



East
Asian
History

NUMBER 23 · JUNE 2002

Institute of Advanced Studies
Australian National University

Editor Geremie R. Barmé
Associate Editor Helen Lo
Editorial Board Mark Elvin (Convenor)
Børge Bakken
John Clark
Andrew Fraser
Helen Hardacre
Colin Jeffcott
W. J. F. Jenner
Li Tana
Lo Hui-min
Gavan McCormack
David Marr
Tessa Morris-Suzuki
Michael Underdown

Design and Production Helen Lo
Business Manager Marion Weeks
Printed by Goanna Print, Fyshwick, ACT



This is the twenty-~~two~~ issue of *East Asian History*, printed June 2002,
in the series previously entitled *Papers on Far Eastern History*.
This externally refereed journal is published twice a year

Contributions to The Editor, *East Asian History*
Division of Pacific and Asian History
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200, Australia
Phone +61 2 6125 3140 Fax +61 2 6125 5525
email geremie@coombs.anu.edu.au

Subscription Enquiries to Subscriptions, *East Asian History*, to
marion@coombs.anu.edu.au

Annual Subscription Australia A\$50 (including GST) Overseas US\$45 (GST free) (for two issues)
1036-6008

史 CONTENTS

- 1** The Impact of Clearance and Irrigation on the Environment in the Lake Erhai Catchment from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century
Mark Elvin, Darren Crook, Shen Ji, Richard Jones, and John Dering
- 61** Astro-Historiographic Chronologies of Early China are Unfounded
Douglas J. Keenan
- 69** Between Heaven and the Deep Sea: the Religious Practice of Chinese Seafarers from the Eleventh to the Mid-Nineteenth Century
Tsu Yun Hui
- 87** *Buraku* Emigration in the Meiji Era—Other Ways to Become “Japanese”
Noah McCormack
- 109** Fishing and Fishers in Penghu, Taiwan, 1895–1970
Sigrid Schmalzer
- 129** Derivation, Intertextuality and Authority: Narrative and the Problem of Historical Coherence
Brian Moloughney
- 149** Falun Gong, Prophecy and Apocalypse
Benjamin Penny

- Cover calligraphy Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman
- Cover illustration Front endpaper (right-hand leaf), by Aō Tokei, “Nihon kokugun sōzu” (Map of Japan), from *Kokugun zenzu* (Atlas of Provinces and Counties) (1828) (source: Yamashita Kazumasa, *Japanese Maps of the Edo Period*, trans. Charles de Woolf [Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 1998])

FALUN GONG, PROPHECY AND APOCALYPSE

史 Benjamin Penny

In June 2000, Li Hongzhi 李洪志, the founder, leader and master of Falun Gong 法輪功, published an essay entitled “In Reference to a Prophecy” which discusses one of the quatrains of Nostradamus.¹ This essay appeared on the main Falun Gong website intended for adherents within weeks of the first anniversary of the commencement of the suppression of Falun Gong in China, and some fourteen months after the demonstration outside Zhongnanhai 中南海 that had grabbed the attention of the world’s press. This article will examine Li’s essay and a series of contributions from followers of Falun Gong that were published on this website—www.minghui.org—after it appeared, all of them concerning prophecies of one kind or another. These contributions refer to prophecies from early modern France and Korea, the ancient Middle East, native America, and pre-modern China. To appear on this site, they must all have been translated, edited and approved by the editors of the Minghui 明慧 site.² While Li Hongzhi himself is the author of only one of the essays discussed below, it is important to recognize that practitioners of Falun Gong, respectful of the Master as they are, are also creative and active in their discussions of Falun Gong and its textual corpus.

In Li Hongzhi’s writings both the possibility of precognition in highly cultivated individuals and the reality of predestination are acknowledged—Li himself is said to be able “to see ... the origin, development and future of mankind.”³ Indeed there are reports of Li predicting the destruction of the

I am indebted to the National Library of Australia for a Harold White Research Fellowship awarded to me to pursue this research.

/not that Minghui Net does not make mistakes, however, on important matters, practitioners watch the position of Minghui Net.” Clearly, postings on this site have the imprimatur of the Master, even if they are not all written over his signature. Chinese version, 14 July 2000, <www.minghui.ca/mh/articles/2000/7/15/2624.html>; English version, 16 July 2000, <www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2000/7/16/7662.html>.

