

Cultural Revivalism in Israel and China: Imagining Lives Against the Present

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Introduction

In April 2022, the Jewish-Israeli fundamentalist group “Khozrim la-Har” (Returning to the [Temple] Mount) offered its adherents a playful bet: On the occasion of Passover, the Jewish holiday of unleavened bread and messianic dreams (“Next year in Jerusalem!”), the movement promised a series of financial rewards to the community of Temple activists in order to encourage the unlawful sacrifice of animals on the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif: 400 shekels for being arrested by the Israeli police, 800 shekels for being arrested while carrying a lamb or a goat, and 10.000 shekels (almost 3000 euros) for successfully sacrificing an animal on the Temple Mount (see Fig. 1)! What might have started as a trolling operation on social media rapidly contributed to violent clashes on the Temple Mount and widespread condemnations by the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, and the Islamist militia Hamas, which described the idea of sacrifices on the Temple Mount as a “direct assault on the belief and feelings of our people and our nation during this holy month [of Ramadan].”¹ In the violent clashes that followed, a minor detail was almost forgotten: In addition to cash prizes, the Temple Movement devised a much more subtle operation to carry out prayers and, perhaps, sacrifices on the Temple Mount, namely by masquerading as Arab Muslims, fully equipped with a prayer cap and a bright red *kaffiyah* (shawl). According to the fragile *status quo*, Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount remains forbidden, a rule enforced by both the Jordanian-controlled *waqf* (Islamic religious endowment) and Israeli police.² Therefore, to pray on the Temple Mount as Jews, the Temple Movement had begun to offer special training sessions that prepared their activists to operate as “Arabizers” (*mista 'aravim*, a term usually reserved for military commando units),³

* Research on Israeli revivalism for this article was supported by the Volkswagen Foundation.

1 “Hamas Threatens Israel over Extremists’ Plans to Bring Sacrifice on Temple Mount; Israel: It’s Not Going to Happen,” *Times of Israel*, April 13, 2022, accessed May 26, 2022, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/hamas-threatens-israel-over-extremists-plans-to-bring-sacrifice-on-temple-mount/.

2 Yitzhak Reiter, *The Eroding Status Quo: Power Struggles on the Temple Mount* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 2017), accessed May 26, 2022, https://jerusalemintstitute.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PUB_ERODINGSTATUSQUO-2017_eng.pdf.

3 Stuart A. Cohen, “‘Masqueraders’ in the Israel Defense Forces, 1991–1992: The Military Unit and the Public Debate,” *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement* 2, no. 2 (1993): 282–300;

covering not only the basic questions of dress code and Arabic language, but also the ritual movements of Muslim prayer and even the basic habits of street culture in East Jerusalem.⁴ The best way so it seemed, to push for Jewish revivalism and the construction of the Third Temple, was to learn from the enemy.

מקריבים קרבן פסח במקומו ובמועדו!

לא הצלחת? נעצרת- ניצחת!

לאור איומי החמאס ולאחר התנגדות המשטרה לאפשר לנו להקריב קרבן פסח במועדו באופן מאושר- השתתפו בנסיון להקריב קרבן פסח, ותזכו לפיצוי כספי!

נצרת?	נצרת עם גדיטאה?	הצלת להקריב?
400 ש"ח	800 ש"ח	10,000 ש"ח

חידוש קרבן פסח הוא המענה היחיד לטרור!

הנעזרים והמקריבים מוזמנים ליצור קשר עם תנועת חזרים להר בפלאפון 050-2424889 או בפייסבוק "תנועת חזרים להר"

Fig. 1. Khozrim la-Har [Returning to the (Temple) Mount], graphic posted on Twitter.⁵

and Yonatan Mendel, "Re-Arabizing the De-Arabized: The Mista'aravim Unit of the Palmach," in *Debating Orientalism*, ed. Ziad Elmarsafy, Anna Bernard, and David Attwell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 94–116.

4 "Mista'aravei har ha-bayit. Ha-tze'irim ha-yehudim she-mithkazim le-muslemim kdei lehitpalei be-har ha-bayit" [The Arabizers of the Temple Mount: Jewish youths who masquerade as Muslims in order to pray on the Temple Mount], *Channel 13*, YouTube video, uploaded December 20, 2021, 10:01, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UD8ZqyKBmiY>.

5 Khozrim la-Har [Returning to the [Temple] Mount], "Lo hitzlachta? Ne'etzarta – nitzachta!" [You didn't succeed? If you were arrested – you won!], Twitter, April 11, 2022, 17:23, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://twitter.com/CozrimLahar/status/1513538249062502414/photo/1>.

As our article will discuss, the Temple Movement has indeed learned from various enemies. From secular Zionism, it adopted the practice of urban planning and the history politics of archaeology, and from political Islam an ideological vision that understands territorial control as an expression of divine sovereignty. Moreover, the mass presence (and mass prayer) of Jewish activists on the Temple Mount represents a sharp rupture with established Jewish practice and also points toward a learning process that emulates the political-religious enemy more closely than most activists would dare to admit.

Based on a comparative case study of two revivalist movements—Political Confucianism in mainland China and Israel’s Temple Movement—this article argues that these practices of studying, engaging, and representing the enemy constitute a paradoxical driver of transculturation. Contemporary cultural revivalists, ranging from political Islam and radical New Confucians in contemporary China all the way to Hindu nationalists and Israel’s messianic right, raise a broad spectrum of nativist claims to reassert and resurrect premodern and precolonial authenticity. But although all cultural revivalists portray their cause as a revolt against assimilation and Westernization, their fascination for their perceived “enemy cultures”—imaginary versions of the global West and more local adversaries—reveals deep-seated ambivalences. In their desire to reclaim and rebuild “a home that no longer exists or has never existed,”⁶ revivalists typically engage in “restorative nostalgia,” defined by the late literary historian Svetlana Boym as “the antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories.”⁷ Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman describes these “projects of total restoration ... to restore a sense of the sacred believed to be missing from the modern world”⁸ as *retrotopias* (the mirror image of utopias), defined as “visions located in the lost/stolen/abandoned but undead past, instead of being tied to the not-yet-unborn and so inexistent future.”⁹ To be sure, all utopias include references to the past, but with few exceptions they claim to bring about progress. In contrast, the *retrotopias* proliferating around the globe in recent decades revolve around the imagined return to a premodern and precolonial past, untainted by decadence and foreign influence. Expressions can range from personal or communal

6 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.

7 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41. Boym contrasts restorative and reflective nostalgia as follows: “While restorative nostalgia returns and rebuilds one homeland with paranoid determination, reflective nostalgia fears returning with the same passion;” Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 354.

8 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 45.

9 Zygmunt Bauman, *Retrotopia* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 5.

attempts to resurrect “counterpresentist”¹⁰ lifestyles, which revolt against contemporaneity with a debased world, to calls for radical political action on a grand scale—through the “reconstruction” of a Confucian theocracy that never was¹¹ or the reestablishment of a “divine kingdom” in the Land of Israel, a theocratic monarchy built around the Third Temple.¹² This obsession with cultural purity typically drives revivalist movements into a close, paranoid, and deeply ambivalent relationship with their enemies, both real and imagined: Not least to free themselves ostentatiously from foreign influences, revivalists often seek to “know the enemy,” sometimes spending more time on the organizational savvy and ideological intricacies of their opponents than on the exact details of their own “transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home.”¹³ After all, as specialists in “knowing the enemy” have argued for centuries, to beat the political antagonist, should one not try to learn from their strengths?¹⁴

Bringing together Israel’s Temple Movement and Political Confucianism, as we suggest in this essay, does not deny or belittle the significant differences between these two movements and the states in which they emerged. While Israel’s Temple Movement was initially based on secular visions of territorial maximalism, it has slowly shifted towards the country’s national-religious right:¹⁵ Ranging from peaceful activism for Jewish prayer rights on the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif to the terrorist “Jewish Underground” (which planned to bomb Jerusalem’s most important Islamic sites in the 1980s),¹⁶ the Temple

10 On this notion, see Gerd Theißen, “Tradition und Entscheidung: Der Beitrag des biblischen Glaubens zum kulturellen Gedächtnis” [Tradition and decision: Biblical faith’s contribution to cultural memory], in *Kultur und Gedächtnis* [Culture and memory], ed. Jan Assmann and Tonio Hölscher (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), 170–196; 174–176.

11 Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, “If Horses Had Wings: The Political Demands of Mainland New Confucians in Recent Years,” introduced and translated by David Ownby, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/ge-zhaoguang-if-horses-had-wings.html>. Original version: Ge Zhaoguang, “Yixiang tiankai: Jinnian lai dalu xin rujia de zhengzhi suqiu” 异想天开：近年来大陆新儒学的政治诉求, *Sixiang* 33 (2017): 241–285.

12 Shabtai Ben Dov, “Ge’ulat Israel be-mashber ha-medina” [The redemption of Israel in the crisis of the state] (1960), in *Ladder to the Promised Kingdom of Israel: Collected Writings of Shabtai Ben Dov*, Vol. 2, ed. Yehuda Etzion (Jerusalem: Sulamot, 2006), 15–569; 308.

13 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xviii.

14 For an overview of Chinese expressions of this view, see Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, “From ‘Controlling the Barbarians’ to ‘Wholesale Westernization’: Translation and Politics in Late Imperial and Early Republican China, 1840–1919,” in *Asian Translation Traditions*, ed. Eva Hung and Judy Wakabayashi (New York: Routledge, 2005), 109–134.

15 Motti Inbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount: Who Will Build the Third Temple?* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009).

16 Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel’s Radical Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Movement is increasingly driven by messianic visions of a total reconfiguration of Jewish political life in Israel/Palestine. Political Confucianism, on the other hand, has only a quaint and tenuous religious foundation and is so far politically ineffective, not least because it operates in a state that leaves very little space for any kind of organized action deviating from the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) increasingly rigid ideological line. It is even more remarkable that Political Confucianism has risen to become a considerable ideological force in contemporary mainland Chinese discourse. Since its tentative beginnings in the aftermath of the massacre on Beijing's Tian'anmen Square in 1989 it has spread a nativist and often radically anti-Western vision, whose cultural, social, and more or less veiled political objectives resonate with widely shared public concerns and have managed not to run afoul of party authorities. Despite an increasingly visible need to tread carefully, so far, Political Confucians have not provoked a lasting backlash that would permanently disqualify them from making their voices publicly heard.

This article sets out to show that despite all their differences, the two movements are comparable in significant respects. In creating and perpetuating images of their enemies, both rely on similar strategies of enemization. Both follow similar argumentative lines to justify their condemnation of Western depravity and the call to restore lost authenticity; both enlist comparable rhetorical resources and rely on state-of-the-art media strategies to propagate their cause; and, most importantly for us, both learn and adapt their antagonistic toolboxes from reviled enemies and a limited, globally shared repertoire of anti-modern and counterpresentist tropes. To gain a clearer understanding of the two movements' similarities and the paradoxical effects of their "learning from the enemy," in a first step, we will trace how they moved from the margins to the center, i.e., sketch how they gained social and political relevance in their respective settings. Second, based on Boym's understanding of restorative nostalgia, we examine the retrotopian ideological visions of the two movements. While formulated in traditionalist terms, both are only partially built on native resources, drawing instead on ideological tropes and rhetorical strategies borrowed from, or at least shared with, their declared enemies. Third, we will explore revivalist attempts to propagate counterpresentist lifestyles, focused on, if not obsessed with, symbolic rejections of "Western" or "modern" ways of life. In our conclusion, we will review the transcultural inspirations which both movements draw on to make their cases. Our findings confirm that cultural revivalists not only resemble one another; even more paradoxically, their nativist activities are characterized by co-constitutive entanglements with their political and cultural enemies in terms of ideology, lifestyle, and strategy. We argue that this insight should be applied more broadly to the field of enmity studies. It also holds an important lesson for transcultural studies: if enmity provokes mutual learning, to the

point of producing what we may call “mimetic isomorphism,” it must be investigated as a central driver of transculturation.

“The Temple Mount is in our hands”: The rise of Israel’s Temple Movement

When the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) conquered Jerusalem’s Old City and the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif in 1967, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan quickly defused the potential for messianic delirium: The IDF’s Chief Rabbi, Shlomo Goren, not only celebrated with a *shofar* (ram’s horn) at the Western Wall, but also organized Jewish prayer services on the Temple Mount itself—and even hinted at the dismantling of the Islamic sites and the subsequent reconstruction of a Third Temple. By contrast, despite the iconic radio broadcast of *har ha-bayit be-yadenu* (“The Temple Mount is in our Hands”) by Mordechai Gur, Moshe Dayan quickly reestablished the *status quo*, under which Israel ceded control over the contested site to the Jordanian-controlled *waqf*, thereby agreeing explicitly to a regime of Muslim-only prayer rights.

