APPENDIX A

“A Sketch of Zhuowu: Written in Yunnan”

(Zhuowu lunlue: dianzhong zuo)

Kong Ruogu 孔若谷 said, “I am old enough to have met the Layman Zhuowu 卓吾居士 and I am able to provide some general comments about him. The Layman is known by many names. ‘Zhuowu’ is simply one of them. The character 卓 is not pronounced in just one way. In everyday conversation the Layman pronounces it according to the standard reading (i.e., ‘zhuo’). When he is serving as an official, and his name is recorded in the official records, fellow officials pronounce it like the standard reading of the character 篤 (i.e., ‘du’). Even in his own natal home in the countryside, some say ‘Du’ and others say ‘Zhuo’ without coming to any final agreement.”

The Layman said, “In my local dialect, 卓 and 篤 are pronounced the same. Country folks cannot make the distinction and so refer to me using either pronunciation.”

I responded, “You can change this. Only it will cost you a fortune to have the block engraver down in Ironsmith Alley straighten it out.”

The Layman laughed and said, “You think so? You want me to exchange something useful for something that’s useless? But, now without a doubt I am Zhuo. And I am also Du. But if you address me as ‘Zhuo’ (‘outstanding’), right now I cannot measure up. And if you address me as ‘Du’ (‘genuine’), right now I don’t measure up to that either. How would I go about changing what I don’t measure up to for something else that I don’t measure up to?”
Li Zhi is still addressed as both “Zhuo” and “Du.” The Layman was born on the 30th day of the 10th lunar month of the Dinghai year in the Jiajing reign of the Glorious Ming. When he was young, his mother (née Xu), passed away and he was orphaned. Nobody knows who raised him. When he reached the age of seven sui he studied under his father, Bai Zhaigong 白齋公 and learned to read books, chant poetry, and practice ritual ceremony. When he was 12 sui he wrote the essay “Discourse on the Old Farmer and the Old Gardener.”

The Layman said, “At this time, I already understood the questions asked by Fan Chi when he encountered the old man shouldering a pole with a basket hanging from it. The superior person Qiu Yiji could not bear to hear such views and so he said, ‘What a petty man is Fan Xu.’ We know at least this about Kongzi.”

When he completed his essay, his fellow students praised the work. The multitudes exclaimed, “What a fine son Bai Zhaigong has!”

The Layman said, “Although I was quite young, I already had realized that my groundless opinions were not worthy of the compliments being paid to my father. Moreover these compliments were much too vulgar and had nothing to do with the truth of the matter. Those people said I was clever with words and when I grew up I would perhaps be skilled at writing prose and poetry. Through such writing I would snatch the wealth and honors of this world and save us from poverty and low estate. They did not know my father did not think this way and was not like this at all. What sort of person was my father? His height reached to seven feet, his eyes did not wander carelessly about. Although extremely poor, from time to time he would suddenly remove my mother, Madame Dong’s, earrings in order to help hasten along a friend’s nuptials. My Mother Dong never stopped him. My father being such a man, could one really offer him compliments in terms valued by the vulgar world?”

When Zhuowu was a bit older, he often found himself confused and unsettled. He studied the commentaries and annotations, but did not critically examine himself. He was unable to carve the teachings of the master Zhu Xi deeply upon his heart. He blamed himself, and wished to abandon his studies. But with a great deal of time on his hands and nothing for him to do to pass the days he sighed and said, “All of this is nothing but play-acting. My studies are no more than plagiarizing and superficial reading. Not even the examiners understand each and every detail of Kongzi’s teachings!”

And so he sought out the most popular and widely read eight-legged essays of his time and he recited several pieces each day. By the time of the examinations he had memorized nearly five hundred essays. When the examination topic was given, he merely copied, transcribed, and recorded what he had memorized. He received high middle honors.
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The Layman said, “This luck of mine could not be better. What’s more, my father is elderly, and each of my younger brothers and sisters has reached the age of marriage.”

And so he accepted an official position, welcomed and cared for his father, and completed arrangements for the marriages of each of his younger brothers and sisters.

The Layman said, “Upon first requesting an official position, I set my hopes on a convenient place like Jiangnan. I did not intend, instead, to travel 10,000 li to Gongcheng and leave my father and cause him to worry. Even so, Gongcheng was where the Song period official Li Zhcai spent his days, and the master Shao Yong considered the place the Nest of Peace and Happiness. Shao resided in Luoyang and traveled as far as 1000 li to study the Dao with Zhcai. If through me, my father and son can come to hear the Dao, even being separated by 10,000 li will be fine. I’ve also heard master Shao threw himself into his studies and late in life did attain understanding. It was not until he was 40 that he returned to Luoyang and began to arrange for his marriage. Had he not heard the Dao, he never would have married.