³ This statement concludes the second part of Li Hongzhi’s biography: “Zhongguo Falun Gong chuanshiren, Falun Gong yanjiu hui huizhang Li Hongzhi xiansheng xiaozhuan” [A short biography of Mr Li Hongzhi, founder of China Falun Gong, President of the Research Society of Falun Gong] which can be found in early printings of *Zhuan Falun* (the title of the official English translation is “A short biography of Mr Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Xiulian Dafa, President of the Research Society of Falun Buddha Science”) (Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbao Dianshi Chubanshe, 1994), pp.333–45. This citation is from p.339. The translation is from an English rendition of this biography by the “Translation Group of Falun Xiulian Dafa” from <www.compapp.dcu.ie/~dongxue/biography.html>, downloaded on 9 March 2001. The biography is no longer found on that site. On the biographies of Li Hongzhi, see my “The life and times of Li Hongzhi” (forthcoming, *China Quarterly*).

¹ Li Hongzhi, “In reference to a prophecy.” Chinese version, 28 June 2000, <www.minghui.cc/mh/articles/2000/6/29/115.html>; English version, 30 June 2000, <www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/jun/30/jingwen_063000.html>. This article was to have included pictures of Li Hongzhi from Falun Gong websites but permission to reproduce them was denied.

² On the Minghui site on 14 July 2000, the “Falun Dafa Bulletin Board” published “On important matters, practitioners must watch the position of Minghui Net.” This article was written “in response to some practitioners’ questions on how to treat Minghui Net and the articles posted on Minghui Net,” and it quotes Li Hongzhi himself in this way: “It is

⁴ Song Bingchen 宋炳辰, an early follower of Falun Gong who parted company with Li Hongzhi, is reported to have claimed that Li predicted that the earth would explode in 1999. This report appears on the Chinese government-sponsored Mingjing website quoting an issue of *China Daily* from 24 July 1999 (<www.mingjing.org.cn/ppflg/e-falun/cult/cult25.htm>). The source for the information in the article is “the manuscript for a documentary released by China Central Television,” and the editor notes at the top of the article, “Li Hongzhi, the man who created Falun Gong, has fabricated many rumours to make himself mysterious and to cheat believers. But in the eyes of his acquaintances, what kind of person is this man who claims he has the authority to determine doomsday?” A Falun Gong source says that Song was a “previous Falun Gong practitioner” who used his “supernormal abilities to heal patients and make money. Since these behaviors are not permitted in Falun Gong, Mr. Li stopped [him] from using Falun Gong to heal patients, which triggered resentful reactions from [him]” (<www.clearwisdom.net/eng/china/zhongnanhai.html>).

⁵ Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schachter, *When prophecy fails* (Minneapolis, Minn., University of Minnesota Press, 1956). For discussions of this seminal work, see J. G. Melton, “Spiritualization and reaffirmation: what really happens when prophecy fails,” *American Studies* 26 (1980: 17–29), and Diana Tumminia, “How prophecy never fails: interpretive reason in a flying-saucer group,” *Sociology of Religion*, Summer 1998 (downloaded from <www.findarticles.com>).

⁶ There is, of course, vast scholarly output on apocalypticism, millennialism and related movements. A useful first port of call is Ted Daniels, *Millennialism: an international bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), and the Forum on Milleniums in *The American Historical Review* 104 (Dec. 1999), which includes David Ownby’s essay “Chinese millennial traditions: the formative age,” pp.1513–30.

⁷ See, for instance, Barend J. ter Haar, *The White Lotus teachings in Chinese religious history* (Honolulu: Hawai’i University Press, 1992), and *Ritual and mythology of the Chinese Triads: creating an identity* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Susan Naquin, *Millenarian*

world in 1999,⁴ but the June 2000 essay marked an explicit turn to the interpretation of preexisting prophetic traditions that had not previously been present. Thus, while the claim that Li Hongzhi himself has powers of prediction is of great importance, it is a separate and distinct claim that seers of the distant past predicted the appearance of Falun Gong, and Li Hongzhi.