Ever since, activists of the Temple Movement, a flexible network of social movements primarily linked to Religious Zionism, have mobilized activists to varying degrees to fight for a greater Jewish presence on the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif. The goals of the movement are far from unified, ranging from relatively moderate claims (Jewish prayer rights) and more contested projects (the construction of a permanent Jewish house of prayer, i.e., a mere synagogue, but not yet a temple), all the way to the most radical visions of reconstruction (the dismantling of the Islamic shrines, i.e., the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque, and the reconstruction of a Third Temple).¹⁷ Since the Second Intifada (2000–2005), some of these claims have moved from the political fringes to the Jewish-Israeli mainstream: According to an opinion poll from 2022, fifty percent of Jewish Israelis support Jewish prayer rights on the Temple Mount while only forty percent are opposed. The support for this practice was primarily based on political reasoning: Among observant Jewish Israelis, most Ultra-Orthodox rejected Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount for religious reasons, while only the national-religious public supported the project as a religious commandment. By contrast, thirty-eight percent of the Jewish-Israeli public supported Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount as a *symbolic* expression of political power, namely as “proof of Israel’s sovereignty over the Temple Mount.”¹⁸ How did this retrotopian vision of the Temple Movement

17 Gershon Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

18 Tamar Hermann and Or Anabi, “50% Jewish Israelis Support Jewish Prayer on the Temple Mount,” *Israeli Voice Index*, May 4, 2022, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://en.idi.org.il/articles/38824>.

move towards the Jewish-Israeli mainstream? And how can we situate its counterpresentist activities (especially the preparation for future Temple sacrifices) within the larger framework of the Zionist project?

The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE looms large in Jewish-Diasporic life and ritual: As part of the traditional *amidah* prayer, Orthodox Jews pray three times a day for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the Temple service; the fast day *Tisha be-Av* laments the destruction of both the First and the Second Temple; and the remembrance of the Temple services play a key role on both *yom kippur* (the Day of Atonement) and *pessach* (Passover), both of which are also observed by less observant Diaspora Jews. For both Jewish proto-nationalism and early Zionism, the passage *le-shana ha-ba'a be-Yerushalayim ha-bnuya* (Next year in a rebuilt Jerusalem!) from the *seder* liturgy (a traditional family dinner on Passover to commemorate the Jewish exodus from Egypt) provided an important source of political inspiration: For more religious proto-Zionists (like Zvi Hirsch Kalischer), the political ingathering of the Jewish Diaspora in the Land of Israel and the reconstruction of the Third Temple were supposed to go hand in hand; by contrast, for political Zionists like Theodor Herzl, the new Jewish nation-state might construct a new Temple, but rather as a synagogue (i.e., without animal sacrifice) and decidedly *not* on the contested site of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif.¹⁹

Throughout the process of Zionist nation-building in Mandatory Palestine, the dominance of Labor Zionism relegated the fascination with the Temple to the political fringes. The *sabra* pioneers of the Hebrew-speaking New Yishuv were more interested in the redemption of the land (*ge'ulat ha-aretz*) than in religious speculations about the messianic return of Davidic kingship, legitimated by a priestly caste and the resumption of bloody animal sacrifices on Mount Moriah. While the symbolism of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount were deployed for fund-raising campaigns and as a tool of historical legitimation, especially in the struggle against non-Zionist settlement projects (territorialism), the Zionist movement in Mandatory Palestine was *less* interested in the Temple Mount than its immediate antagonist, the emerging movement of Palestinian Arab nationalism. One of the watershed moments of Jewish-Arab relations in Mandatory Palestine, the 1929 riots, was triggered by questions over symbolic control of the Western Wall. However, while Palestinian Arab nationalists and Islamic thinkers grew increasingly worried about Jewish irredentism *vis-à-vis* the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif, the only Zionists who actively sought to “redeem” the Temple Mount could be found among the radical minority position of revolutionary right-wing Zionism, especially in the militia LECHI (*Lochamei Herut Israel*, Fighters

19 Jess Olson, “‘Jerusalem Rebuilt’: The Temple in the *Fin-de-Siècle* Zionist Imagination,” in *The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah*, ed. Steven Fine (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 329–348.

for the Freedom of Israel). In its eighteen-point political plan published in the early 1940s (“Principles of Rebirth”), LECHI called for the “construction of the Third Temple as a symbol for the time of total redemption” (*semel le-tor ha-ge’ula ha-shlema*).²⁰

In the first Arab-Israeli War (1948–1949), Israel lost control over Jerusalem’s Old City. After the Jordanian annexation, Jews no longer had access to the Western Wall, and the Jewish neighborhood of the Old City was ethnically cleansed and largely destroyed. To an extent, these two decades of Jewish absence from the Western Wall explain the first sparks of redemptive fascination on the occasion of the Six-Day War. Until today, even among non-observant Jews, the sight of Shlomo Goren blowing the *shofar* at the Western Wall represents a powerful symbol of restored Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel/Palestine. However, at a closer look, the Temple Movement was not driven by Jewish-Israeli triumph, but rather by Jewish-Israeli tragedy. The messianic radicalization of Israel’s national-religious right did not grow naturally from Israel’s military victory in the 1967 Six-Day War. Rather, it developed as a defensive mechanism after the near defeat in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In fact, the origins of the Temple Movement (in its contemporary form) can even be traced back to Israel’s first territorial contraction, the withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula in the early 1980s. Both the Jewish Underground (which planned to blow up the Islamic shrines on the Temple Mount) and the nascent Temple Movement sought to *restore* a lost sense of Zionist purpose, crystallized in Israel’s willingness to dismantle Jewish settlements in the Sinai.

In some cases, this link between territorial withdrawal and messianic radicalization was deeply personal. Yisrael Ariel, a key figure of the Temple Movement, previously served as *rosh yeshiva* (yeshiva leader) in Yamit, one of Israel’s largest settlements in the Sinai Peninsula. When Yamit was evacuated in 1982, Ariel moved to Jerusalem’s Old City. Two years later, he established the Temple Institute, which quickly became one of the leading educational centers of the more radical pro-Temple voices in Jewish-Israeli society.²¹ Arguably, this dynamic of retropian radicalization as a response to political crises holds true until today: Within Israel’s national-religious right, the growing fascination with the Temple Mount can be dated back to the Second Intifada—largely perceived as a major strategic crisis, and closely connected to yet another Israeli territorial withdrawal. After dismantling the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip in 2005, Israel’s settler movement underwent a moment of soul-searching, frequently lamenting its failure to “settle in the

20 Avraham Stern, “Ikarey ha-techiya” [Principles of revival], *Ben Yehuda Project*, August 24, 2022, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://benyehuda.org/read/197>.

21 Yisrael Ariel, *The Odyssey of the Third Temple* (Jerusalem: The Temple Institute, 1993).

hearts” of Jewish-Israeli audiences.²² In a way, the increasing attraction of the Temple Movement for national-religious activists throughout the last two decades might therefore reflect a desire to reconnect with the broader Jewish-Israeli public. Isolated hilltop settlements deep inside the occupied West Bank would always remain contested among Israeli Jews. But the vision of Jewish-Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem itself, symbolized in Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount, attracted support even among decidedly secular and non-observant audiences. In addition, within the religious camp (composed of both Religious Zionists and Religious Non-Zionists, i.e., Ultra-Orthodox Jews), the question of the Temple Mount gave the national-religious movement the chance to portray itself as activist pioneers, thereby embarrassing the approach of Ultra-Orthodox quietism. If the Ultra-Orthodox loved Jerusalem so much and prayed for the return of the Third Temple three times a day—what exactly held them back from actively putting Israel’s redemption into practice?

Out of Guizhou: The unlikely rise of Political Confucianism

Political Confucianism (*zhengzhi ruxue* 政治儒學), the second revivalist movement we suggest is best studied in the context of ambivalent enmity, began to take shape around 1989 as an outsider’s position in an academic controversy about the place of China’s moral and spiritual heritage in the modern world. The debate had raged since the 1920s, when a “conservative” position formed as a neo-traditionalist backlash against calls for “wholesale Westernization” (*quanpan xihua* 全盤西化) raised by the May Fourth Movement of 1919.²³ Against sweeping condemnation of traditional Chinese ways of life and thought, not only reactionary thinkers defended the necessity to search for meaning in the precariously defined nation’s cultural heritage. Abandoning this quest, both arch-conservatives and more moderate voices agreed, would relinquish control over China’s cultural and political destiny. Their concern, which continues to resonate across ideological divides to this day, can perhaps best be understood as a need to regain a sense of agency threatened by China’s ever-deepening integration into globalized templates identified with “Western” modernity.²⁴

For most of the twentieth century, the traditionalist cause was propagated by a loose group of philosophers soon identified as “modern New Confucians”

22 Michael Feige, *Settling in the Hearts: Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009).

23 Chow Tse-tsung, *The May 4th Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 314–337.

24 On the continued urgency of this quest, see Gloria Davies, *Worrying about China: The Language of Chinese Critical Inquiry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

(*dangdai xin rujia* 當代新儒家).²⁵ Although by no means unified in their scholarly outlook and political convictions, most members of this camp combined assertions of the continued relevance of Confucian precepts with more or less labored proofs that Confucian maxims were compatible with, or had even anticipated, modern “Western” forms of intellectual, social, and political organization.²⁶ By the late 1980s, three generations of modern New Confucians had come to accept the utility of modern science as well as some form of democratic government, and only insisted on balancing the unwanted side effects of both through moral prescriptions emerging from creative re-readings of Confucian thought. Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995), the philosophically most ambitious representative of the second generation, flatly declared that of the “three traditions” (*san tong* 三通) guiding human life, the modern West had perfected those of “scholarship” (*xuetong* 學通), including science, and “politics” (*zhengtong* 政通), while China could only boast universally relevant insights in the realm of the “Way” (*daotong* 道通), that is, religion and morality.²⁷ Throughout Chinese history and much to its detriment, however, even the latter had often been confounded with administrative needs or sacrificed for political gains. If it were to retain any place at all, then, Confucian thought needed to focus not only on perfecting individual moral impulses, or cultivating one’s “inner sageliness” (*neisheng* 內聖), as Mou wrote reviving an old formula; in matters of social, economic, and political relevance, or the realm of “outer kingliness” (*wai wang* 外王), Chinese thinkers had to harmonize their views with the best global modernity had to offer.²⁸

A frontal attack on this compromise signaled the advent of Political Confucianism and the rise of a new breed of modern New Confucians, now often referred to as “Mainland New Confucians” (*dalu xin rujia* 大陸新儒家).²⁹ The attack was led by Jiang Qing 將慶 (b. 1953), initially a little-known lecturer in law and amateur philosopher, who would rise to become the most visible leader of a surprisingly influential movement. Nothing in his early life seemed to qualify Jiang for the task. Born and raised in the southwestern

25 For a general overview, see John Makeham, *Lost Soul: “Confucianism” in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

26 Thomas Fröhlich, “‘Confucian Democracy’ and its Confucian Critics: Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi on the Limits of Confucianism,” *Oriens Extremus* 49 (2010): 167–200.

27 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, *Daode de lixiangzhuyi* 道德的理想主義 (Moral idealism) (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1978 [1959]), 152–157.

28 N. Serina Chan, *The Thought of Mou Zongsan* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 82–92.

29 On the formation of this by now well-established group and the utility of the new label, see Steven C. Angle, “The Adolescence of Mainland New Confucianism,” *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 49, no. 2 (2018): 83–99.

borderland province of Guizhou, he followed a rather conventional path. His formal education was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution, but he still managed to enroll in a regional law school in 1978 where, according to one of a growing number of hagiographies, he began to doubt Maoist ideology and immersed himself in European philosophy and political thought, growing especially fond of then-popular authors such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Martin Heidegger, but also John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the young Karl Marx.³⁰ Barred from graduate studies because of his unorthodox political views, Jiang embarked on a spiritual quest in the early 1980s. Reading extensively, so the story continues, he was attracted to aspects of Daoism and Buddhism but found them ultimately wanting. Evangelical Christianity left a more lasting impression. Jiang helped to translate into Chinese James Reid's *Facing Life with Christ* (1940) and Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932), and considered conversion. In 1984, he was offered a scholarship to attend a divinity school in the American South. This temptation, which he turned down at the very last minute, if we are to believe his own account, provoked an epiphany not unlike those recounted in many biographies of born again Christians: about to leave his Chinese life behind, he suddenly became aware of "something deeply rooted inside himself" that ultimately led him to discover his true identity as a Confucian.³¹ By the time he started his private correspondence with Mou Zongsan in 1989, he had studied the key works of modern New Confucianism and also closed glaring gaps in his generation's education in the classical canon through self-study. Initially drawn to the emphasis on ethical concerns of "Heart and Human Nature" Confucianism (*xinxing ruxue* 心性儒學, henceforth referred to as Moral Confucianism), the turmoil leading up to the events of June 4, 1989, convinced him that what he regarded as an existential crisis of Chinese civilization could not be resolved by mimicking "foreign" models such as "liberal democracy." China's only hope was a resurrection of its Confucian soul. Yet, as he wrote in a letter to Mou that announced his future life's mission,

There is no hope to revive Confucianism if we do not turn to issues of [outer kingliness]. It will be difficult for the general public to accept Confucianism if its political teachings cannot provide a solid theoretical foundation for the subsequent political development in China. Hence, the crucial point of development of contemporary Confucianism is to

30 Erika Yu and Meng Fan, "A Confucian Coming of Age," in *The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China*, ed. Fan Ruiping (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 241–257; 244.

