

Syncretism of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism in *Liáozhāi Zhìyì* in Terms of Filial Piety

Aiqing Wang

University of Liverpool, United Kingdom

corresponding author : Aiqing.Wang@liverpool.ac.uk

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Abstract

Liáozhāi Zhìyì is one of the representative compilations in the genre of *zhìguài* ‘strange writing’ during the Qing (1644-1912) era, and it conveys filial piety through narration and authorial commentary. This research scrutinizes narratives regarding the preponderant construal of filial piety, so as to explore the harmonious contemporaneous of religious thinking and behavior in Qing China. This research conducts interpretative and hermeneutic research on four narratives in *Liáozhāi Zhìyì*, namely, *Xí Fāngpíng*, *Lè Zhòng*, *Sìshí Qīān*, and *Qíánbǔ Wū*, and also refers to classic treatises regarding filial piety. Given the fact that narratives in *Liáozhāi Zhìyì* themed by or appertaining to filial piety entail elements of three religions simultaneously. This study propounds that it illuminates amalgamation of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, i.e. *sānjiàohéyī*, in seventeenth-century China.

Keywords: *Liáozhāi Zhìyì*, *zhìguài* genre, *Confucianism*, *Buddhism*, *Daoism*, *filial piety*

Abstrak

Liáozhāi Zhìyì adalah salah satu kompilasi representatif dalam genre *zhìguài* 'tulisan aneh' selama era *Qing* (1644-1912), dan menyampaikan kesalahan anak melalui narasi dan komentar penulis. Penelitian ini, menelaah narasi-narasi tentang penafsiran yang lebih besar tentang bakti, untuk mengeksplorasi keserasian pemikiran dan perilaku keagamaan di *Qing* Cina. Penelitian interpretatif dan hermeneutik ini dipusatkan pada empat narasi dalam *Liáozhāi Zhìyì*, yaitu, *Xí Fāngpíng*, *Lè Zhòng*, *Sìshí Qīān*, dan *Qiánbǔ Wū*, dan kajian ini juga merujuk pada risalah klasik tentang berbakti. Mengingat fakta bahwa narasi dalam *Liáozhāi Zhìyì* bertema atau berkaitan dengan berbakti mengandung unsur-unsur dari tiga agama secara bersamaan, kajian ini mengusulkan penggabungan Konfusianisme, Buddhisme dan Taoisme, yaitu *sānjiàohéyī*, di Cina abad ketujuh belas.

Kata kunci: *Liáozhāi Zhìyì*, genre *zhìguài*, Konfusianisme, Buddha, Taoisme, bakti anak

Introduction

Classical Chinese literature abounds with illustrious fiction labeled as 志怪 *zhìguài*, viz. 'strange writing' or 'accounts of miraculous paranormality and abnormality', which evolved into a full-fledged genre since Six Dynasties (222-589 AD) (DeWoskin 1977, Company 1991, Chiang 2005: 12-13, Shang 2018). *Zhìguài* writing features supernatural phenomena, occurrences, and creatures, with an emphasis placed on mythical figures, sages, sovereigns, practitioners of shamanism, and esoteric arts, as well as divinities, fauna, flora, and mythological events affiliated to topographically listed sites (Company 1996: 99, Chen 2002). *Zhìguài* narratives are cumulated from distinct sources, ranging from historiographical collections, religious texts and palace archives, to shrine inscriptions, local legends and alleged eyewitnesses (Kao 1985: 28, Zeitlin 1993: 4-5, Company 1996: 151, Zhang 2014: 1).

The earliest extant *zhìguài* compilation is 搜神记 *Sōushénjì* 'In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record' by a court historian 干宝 Gān Bǎo (?-360 AD), which occurred before Six Dynasties in circa 350 AD.