The use of prophecy in religions, past and present, is not unusual. Among new religious or spiritual movements across the world, predictions of future events have often been at the centre of doctrine, and, to a large extent because of their non-fulfilment, fundamental in the development of these movements. Indeed, perhaps the first major scholarly work on a new religious movement—on the UFO group known in the book as “The Seekers”—was entitled *When Prophecy Fails*.⁵ Some of the general concern in non-academic discussion about these groups (where they are often referred to as “cults”) has focussed on the violence that has sometimes accompanied their demise—which in turn has been triggered by predictions of cataclysm, or liberation, or apocalypse. In these cases, a charismatic leader has typically been understood to have privileged access to knowledge about the future. In Falun Gong, as has been noted above, Li Hongzhi is in such a position. In this context, the way that Falun Gong has used prophecy is of central concern to the future and development of the movement.⁶

In addition, within Chinese religious traditions prophecy has played a crucial role. Messianic and millenarian movements repeatedly appear in the standard histories of pre-modern China—typically, of course, when they became powerful enough to threaten the state.⁷ One of the most common strains in recent centuries has focussed on the figure of the Maitreya, or future, Buddha. In orthodox Buddhism, the Maitreya Buddha is believed to be in the Tuṣita heaven awaiting the time when he should descend to earth and, for most Buddhists, Maitreya-related hopes centred on either being reborn in the Tuṣita heaven, or else being fortunate enough to be reborn during Maitreya’s time on earth when they can be present when he expounds the Dharma. The advent of Maitreya was generally thought to be far in the future. In Chinese tradition, however, another stream of Maitreya-focussed belief arose, namely that instead of Maitreya’s advent being distant, it was, in fact, close at hand or had even occurred. And, instead of being supportive of the status quo, it sought to overthrow secular authority.⁸ In these Chinese movements, the advent of Maitreya takes on an apocalyptic flavour where his

rebellion in China: the Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976); Noguchi Tetsurō, “A genealogy of millenarian movements in China,” in *Millenarianism in Asian history*, ed. Ishii Yoneo (Tokyo: ILCAA, 1993), pp.25–53; Anna Seidel, “The image of the perfect ruler in early Taoist Messianism,” *History of Religions* 9 (1969–70): 216–47; “Taoist Messianism,” *Numen* 31 (1984):

/161–74; and Kristofer Schipper, “Millenarianismes and messianismes dans la Chine ancienne,” in *Understanding modern China: problems and methods*, ed. L. Lanciotti and P. Conradini (Rome: Centro Ricerche Sinologiche, 1979), pp.31–49.

⁸ See Daniel Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist religion: dissenting sects in late traditional China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp.80–5.

messianic appearance ushers in a golden age, preceded by generalised suffering, battles, and the overthrow of secular authority. Thus, attempts at identifying Li Hongzhi with the Maitreya Buddha, discussed below, both feed on a strong, preexisting tradition in popular Chinese religious movements and automatically pose a threat to those in power in Beijing.

The specific prophecies that have been discussed on the Minghui site demonstrate two other important features of Falun Gong that it shares with some other new religious or spiritual movements. The first is that despite its many deeply traditional Chinese aspects, Falun Gong displays a tendency to absorb into its doctrine whatever items of practice or belief it desires from the cultural world that it inhabits in a way that can, perhaps, be thought of as spiritual bricolage—a process of constructing spiritual discourse with whatever resources happen to be about. As the core group of Falun Gong moved from Beijing to New York, its cultural world has also shifted, and this is reflected in the broadening of its sources of information. Thus, the second feature that should be noted in this context is the international nature of the prophecies that the followers of Falun Gong have chosen to discuss and which the editors of the Minghui site have chosen to publish.⁹ As the movement has gone global, so has the range of reference of its adherents. Perhaps the most salient feature of the discussions of prophecy that follow is that they have taken place in the context of Falun Gong as an expatriate movement no longer welcome in its homeland.

With this in mind, the discussion of these extant prophetic traditions can be seen to stand at the nexus of two issues Falun Gong faced in the aftermath of its suppression. The first, as discussed above, is its change in status from a movement with an almost exclusively Chinese focus to one with a necessarily international outlook.¹⁰ The second is that, from a doctrinal point of view, the suppression proved difficult to explain. At the core of Falun Gong doctrine is the claim that Li Hongzhi is all-knowing, and that supernormal powers can be acquired by practitioners through moral and physical cultivation. Moreover, Li has continually stressed that practitioners are protected by his “law bodies,” or *fashen* 法身, emanations of himself that do his bidding.¹¹ Thus, existing prophetic traditions have been used to make the case that the suppression was preordained and part of a greater plan, something that Li has allowed in order to eliminate evil and provide a trial for practitioners.¹²

Nostradamus

The article that Li Hongzhi published in late June 2000—“In Reference to a Prophecy”—begins:

Disciples: What is currently unfolding in China was previously arranged. Many people throughout history have prophesied this. They chose not to articulate the matter directly so as to both conform to the deluded way the world is and

⁹ The prophecies discussed in this essay are those listed under “Prophecies” on the Clearwisdom website. See <www.clearwisdom.net/emh/special_column/prophecies.html>.