31 Yu and Fan, "A Confucian Coming of Age," 246–247. For a slightly different account, see Daniel A. Bell, "Introduction," in Jiang Qing, *A Confucian Constitutional Order: How China's Ancient Past Can Shape its Political Future*, ed. Daniel A. Bell and Fan Ruiping (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 1–24; 4.

reconstruct a new outer kingliness, to which I will dedicate myself from now on.³²

Enter Political Confucianism. The first outlines of this program, which was to culminate in an eponymous book published in 2003, emerged in a series of essays that Jiang published in Mou’s prestigious *Ehu Monthly* (*Ehu yuekan* 鵝湖月刊).³³ Jiang’s starting point was a description of the “crisis of belief” that paralyzed contemporary mainland society.³⁴ As a rationally constructed ideology, Marxism was unsuited to sustain the life and spirit of the Chinese people.³⁵ No less impotent were the secularized theories of “the West” that had attracted so many young minds, including Jiang’s earlier self, with treacherous promises of freedom, human rights, equality, the rule of law, etc., as the multiple crises of late modern societies in Europe and North America amply demonstrated. By ignoring these shortcomings and trying to find or insert traces of similar theorems in China’s traditions, both Marxists and New Confucians had led Chinese civilization astray for more than a century. “Using the West to explain China” (*yi xi shi Zhong* 以西釋中), as both of these groups had tried to do, could only exacerbate the global crisis of modernity by distracting from its root cause: the destruction of traditional authority through the relentless disenchantment of the world.³⁶ It was therefore high time to reverse course and overcome the crisis by a determined effort to reenchant China’s social and political order and liberate it from the glittering but, for China, unsuited blueprints of a fallen post-Enlightenment world dominated by a hegemonic and long corrupted West.

We will sketch the outlines of the retrotopian ideology with which Jiang tried to fill this program in the next section. Prior to that, we need to reflect on the factors that may have helped him move from the margins to the center of mainland Chinese discourse in the aftermath of the turmoil and crushed hopes of 1989.³⁷ Identifying clear-cut, powerful, and numerous enemies, including

32 Quoted in Yu and Fan, “A Confucian Coming of Age,” 249.

33 Jiang Qing 將慶, “Zhongguo dalu fuxing ruxue de xianshi yiyi ji qi mianlin de wenti” 中國大陸復興儒學的現實意義及其面臨的問題 [The practical significance of and problems facing the revival of Confucianism in mainland China], *Ehu yuekan* 170 (August 1989): 29–38 (part 1) and 171 (September 1989): 22–37 (part 2); “Cong xinxing ruxue zouxian zhengzhi ruxue 從心性儒學走向政治儒學 [From Moral Confucianism to Political Confucianism], reprinted in *Dangdai xinruxue lunwen ji—waiwang pian* 當代新儒學論文集—外王篇 [Collected essays on contemporary New Confucianism—Outer kingliness], ed. Liu Shuxian 劉述先 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1991), 153–178.

34 Jiang, “Zhongguo dalu fuxing ruxue de xianshi yiyi,” part 1, 29.

35 Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 262–263.

36 Jiang Qing, “Cong xinxing ruxue zouxian zhengzhi ruxue.”

37 For an overview, see Timothy Cheek, David Ownby, and Joshua A. Fogel, ed. *Voices from*

non-orthodox versions of Marxism in writings published in Taiwan beyond the reach of party censors, was a key part of Jiang's early mission statements and helped him attract attention well beyond the narrow academic circle in which he first launched his vision. Dramatizations of a shared global crisis (in his telling, the roots of the crisis of the modern West were identical to those of China's Westernized present) resonated with prevalent political and individual anxieties, and his plan to rediscover a forgotten tradition coincided with an ever more urgent search for native roots in a rapidly changing social, political, and economic environment.³⁸ Yet, paradoxically for his diagnoses as well as his nativist prescriptions, Jiang relied to a substantial extent on lessons drawn from his declared enemies. His plea for a "turn inward," albeit in spiritual and ethical instead of political terms, had been a staple of all three generations of the modern New Confucians he aimed to dethrone. Yet more significantly, his prophecies of Western doom and his disenchantment with secular society resonated not only with the Western, mostly American, Christian authors he had read and translated, but also with Leo Strauss, whose writings became all the rage in China at the very moment when Jiang entered the public arena.³⁹ Time was thus ripe for his calls to abandon the corrupt present and return to a pristine past that never was.

Next Year in a rebuilt Jerusalem! The ideological visions of the Temple Movement

Restorative nostalgia, "a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home," also stands at the core of the Temple Movement's ideological vision.⁴⁰ In the eyes of its believers, the establishment of the Third Temple fulfills "a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the Edenic unity of time and space before entry into history."⁴¹ Consequently, the reestablishment of the Third Temple is fantasized as something very *different* from yet another Jewish house of prayer, but promoted rather as a project of "total restoration" that aims to recover "a sense of the sacred believed to be missing from the modern world."⁴²

the Chinese Century: Public Intellectual Debate from Contemporary China (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

38 Sébastien Billioud and Joël Thoraval, *The Sage and the People: The Confucian Revival in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

39 Kai Marchal and Carl Shaw, ed., *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss in the Chinese-Speaking World: Reorienting the Political* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017).

40 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xviii.

41 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 8.

42 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 45.

In this fantasy of “total restoration,” we might distinguish between two different political visions for the future, namely an “activist” political project (influenced by LECHI ideologues such as Israel Eldad and Shabtai Ben Dov) and a “quietist” political project (influenced by Yisrael Ariel and the Temple Institute). The quietist version of Temple activism focuses on everyday messianism (see below), for instance through the meticulous preparation of future animal sacrifice (Temple vessels, training of future priests, etc.). According to this quietist messianism, the Third Temple should not be forced into existence, but rather brought about through the right mix of religious enthusiasm and faithful preparation. For adherents of this quietist project, the Third Temple will primarily serve as the prophetic “House of Prayer for All Nations” (Isaiah 56:7).

[The] Temple is the apex of the process of repairing and uplifting the world, culminating with the arrival of the messiah and complete redemption for the entire world. ... [The] First and Second Temples represent the most glorious chapters in Jewish history. Still, the Temple’s primary purpose is to serve as an illumination for the entire world and all who live in it. It is the deepest prayer of the Jewish Nation to see the construction of the Third Holy Temple—may it occur speedily—and that it should stand forever as a center of spirituality for Israel and for the entire world.⁴³

In contrast to this Abrahamic universalism, for the activist wing of the Temple Movement, the Third Temple primarily serves as a symbol of ethno-religious particularism, namely as the most visible form of a political and religious return to authentic Jewish life. In classic retrotopian fashion, this lost sense of Jewish authenticity is projected far back into the pre-Diasporic past. For instance, for Israel Eldad, one of the chief ideologues of LECHI, the Temple merely symbolizes the transition from the “State of Israel” (*Medinat Israel*) to the “Kingdom of Israel” (*Malchut Israel*). According to Eldad, this Kingdom of Israel will be realized based on three profound revolutions in Jewish history: a demographic revolution (the “evacuation of all the exiles and the return to Eretz Israel [Land of Israel] of the entire Jewish People”); a territorial revolution (the “liberation of the entire Land of Israel in accordance with the boundaries set out in the Divine Promise, which are the geopolitical boundaries from the Euphrates to the Nile”); and a cultural revolution (“return, renewal, and revival of the basic values of Judaism deriving from the principles of faith and prophecy by way of all strata of our spiritual achievement”).⁴⁴

43 Yisrael Ariel, *The Holy Temple in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Maggid Books, 2018), 2–3.

44 Israel Eldad, *Israel: The Road to Full Redemption* (New York: Krausher’s Books, 1961), 37.

The Third Temple is thereby transformed into a symbol of restored Jewish authenticity, cleansed from the false idols of non-Jewish culture adopted throughout the Diaspora:

The return to the language and the land is clearly impossible without a return to the spirit which that language, land, and human stem fashioned here. ... It is equally impossible to return to the land without returning to the heavens of that land. ... By way of comparison it is possible to view all that is called European Culture, which has split into two channels, American culture on the one hand and the culture of Soviet Russia on the other, as sub-cultures whose basic values are on the decline, even though their external successes still shine and bedazzle weak eyes. The spiritual personalities in these two sub-cultures are at a loss, for in the depths of their souls they can sense the death of their gods. ... The adored god known as European humanism was one of the victims of the furnaces at Auschwitz, while the god who was known as New Socialist Man froze to death in Siberia.⁴⁵

Eldad's vision of a Kingdom of Israel combines a decidedly Nietzschean vitalism with a puzzling lack of organizational detail, including the question whether this "kingdom" would have a king to begin with.⁴⁶ Many of these organizational gaps were filled by another LECHI thinker, Shabtai Ben Dov, who had a crucial impact on Yehuda Etzion and is best described as the living bridge between the "Jewish Underground" of the 1980s and contemporary activist messianism in the Temple Movement. For Shabtai Ben Dov, the retrotopian vision of a future Kingdom of Israel, organized around a Third Temple, could be spelled out by returning to the Jewish past, namely monarchical rule during the last years of the Second Temple. Consequently, Ben Dov's writings, frequently based on halachical authorities such as Maimonides, are highly detailed when it comes to the institutional set-up of this future Jewish theocracy. Instead of Israel's liberal democracy, Ben Dov called for the actual return of monarchical rule (by the House of David, of course), counceled by both the Sanhedrin (a council of seventy-one priests and rabbinical authorities) and the prophetic leadership of the tribe of Levi.⁴⁷ According to Ben Dov, this Jewish theocracy would be driven by religious law (*halacha*) instead of alien value systems, it would espouse a "Hebrew morality of war" instead of Christian humanism, and it would leave non-Jews

45 Eldad, *Israel*, 35–36.

46 On Eldad's translations of Nietzsche, see David Ohana, "From Right to Left: Israel Eldad and Nietzsche's Reception in Israel," *Nietzsche Studies* 38, no. 1 (2009): 363–388.

47 Inbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, 55–57.

the options of emigration, conversion, or open warfare. In this context, Ben Dov was particularly fascinated by the future planning of Jerusalem as the future capital of this theocracy, which was centered on a totalizing vision of the Third Temple, and was visibly disinterested in the future fate of the Knesset building, Israel's soon-to-be ex-parliament:

The priestly-ceremonial function, described here as ritual and historical consecration, are but a branch from the state function, which again is supposed always to return and draw its vitalism from them, even when it comes to secular affairs, in an ongoing circle. ... Given the principle of this structure ... of course the use of the 'Knesset' building in the current governmental quarter will be canceled. ... Instead, it is important that the Temple will return to be the center of Hebrew life, spiritually and politically united into one.⁴⁸



Fig. 2. Yehuda Etzion, sketch of the Third Temple, superimposed on the Dome of the Rock.⁴⁹

Inspired by these writings, Yehuda Etzion (Ben Dov's most important disciple) published in 2014 the first results of a large-scale exercise of city

48 Shabtai Ben Dov, "Al tikhnun Yerushalayim" [On the planning of Jerusalem] (1971), in *Ladder to the Promised Kingdom of Israel*, 534–535.