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This archetype of *zhìguài* writing has palpably impinged upon following collections in the Qing (1644-1912) era (DeWoskin and Crump 1996: xxv, Xie 2014), including 子不语 *Zǐbù yǔ* ‘What the Master Would not Discuss’ published in 1788 by an unconventional skeptic-iconoclast and gastronome called 袁枚 *Yuán Méi* (1716-1798) (Chan 1991, Clart 1996, Louie and Edwards 1996: xxiii, Tucker 1997, Santangelo and Yan 2013: vii-viii) and 阅微草堂笔记 *Yuèwēi Cǎotáng Bǐjì* ‘Jottings from the Grass Hut for Examining Minutiae’ by an elite politician and philosopher 纪昀 *Jì Yún* (1724-1805) (Chan 1993, 1998: 8, Riegel 2010, Chang 2013).

The pinnacle of *zhìguài* compilations in the Qing dynasty is unanimously regarded to be an epoch-making masterpiece 聊斋志异 *Liáozhāi Zhìyì* ‘Strange Tales/Stories from a Chinese Studio’ or ‘Strange Tales from the Liáozhāi Studio’, the themes, plot lines, and narrative styles of which are also profoundly inspired by *Sōushénjì* (Yuan 1999, Yuan and Xu 2000: 177, Teo 2006, Nienhauser 2010: 118, Cook 2014) as well as 传奇 *chuánqí* ‘marvel tales’ or ‘transmissions of the strange’ of the Tang (618-907) era (Bush 2001: 152, Zhao 2005: 31-32, Nienhauser 2010: xiii). *Liáozhāi Zhìyì* (henceforth *Liáozhāi*) is a posthumously published chef-d’oeuvre of 蒲松龄 *Pú Sōnglíng* (1640-1715), a prolific intellectual of iconic fame in Classical Chinese literature (Yuan 1984, Chang and Chang 1998: 1, 42, 2004: 130, Teo 2006, Cook 2014, Hughes et al 2016: 47).

Although *Liáozhāi* is composed in the vernacular style of the seventeenth century and expounds anomalies and prodigies, it exhibits similitude in terms of narrative rhetoric with the monumental 史记 *Shǐjì* ‘Records of the Grand Historian’ composed by a court scribe and

astrologer 司马迁 Sīmǎ Qiān (circa 145-87 BC) in circa 90 BC (Li 2004: 319, Kern 2015). Analogous to *Shǐjì*, a prototype shaping the subsequent development of the narrative tradition (Barr 2007), *Liáozhāi* integrates three components, viz. autobiography, narrative, and commentary (Zeitlin 1988: 41). Pú creates a persona called 异史氏 *Yìshǐ Shì* ‘the Historian of the Strange’ pertaining to the title of Sima Qian, i.e. 太史公 *tàishǐ gōng* ‘the Grand Historian’ (Li 1985, Yu 1987) and appends third-person authorial comments to a total number of 149 tales, introduced by an expression 异史氏曰 *Yìshǐ Shì yuē* ‘the Historian of the Strange says’ (Zhao 1984), which is on a par with the style of *Shǐjì* (Li 2004: 319, He 2011). The authorial commentary assumes a preponderant role in *Liáozhāi*, in that it constitutes a frame elaborating the narrative core and themes, and epitomizes Pú’s insights into characters, storylines, and counsel for readers (Zhang 1989, Zheng 2001, Barr 2007).

Method

In this paper, I investigate the epoch-making *zhìguài* classic *Liáozhāi*. By scrutinizing narratives appertaining to the preponderant construal of filial piety, I postulate that *Liáozhāi* embodies the amalgamation of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism in pre-modern China.

In *Liáozhāi*, there are approximately fifty anecdotes implicitly or explicitly alluding to filial piety, the significance of which is illustrated by an array of benefits: being a filial son can be awarded affluence, officialship, longevity, immortality, as well as offspring and their blessing (Yang 2011). In this paper, I conduct interpretative and hermeneutic research on four narratives in *Liáozhāi*, namely, 席方平 *Xí*

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Fāngpíng, 乐仲 *Lè Zhòng*, 四十千 *Sìshí Qiān*, and 钱卜巫 *Qiánbǔ Wū*, and I also refer to classic treatises regarding filial piety.