¹⁰ The move to internationalise the movement can also be seen in the adoption of the rhetoric of human rights and freedom of religion as evidenced, in particular, on the Falun Gong website “Falun Dafa Information Center” (<www.faluninfo.net>).

¹¹ On the law bodies and related subjects, see my “The Body of Master Li: Doctrine, Corporeality and Iconography in Falun Gong,” Charles Strong Memorial Trust Lecture to be delivered at the Australian Association of Religious Studies Conference, University of New England, Armidale NSW, on 6 July 2002, and later published by the Trust.

¹² This is part of a larger discussion within Li’s writings concerning the question of evil that also arose in the second half of 2000. See, for instance, the essays “Eliminate your last attachments,” (Chinese version, <www.minghui.cc/mh/articles/2000/8/12/110.html>; English version, <www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2000/8/14/9117.html>) and “Suffocate the evil,” (Chinese version, <www.minghui.cc/mh/articles/2000/10/22/8225.html>; English version, <www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2000/10/23/9116.html>) and his speech at the “Western US cultivation experience sharing conference of Falun Dafa,” (Chinese version, <www.minghui.cc/mh/articles/2000/11/3/106.html>; English version, <www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2000/11/5/9115.html>).

¹³ See, for instance, Edgar Leoni, *Nostradamus and his prophecies* (New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1982), pp.434–5; Erika Cheetham, *The prophecies of Nostradamus* (London: Corgi Books, 1975) p.468; Henry C. Roberts, *The complete prophecies of Nostradamus* (London: Granada Publishing, 1984), p.333.

to warn its people. Therefore, everyday people are only able to realize the meaning of a prophecy after history has come to pass. For example, with regard to what is happening in China, Nostradamus, the French-man, stated the following in his book of prophecy, *Centuries*, hundreds of years ago:

In the year 1999, seventh month
 From the sky will come a great King of Terror
 In order to bring back to life the great king of Angolmois
 Before and after Mars reigns in the name of bringing people happiness.

This quatrain is the 72nd of the 10th set of quatrains in Nostradamus and it is notable as one of the few to include a specific date—the seventh month of 1999. His words are, however, notoriously difficult to decipher, even if they are credited as prophetic. An example of this in the quatrain Li quotes is the reference to the “great king of Angolmois” which is often read as a near anagram of Mongolois, the Mongols, making this line refer to the “great king of the Mongols.”¹³ Li, however, does not address this point. His commentary

simply elides the reference as it does other problematic parts of the text:

What he said about “the year 1999, seventh month, From the sky will come a ... Terror, In order to bring back to life the ... king ...” refers precisely to a few people with ulterior motives in the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party using their power to initiate a vicious, comprehensive suppression of Dafa 大法 and Dafa disciples.

His second point of commentary refers to Mars:

As to the sentence “before and after Mars reigns ...,” it means to say that [Karl] Marx is ruling the world before and after the year 1999 ... With regard to the last part, “in the name of bringing people happiness,” this refers to the communist idea of liberating all of humankind, as well as to Western societies’ sustaining social welfare through heavy taxation.

Thus, setting aside the question of whether Li’s reading of this quatrain is any more or less reasonable than any other reading of it, we should note that Li is not using Nostradamus to predict what will happen; he is using Nostradamus to verify what had already happened, a kind of “prophecy with hindsight.” This avoids the problem discussed above concerning the non-fulfilment of prophecy but more importantly it implies that the rise of Falun Gong and its suppression by the Chinese authorities were

Figure 1

A portrait of Nostradamus by César, his son (source: Edgar Leoni, Nostradamus and his Prophecies, reprint ed. [New York: Bell, 1982], frontispiece)



predestined.