I am 29 years old and already have mourned the death of my eldest son, grieving most deeply. I have not immersed myself in the Dao but instead, only have wallowed in feelings of grief. When I observe the ways of Shao Yong I am deeply ashamed!”

The Nest of Peace and Happiness is located up above Hundred Springs on Mount Sumen. The Layman was born in Quan and it was an auspicious place for the Chan Buddhist Master of Wenling.

The Layman said, “I am a person of Wenling. I should adopt the style ‘The Layman of Wenling.’”

One day when wandering above Hundred Springs he said, “I was born in Quan and have served as an official in Quan. Quan and I are destined to be together!”

And so he refers to himself as “The Man of Hundred Springs “ and also styles himself “The Layman of Hundred Springs.” During his five years in Hundred Springs he languished and never did hear the Dao.

In the end he was appointed to the Academy in Nanjing and departed.

Several months later, he received news that his father Bai Zhaigong had died. He observed the traditional rituals of mourning and traveled east returning to his natal home. At that time, the Wo Kou pirates were plundering the coasts and the oceans were all in flames. The Layman had to travel at night and hide during the day. It was more than six months before he arrived at his natal home. Even so, because of the unrest he was still not able to devote himself to the business of a filial son. In his mourning garb he led his younger brothers and nephews. Day and night he climbed the parapets and sounded the watchman’s
rattle in order to prepare the guards. At the foot of the city wall it rained arrows and stones. No amount of money could purchase rice or corn.\textsuperscript{29} The Layman’s family members numbered about thirty, and they were barely able to survive. After the three-year mourning period was completed, he brought his entire family to the capital as he desired to avoid the difficulties in Quanzhou.\textsuperscript{30}

He lived in the official accommodations in the capital for over ten months but did not obtain any official position.\textsuperscript{31} His bags by then were emptied of provisions, but he was able to pay for his accommodations by taking in pupils. After more than ten months had passed, he finally did receive an official appointment.\textsuperscript{32} He was honored as an Erudite of the Imperial Academy, a position of the same rank he formally had held in Nanjing. Soon afterward, an announcement arrived notifying Li of the death of his paternal grandfather Zhuxuan.\textsuperscript{33} On this same day, the Layman’s second eldest son also fell ill and died in the official accommodations. I too heard this news.

With a sigh I said, “Alas! Is life not bitter? Whoever said to be appointed an official is a source of happiness? Doesn’t an official like the Layman suffer even greater bitterness?” I grieved for his losses.

When I entered the house to offer my condolences, I found there was nothing unusual about the Layman’s expression.

He said to me, “I have something to say. And I would like to talk with you about it. My great grandparents passed away more than fifty years ago. I did not bury them at that time because I was impoverished and had no means to obtain a burial plot. This is a great violation of custom. I fear that I will be picked out by heaven as one who is outrageously lacking in filial piety. A filial son or grandson must find his parents a final place of rest. I never have heard of anyone who was considered filial because he chose first to protect himself from wind and rain. I fear that heaven and the spirits above will never be willing to leave an auspicious burial plot for one as lacking in filial piety as I. Nothing can atone for my crime. This time, when I return to my natal home, I must find a resting place for all three generations. I would like to leave my family in Henci,\textsuperscript{34} and divide the money I’ve set aside for the funeral expenses. I intend to use half this amount to purchase a field so that my family can till the land to grow food to eat. I will take the other half and return to my natal home. Then I can achieve what I must do. There is one thing, though. I am simply afraid my wife will not go along with my plans. If, when I walk in to talk with her, she does not go along with my wishes, I ask you to work at persuading her!”

The Layman then entered and, pacing back and forth, he spoke his mind.

Madame Huang\textsuperscript{35} responded, “It’s not that what you say is untrue, but my mother is elderly. She is widowed and lives for me. Now I am
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willing to remain here, but she weeps for me day and night, to the point
that she is blinded in both eyes. If she sees that I have not returned, she
will certainly die.”

Before she had finished speaking, tears came down like rain, but
the Layman remained unmoved. Madame knew that in the end she
would not be able to change his mind.

She held back her tears, changed her expression, and admitting her
faults said, “Alright. Alright. First, though, when you see my mother, tell
her I am as fine as ever and in good health. There is nothing to worry
about. She will see me another time. I will work hard and help out with
matters. I will not return, and I dare not complain.”

He then packed up his bags, and asked a family member to arrange
to buy land and plant seeds according to his wishes.