49 Yehuda Etzion, *Sefer Yerushalayim Ha-Benuya* [Book of Jerusalem rebuilt] (Jerusalem: self-published, 2014), 27.

planning, thereby transforming Ben Dov's messianic visions into real-world retrotopian architectural designs (see Fig. 2). At the center of this project (entitled "A Rebuilt Jerusalem") stands not only the Third Temple, but also a Jewish polity without non-Jews. To quote Etzion himself:

The picture of the future of Jerusalem which we are painting is a Holy City for the people of Israel, without any hold by a foreign people or foreign religions, certainly not dozens of mosques, monasteries, and churches as is the case today. These are foreign characteristics that will have to go. It is possible that some Arabs who form an alliance with us will be able to live in the State of Israel, but they will be few and their presence will be less significant.⁵⁰

"Sovereignty lies in Heaven": Reenchanted China's political order

While the Temple Movement prepared to rebuild Jerusalem, Jiang, and with him the project of a muscular Political Confucianism that he announced when inserting himself in public debates on the fate of Chinese civilization, made a tactical retreat to the periphery. He had started to flesh out his program for a reenchanted China's political and social order in 1989 while teaching at an administrative college in the emerging southern boomtown of Shenzhen. Disillusioned with his job, despondent about the political situation, and angered by the (very rare) calls of exiled Tian'anmen activists to end Communist rule through outside intervention,⁵¹ Jiang opened his crusade to reenergize Confucianism in a most unlikely fashion: by writing a sub-commentary on a largely forgotten commentary from the second century BCE on the least accessible of the even more ancient Confucian classics, the *Gongyang Tradition* (*Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳) to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋).⁵² This enterprise was inspired by an earlier effort to draw radical political lessons from this text by the late Qing reformer Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1929). Although Kang's attempt to legitimize calls for a constitutional monarchy by far-fetched interpretations of the *Gongyang Tradition*, which portrayed Confucius as an institutional

50 Arnon Segal, "Ha-Khazon shel atzor ha-makhteret: Rakevet le-veyt ha-mikdash" [The vision of the underground prisoner: A train to the Temple], *Makor Rishon*, June 9, 2013, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.makorishon.co.il/nrg/online/11/ART2/504/492.html>.

51 Yu and Fan, "A Confucian Coming of Age," 249–250.

52 Jiang Qing, *Gongyangxue yinlun: Rujia zhengzhi zhihui yu lishi xinyang* 公羊學引論：儒家政治智慧與歷史信仰 [An introduction to Gongyang studies: The political wisdom and historical beliefs of Confucianism] (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1993). On the *Gongyang Tradition*, see Michael Loewe, ed. *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early Chinese Texts, 1993), 67–76.

reformer, had failed to prevent the collapse of the imperial order,⁵³ Jiang found in Kang a versatile model to replicate in his own activities. Like Kang, he extracted hidden political messages from esoteric passages, and like Kang he read the text as proof that Confucianism, rightly understood, could be turned into an institutionalized religion equivalent, or even superior in political efficacy, to Christianity in Europe and North America.⁵⁴ Without offering novel philological insights, Jiang used his interpretation to anchor key points of his political agenda in a classical source. In his reading, the *Gongyang Tradition* emphasized outer kingliness rather than inner sageliness, sketched a program for action that offered hope in dark times, and provided a model for universal kingship that unified communities not by force but by instilling a shared sense of moral responsibility through education and example.⁵⁵

One virtue Jiang found in the text that had not been identified by Kang is of particular interest in our context: An unwavering “spirit of revenge” (*fuchou jingshen* 復仇精神) that Jiang singled out as a transhistorical and indispensable characteristic of the “Chinese nation.”⁵⁶ For Jiang, the way in which this revanchist spirit was described in the *Tradition* held a valuable lesson for contemporary China, in that it reminded his contemporaries that devotion to the nation required not only individual sacrifice but also merciless vengeance:

The Chinese nation was from antiquity a nation with a spirit of honor and shame and, molded by this spirit, the Chinese have always regarded the dignity of the nation and the reputation of the state as more important than their own lives. As soon as nation and state suffered humiliation, they felt as if they were personally humiliated and were overcome with inconsolable grief, so much so that they had to avenge the humiliation with blood, regardless of the consequences, in order to restore the dignity and reputation of the nation.⁵⁷

53 Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, *A Modern China and a New World: K'ang Yu-wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858–1927* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 97–136.

54 Jiang Qing, “Chongjian rujiao jihua” 重建儒教計畫 [A plan to reestablish China’s Confucian religion], *Zhongguo rujiao yanjiu tongxun* 1 (December 2005): 1–5. On Kang’s ideas, see Kuo Ya-pei, “‘Christian Civilization’ and the Confucian Church: The Origin of Secularist Politics in Modern China,” *Past & Present* 218 (February 2013): 235–264.

55 Jiang Qing, *Gongyangxue yinlun*, 27–44, 45–60, 191–205.

56 Jiang Qing, *Gongyangxue yinlun*, 329–347.

57 Jiang Qing, *Gongyangxue yinlun*, 339.

Only because it had cultivated this spirit over “five thousand years of its history” could China become a self-confident nation with an irrepressible ability to renew and strengthen itself, so that no one could ever detest it as weak and lethargic. What the nation gained from this spirit, according to Jiang, was a sense of “inner peace and collective destiny” (*anshen liming* 安身立命) that entailed an unmistakable religious dimension and had strong nationalist implications.⁵⁸ Highlighting the virtues of resentment and revanchism as essential elements of Confucian morality and the precondition of a “self-confident” (*zixin* 自信) nation brought Jiang’s Political Confucianism in line with the CCP strategy amplified in the aftermath of 1989 to deflect public rage onto outside enemies by promoting a litany of national humiliations in their program of “patriotic education.”⁵⁹ It also struck a chord with nationalistically aroused audiences. Published in a non-descript series of popular introductions to classical works, Jiang’s aggressive assertion of Confucianism’s latent political power earned him a wide array of passionate readers and further raised his visibility and profile.

However, soon after publication, Jiang, once again emulating Kang Youwei, resigned from his humble academic position to devote himself to meditation, study, and the establishment of a private academy dedicated to unfolding concrete details of his emerging program of action. The partial retreat from his increasingly public life marked his first practical step to act upon his nostalgia for a life untainted by the exigencies of the corrupt present. Far from slipping into oblivion, the performative renunciation of convenience and publicity (see Fig. 3) only enhanced his visibility and hastened his transformation from academic to prophet. Although it would take him years to secure the funds and land to build his own academy—the Yangming Retreat (Yangming Jingshe 陽明精舍) was eventually opened in Longchang village in a mountainous region of his native province of Guizhou in 1998—Jiang received a steady flow of visitors and disciples, some of whom provided means and connections that proved invaluable for disseminating his agenda,⁶⁰ as we will see in the next section.

58 Jiang Qing, *Gongyangxue yinlun*, 339. See Billioud and Thoraval, *The Sage and the People*, 111–144.

59 Paul A. Cohen, “Remembering and Forgetting National Humiliation in Twentieth-Century China,” *Twentieth-Century China* 27, no. 2 (2013): 1–39; William A. Callahan, “National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism,” *Alternatives* 29, no. 2 (2004): 199–218; Wang Zheng, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

60 For an adulatory account of a visit to Jiang’s Retreat by his most devoted non-Chinese adept, see Daniel A. Bell, “A Visit to a Confucian Academy,” *Dissent*, September 22, 2008, accessed May 26, 2022, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/a-visit-to-a-confucian-academy/.



Fig. 3. Jiang meditating at the Yangming Retreat in Longchang, Guizhou Province, a place built “to bring inner peace to a Confucian’s restless soul” (wei rujia youhun anshen 為儒家遊魂安身).⁶¹

Dividing his time between summers in Guizhou and winters in balmy Shenzhen, Jiang finished his long-awaited *Political Confucianism (Zhengzhi ruxue 政治儒學)* soon after the opening of his Retreat. The work was eventually published on the mainland in 2003 and followed one year later by a monograph paraphrasing his message that appeared in Taiwan under the title *Faith in Life and the Kingly Way of Politics (Shengming xinyang yu wangdao zhengzhi 生命信仰與王道政治)*.⁶² Together with a set of essays first published in English as *A Confucian Constitutional Order*,⁶³ these texts finally laid out

61 Li Xiang 李响, “Yige ruzhe de xiandai tuwei: Yangming Jingshe fang Jiang Qing” 一個儒者的現代突圍——陽明精舍訪蔣慶 [A Confucian’s modern escape: Visiting Jiang Qing at his Yangming Retreat], *Rujia wang* [Confucian web 儒家網], August 16, 2010, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.rujiazg.com/article/1512>.

62 Jiang Qing, *Zhengzhi ruxue: Dangdai ruxue de zhuanxiang, tezhì yu fazhan* 政治儒學：當代儒學的轉向，特質與發展 [Political Confucianism: The transformation, characteristics and development of contemporary Confucianism] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2003); Jiang Qing, *Shengming xinyang yu wangdao zhengzhi: Rujia wenhua de xiandai jiazhi* 生命信仰與王道政治：儒家文化的現代價值 [Living faith and the Kingly Way of politics: The modern value of Confucian culture] (Zhonghe: Yangzhengtang wenhua shiye gongsi, 2004).

63 Jiang Qing, *A Confucian Constitutional Order: How China’s Ancient Past Can Shape its Political Future* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). The publication of this book with the prestigious Princeton University Press was engineered once again by Daniel A. Bell, until very

the specifics of his political vision. Jiang presented this vision not just as a recovery of ancient wisdom, but as a practical necessity. The disenchantment of the world in the process of modernization had led to a crisis of Chinese consciousness that resulted from its blind adoption of foreign ways. This crisis endangered the nation's survival by undermining the indispensable sources of supramundane authority. Three losses brought about by secularization proved to be particularly harmful. The loss of historical continuity, as exemplified by the demise of the imperial order in 1911, had subverted the national spirit. The loss of sacredness, reputation, and value had invited derelictions of duty. And the loss of loyalty destroyed the foundations of morality and religion and delegitimized culture and state.⁶⁴ To respond to these threats, Jiang rejected the secularized idea of popular sovereignty, which lay at the heart of liberal democracy and was embraced by earlier modern New Confucians. Instead, he called to replace it by a retrotopian vision of the world anchored in "Heaven" (*tian* 天) as the seat of "sacred sovereignty" (*shensheng zhuquan* 神聖主權) and absolute authority.

This restorative design of a reenchanting political order required complex argumentative props. The first was a reconceptualization of "Heaven" that had little to do with mainstream Confucian views. Pointing, like Kang a century before him, to the Song philosopher Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and the Han scholar Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE),⁶⁵ Jiang held that Heaven needed to be seen in two ways. On the one hand, it was a transcendent, metaphysical force, a divine spirit that acted in mysterious ways. As such, it possessed creative omnipotence and sustained the unity of all that existed. On the other hand, Heaven revealed itself in the physical, human realm by exerting "lordship": it manifested a sacred will and acted as a "Lord on High" (*shangdi* 上帝) that functioned much like a monotheistic god, even if Jiang repeatedly tried to dispel this impression.⁶⁶ Jiang's second challenge was to prove the key idea of Political Confucianism that "sovereignty rests in Heaven."⁶⁷ This was a crucial step for his project of conscious "reenchantment."⁶⁸ He argued that

recently a tireless promoter of the "China Model" and its allegedly Confucian underpinnings. See, for instance, Daniel A. Bell, *China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Daniel A. Bell, *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

64 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 89–91.

65 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 50, 182–183.

66 Li Chenyang, "Transcendent Heaven? A Critique of Jiang Qing's Grounding of the Right to Rule," in Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 129–138; for Jiang's response, see Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 188–192.

67 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 48.

68 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 208.

only Heaven as a “metaphysical,” “sacred,” and “personal” force was invested with the power to guarantee an authority that could be recognized as “sacred,” “absolute,” “exclusive,” and “supreme.”⁶⁹ Jiang was aware that such recognition depended upon an act of faith and could not be justified by reason. But what was the alternative? “The people,” among whom sovereignty was located by modern political thought, possessed no similar power since they were a “secularized” and “limited” force that represented only a “narrow collection of human desires.”⁷⁰ Despite its egalitarian appeal, popular sovereignty was therefore a danger rather than a blessing. It reneged on the key role of the state to propagate sacred values and invited endless controversies about selfish gains. Only an activist state whose actions and sources of legitimacy transcended the human realm would be able to settle pointless conflicts of interest and ensure security, peace, and stability.

If sovereignty rested in Heaven, however, how could it be delegated to the human realm and translated into a blueprint for a viable political order? This third task consumed most of Jiang’s deliberations. In reply to calls for clarification, he provided a diagrammatic sketch that can serve as a convenient guide to his conception (Fig. 4; for a full translation, see Fig. 9 in the Appendix).

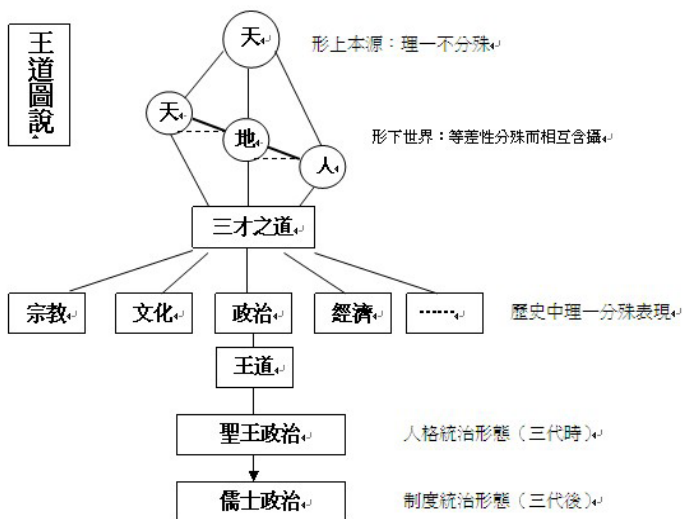


Fig. 4. “The ‘Kingly Way,’ Illustrated and Explained.”⁷¹

69 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 71–74.