Nostradamus is no stranger to East Asia. As Robert Kisala has shown for Japan, several new religious movements, notably Aum Shinrikyō アウム真理教, have used his texts extensively.¹⁴ Nostradamus is also well known in Korea¹⁵ and his work has circulated in the Chinese world since at least 1980. The popularity of Nostradamus in Japan is noteworthy, as one of the earliest—if not *the* earliest—Chinese-language version of a work on the quatrains is a translation from the Japanese of Gotō Ben's 五島勉 1973 *Nosutoradamusu nodaiyogen* ノストラダマスの大予言 (The Prophecies of Nostradamus).¹⁶ Gotō is credited with bringing Nostradamus to a Japanese audience—his book went through almost 150 printings in three months after it first came out—and, according to Kisala, “he has written over ten more volumes specifically on Nostradamus as well as dozens of other works on UFOs and extraterrestrials, the polar shift, John’s Apocalypse, the secrets of Fatima, and various other prophecies.” Since then, several translations of the quatrains, a biography, two works on prophecies for 1999, and one on prophecies for the twenty-first century appeared through the 1980s and 1990s published in Hong Kong, Taipei and Beijing.¹⁷

Li Hongzhi’s article seems to have encouraged contributions on prophecy from adherents of Falun Gong—usually anonymous or pseudonymous—through the second half of 2000 and into 2001. There have been several more Nostradamus-related essays, disquisitions on two Chinese figures—a monk of the Sui 隋 period called Master Buxu “Pacing the Void” (Buxu dashi 步虛大師), and the well-known writer of the early Ming, Liu Bowen 劉伯溫 (1311–75). There have also been articles on Nam Sa-go 南師古 (1509–71), a Korean scholar and astronomer of the sixteenth century, the *Book of Revelations*, and the Hopi Indians of Northern Arizona.

A fortnight after Li Hongzhi’s article appeared, an essay by “Christine Jiang, Sydney, Australia” was posted on the site.¹⁸ Ms Jiang is a practitioner who is listed in a Falun Gong “Human Rights Report” as a “practitioner illegally arrest [*sic*] and detained during [her] trip to China” and who is a “language translator.”¹⁹ She has also made an appearance on a Nostradamus thread on an email discussion group.²⁰ Her essay, “Thoughts Derived from Quatrain 72 of Nostradamus’ Prophecies,” and her contribution to the Nostradamus thread, both simply reiterate Li’s reading and describe the suppression of Falun Gong by the Chinese authorities, information that is widely known to readers of the Minghui site. For this reason, and judging by other internal evidence, this essay was probably originally intended for an audience interested in Nostradamus rather than a Falun Gong-related audience, and must

dedayuyan [The prophecies of Nostradamus] (Taipei: Juren Chubanshe, 1980). The same work was retranslated (no translator listed) as *Sibai nian qian “Nostradamus” de Dayuyan* [The prophecies of Nostradamus from 400 years ago] and published in Hong Kong during the 1980s by Gezhi Chubanshe.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Bian Depei, *1999 renlei zai jie nan tao ma? Nuochadanmasi dayuyan zhenxiang zhaojie* [Can mankind escape the calamities of 1999? : the truth of Nostradamus’s great prophecies clearly revealed] (Beijing: Hualing Chubanshe, 1997); Chen Guanru, *Chumu yuyan ershibiyi shiji* [Striking prophecies of the twenty-first century] (Hong Kong: Luowen Tiankong Chubanshe, 1988); Knut Boeser, *Dayuyan jia* [The great prophet] (Taipei: Linyu Wenhua Shiye Youxian Gongsì, 1995.); Liu Zhixia, *Yuyan zhe zhi ge* [Verses of the prophet] (Taipei: Yuanjing Chubanshi Ye Youxian Gongsì, 1995); Ling Shan, *1999 kongbu dawang yu Menggu dajun: Faguo dayuyan jia Nuochadanmasi yuyan* [The 1999 Great King of Terror and the Great Lord of the Mongols: the prophecies of the great French prophet Nostradamus] (Hong Kong: Huitong Chubanshe, 1994); Liu Zhixia, *Geshi tianji* [The secret design from generations past] (Hong Kong: Tianhan Tushu Chuban Gongsì, 1999); No listed author, *Mosbi qishi lu* [Record of the revelation of the Apocalypse] (Hong Kong: Heyou Chubanshe, 1990); Huang Yi, *Jingshi dayuyan* [Great prophecies that startle the age] (Hong Kong: Juxian Guan Wenhua Youxian Gongsì, 1990).