Moreover, with its literary prominence, artistic value, and narrative skills, *Liáozhāi* and its author Pú have received a prodigious amount of interpretative, hermeneutic, and biographical scrutiny, reflected by the prosperous transnational critical industry dubbed as 蒲学 *Pú-xué* or 聊斋学 *Liáozhāi-xué* that literally means ‘*Pú/Liáozhāi*-ology’ (Barr 1984, Li 2005, Wang 2006, Fan and Liu 2019, Zou 2019). In this paper, I also draw on ‘*Pú/Liáozhāi*-ology’ literature.

Literature Review

In Confucianism, filial piety (孝 *xiào*) is construed as a pivotal virtue (see Ivanhoe 2000: 2, 2007, Chan and Tan 2004, Nuyen 2004, among many others), one of the underlying and overarching precepts of the moral system and the anthropological source of ethically evaluative sentiment (Yao 1995, Hwang 1999, Ikels 2004: 187-191, Larm 2012, Van Norden 2019). Filial piety, along with fraternal responsibility in the family and loyalty (忠 *zhōng*) to the country, function as derived virtues and underpin 仁 *rén* ‘benevolence; humanity’ which is one of the 五常 *wǔ cháng* ‘five constants/relationships’ (Cheng and Cheng 1989: 105, Wilkinson 1996, Huang 2013, Chen 2018, Tan 2018) and the fundamental credo in the entire Confucian school of ethical thought (Ames 1991, 2011, Neville 2011, Slingerland 2011, Chen 2013, Wong 2020).

Kinship establishment is a foundational constituent of Buddhist practice, in that familial ties are capable of performing social labor, and family membership serves as an influential motivational tool for aspiring Buddhists (Wilson 2013)—even ordination cannot cease the bonds

between renouncers and their families (Clarke 2009, Xing 2010). Buddhist ethos also entails filial piety, which is reflected by scriptures that depict Buddhists conducting heroic acts to benefit their parents (Ch'en 1968, Teiser 1988: 92-94), as well as imperatives to repay parents' kindness (Ch'en 1973, Sung 2003, Kunio 2004). Additionally, Buddhist filial devotion is marked by its overarching construal of reincarnation: since deceased ancestors could exist in various forms by reincarnation, Buddhists, who practice universal compassion covering animals, hell beings, and denizens of diverse post-mortem realms, can thus thoroughly accommodate reincarnated ancestors (Wilson 2013, 2014). Moreover, filial piety is a pivotal aspect of Buddhist ethical teachings (Strong 1983, Xing 2005). According to medieval Buddhist propaganda, one is obliged to take the fate of one's parents in the afterlife into consideration, so the most filial conduct is to become a monk or nun, or at least make a plenitude of donations to monastic institutions (Cole 1998: 62, 235, Despeux and Kohn 2003: 145-146): inscriptional and textual evidence illuminates that both monastics and laity make donations to benefit their living and deceased parents (Schopen 1984).

Filial piety plays a preponderant role in Daoist ideology: as prescribed by a medieval Daoist classic 太平经 *Tàipíng Jīng* 'Scripture on Great Peace', 天下之事, 孝为上第一 *tiānxià zhī shì, xiào wéi shàngdìyī* 'among the activities of this world, filial piety is supreme and of first rank' (Wang 1960: 592, Hendrichke 2007: 363, Liao 2013, Eskildsen 2015: 32). Filial impiety, however, triggers karma that renders Daoist followers subject to hell, abominable rebirth, and inability to attain immortality (Kohn 2004). The establishment of Daoist filial piety is inspired by and hence inextricably intertwined with Confucian filial

piety (Zheng and Zhan 2011), in that it further enriches and expounds its Confucian counterpart, as exemplified by a statement that 人亦天地之子也 *rén yì tiāndì zhīzǐ yě* ‘men are children of heaven and earth’, proclaimed by *Taiping Jing* (Wang 1960: 406, Hendrischke 2007: 228, Liao 2013). Humans are also perceived to have an especially close relationship with their ancestors, so the acts of ancestors directly impinge upon the fate of descendants, referred to as inherited evil that is constituted of various concepts of ancestral wrath, personal retribution, and collective punishments (Chen 1986, Brokaw 1991: 28, Hendrischke 1991, Kohn 2004).