70 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 48–52.

71 Jiang Qing, “Wangdao tushuo: ‘Rujia xianzheng’ de yili jichu yu ‘huiyi sanyuan zhi’” 王道圖說——‘儒家憲政’的義理基礎與‘會議三院制’ [The Kingly Way, illustrated and explained:

Read from top to bottom, Jiang opened with a reminder of the twofold nature of Heaven, as a unified metaphysical principle and a concrete power underlying all physical phenomena. In the human realm, its manifestations split into the “three powers” (*san cai* 三才) of heaven, earth, and man, which mutually nurtured and sustained one another. The interactions of these powers with the transcendent unity found specific expressions in history, where they coalesced, for instance, into the realms of religion, culture, politics, economics, and so on. In line with classical conceptions, Jiang conceded that Heaven revealed its concrete will only sparingly, if ever.⁷² The only unambiguous example was the “mandate” with which it had entrusted the Ancient Sage Kings of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties (2100–475 BCE). Gifted by Heaven, the actions of these sage rulers embodied the “Kingly Way” (*wangdao* 王道). They ruled through personal example and the strength of their character.⁷³ While the world is waiting for the arrival of a new sage king, the best humanity can do is to study the classical texts documenting their deeds in hopes of recovering enough clues about Heaven’s will to intuit what the “Kingly Way” may demand in specific circumstances. For most of China’s history, literati officials were the only specialists trained to preserve and decode these texts, interpret their meaning for contemporary problems, and translate their instructions into effective institutional arrangements. Heaven’s sacred sovereignty had thus been delegated to them, but with the forced advent of modernity and the collapse of the imperial order, their role had been usurped by “the people” or those claiming to represent their interests in an act of “cultural self-mutilation” with disastrous results,⁷⁴ as Jiang reminded his readers time and again. His conclusion was that only a restitution of “rule by scholarship” (*xuezhi* 學治), i.e., by a new class of Confucian scholar-officials, could ensure a form of government attuned to the decrees of Heaven. This form of rule, as Jiang envisioned it, was superior, he claimed, both to the “rule of law” (*fazhi* 法治), practiced however imperfectly in the West, and the “rule by virtue” (*dezhi* 德治), propagated by modern New Confucians.⁷⁵

Jiang’s creative, and transparently self-serving, exhumations of a past that never was did not end at this point. In a final act of defiance, he translated his restorative impulses into a detailed blueprint for a “Confucian constitution.”

The moral foundation of ‘Confucian constitutionalism’ and the ‘Tricameral parliamentary system’], *Rujia wang*, October 27, 2013, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.rujiazg.com/article/3663>.

72 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 49–50.

73 Jiang, *Zhengzhi ruxue*, 154–160.

74 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 67.

75 Jiang, *Shengming xinyang yu wangdao zhengzhi*, 437–450.

The decision to devise such a plan certainly begged for an explanation. Jiang repeatedly sneered at the failures of the rule of law, especially in the United States, and condemned the “purely negative” functions of constitutions throughout Western history. Vaguely inspired by Strauss and gesturing also toward Carl Schmitt, he argued that “rights-based” constitutions that limited abuses of power and guaranteed individual rights privileged “common people” and their selfish, short-sighted interests over the scholarly elite and their superior understanding of morality, religion, and the needs of state and nation.⁷⁶ A Confucian constitution therefore needed to be “morality-based” and reflect entirely different priorities: it should not only prevent authorities from doing wrong, but impel the people to do good; it should not only protect civil rights, but also promote morality.⁷⁷ Even if China was a multi-ethnic and pluri-religious state, this meant, according to Jiang, that the constitution should propagate only a narrow set of fundamental Confucian values.⁷⁸

Jiang’s draft constitution was first published in English and thus at a safe distance from China. This appears to have been a wise decision, considering that it paid no heed whatsoever to the existing legal framework of the People’s Republic or its ruling party. Instead, it offered the vision of a quasi-theocratic monarchy whose key elements, despite the traditional terms in which Jiang clad them, merged diverse foreign models, from the United Kingdom to the Islamic Republic of Iran (Fig. 5).

Jiang’s draft built on his conception of sacred sovereignty. The “Supreme Academy,” whose name Jiang borrowed from the seventeenth-century Ming loyalist Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695),⁷⁹ was designed as the state organ with the highest authority and the most expansive functions. It consisted of about one hundred carefully chosen scholars and other dignitaries who proved their qualifications through success in a revived system of civil examinations based on new versions of the Confucian classics. The Academy was to combine elements of a college for the emperor, as envisioned by Huang, with tasks assigned to the imperial

76 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 53–55.

77 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 52–53. On Jiang’s view of the state, see also Jiang Qing, “Guojia bixu queli zhengquanxing yu zhudaoxing de zhipai jiazhi—‘zhengzhi ruxue’ dui ziyoushuo xue de huiying zhiyi: Yi Chen Zuwei jiaoshou wei li” 國家必須確立整全性與主導性的支配價值——“政治儒學”對自由主義學理的回應之一：以陳祖為教授為例 [The state must establish comprehensive and dominant guiding values. One reply of “Political Confucianism” to liberal theory, taking Professor Chen Zuwei as an example], *Rujia wang*, July 26, 2016, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.rujiazq.com/article/8649>.

78 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 47–48.

79 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 55–56. For Huang’s own description of the Academy, see William Theodore de Bary, *Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince. Huang Tsung-hsi’s Ming-i Tai-fang Lu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 102–110.

guardians of orthodoxy, formerly assembled in the venerated Hanlin Academy (Hanlinyuan 翰林院), and other roles resembling those performed by the Guardian Council in contemporary Iran. The Academy was to play a supervisory role, on the one hand, by instructing and mentoring the emperor; on the other, by censuring other branches of government if they ever violated Confucian precepts. It drafted educational curricula and regularly lectured government officials; oversaw the examination system; designed and officiated rites and ceremonies; recalled and impeached corrupt officials; mediated conflicts within the government and between the government and the public; and upheld moral and religious values.⁸⁰ Jiang himself added a long note to this description to dispel suspicions that he imagined the Academy as a Chinese version of Taliban-style rule, and likened it instead, without much explanation and only slightly less disconcertingly, to the College of Cardinals in the Vatican.⁸¹ The role of the Symbolic Monarch, whose title and functions Jiang borrowed from Kang Youwei, who in turn had adapted them from British practices,⁸² was even less clearly defined. Jiang envisioned this office as largely ceremonial. The monarch had neither legislative nor executive powers but nevertheless served an essential function by embodying the unity and historical and cultural continuity of the Chinese nation.⁸³ As to who was best suited to fill this role, Jiang, somewhat desperately, suggested an heir to Confucius himself, probably not least because the descendants of the last ruling dynasty could claim no Han Chinese ethno-cultural heritage.⁸⁴ Heaven's sovereignty was not delegated to the monarch directly, but mediated through the Academy, who boasted the knowledge and wisdom to instruct him in the "Kingly Way."

80 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 57–64.

81 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 220–221n39–40.

82 Jiang Qing, "Kang Youwei de sanda sixiang yichan: Guojiao lun, Kongjiaohui lun, xujun gonghe lun" 康有為的三大思想遺產：國教論，孔教會論，虛君論 [Three great ideas Kang Youwei left us: The theories of state religion, Confucian associations, and the symbolic monarch], *Rujia wang*, June 2, 2015, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.rujiazg.com/article/5551>. For a sympathetic reconstruction of Kang's notion of a "republic with a symbolic monarch," see Gan Chunsong 干春松 "Xujun gonghe": 1911 zhi hou Kang Youwei duiyu guojia zhengzhi tizhi de gouxiang "虛君共和": 一九一一年之後康有為對於國家政治體制的構想 [A Republic with a Symbolic Monarch': Kang Youwei's conception of the nation's political system after 1911], *Dongwu xueshu*, no. 2 (2015): 5–22. See also Wan Zhaoyuan, *Science and the Confucian Religion of Kang Youwei (1858–1927): China Before the Conflict Thesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 148–152.

83 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 91–94.

84 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 88–89.

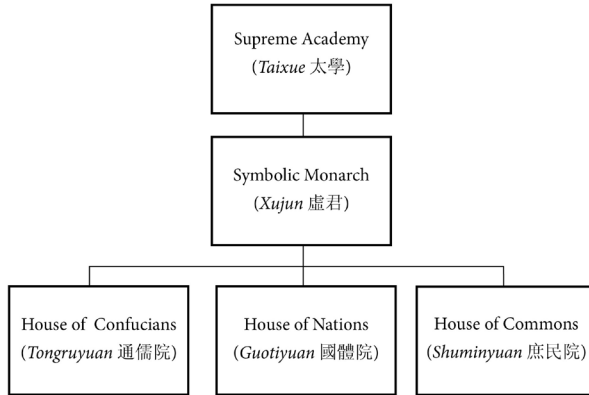


Fig. 5. The tricameral parliament in Jiang's "constitutional Confucianism."⁸⁵

The three chambers of parliament that completed Jiang's draft also drew their "sacred legitimacy" from Heaven, but in an even more mediated fashion: they were rooted in the Three Powers of heaven, earth, and man. All three were to hold "parliamentary" power, even if they remained subject to supervision by the Academy.⁸⁶ To be passed, any bill had to be accepted by all three or, as Jiang wrote elsewhere, at least two. Still, the three chambers were by no means equal: the House of Confucians, which enjoyed the most sacred legitimacy and was to assemble eminent scholars appointed by recommendation or examination, held a permanent veto power over the other two. The House of Nations was rooted in the cultural and historical legitimacy associated by Jiang with earth. It was to be led by yet another descendant of Confucius who personally selected its members from the families of great sages, rulers, or "patriots," and among "professors of Chinese history," meritorious officials, retired judges, etc. He could also invite representatives of "ethnic minorities" and non-orthodox religions, such as Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, etc. Executive tasks, which seemed of no great concern for Jiang, were relegated rather dismissively to the House of Commons, whose hardly illustrious members were to be chosen "according to the processes and norms of Western parliaments."

Although Jiang insisted that his draft portrayed a "realizable utopia,"⁸⁷ its glaring gaps (for instance, how will the chambers cooperate and who will

⁸⁵ English translations follow those provided in Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*.

⁸⁶ Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 88–89.

⁸⁷ Zheng Weiwei 鄭維偉, "Rujia xianzhengzhuyi: Yige xianshi de wutuobang?" 儒家憲政主義：一個現實的烏托邦? [Confucian constitutionalism: A realizable utopia?], *Zhejiang shehui kexue*, no. 1 (2013): 8–16.

carry out the actual work of government?) and exclusions (for example, will any women be involved?) leave no doubt that his sketch was conceived above all as a performative rejection of “modern,” “Western,” or “liberal” modes and ideals of political and social order. Many of his prescriptions, and the concrete models from which they were drawn, seemed designed above all as negations of secularized practices rather than practical solutions to concrete problems. Yet, despite its outspoken hostility, his draft offered not a negation but merely a variation of a quintessentially modern and Western model of political order. In its mimetic isomorphism, it betrayed simultaneously how earnestly he loathed his declared enemies and how much he had learned from them.

For understandable reasons, given the touchiness of China’s censors, Jiang offered no clue as to how he imagined the transition from the current regime to his sinicized theocratic fantasy of total restoration. While appealing for a return to imagined traditions reaching back thousands of years, his reliance on Kang, a visionary endowed with a sense of mission and a will to power that easily dwarfed Jiang’s expansive ambitions, indicated a second layer of his retrotopian longings: the desire to return to a world just before the fall of the Chinese empire, unscathed by the devastations of the twentieth century, and thus to an imaginary land of infinite possibilities, a viable empire with enchanted powers untouched by the misguided reforms and failed revolutions that had pushed China into its present, desperately deplorable state.⁸⁸

Fridge magnets and transgressive pilgrims: Everyday messianism in Israel’s Temple Movement

Yehuda Etzion’s playful futuristic planning for a “rebuilt Jerusalem” may remind us of Boym’s metaphor of the “Jurassic park syndrome, in which the most modern science is used for the recovery of the prehistoric world”⁸⁹: A form of retrotopian “technonostalgia,” which seeks to escape “from contemporary history and local memories”⁹⁰ in its desire to rebuild “one’s homeland with paranoid determination.”⁹¹ In addition, a closer look at the gift shop of the Temple Institute points to another element of Boym’s analysis of restorative nostalgia, namely the “souvenirization of the past,” a “marketing

88 Jiang Qing, “Zhuanfang Jiang Qing: ‘Huidao Kang Youwei’ shi zhengzhi chengshu biaoqian” 專訪蔣慶：‘回到康有為’是政治成熟表現 [Interview with Jiang Qing: ‘The return to Kang Youwei’ is an expression of political maturity], *Rujia wang*, October 13, 2014, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.rujiazg.com/article/4416>.