¹⁸ Christine Jiang, “Thoughts derived from Quatrain 72 of Nostradamus’ prophecies,” Chinese version, 13 July 2000 <www.minghui.ca/gb/0001/Jul/07/Nostradamus_lianxiang.html>; English version, 13 July 2000, <www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/July/13/POI071300_2.html>.

¹⁹ Australian Falun Dafa Practitioners, ed. and comp., *A human rights report: sufferings of Australian citizens caused by the Chinese government, 1999–2001*, (no publication details but 2001), p.17.

²⁰ <www.afund.com/wwwboard/messages/139.html>. This discussion group is hosted by “The Astrologers’ Fund, inc.,” an organisation giving investment advice based on astrology whose slogan is “Always A Stellar Performance!”

¹⁴ Robert Kisala, “Nostradamus and the Apocalypse in Japan,” *Inter-Religio* (Winter 1997): 47–62, and also in *Japanese Religions* 23.1 and 2 (Jan. 1998), “Nostradamus and the New Age in Japanese religions,” paper presented to the Korea Anthropology Association meeting in 1999, held at Hanyang University, Seoul.

¹⁵ Private communication, John Jorgensen, 18 July 2001.

¹⁶ Gotō Ben, *Nosutoradamusu no daiyogen* [The prophecies of Nostradamus] (Tokyo: Shodensha, 1973), translated by Chen Xi as *Nasitelademesi*

²¹ Anon, "Prediction by Nostradamus on the Third Antichrist" (signed 21 Nov. 2000), Chinese version 21 Nov. 2000 <www.minghui.cc/gb/0001/Nov/21 Nostradamus_third_prophet_112100_dajia.html>; English version, 24 Nov. 2000, <www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/Nov/24/SCF112400_1.html>.

²² A Falun Dafa practitioner in North America, "Prediction by Nostradamus on Master Li and Falun Dafa" (signed October, 2000), Chinese version, 24 November 2000, <www.minghui.ca/mh/articles/2000/11/24/1374.html>; English version, 25 November 2000, <www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/Nov/25/SCF112500_1.html>.

²³ John Hogue, *Nostradamus—the new revelations* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1994).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

be regarded as a kind of proselytising.

In November 2000, two more Nostradamus-related articles appeared. The first, "Prediction by Nostradamus on the Third Antichrist,"²¹ nominated the Chinese President Jiang Zemin 江澤民 as the third Antichrist referred to in Nostradamus's work—the first two were generally considered to be Napoleon and Hitler. To this end, the anonymous author cites Quatrain 50 from the first "Century":

From the three water signs will be born a man who will celebrate Thursday as his feast day. His renown, praise, rule and power will grow on land and sea, bringing trouble to the east.

Nostradamus's reference to the three water signs in this passage is a clear astrological reference—the three water signs are Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces—however, the author interprets them rather differently here:

[Jiang's] name contains two water signs: *Jiang* means river and *Ze* means lake in Chinese. His birthplace *Jiang* Su Province provides the third water sign. He first gained his national prominence in Shang Hai (*Hai* means sea). He now resides in ZhongNan Hai (Sea) in Beijing. During his presidency, China has suffered from three major floods (1997, 1998, 1999).

The final Nostradamus-related article that appeared the next day is, perhaps, the most intriguing. Entitled "Prediction by Nostradamus on Master Li and Falun Dafa," it is written by "A Falun Dafa practitioner in North America."²² In this essay, the author quotes liberally from John Hogue's 1994 *Nostradamus—The New Revelations*.²³ Hogue reads several of Nostradamus's quatrains as indicating the rise of a new religious mentality and seems intent on linking Nostradamus with Buddhist history. He also sees Nostradamus predicting the coming of the Maitreya Buddha. As quoted by the practitioner from North America, Hogue writes, "the next great world teacher, who is given the name 'Maitreya' meaning 'friend,' who would appear around the year AD 2000 and will restore momentum and power to all those seeking after religious truth ..." and that "organized religion will be destroyed by words of truth spoken by 'the friend' through the 'human flame' of a new religion."²⁴ Referring, *inter alia*, to Madame Blavatsky's prediction that Maitreya would appear in Asia around 1950²⁵ (Master Li was born in either 1951 or 1952 depending on which account one follows²⁶) the author notes that among Hogue's candidates for the Future Buddha are the Revd Sun Myung-moon and the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Ruling out both these men as possible, the North American practitioner notes that, "If John Hogue were to write the book today, it would be hard for him not to include Master Li Hongzhi and Falun Dafa."

