



Strange Dogs | 犬異

Text Information

Author | Hong Mai

Language | Chinese

Period | 12th Century

Genre | History

Source | Hong, Mai. *Yi Jian Zhi*. First ed. 4 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju. 1981.

Collection | History: Chronicles, Legends and Anecdotes

URL | sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/hong_mai_strange_dogs/

Translation and introduction by Likun Yang.

Introduction to the Text

This story is one of five in the Global Medieval Sourcebook to have been selected from the *Yijian Zhi* (or, *Record of the Listener*, hereafter the *Record*) by Hong Mai (1123-1202). Like many well-educated men in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), Hong Mai grew up in a prominent family, passed the civil service examination, and obtained a post in the imperial government. However, due to misconduct during a diplomatic mission, his career came to an abrupt end. From then on, he retreated to his study and devoted himself to writing the *Record*.

The corpus of the *Record* originally consisted of 420 chapters. What we have today, however, is but a small fraction of the original text. The *Record* shows a remarkable degree of accuracy when we compare it with the official documents and other texts of the same period. Nevertheless, many stories in the *Record* are outright fictitious or based on highly unreliable sources. The *Record* preserved much information about the society, culture and religion of the Southern Song Dynasty and was a source of inspiration for generations of writers after Hong Mai. Writers in late imperial China, for instance, took up many stories in the *Record* and refashioned them into stories that met the demands and expectations of their own times.

Further Reading

Allen, Sarah M. *Shifting Stories : History, Gossip, and Lore in Narratives from Tang Dynasty China*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014.

- Explores the tale literature of eighth- and ninth-century China to show how the written tales we have today grew out of a fluid culture of hearsay that circulated within elite society. Contains a chapter that explains the modern (mis)understanding of the tale literature as a genre.

Hansen, Valerie. *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1990.

- Uses the *Yi Jian Zhi* tales as historical documents and shows that social and economic developments underlay religious changes in the Southern Song (1127 - 1276).

Inglis, Alister David. *Hong Mai's Record of the Listener and Its Song Dynasty Context*. Suny Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.

- A comprehensive survey of the scholarship on *Yi Jian Zhi*.

Luo, Manling. *Literati Storytelling in Late Medieval China*. The Modern Language Initiative. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015.

- Shows how the tales offer crucial insights into the reconfiguration of the Chinese elite, which monopolized literacy, social prestige, and political participation in tenth-century China.



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犬異

金國天會十四年四月中, 京小雨, 大雷震, 群犬數十爭赴土河而死, 所可救者才一二耳。

Strange Dogs

In the fourteenth year of the Tianhui era of the State of Jin, it was raining in the capital. There occurred a huge thunderbolt. Several tens of dogs ran in **group** into the Tu River and died. Only one or two were rescued and survived.