89 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 33.

90 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 33.

91 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 354.

strategy that tricks consumers into missing what they haven't lost."⁹² The collection of souvenirs includes fridge magnets (see Fig. 6), wooden miniature models of the Temple vessels,⁹³ silver necklaces in the shape of the Temple,⁹⁴ poster sets of the priestly garments,⁹⁵ the childrens' book *It Could Have Been* (which depicts the Temple as part of modern Jerusalem),⁹⁶ custom-tailored priestly garments,⁹⁷ and giant self-construction models of the Temple, "ideal for displaying in schools and institutions ... both extremely attractive and a wonderful educational tool."⁹⁸



Fig. 6. Fridge magnet of the Third Temple from the online store of the Temple Institute.⁹⁹

92 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 38.

93 "Models of the Temple Vessels," The Temple Institute Store, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.templeinstitute.com/product-page/models-of-the-temple-vessels>.

94 "Temple Silver Necklace," The Temple Institute Store, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.templeinstitute.com/product-page/temple-silver-necklace>.

95 "Priestly Garments, Six Poster Set," The Temple Institute Store, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.templeinstitute.com/product-page/priestly-garments-six-poster-set>.

96 *It Could Have Been*, The Temple Institute Store, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.templeinstitute.com/product-page/it-could-have-been>.

97 "Custom-tailored Priestly White Vestments," The Temple Institute Store, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.templeinstitute.com/product-page/priestly-white-vestments-custom-tailored-for-sale>.

98 "Giant Second Temple Model," The Temple Institute Store, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.templeinstitute.com/product-page/giant-second-temple-model>.

99 "Magnet 10," The Temple Institute Store, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.templeinstitute.com/product-page/magnet-10>.

While this souvenirization of the Temple primarily caters toward Jewish-American tourists, the Temple Movement has long developed a distinctive tradition of everyday messianism that goes far beyond richly illustrated coffee table books on the Second Temple or playful Temple events in Israeli schools.¹⁰⁰ Three strategies of counterpresentist activism can be distinguished: messianic prepping, retrotopian theater, and transgressive pilgrimages.

First, in terms of messianic prepping, the Temple Institute stands out for the most up-to-date planning towards the return of animal sacrifice in a Third Temple. While the Temple Institute is agnostic on the question of whether the Third Temple should be established by human or divine intervention, its meticulous preparations are systematically engineered towards creating an end-of-times atmosphere among its visitors. These preparations include: the creation of a golden menorah for the future Temple; the identification of the precious stones in the High Priest's breastplate; the precise topography of the Temple edifice; the exact restoration of Temple vessels, ritual garments, and musical instruments; and research into both historical Temple music and the exact colors used for the priestly Temple vestments, including "a unique breeding pond ... where the various species of sea-life identified with the production of the blue and crimson colors will be raised".¹⁰¹ Some of these preparations seem to combine messianic prepping with fund-raising considerations, not least by pointing out the exact prices of the required Temple vessels: While the price structure for the restoration of "David's Harp" (\$17,000) or the "Golden Crown for the High Priest" (\$8500) seems reasonable, other Temple vessels come at surprising costs, including the "Uniform of the High Priest" for half a million dollars, the "Incense Altar (pure gold)" for one million dollars, or the "Levitical Music Academy" for one and a half million dollars.¹⁰² A special focus is put on the breeding of a red heifer, required for the purification ritual of the Temple high priest. In fact, the Temple Institute has repeatedly declared that it was close, or even very close, to producing viable candidates for this "apocalyptic cow," to quote the Israeli news website *Walla*.¹⁰³

100 Ariel, *The Holy Temple in Jerusalem*. "Pe'iluyot le-vatei sefer yesodi'im" [Activities for elementary schools], accessed May 26, 2022, https://hamikdash.org.il/?page_id=10. For a critical analysis, see "Hakiru et ha-amuta she-melamedet al bayit ha-mikdash be-vatey sefer—be-tiktzuv misrad ha-khinukh" [Get to know the association that teaches about the Temple in schools, funded by the Ministry of Education], *Ha'aretz*, July 16, 2016, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.themarket.com/news/education/2017-07-16/ty-article/0000017f-e09c-d804-ad7f-f1fec6770000>.

101 Ariel, *The Odyssey of the Third Temple*, 104–110.

102 Ariel, *The Odyssey of the Third Temple*, 109.

103 "Para apokaliptit: Ha'im ha-para ha-aduma ha-rishona she-nolda be-Israel me'as 2,000 shana mevaseret ra'ot le-kulanu?" [Apocalyptic cow: Does the first red heifer born in Israel in the last two thousand years announce bad news for all of us?], *Walla*, September 15, 2018, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://news.walla.co.il/item/3187260>.

Second, when it comes to retrotopian theater, the Temple Movement has become famous for the elaborate staging of animal sacrifices, especially around Pessach, not least to showcase its readiness for the return of the Temple. In these public spectacles, decades of messianic prepping are put into practice: Participants are dressed in priestly garments; animals are slaughtered on a training altar; the blood of the slaughtered animals is passed on in Temple vessels; and the entire ceremony is accompanied by restored Temple instruments. As the Israeli center-left newspaper *Ha'aretz* has pointed out, these “demonstrations” of animal sacrifices have the curious tendency of moving closer and closer to the Temple Mount each year: in 2015, the ceremony was held in a distance of about four kilometers from the Temple Mount; in 2016, the “training sacrifice” was held on the Mount of Olives (one and a half kilometers from the Temple Mount); in 2017 in the Jewish Quarter, some 400 metres from the Temple Mount—and since 2018, the ceremony is held close to the Jerusalem Archaeological Park, next to the Western Wall, only tens of meters from the Temple Mount.¹⁰⁴

Third, when it comes to transgressive pilgrimages, Temple activists routinely defy the limits of the *status quo* by performing Jewish prayers on the Temple Mount. These practices can be described as transgressive on two accounts: first, they challenge the Ultra-Orthodox consensus that Jews should not enter the Temple Mount in the first place; second, they systematically bend the rules of the *status quo*, namely the imposition of Muslim-only prayer on the site. So far, practices more transgressive than mere prayer have failed, none more so than yearly attempts to perform animal sacrifices on the Temple Mount itself. However, when it comes to Jewish prayer, Temple activists take a distinct pride in recording these practices themselves and putting them online.¹⁰⁵ In some cases, these practices include a certain sleight of hand. Tour guides will announce that “while Jewish prayer is certainly forbidden, this is what we *would* say if only it were allowed”; visitors will pretend to greet one another by actually performing prayers; and in rare cases, Temple activists will disguise themselves as Arab Muslims to perform Jewish prayers even *inside* the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa-Mosque (see Fig. 7).¹⁰⁶

104 Nir Hasson, “Jewish Activists to Reenact Passover Sacrifice at Foot of Temple Mount,” *Ha'aretz*, March 26, 2018, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2018-03-26/ty-article/.premium/jerusalem-police-authorize-passover-sacrifice-at-foot-of-temple-mountain/0000017f-db57-d856-a37f-ffd7bcd00000>.

105 Among the many examples, see, for instance, “Prayer on the Temple Mount: A Moving Glimpse,” The Temple Institute, uploaded October 18, 2013, YouTube video, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StoE7jPqh1c>.

106 “The Jews Dressing as Muslims to Get around a Prayer Ban,” *BBC*, February 8, 2022, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-60291670>.



קורס מסתערבי הר הבית
ZOOM

בעקבות כניעת הממשלה לטרור וסגירת הר הבית לעולים יהודים,
אנו פותחים קורס מקוצר עליה להר הבית דרך השערים הנתרים,
על ידי הסתערבות והשתלבות בסביבה מוסלמית

ימי ראשון (1.5) ושלישי (3.5) הקרובים	מתי?
21:00-22:30	שעה?
בזום!	איפה?
לכל יהודי שלא מוכן להפקיר את הר הבית מנוכחות יהודית.	למי הקורס מיועד?

הקורס - חינם!

להרשמה- לחצו על הקישור המצורף

*תתאפשר קניה של ביגוד וציוד מתאים בסוף הקורס

Fig. 7. Khozrim la-Har [Returning to the (Temple) Mount], online class for “ascending the Temple Mount ... by masquerading as Arabs and integrating into the Muslim surrounding.”¹⁰⁷

107 Khozrim la-Har, “Kurs mist’aravey har ha-bayit” [Course for the Arabizers of the Temple Mount], Twitter, April 26, 2022, 18:38, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://twitter.com/CozrimLahar/status/1518992802939613184?ctx=HHwWgMC5uYD6xZQqAAAA>.

Resurrecting authenticity: Reenactments of Confucian lives

While Jiang meditated on the fate of Chinese civilization and his next moves to gain a wider audience for his message, sprouts of a more general Confucian revival blossomed all over China. The desire to find “inner peace and a collective destiny” in restorative nostalgia was not felt by Jiang and his immediate followers alone, but drove a broad range of actors to turn their backs, with varying degrees of abruptness, on contemporary society and seek new founts of purpose, solace, hope, distraction, and identity in Confucianism’s moral and spiritual heritage. Sébastien Billioud and the late Joël Thoraval have painstakingly documented how attempts to reinsert Confucian themes into educational curricula began to flourish alongside a reenergized drive to turn Confucianism into a state religion and the recovery of Confucian rituals in all walks of civic and political life.¹⁰⁸ Kenneth Hammond and Jeffrey Richie have added accounts of the adaptation of Confucian tropes in online chat rooms and among youth cultures of diverse ideological persuasions,¹⁰⁹ and Kevin Carrico’s ethnographic study of the Han Clothing Movement (*Hanfu yundong* 漢服運動) has traced large numbers of urban youth who act out their desire for a pure, well ordered, secure, and racially homogenous China by getting together dressed in imaginary Han ethnic garb. Carrico even spells out the similarities between his subject and Jiang Qing’s political agenda: “Both rely on unrestrained imaginings of a traditionalist fantasy representing the one and only ‘real China,’ towards which each aim to proceed as the natural yet perpetually elusive conclusion of identity.”¹¹⁰ In fact, not only in the case of the Han Clothing Movement, but in all instances mentioned above, Confucian revivalism appears to feed off the lure of retrotopian fantasies and to celebrate theatrical enactments of a counterpresentist lifestyle. In all cases too, hostility to foreign and domestic others is intertwined with deliberate efforts to learn from the enemy.

Although he strategically and carefully cultivated his image as a latter-day sage, Jiang did not hesitate to enter China’s sprawling educational and spiritual marketplace in the early 2000s. On the contrary, he relished the opportunity to complement his philosophical efforts to re-Confucianize the Chinese state with his own form of technonostalgia. Encouraged, advised, and financially supported by worldly associates with impressive business acumen, Jiang did not hesitate to take the low road to change popular

108 Billioud and Thoraval, *The Sage and the People*.

109 Kenneth J. Hammond and Jeffrey L. Richey, ed., *The Sage Returns: Confucian Revival in Contemporary China* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014).

110 Kevin Carrico, *The Great Han: Race, Nationalism, and Tradition in China Today* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 201.

customs and beliefs. His savvy actions further raised his public visibility. One early example is his involvement in an informal “Children’s Classics Reading” (*shao’er dujing* 少兒讀經) campaign that he helped to initiate together with the retired Taiwanese professor and Confucian activist Wang Caigui 王財貴 (b. 1949).¹¹¹ Thanks to the participation of diverse actors and institutions, from China’s Central Television and religious organizations to commercial companies distributing reading materials together with non-descript items of daily use, several million children became acquainted with moralizing snippets of classical texts, mostly through extracurricular activities organized in or by their primary schools.¹¹² To further this cause, Jiang compiled an extensive children’s reader for a commercial publisher of educational materials.¹¹³ In his preface, he explained that he excluded non-Confucian materials from the collection because Daoist or other non-orthodox texts were saturated with political schemes and therefore dangerous to the moral development of children. Instead, he offered a purified Confucian “quintessence” of Chinese culture that “every Chinese must know to be considered Chinese.”¹¹⁴ For all its success, Jiang’s strategy was hardly new. Its exclusive and combative tone made it appear like a radicalized mainland echo of earlier modern new Confucian efforts to reinsert Confucian contents into educational curricula, the most prominent example of which was perhaps Du Weiming’s 杜維明 (b. 1940) draft for a primary school curriculum commissioned by Singapore’s former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew in the 1990s.