Maitreya

The North American practitioner's suggestion that Li Hongzhi might be identified as Maitreya was, in fact, preceded by two other essays that pointed in this direction. One concerned the writings of the sixteenth-century Korean scholar and astronomer Nam Sa-go 南師古 (1509–71) and the other on the fourteenth-century Chinese literatus and scholar Liu Bowen.

The article about Nam Sa-go, (rendered in Falun Gong's English translation with the Chinese reading of the name Nan Shigu), appeared in September 2000 although it is dated 10 July 2000. Written by "A Korean Practitioner" it is called "Letter from a Practitioner: Reflections after Reading 'A Reference for Prophecies',"²⁷ and it presented observations on Nam's book, *Kyogam Yurok* 格庵遺錄 (Kyogam is rendered, again in Chinese reading, as Ge An). This book, it says, was hidden from the world for 450 years until, "in 1986, a Korean scholar, whose last name was Xin 辛 [Korean reading Sin] started to explore the book's meaning for the first time. By the end of the 1980's, this book had become a hot topic in South Korea."²⁸

The Korean practitioner lists no fewer than nineteen places where he or she claims *Notes left by Ge An* (that is, *Kyogam yurok*) "unmistakably hinted about the a [*sic*] sage named Li and Great Fa 法 and Great Tao 道 he teaches." These begin by supposedly identifying Li Hongzhi as the sage:

He is named after wood (Li in Chinese means plum tree). He has the sign of the rabbit (born in 1951), born in April (of lunar calendar) at the north of the 38th parallel and in Gongzhuling 公主岭 under the Three Deity Mountain (Sanchengshan 三神山—Changbai Mountain 长白山 in northeast China). He was born under the direction of "Gen" 艮, which corresponds to the northeast direction.

The article continues with many apparently convincing cases of Nam's predictions being fulfilled by the appearance of Li Hongzhi and Falun Gong. However, there are several specific points in this list that should be noted, not so much because they are, or are not, accurate predictions but for what they say about the evolving doctrines of the Falun Gong. First, having identified Li Hongzhi as the sage in the first "hint" the second makes another, perhaps even more potent, identification:

This sage is the king of all kings in heaven, that is, the Great King of Falun. People will refer to him as Buddha Maitreya when he descends to this world.

In other words, if Li Hongzhi is this sage as the prophecy is claimed to reveal, then he is not simply an individual who, through cultivation, had attained an extraordinary level of being—in itself a supreme claim—he is nothing less than the highest god in heaven who has descended to earth in the form of the Maitreya Buddha.


²⁶ On the question of Li Hongzhi's disputed birthdate, see Penny, "The life and times of Li Hongzhi."

²⁷ A Korean Practitioner, "Letter from a practitioner: reflections after reading "A reference for prophecies," Chinese version, 7 September 2000, <www.minghui.cc/gb/0001/Sep/07/ge_an_yi_lu.html>; English version, 8 September 2000; <www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/Sept/08/PO090800_2.html>.

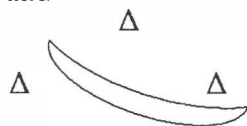
²⁸ The particular book appears to be Sin Yu-sung, *Kyogam yurok* [Notes left by Kyogam] (Sejong Chulpan Kongsu, 1987), not sighted. The original text of the prophecies can be found in Sin Yu-sung, *Kyogam yurok*, 3 vols (Kyungsung, 1996): 1, pp.237–55.

²⁹ In orthodox Buddhism, the decline of the dharma refers to that period in cosmic history when the Buddhist law is in decline, leading to its eventual destruction and the world is in chaos. The period of the decline of the dharma is marked by corruption, non-adherence to the precepts, generalised suffering and by immense difficulty in attaining nirvana.