As a national faith of China, the construct of 三教合一 *sānjiàohéyī* ‘the unity of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism’ initially occurred before the Tang dynasty (Brook 1993, Gong and Gong 2010), based on the integration among and condominium of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism that is of foreign origin (Fan and Whitehead 2011, Shahar 2013). Since it first attained popularity during the late Ming (1368-1644) era (Duara 2008), this late imperial gentry syncretism has been underpinning a scheme in which Confucianism is regarded as the mainstay, while Daoism and Sinicised Buddhism serve as branches (Han 2011, Shan 2012c, Sun 2012). Despite divergent canons, liturgies, and venues (Huang 1998, Adler 2002), such harmonization of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism is referred to as syncretism: as propounded by a proverb from a 1605 novel 封神演義 *Fēngshén Yǎnyì* ‘Investiture of the Gods’ that is of massive and grandiose conception (Kao 2002, Lu 2011), ‘[t]he three teachings—the gold and cinnabar of Daoism, the relics of Buddhist figures, as well as the Confucian virtues of humanity and righteousness—are basically one tradition’ (Plopper 1926: 16, Teiser 1996: 3).

Result and Discussion

A paradigm conveying the Confucian creed of filial piety in *Liáozhāi* is 席方平 *Xí Fāngpíng*, in which the protagonist *Xí Fāngpíng* enters the underworld four times and endures savage infliction to redress the injustice and exploitation imposed on his father (Zhang 2003); other filial deeds in *Liáozhāi* include the personal sacrifice of wellbeing, enjoyment, freedom, status, and life (Yang 2011).

It is noteworthy that *Xí Fāngpíng* integrates both Confucian and Buddhist canons. In author's comment introduced via the expression *Yì shǐ Shì yuē*, 'the Historian of the Strange says', a prominent Buddhist concept of 淨土 *jìngtǔ* 'Pure Land' signifying the transcendent realm of Buddhas and bodhisattvas (Hirota 2000, Leeming 2002, 2005, Keown 2004) is included, yet in the posterior context, salient Confucian virtues of *zhōng* and *xiào*, which serve as two interwoven components of *rén*, are also mentioned (Example (1)).

(1) 异史氏曰：“人人言净土，而不知生死隔世，意念都迷，且不知其所以来，又乌知其所以去；而况死而又死，生而复生者乎？忠孝志定，万劫不移，异哉席生，何其伟也！”

Yì shǐ shì yuē: 'Rén rén yán jìng tǔ, ér bù zhī shēng sǐ gé shì, yì niàn dōu mí, qiě bù zhī qí suǒ yǐ lái, yòu wū zhī qí suǒ yǐ qù; ér kuàng sǐ ér yòu sǐ, shēng ér fù shēng zhě hū? Zhōng xiào zhì dìng, wàn jié bù yí, yì zāi xí shēng, hé qí wěi yě!'

'The Historian of the Strange says: "Everybody talks about Pure Land, yet nobody understands that the disparity between life and death is insurmountable, rendering living people bewildered about departures and destinations, not to mention repeatedly revived people. Xi's determination to loyalty and filial piety is extremely adamant. How wondrous and great he is!"'

(*Liáozhāi. Xí Fāngpíng*. Trans. Mine)

An analogous paradigm regarding Confucian filial piety in *Liaozhāi* is entitled 乐仲 *Lè Zhòng*, in which the protagonist *Lè Zhòng* worships his deceased mother rather than a Buddhist statue, as in Example (2). Confucian promulgation of ancestral worship is ascribed to conventional institutions, in that offering sacrifices to ancestors leads to reverence for elder and senior members in familial and societal hierarchies (Hall and Ames 1996: 64-65, Nichols 2011, Shan 2012a: 25-27), so Confucian scholar-rulers endeavor to harness subordinates for kinship solidarity, community stability and social harmony (Cohen 1992, Chen 2018). Moreover, ancestral worship constructs indebtedness and interdependence and reinforces a reciprocal relation-faith pattern between ancestors and worshipers (Yang 1976: 357-358, Shun 2002).