The second cause that Jiang publicly supported was the drive to establish Confucianism as China’s state religion. The idea of a Confucian church can be traced back, as we have seen, to a blueprint by Kang Youwei and his associates from the late nineteenth century. It gained renewed traction thanks to the dedicated action of grassroots activists, assistance from Confucian organizations based in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and affluent supporters in various Chinese provinces.¹¹⁵ The sense of urgency these actors shared was amplified by a widely perceived threat to China’s national identity through a silent but effective evangelization drive. Jiang had sympathized with the idea of a Confucian state religion from the early 1990s, but only threw his weight

111 For a general survey of the Classics-reading Movement, see Sandra Gilgan, *Utopia in the Revival of Confucian Education: An Ethnography of the Classics-reading Movement in Contemporary China* (Leiden: Brill, 2022); specifically on Wang Caigui, see Gilgan, 31–38.

112 Billioud and Thoraval, *The Sage and the People*, 41–45.

113 Jiang Qing, *Zhonghua wenhua jingdian jichu jiaoyu songben* 中華文化經典基礎教育誦本 [Readers in the classics of Chinese culture for elementary education], 12 vols. (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004).

114 Chen Yong, *Confucianism as Religion: Controversies and Consequences* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 176.

115 Billioud and Thoraval, *The Sage and the People*, 146–152.

behind it in the early 2000s. In 2005 he wrote a proposal to “reestablish” Confucianism as China’s exclusive state religion with the explicit purpose of countering Christianity.¹¹⁶ In line with his general ideological drive, he advertised three useful effects of this motion: it secured sacred legitimacy for political action, set norms regulating social conduct, and provided religious faith for the common people. In return, Jiang demanded preferential treatment in organizational and financial matters, extensive opportunities to reshape education, and rights to direct sacrificial ceremonies in the name of the state.¹¹⁷ To lend urgency to his proposal, Jiang wrote: “Faced with the challenge of Western culture on all fronts, it is necessary to revive the Confucian religion (*rujiao* 儒教) on all fronts. Only by responding to Western culture with Confucian culture can the full revival of Chinese culture be accomplished ... this is our most pressing task.”¹¹⁸ Despite his dramatic plea, Jiang’s proposal had little effect. If anything, it alienated erstwhile academic sympathizers who detested his attempt to reduce the richness of Chinese culture to a narrowly chauvinistic slice of Confucian lore. But Jiang made progress in another area. His former disciple, the businessman Zhou Beichen 周北辰 (b. 1965), who had already helped him establish his Retreat, initiated a project aimed at opening “Halls of the Sage Confucius” (Kongshengtang 孔聖堂), a kind of Confucian church, throughout the country.¹¹⁹ Zhou conceived these halls mainly as “ritual precincts” (*daochang* 道場), equipped with a statue of the sage, an altar, an incense burner, and rooms spacious enough to host ritual functions, reading groups, or musical practice. A prototype was opened to much fanfare in 2009 in Shenzhen and the model has since been replicated in several other cities, mainly in the south. In 2010, the Shenzhen Hall made national headlines for hosting what was advertised as the first matrimonial ceremony celebrated in accordance with “authentic” Confucian rites in more than a century, a feat for which Jiang was given credit. At the same time, the Hall entered a tacit alliance with local authorities by supporting the party’s stance in matters of moral governance, as Alex Payette has demonstrated, and prides itself that high-ranking officials from the State Administration of Religious Affairs attend their ceremonies.¹²⁰

116 Jiang Qing, “Guanyu chongjian Zhongguo rujiao de gouxiang” 關於重建中國儒教的構想 [A proposal to reestablish Confucianism as China’s state religion], *Xin fajia* 新法家 [The New Legalist], September 19, 2010 [2005], accessed May 26, 2022, <http://www.xinfajia.net/8121.html>.

117 Jiang, “Guanyu chongjian Zhongguo rujiao de gouxiang.” See also Wang Ruichang, “Political Confucianism,” 41–42.

118 Jiang, “Guanyu chongjian Zhongguo rujiao de gouxiang.” See also Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 272–275.

119 Billioud and Thoraval, *The Sage and the People*, 152–156.

120 Li Hanlin 李翰林 [Alex Payette], “Shenzhen Kongshengtang de rujiao shijian yu daode zhili” 深圳孔聖堂的儒教實踐與道德治理 [Religious Confucian practices and moral governance at Shenzhen’s Kongshengtang], *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences* 48 (Autumn 2016): 3–32.

The visibility Jiang gained for his cause through these activities changed his public image from a sagely traditionalist to that of a rigid religious and political activist. Some now wondered publicly whether he should be seen as a “fundamentalist.”¹²¹ Jiang himself had no qualms about accepting that label when it referred to someone with inviolate beliefs who saw himself as a savior of society embroiled in an existential struggle and willing to make great sacrifices for his cause.¹²² Jiang’s public image as a Confucian hardliner was confirmed through a series of provocative statements on matters of current concern, which he mainly released through *Confucian Web* (*Rujia wang* 儒家網), one of the most frequented online resources of mainland Confucian activism.¹²³ Jiang used this platform and other popular venues to address hot-button issues that lent themselves to moralizing intervention, allowed him to denounce his enemies (mainly an ever more demonized West and its alleged Chinese lackies, from the iconoclasts of the New Culture Movement through modern New Confucians to contemporary liberals), and were often designed to create controversy. Yet even here Jiang emulated strategies devised by his declared enemies. The themes he chose and the manner in which he addressed them were hardly original. In many cases, they appeared eerily reminiscent of tactics perfected by the nationalist Christian right in the United States. One of his most direct inspirations may have been Richard John Neuhaus, an author whose analyses of liberal America’s failures Jiang cited in several of his articles.¹²⁴ Two of Neuhaus’s claims in particular seem to have resonated with Jiang. The first was the diagnosis that the retreat of religion from public life and debate was a key cause for the erosion of American social mores, a point Neuhaus illustrated in his bestselling book *The Naked Public Square*, which Jiang exploited as a repository of talking points about Western depravity.¹²⁵ The second was the categorical claim that orthodoxy was never “optional,” that is, that orthodox positions had to be defended and enforced unwaveringly and without the slightest compromise if they were to survive in

121 Chen, *Confucianism as Religion*, 175–180; Yang Fenggang, “Cultural Dynamics in China: Today and in 2020,” *Asia Policy* 4 (July 2007): 41–52; 48–50. See also Steven C. Angle, “Jiang Qing and Fundamentalism,” *Warp, Weft, and Way: Chinese and Comparative Philosophy Blog*, July 2, 2013, accessed May 26, 2022, <http://warpweftandway.com/jiang-qing-and-fundamentalism/>.

122 William O. Beeman, “Fighting the Good Fight: Fundamentalism and Religious Revival,” in *Anthropology for the Real World*, ed. J. MacClancy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 129–144.

123 *Rujia wang*: *Dangdai “dalu xinrujia” sixiang pingtai* 儒家網：當代‘大陸新儒家’思想平台 [Confucian web: A platform for contemporary ‘mainland New Confucian’ thought], *Rujia wang*, since 2008, accessed May 26, 2022, <http://www.rujiazg.com>.

124 Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 54, and chapter 8.

125 Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984).

modern societies.¹²⁶ Although Neuhaus, who served as a spiritual adviser to President George W. Bush during the Iraq War, operated in closest proximity to the incarnation of Political Confucianism's most fervently despised enemy, neither Jiang nor his allies hesitated to cite him as an ideologically kindred spirit, borrow his authority, and translate his rhetorical and political strategies into Chinese contexts. In times of argumentative need, such an enemy could be a friend indeed.

Two examples may suffice to illustrate the similarity of Jiang's inflammatory posturing with tropes of the ongoing American culture wars. The first was an article with the programmatic title "Gay Marriage: An Historically Unparalleled, Devastating Challenge to Human Civilization."¹²⁷ According to Jiang he had been asked by the editor of *Confucian Web* to respond to the news that Confucius was mentioned in the draft bill for a US law legalizing same sex marriage. He allegedly responded with utter disbelief: "What has this world come to? What on earth has this world come to?" Yet, rather than despair, he claimed, he called on the US Supreme Court to clear Confucius's name from such slander (there is no record of any reply). He then set out to show in detail why he regarded the legalization of gay marriage as the "deadliest challenge ever" to morality and religion. Confucians must categorically reject this threat to the survival of humanity, Jiang wrote, because, if sanctioned by becoming law, same-sex marriage violated the "Way of Heaven" by eroding "natural attributes," destroying "human civilization," and endangering age-old "marriage practices." Peppered with images of kissing same-sex couples on the steps of the US Supreme Court, Jiang's article listed a litany of shrill condemnations of contemporary Western ways and concluded by denouncing the United Nations' willingness to endorse marriage equality as a betrayal of its mission.

Responses were mixed at best but poured in by the thousands. Perhaps emboldened by the strength and volume of the reaction, Jiang published an interview extolling Confucian views about the place of women in society only a few weeks later.¹²⁸ The gist of his lengthy deliberations, in which he once again,

126 Richard John Neuhaus, "The Unhappy Fate of Optional Orthodoxy: Neuhaus's Law," *First Things* (March 2003), accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2009/03/the-unhappy-fate-of-optional-orthodoxy>.

127 Jiang Qing, "Tongxing hunyin: Renlei wenming gengu weiyu de huimixing tiaozhan" 同性婚姻：人類文明互古未有的毀滅性挑戰 [Gay marriage: An historically unparalleled, devastating challenge to human civilization], *Pengpai xinwen* 澎湃新聞 [The Paper], July 22, 2015, accessed May 26, 2022, https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1355289.

128 Jiang Qing, "Zhiyou rujia neng andun xiandai nüxing" 只有儒家能安頓現代女性 [Only Confucianism can pacify modern women], *Rujia wang*, August 12, 2015, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.rujiazg.com/article/6034>. English translation by David Ownby, Jiang Qing, "Only Confucians Can Make a Place for Modern Women," in *Voices from the Chinese Century*, 318–

and like many American televangelists, spent more time denouncing favored enemies than specifying his own positions, was the insight, codified early on by Confucian sages, that women's "natural" place was the home where they cared for the family, relying on and protected by the men in their lives. Reverting to this position was the only way to alleviate the "anxiety" and "restlessness" induced by the false promises of Western modernity that ignored women's "social roles" and violated their "gender nature." This time, the Chinese web exploded. One popular website that had reposted Jiang's rant counted more than two million overwhelmingly negative reactions. Even if his intention had been to gain visibility by inciting controversy, Jiang hardly anticipated the avalanche of critique and ridicule that washed over him within a matter of days. Far from retracting his views, but clearly stung by the virtual storm, he reduced the frequency of his public pronouncements and focused more narrowly on the political and religious concerns for whose advocacy he first became known. One stance in which he never wavered remained his hostility to the West in general and Christianity more particularly—even if both provided most of the inspiration for his ideological convictions and rhetorical strategies.¹²⁹

The effects of Jiang's public activities on the standing of Political Confucianism and his role in it are difficult to gauge. His offers to resurrect a more authentically Confucian and thus more truly "Chinese" lifestyle through early education, church-like meeting halls, and reinvented rituals and ceremonies resonated with a segment of society uncertain of its present and anxious about its future. At the same time, the appeal of his retrotopian fantasies was clearly limited, as documented by the outrage over his simplistic cultural musings on themes on which he offered little more than thinly veiled resentment. His best bet, learned in substantial parts from those he reviled, was to focus his activities on fortifying the resolve of his friends and turning his competitors in mainland China's intellectual and spiritual marketplace into the nation's natural enemies.

Conclusion: Beloved enemies

In 2019, an article in the *New York Times* lamented the ongoing "Disneyfication" of Jerusalem. The construction of a cable car between West Jerusalem and the Western Wall would enable tourists to circumvent the Palestinian parts of Jerusalem, thereby strengthening Israel's control over the contested city. The

341. Also available online via Reading the China Dream, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/jiang-qing-only-confucians.html>.

129 Jiang Qing, "Ruguo da jiaotang zai Qufu jiancheng, wo zhe beizi jiu bu qu Qufu le 如果大教堂在曲阜建成, 我这辈子就不去曲阜了 [If a church is built in Qufu, I will never in my life visit Qufu again!], *Pengpai xinwen*, January 26, 2016, accessed May 26, 2022, https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1425251.

article quoted an Israeli architect, Moshe Safdie, who deplored the contrast between cable car and Western Wall, describing the Western Wall as “a ruin, humble, an ancient site of sadness and loss ... It is the true heart of Judaism. The cable car is the opposite, flashy, vulgar, and aggressive.”¹³⁰ Meanwhile, the revivalists of the Temple Movement have long included the plans for a cable car into their visions of a “rebuilt Jerusalem.” In their eyes, the Western Wall is far from being “the true heart of Judaism,” and if a cable car were to be built, it should transport tourists to the *actual* heart of Jerusalem, namely the soon-to-be-rebuilt Third Temple (see Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Temple Institute, depiction of a rebuilt Third Temple in Jerusalem.¹³¹

As our article shows, revivalist movements like the Temple Movement and Political Confucianism propagate starkly different retrotopian visions, but a closer look reveals that they are closely related in multiple respects. In their rejection of Western modernity and their search for counterrepresentist ideologies and lifestyles, they depend on learning from similar sources, not least from one another. More paradoxically, revivalists of all stripes are deeply, almost obsessively fascinated by their alleged political enemies. Intimate

130 Michael Kimmelman, “Cable Cars Over Jerusalem? Some See ‘Disneyfication’ of Holy City,” *New York Times*, September 13, 2019, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/13/world/middleeast/jerusalem-cable-cars.html>.

