of Qufu continued to be respected nonetheless; travelers of all backgrounds remarked on the luxuriant vegetation in the cemetery, particularly the presence of ancient trees. Liu Shijie declared with amazement, “Within the walls are no less than several hundreds or thousands of trees, all hundreds of years old, such as I have seldom seen in my life” (Liu 1932, 10.9; see also Yamada 1922, 18–19). Viewing them from the perspective of a biologist, Walter Fisher found the trees and grasses of the cemetery woods “a haven of refuge for crows and other birds,” remaining untouched although “everything inflammable is eagerly seized for fuel” in the surrounding countryside (Fisher 1917, 487). Even the usually acerbic Harry Franck was moved to offer what was for him the highest praise, calling the wooded setting of Confucius’s tomb “a resting-place that even the Western world would have approved, perhaps even envied” (Franck 1923, 283). This restraint contrasted with the early seventeenth century, when Bi Ziyan had noted that many people were gathering firewood there, ignoring the prominent stele bearing a prohibition against it (Bi Ziyan 1961, 3.25b). Indeed, Xie Zhaozhe noted that even the officials appointed to look after the locality had regularly ordered gifts made from the valuable pistachio wood there (Xie 1975, 10.2b). Even as demographic pressure on resources increased, state support was withdrawn, and the Kong family lost wealth and prestige, pilgrims and other visitors found respect for the cemetery woods to be, if anything, stronger than at the height of Ming power. That Qufu continued to be respected as a sacred site even amid the collapse of the Qing state, the decline of Kong family authority, and the violation of temple lands elsewhere indicates that visiting the place was for many still distinct from ordinary tourism.

Conclusion
We have seen how elites in late imperial China perceived in the built and grown environment around Qufu a sacred status stemming from its connection with
Confucius, his disciples, and the classical tradition. Literati sought direct access to this sanctity by personal visits to Qufu and its artifacts, shrines, tombs, and other sites. As with other pilgrimage sites, visitors came to Qufu with a range of intentions and their experiences differed accordingly. Nonetheless, in its association with the textual tradition of the Confucian canon and, more importantly, the interpretation of that tradition in accordance with the values of civil culture espoused by the literati class, Qufu admitted less diversity of experience than such destinations of broad appeal as Mts. Tai, Wudang, or Wutai. In the late imperial period, only men with examination degrees had been permitted to attend rites at even local Confucian shrines (Huang 2009, 553–54). At the same time, the public outside the elite exhibited little wish to visit Confucian shrines had they been permitted to do so, as the spirits of Confucius and other figures venerated within were not thought to provide practical benefit to individuals. A late imperial subject could not implore the Sage’s spirit for assistance in passing examinations or bearing a son, for example; indeed, the failure of the official cult of Confucius to promise practical benefits to individual petitioners was cited by the conservative Ye Dehui (1864–1927) as an argument against making Confucian shrines more accessible to commoners (Huang 2009, 554). As a result of these factors, the cult of Confucius never developed the mass appeal that would bring the same diversity of pilgrims as more popular sites. Qufu’s appeal remained limited to a self-selecting set of pilgrims even during the Republican period decline in the status and power of the Kong family, which had previously mediated access to the shrine.

It has been this more narrowly bounded constituency of pilgrims that has led scholars to overlook Qufu’s position as a pilgrimage site. In the late imperial era, the Qufu pilgrimage worked to strengthen the sense of community within the literate elite across China and East Asia, including those making the physical journey and a much larger group of “virtual pilgrims” who read their accounts. In this way the practice did not significantly create a new sense of association among a heterogeneous multitude sharing the same space—the “communitas” Turner posited as characterizing pilgrimage. With the accelerating human flows of transnational modernity, European and American travelers were drawn into the practices of this literate elite community through human and textual mediators. The types of visitors Qufu attracted—male or female, Chinese or foreign—were as a rule the kind who could converse amicably with and obligingly follow the Kong family, and who would peruse standardized written descriptions of the site either in the classics, late imperial compendia, or modern texts that drew on those earlier sources. Whether enchanted by trees, images, or buildings evocative of the era when the Sage walked the earth, visitors to Qufu from the late imperial through Republican periods followed in one another’s literary as well as literal steps.
## GLOSSARY