(2) 父早丧，遗腹生仲，母好佛，不茹荤酒。仲既长，嗜饮善啖，窃腹 诮母，每以肥甘劝进。母咄之。后母病，弥留，苦思肉。仲急无 所得肉，剖左股献之。病稍瘥，悔破戒，不食而死。仲哀悼益切，以利刃益剖右股见骨。家人共救之，裹帛敷药，寻愈。心念母苦节，又恻母愚，遂焚所供佛像，立主祀母。醉后，辄对哀哭。

Fù zǎo sàng, yí fù shēng zhòng, mǔ hǎo fó, bù rú hūn jiǔ. Zhòng jì cháng, shì yǐn shàn dān, qiè fù fěi mǔ, měi yǐ féi gān quàn jì n. Mǔ duō zhī. Hòu mǔ bìng, mí liú, kǔ sī ròu. Zhòng jí wú suǒ dé ròu, kuī zǒu gǔ xiàn zhī. Bìng shāo chài, huǐ pò jiè, bù shí ér sǐ. Zhòng āi dào yì qiè, yǐ lì rèn yì kuī yòu gǔ jiàn gǔ. Jiā rén gòng jì zhī, guō bó fū yào, xún yù. Xīn niàn mǔ kǔ jié, yòu tòng mǔ yú, suì fén suǒ gòng fó xiàng, lì zhǔ sī mǔ. Zuì hòu, zhé duì āi kū.

‘Le Zhong was a posthumous child. Being a devoted Buddhist, Zhong’s mother had been a vegetarian refraining from drinking. Zhong grew up to be an alcoholic and gastronome who disdained his mother’s practice, so he often induced her to try gourmet food. Such acts were always rebuffed sternly. Later, his mother was in extremism

and eager for meat. Zhong could not find any meat immediately, so he cut some flesh off his left thigh to feed his mother. When his mother slightly recovered, she was so contrite to violate the abstinence that she starved herself to death. The mournful Zhong cut his right thigh deep to the bone with a sharp knife; he was rescued and cured by his family and recovered gradually. Zhong grieved over his mother's abstinence and stubbornness, so he burned the Buddhist statue and worshipped her instead. He often wept in front of her memorial tablet after drunkenness.'

(*Liáozhāi. Lè Zhòng*. Trans. Mine)

As can be seen from Example (2), apart from orthodox Confucian norms prescribing widow chastity (Mann 2002, Theiss 2002), the anecdote depicts Buddhist practices including vegetarianism and propitiation; moreover, in the rest of the narrative, Buddhist elements such as sexual abstinence and lotus are also expounded. More significantly, the portrayal of cutting off one's flesh in (2) is aberrant from the Confucian tenet of filial piety but accords with Buddhist philosophy. As proscribed by 孝经 *Xiào Jīng* 'Classic of Filial Piety', one of the thirteen Confucian classic treatises (Goldin 2015: 35, Yan 2017, Yang 2017), the inception of filial piety lies in preserving one's own body, hair, and skin, all of which are bestowed upon by one's parents. However, a Buddhist apologetic work, 牟子理惑论 *Móuzǐ Lǐhúò Lùn* 'Mouzi on the Settling of Doubts' points out the importance of weighing the circumstances, and argues that to attain 'great virtue', one is not expected to stringently comply with trivial ritual details regarding hurting one's body (Kunio 2004).

Additionally, the protagonist's reverence for his mother in *Lè Zhòng* embodies Daoist (aka Taoist) filial piety that places an emphasis on mothers. To be more specific, in stark contrast to Confucian patriarchal ideals epitomized by 三从四德 *sān cóng sì dé* 'Three Obediences and

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Four Virtues’ (Gao 2003, Rosenlee 2006: 90-92, Lee 2009), Daoist teachings recognize the feminine role in the ethical system and deploy a metaphorical representation to link female reproduction to the oneness of the universe and the essence of Dao (Despeux and Kohn 2003: 1-2, Zheng and Zhan 2011, Cook 2015).