131 “The 9th of Av: A Time to Mourn? ... A Time to Build!” The Temple Institute, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://templeinstitute.org/9th-av/>.

knowledge of enemies is indispensable to recognizing their adversaries' lethal threat and imparting this lesson effectively to potential followers. To promote restorative nostalgia, revivalists skillfully rely on the modern technologies they decry, even if only for the sake of producing technonostalgia. To denounce the decadence and bankruptcy of liberal democracy, they draw on the rich archives of Western critiques of modernity, from the conservative revolution and Italian fascism to fundamentalist Christian treatises.¹³² To further refine their arsenal, revivalists are open to learning from more local enemies, too. Despite its denigration of Islamic tendencies within China and its hostility to Japan, Political Confucianism happily borrows from the Iranian constitution and adopts interpretations of key concepts, such as the "Kingly Way," that continue to resonate with Japan's radical right. Similarly, despite its rejection of secular Zionism, the Temple Movement has willingly incorporated core strategies of Zionist statecraft, ranging from the ethno-nationalist interest in archaeology to modern city planning. More strikingly, perhaps, in its struggle for Jewish control over the contested site of the Temple Mount, the Temple Movement reveals a deep-seated fascination with Muslim practice on the sacred esplanade. There is simply no precedent for mass Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount since the end of the Second Temple Period, pointing us to the fact that the Movement might seek inspiration not so much in Jewish sources, but rather in the everyday practice of Palestinian Muslims in Jerusalem.

Reliance on a stable hierarchy of enemies is another common feature of revivalist movements. In the case of the Temple Movement, political enmity can be directed towards various antagonists, including both external enemies (political Islam, the Arab presence in Jerusalem) and domestic challengers (quietist Ultra-Orthodoxy and secular Zionism). In the case of Political Confucianism, the main enemy and object of obsessive engagement remains an imaginary, stereotypical West, reduced mostly to a television version of US East Coast debauchery that embodies and is held responsible for all ills of a world deprived of the warmth and security offered by the romanticized ways of an enchanted premodern life. Other, significantly less prominent, enemies include Japanese colonialism and its alleged heirs, and domestic adversaries, such as Chinese anti-traditionalism, liberalism, and even the more conciliatory modern Confucians of the mid- and late twentieth century. These too perform dual roles as scapegoats and inspirations to sharpen conceptual tools and refine strategies of intervention. All such enemies combined are needed, revivalists seem to believe, to counter the West's unabated hegemonic aspirations and finally overcome the vexing inability of China and other non-Western societies to stand up to its continued bullying. As long as actual solutions to this

132 On the influence of Italian fascism on Shabtai Ben Dov, see Inbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, 58.

predicament seem out of reach, retrotopian fantasies attacking or unmasking all these enemies must serve as props promising the resurrection of cultural authenticity, an elusive feat that would, revivalists claim, inevitably and magically restore awe-inspiring political power, globally attractive cultural capital, and, not least, a secure sense of national pride.

For both movements, the main enemy remains the fount of the gravest ambivalence. Political Confucianism is an ideology that can only be conceived in the language of its enemy. None of the issues raised in contemporary Confucian thought would be understandable to a Confucian scholar trained before 1900, including even Kang Youwei, whose messianic interventions serve as the closest native model Jiang and his comrades in crusade strive so hard to emulate. Nor can the goals and aspirations of their movement be understood without considering their generation's alienating experiences under Maoism and other more recent incarnations of Sino-Marxism, itself a quintessentially modern and inescapably hybridized ideology. The Temple Movement has a no less ambivalent relationship with Islam. The contemporary struggle between Muslim and Jewish claims *vis-à-vis* the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif was shaped through 150 years of close entanglement and mutual transculturation. At a closer look, the Temple Movement's calls for Jewish control over the Temple Mount might not only be connected to retrotopian visions of lost sovereignty, they might simply express a desire to learn from Muslim-Arab practice: "This mountain is Moslem, so holy is it to them, the whole majestic mountain. It is theirs."¹³³

Our experimental study of the striking similarities lurking underneath the wildly different goals and modes of operation of Israel's Temple Movement and mainland Chinese New Confucianism does not claim uniqueness for our protagonists. Both movements must be seen as no more than recent, if particularly vivid, expressions of the global pandemic of restorative nostalgia, and as such, as we have argued, as emulations of much older forms of counterpresentist longing. Far from celebrating the originality of these new revivalists, or from buying into self-serving and inflated myths of their relevance, our aim was to reveal the multiple debts both incurred, not only to native forerunners sharing their unease about, and disconnect from, their own times, but more importantly to their declared enemies. At the same time, we attempted to demonstrate how detailed reconstructions of the ways in which both exploited the argumentative resources and organizational strategies of their antagonists help to explain the inevitable ambivalences arising from continued efforts to unveil and emulate the secrets of an adversary whose strength appears simultaneously threatening and enviable.

133 Israel Eldad and Arieh Eldad, *The Challenge of Jerusalem: Betwixt Thicket and Altar* (Tel Aviv: Simanei Dfus, 1998), 261.

Zooming in again, finally, on our concrete subjects of investigation, how are we to assess their significance? Israel's Temple Movement may be ridiculed among the secular inhabitants of Tel Aviv, Israel's largest city at the Mediterranean shore, but in recent years, it has increased its hold over right-wing religious Jews in the settlements and especially Jerusalem. According to the left-wing NGO Ir Amim, the long-standing policy of governmental support for Temple-related activism, especially within the national-religious stream of Israel's education system,¹³⁴ has escalated into direct governmental support for fringe activists, including those involved in breeding programs for red heifers. Since the slaughter of these animals is required for purification rituals before entering the Temple Mount, governmental support for breeding efforts and the planning of a promenade with a view of the Temple Mount (dedicated to said purification rituals) suggests a certain mainstreaming of retrotopian theater.¹³⁵

Assessing the impact of Political Confucianism faces greater uncertainties. On the one hand, the movement can boast with some right to have prepared the ground for the CCP's ham-fisted embrace of Confucian ideals, exemplified most recently by the much ridiculed five-part propaganda series "When Marx Met Confucius" (*Dang Makesi yujian Kongfuzi* 當馬克思遇見孔夫子).¹³⁶ On the other hand, the tightening of ideological screws in the late Xi Jinping era has not only silenced any remaining liberal voices, but also narrowed what little room existed for the expression of nativist views with the slightest potential to cross the party line. Jiang and his associates were forced to tread ever more lightly in recent years, even when offering their services to act as multipliers of party-compatible messages on social mores. Their visibility has consequently waned. No longer a regular talking head on TV, Jiang has retreated to ventilate his views via transparently staged interviews with reverential followers published on *Confucian Web*, a site whose design and impact seem to have stagnated since the mid-2010s. China's academic establishment, where Jiang could count few followers to begin with, has also overcome its reluctance to engage his home-spun interpretations of China's

134 *Dangerous Liaison: The Dynamics of the Rise of the Temple Movements and Their Implications* (Jerusalem: Ir Amim, 2013), accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.ir-amim.org.il/sites/default/files/Dangerous%20Liaison-Dynamics%20of%20the%20Temple%20Movements.pdf>.

135 Ir Amim, *Degel Adom: Al Me'oravut Ha-Rashuyot Ha-Israeliyot Be-Mahalach Ha-Meshichi Le-Hava'atan Shel 'Parot Adumot' Lema'an Bniyato Shel Bayt Ha-Mikdash* [Red flag: On the involvement of the Israeli authorities in the messianic process of bringing 'red heifers' in order to build the Temple], 2023, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.ir-amim.org.il/sites/default/files/גלגל%20דאזא%20-%20עזע%20%20התברועמ%20מירוג%20מיתלשממ%20מזימב%20הרפ%20המודא.pdf>.

136 Hunan Provincial Television 湖南省廣播電視台, *Dang Makesi yujian Kongfuzi* 當馬克思遇見孔夫子 [When Marx met Confucius]. For episode 1, see Mango TV, accessed November 2, 2023, <https://w.mgtv.com/b/592591/19875185.html>.

history and classics, as attested by several spirited take-downs, including the lengthy evisceration by Ge Zhaoguang, the doyen of intellectual history at Shanghai's Fudan University, cited above.¹³⁷ The praise heaped upon Jiang in English-language publications thus rings more and more hollow, most notably the hyperbole of his most trusted foreign-affiliated confidante Daniel A. Bell, who advertises Jiang as “the most prominent Confucian political thinker of our day,” and claims that his works offer “the most detailed systematic alternative to both the current regime and Western-style liberal democracy;”¹³⁸ and that of his Hong Kong adept Fan Ruiping, who dedicated a volume he edited on *The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China* to “Mr. Jiang Qing, an exemplary Confucian in contemporary society” and helped publish a star-struck hagiography we mentioned earlier.¹³⁹ Still, like the Temple Movement's ideological contortions, the revivalist fantasies expounded by mainland Chinese New Confucians such as Jiang continue to merit our attention, if only, or rather precisely because, they reveal profound and undeniable ambivalences in even the most radical staging of enmity.

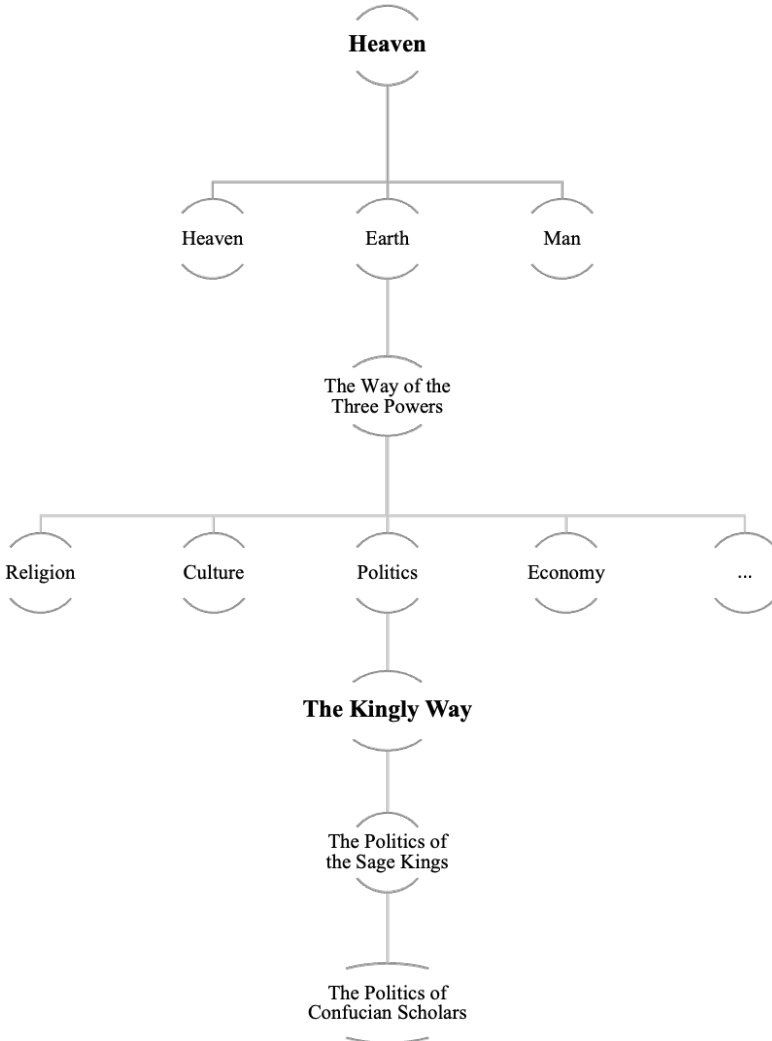
137 See Ge Zhaoguang, “If Horses had Wings.” Taiwanese scholars had taken up the challenge earlier; see, for instance, Li Minghui, “I Disapprove of the Phrase ‘Mainland New Confucianism,’” *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 49, no. 2 (2018): 100–112.

138 Bell, “Introduction,” 1.

139 Fan Ruiping, *The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China*; for Jiang's hagiography, see Erika Yu and Meng Fan, “A Confucian Coming of Age.”

Appendix

The “Kingly Way,” Illustrated and Explained



*Fig. 9. Jiang Qing, “The ‘Kingly Way,’ Illustrated and Explained.”*¹⁴⁰