| Chinese       | Pinyin        | English          |
|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| Bi Yu         | Bì Yú         | Bi Yu            |
| Bi Ziyan      | Bì Zhìyàn     | Bi Ziyan         |
| congsi        | cóng sì       | congsi           |
| Dachengdian   | Dá chéngdiàn  | Dachengdian      |
| Dang Huaiying | Dǎng Huái yīng| Dang Huaiying    |
| daoli         | dào lǐ        |道理              |
| Dong you ji   | Dōng yóu jì   | 東遊記           |
| Duanmu Ci (Zigong) | 端木賜 (子貢) | Duanmu Ci (Zigong) |
| Fang Yizhi    | Fāng Yízhì    | 方以智           |
| Feng Yuxiang  | Fēng Yǔxiāng  | Feng Yuxiang     |
| fufu          | fǔfǔ          | 履畓              |
| Fusheng miao  | Fùshēng miào  | 復聖廟           |
| Gaoyao        | Gào yáo       | 高陽             |
| gewu zhizhi   | gé wù zhìzhì | 格物致知         |
| Gu Kaizhi     | Gu Kǎizhǐ     | 阮光之           |
| Gu Yanwu      | Gu Yánwǔ      | 阮炎武           |
| Hanlin        | Hán lín       | 翰林             |
| Huang Zongxi  | Huáng Zōngxí  | 黃宗羲           |
| Jiating       | Jiājìng        | 嘉靖             |
| Jiang Chaobo  | Jiāng Chàobó  | 蔣超伯           |
| Jiangtang     | Jiāngtáng     | 講堂             |
| jie or kai    | jiě or kǎi    | 榜               |
| Jinan         | Jǐnán         | 濟南             |
| Jining        | Jǐnìng        | 濟寧             |
| Jingdi        | Jǐngdí        | 景帝             |
| jinguo        | jīnguó        | 巾幗             |
| jinshi        | jǐnshì        | 進士             |
| Jinsitang     | Jīnsītáng     | 金絲堂           |
| Kangxi        | Kāngxī        | 康熙             |
| Kang Youwei   | Kāng Yōuwèi  | 康有為           |
| Kongfu        | Kōngfū        | 孔府             |
| Kong Ji (Zisi)| Kōng Jī (Zǐsī)| 孔伋 (子思)       |
| Kong Li (Boyu)| Kōng Lǐ (Bóyu)| 孔鲤 (伯魚)       |
| Konglin       | Kōng lín      | 孔林             |
| Kongmiao gui  | Kōngmiào guì  | 孔廟櫧           |
| Kong Shangren | Kōng Shāngrén | 孔尚任           |
| Kong Shangren | Kōng Shāngrén | 孔尚任           |
| Kong Wenshao  | Kōng Wénshào  | 孔聞韶           |
| Kong Yuancuo  | Kōng Yuáncuò  | 孔元措           |
| Kongzi        | Kōngzǐ        | 孔子             |
| Li            | Lì            | 禮               |
| Li Ji         | Lì jí         | 禮記             |
| Li Zhi        | Lì Zhì        | 李賛             |
| Liu Shijie    | Líu Shíjié    | 劉世傑           |
| Liu Yu        | Líu Yú        | 劉餘             |
| Louxiang      | Lóu xiāng     | 陋巷             |
| Lu            | Lù            | 魯               |
| Lu Gongwang   | Lú Gōngwàng   | 魯共王           |
| Lushi chunqiu | Lúshī chūnqiū | 呂氏春秋         |
| mengqi        | mǐngqǐ        | 嶽                |
| Mengzi        | Mèngzǐ        | 孟子             |
| mianliu       | mǐnliǔ        | 晃璇             |
| Mt. Miaofeng  | Mèi Tái Mìáo  | 妙峯山           |
| Mt. Ni        | Mèi Tái       | 尼山             |
| Mt. Tai       | Mèi Tái       | 泰山             |
| Mt. Wudang    | Mèi Wùdāng    | 武當山           |
| Putuoshan     | Pǔtúoshān     | 普陀山           |
| qi            | qì            | 氣               |
| Qiguan        | Qíguān        | 元宮             |
| Qindian       | Qíndiàn       | 寝殿             |
| Qingdao       | Qīngdào       | 青島             |
| Qishengci     | Qíshèngcí     | 啓聖祠           |
| Quanzhou      | Quánzhōu     | 泉州             |
| Queli         | Quělǐ         | 闕里             |
| Queli shuwen  | Quělǐ shúwén  | 闕里追聞         |
| Queli wenxian kao | Quělǐ wénxiān kào | 闕里文獻考     |
| Queli zhi     | Quělǐ zhǐ     | 闕里志           |
| Qufu          | Qūfú          | 曲阜             |
| Shao Hao      | Shào Hào      | 少昊             |
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