Apart from Confucian precepts, *Liáozhāi* abounds with Buddhist canons, embodied by: 1) conceptions of reincarnation, hell, and karma; 2) the spirit of equality; and 3) mysticism (Qin 2004, Li 2011, Yang 2016).

A narrative 四十千 *Sìshí Qiān* ‘Forty Thousand’ conveys a *karmatic* belief through a Buddhist monk that children are to collect the debt from parents incurred during their previous incarnation (Example 3). In the story, an affluent man has a dream about owing another man forty thousand, and upon he wakes up, his wife delivers a boy, so he allocates forty thousand as the maintenance to raise this newborn. Three years later, there is only seven hundred left, so he informs the boy of his incoming decease. The boy immediately breathes his last, and the remaining money exactly covers his funeral cost. Furthermore, as can be seen from Example (3), the authorial commentary accords with another related Buddhist ideal that children are to repay the debt of gratitude to their parents (Tan 2011).

(3) 昔有老而无子者，问诸高僧。僧曰：“汝不欠人者，人又不欠汝者，乌得子？”盖生佳儿，所以报我之缘；生顽儿，所以取我之债。生者勿喜，死者勿悲也。

Xī yǒu lǎo ér wú zǐ zhě, wèn zhū gāo sēng. Sēng yuē: ‘Rǔ bù qiàn rén zhě, rén yòu bù qiàn rǔ zhě, wū de zǐ?’ Gài shēng jiā ér, suǒ yǐ bào wǒ zhī yuán; shēng wán ér, suǒ yǐ qǔ wǒ zhī zhài. Shēng zhě wù xǐ, sǐ zhě wù bēi yě.

‘A childless old man enquired a Buddhist monk about his heirlessness. The monk said: “If you have never owed others and neither have they owed you, how can you have children?”

Outstanding children are to reward fate; misbehaved children are to dun debt. Do not celebrate for newborns or grieve over decedents.’

(*Liáozhāi. Sishí Qiān*. Trans. Mine)

Furthermore, a considerable portion of narratives in *Liáozhāi* can be analyzed as outcomes of non-institutionalized, folk Daoism, embodied by an equality conception entailing conversions of mythical creatures into human beings and mortals into immortals (Li 2013). Moreover, *Liáozhāi* depicts fairyland, immortals’ life, and interaction with mortals (Yang 2004), as well as Daoist priests’ avuncular and upright deeds, disparate from those conducted by Buddhist monks (Cheng 2017, Xi 2018).

A tale 钱卜巫 *Qiánbǔ Wū* in *Liáozhāi* conveys the Daoist credence that one’s conduct affects their offspring (4), parallel to a thought indicated in a divination classic 易经 *Yì Jīng* ‘Book/Classic of Changes’ that a household acts as an integrated unit in terms of divine blessings and retribution.

(4) 先人有善，其福未尽，则后人享之；先人有不善，其祸未尽，则后人亦受之。

Xiān rén yǒu shàn, qí fú wèi jìn, zé hòu rén xiǎng zhī; xiān rén yǒu bù shàn, qí huò wèi jìn, zé hòu rén yì shòu zhī.

‘If forefathers exhibit goodness yet have not enjoyed all the blessing, offspring will inherit it; if forefathers commit vice yet have not suffered all the cataclysms, offspring will also inherit them.’

(*Liáozhāi. Qiánbǔ Wū*. Trans. Mine)

(5) 积善之家，必有余庆；积不善之家，必有余殃。

Jī shàn zhī jiā, bì yǒu yú qìng; jī bù shàn zhī jiā, bì yǒu yú yāng.

‘The family that accumulates goodness is sure to have superabundant happiness. The family that accumulates evil is sure to have superabundant misery.’