At this time, a powerful but corrupt official was in office. When
money wasn’t coming into his hands, he would scare the wealthy fami-
lies. Declaring the importance of the canal, he used up all the water
from the springs to feed the canals and did not permit even half a drop
to be diverted. The Layman went to meet with this individual. Although
the Layman emotionally exhausted himself and repeatedly pleaded, his
requests were not granted. But because the Layman himself had only a
few mu, the official said he could have water diverted just to his fields.

The Layman replied, “Alas! Heavens! How could I bear to sit and
see the entire city and 10,000 qing⁶ of land dry up, and only my few mu
of fields irrigated and flourishing! I cannot accept this at all. I beg you
to heed my request!”

He then returned to his natal home.

That year’s harvest was extremely meager. The plot of land acquired
by the Layman barely yielded a few pecks of weeds. His eldest daughter
had long endured difficult times. She ate the weeds as if she were eating
grain. His second and third daughters were unable to gulp down the
weeds and consequently one and then the other, so young in life, fell ill
and died.

An old women came forward with an announcement, declaring,
“The people are starving. The officials wish to distribute grain. I hear
that the official who will be in charge is the judge Deng Shiyang 鄧石陽.
He has known the Layman for a long time. You can ask him.”

Madame responded, “There are no affairs outside the home for a
wife. I cannot ask him. And moreover, if he really is an old friend of my
husband’s, why would he wait for me to ask him?”

The gentleman Deng indeed did send along a portion of his own
salary as a vice commissioner. He also immediately wrote and had deliv-
ered a letter to a colleague seeking further assistance. In each of these
two matters, he took great care and attended to every detail. Madame
took half of the money he sent and bought grain. With the other half she bought cotton thread and wove cloth. For three years there was no deficiency in food or clothing and this was due to the efforts of the gentleman Deng.

The Layman said, “My time for mourning had now passed. My family’s burial matters were completed, thus bringing good fortune for three generations; I was free of any of the concerns of an official. I turned my head toward the horizon, and nothing was in my mind but thoughts of my wife and children who were 10,000 li away. I then returned to Gongcheng. When I walked through the doorway and saw my family, I was deeply joyful. I asked about my two younger daughters, and only then discovered that both had died a few months earlier even before I had begun my journey back to my natal home.”

At this time, Madame Huang’s tears were already at the tips of her eyelashes. When she saw the Layman’s expression alter, she acted according to custom and asked about the burial matters and her mother’s well-being.

The Layman replied, “That evening my wife and I sat across from each other the entire night; it was truly like a dream. I knew that my wife’s memories were vivid and her feelings were genuine. And so I corralled my feelings and controlled them. Only now do I feel about that night like one of the teeth on the bottom of my platform clogs has broken off!”

Once he reached the capital, he took up an official position within the Ministry of Rites. A person remarked to the Layman, “The poverty endured by a government servant is even greater than the poverty endured within the Imperial Academy. Although you are able to bear it, are you the only one who has not heard the saying, ‘Wherever can one go without coming upon poverty?’”

He felt ridiculed; the man did not know when to stop.

The Layman responded, “What I refer to as poverty is not the poverty of this world. As for poverty, there is nobody who is more impoverished than one who has not heard the Dao. As for joy, there is nobody who is as happy as one who knows where to rest. For more than ten years I have been hastily traveling from north to south all for the sake of family matters. I completely forgot the thoughts of peace and joy which I had set my heart on while in Wenling and Baiquan. I hear that those in the capital who are teachers are excellent. I shall find one and study under him.”

The person responded, “Your nature is too narrow. You often examine your own faults, and also frequently examine the faults of others. If you hear the Dao, you will certainly become broader in your outlook.”

The Layman responded, “That is so. I surely am too narrow in my nature.”
Consequently, he began to refer to himself as “Father of Vastness” and “The-Layman-the-Father-of-Vastness.”

During the five springs the Layman served as an official, he immersed his heart and mind in the mysteries of the Dao. He regretted he was not able to bring Bai Zhaigong back from the land of the dead and longed for him often and deeply. And so he referred to himself also as “The-Layman-Longing-for-Zhai.”

One day he told me, “You have known me for a long time. When I die could you please write an inscription for me? If I die in the hands of friends, then do as my friends instruct. If I die on the road, then definitely throw me in the waters or cremate me. Under no circumstances should you leave my bones for others to take care of. There is no need to write an inscription in the second case. If you could write a short biography, that would be fine.”

I responded, “How can I claim to really understand the Layman? At another time, some Gu Hutou will come along and truly know him.”

Consequently I have written an essay offering a general sketch of his life. Afterwards, I traveled far and wide and did not see the Layman for a long time. And so from his time in Nanjing onward, I have not recorded anything at all. Some say the Layman died in Nanjing. Others say he is still in southern Yunnan and has not yet died.