(*Yi Jing*. Trans. Legge 1969: 20)

A distinctive property of Daoist doctrine lies in its quest for longevity and even eternal life (Akahori 1989, Despeux and Kohn 2003: 1, Shan 2012a: 83-88); consequently, Daoist filial piety is featured by children’s obligation to obtain physical immortality for their parents (Zheng and Zhan 2011, Liao 2013) as well as their commitment to prolong the life expectancy of their parents (Hendrichske 2007: 303, 363, Zhou 2012). In 席方平 *Xí Fāngpíng* depicting Confucian filial piety, the protagonist’s filial deed is rewarded by an additional thirty-six years of life for his father (6), which typically indicates the Daoist belief.

(6) 念汝子孝义, 汝性良懦, 可再赐阳寿三纪。

Niàn rǔ zǐ xiào yì, rǔ xìng liáng nuò, kě zài cì yáng shòu sān jì.

‘Given your son’s filial piety and your kindness, thirty-six years’ additional life will be bestowed upon you.’

(*Liáozhāi. Xí Fāngpíng*. Trans. Mine)

Furthermore, the protagonist in *Xí Fāngpíng* also serves as the epitome of Daoist filial commitment and devotion. Filial children in a Daoist sense are obliged to cultivate themselves and thrive (Zheng and Zhan 2011, Liao 2013, Wu 2014). According to a Daoist classic treatise 文昌孝经 *Wénchāng Xiàojīng* composed in the Song (960-1279) dynasty (Xiao 1997, Wu 2014, Zhang 2015), filial piety is encapsulated by one’s competence in assuming responsibilities, which functions as a prerequisite for empathy with parents, as in Example (7).

(7) 所谓孝子, 欲体亲心, 当先立身。...完厥惺惺体, 尽我所当务。

Suǒ wèi xiào zǐ, yù tǐ qīn xī, dāng xiān lì shēn ... Wán jué xīng xīng tǐ, jìn wǒ suǒ dāng wù.

‘To empathize with parents, a filial son should first cultivate himself...One should accomplish the self and fulfill responsibilities.’

(*Wénchāng Xiàojīng. Shǒushēn*. Trans. Mine)

It is worth mentioning that 修身 *xiūshēn* ‘self-cultivation’ is also a preponderant Confucian precept about the attainment of individual psychological stability and personal discipline, which lays the foundation for contribution to social life and country governance as a 君子 *jūnzǐ* ‘gentleman; superior/exemplary/virtuous person’ (Mou 2009, July 2011, Coles 2019). As promulgated in 大学 *Dàxué* ‘Great Learning’, one of the Four Books (四书 *sìshū*) of Confucian Classics, ‘[t]hose who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. Those who wished to rectify their minds would first make their will sincere’ (Ng 2009: 4, Shan 2012b, Liu and Cao 2014, Wu 2017); as stated in 中庸 *Zhōngyōng* ‘Doctrine of the Mean’, ‘one who knows how to cultivates his person knows how to govern men; and one who knows how to govern men knows how to govern the states and families of the world’ (de Bary and Bloom 1999: 337, Pohl 1999: 85, Zhang 2014, Tan 2017).

Conclusion

As can be seen from narratives exemplified by *Lè Zhòng* and *Xí Fāngpíng*, *Liáozhāi* embodies the unification of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, analogous to a mid-eighteenth-century

masterpiece 红楼梦 *Hóng Lóu Mèng* ('Dream of the Red Chamber/Mansion' or 'Story of the Stone') that I suggest manifests the *sanjiaoheyi* religious ideology of aristocracy in imperial China under the reign of the Qing dynasty (Wang 2020).

The inclusive religiosity can be reflected in *Liáozhāi* in terms of its depiction concerning filial piety. Although *Xí Fāngpíng* and *Lè Zhòng* express Confucian filial piety, there are Buddhist terminologies indicated in the narratives. Other tales such as *Sìshí Qiān* and *Qiónbǔ W ū* may not entail distinct doctrines simultaneously, whereas they indeed demonstrate that when discussing filial piety, *Liáozhāi* is not limited to any single religion. On the contrary, *Liáozhāi* manifests harmonious contemporaneous of religious thinking and behavior in the seventeenth century.

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