³⁰ On 30 January 2001 (Chinese version, <www.minghui.ca/mh/articles/2001/1/30/7456.html>) and on 2 February 2001 (English version, <www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2001/Feb/02/VSF020201_7.html>) a “Comment on reflections after reading ‘A reference for prophecies’” by “Practitioner in China” was published. The writer, evidently prompted by the original article nonetheless wishes to offer his or her own interpretation of one of the prophecies, the 18th. He or she also reflects that, “Indeed as Teacher has said, this event had been arranged *billions* of years ago” [my emphasis]. The supposed original message of Nam in this prophecy was that it “emphasizes that the key to the cultivation practice in this time is cultivating *xinxing* 心性, ‘preserving life at the half-moon shape under the triangle mountain’ (referring to Clear Moon Lake (Jingyue tan 淨月潭) in Changchun 長春 [Jilin 吉林 province]).” Our new correspondent suggests otherwise, believing that “half-moon shape under the triangle mountain” refers to the character *xin*, heart, rather than a place. The logic behind this conclusion rests on the identification of the triangle mountain as “three triangle mountains” arranged in this particular way:



And the half moon as “a crescent moon” placed here:



Thus, the character for heart, which in this context is taken to mean that, “only by emphasising the cultivation of the heart can one be protected during the Fa-rectification.”

³¹ Rong Fa, “Prophecies of Liu Chi in China’s Ming dynasty,” Chinese version, 26 October 2000, <www.minghui.cc/gb/0001/Oct/26/

The second important point in this series of hints relates to how practitioners should see the situation in China at the time of writing. Nam apparently predicts the beginnings of the suppression of Falun Gong, but that after “enduring the tribulations” adherents in China will see daylight and furthermore that “after some years, the Chinese government will change its policy against Dafa.” Unfortunately, however, “Dafa practitioners will suffer the tribulation of jail terms.” Finally, in an echo of Li’s own remarks relating to Nostradamus, “current events happening now in China were arranged several thousand years ago.” Taken together, this series of statements would be greatly heartening to adherents. Once again they could conclude that they and their movement are part of a great cosmic plan and that their current trials are part of that plan—but that their persecution will eventually cease and they will be able to practise freely in their homeland once more.

A third set of “hints” relates to the last days or end times discourse of the Falun Gong. In accordance with Li’s writings, Nam apparently refers to this as the dharma-ending period.²⁹ During this period—we are not told how long it will last—a “strange disease” will afflict mankind and “it is hard for even one out of ten households to survive.” The sage will not teach for very long, and, importantly, “all religions at the time are no longer effective. The only way out is to attain the Fa quickly.” This last remark is of significance as it echoes a comment made by the “Falun Dafa practitioner in North America” (in his discussion of John Hogue’s writings) concerning the destruction of organized religion. Thus, in these last days, Falun Gong must be seen as the only path to salvation, supplanting existing religions. Finally, the day of reckoning seems to be some way off:

Those who persecute Dafa will perish forever, and the day for hundreds of millions of practitioners all over the world to celebrate will eventually come.³⁰

Although in his writings from the latter part of 2000 and through 2001 Li Hongzhi has spoken of future apocalyptic events more frequently, he has never specifically addressed the question of when they will eventuate. This is of great importance as the nomination of a precise date or time frame in which the critical events will take place has been crucial in the non-fulfilment of prophecies in various religious movements, and has eventuated in either the failure of the movement concerned or the necessity for a radical restructuring of its doctrine.

In early November 2000, the first prophecy appeared that related to a Chinese source. Written by one “Rong Fa” 溶法, it is called in its English version “Prophecies of Liu Chi in China’s Ming Dynasty.”³¹ Liu Chi (Liu Ji 劉基) is Liu Bowen 劉伯溫, the famous literatus and statesman from the fourteenth century who was important in the formation of the Ming dynasty.³²

liubowen_yuyan_102600_shishi.html>; English version, 3 November 2000, <www.clearwisdom.net/Eng/2000/Nov/03/VSF110300_1.html>.

³² Liu’s formal given name should actually be rendered “Ji” in *banyu pinyin* 漢語拼音 rather than “Chi.”

His popular claim to fame is as the inventor of *yuebing* 月餅, or moon cakes. The reason that Liu Bowen is included amongst writings on prophecy is, however, for another tradition associated with him, namely his supposed authorship of a collection of gnomic verses called *Shaobingge* 燒餅歌, “frying cake verses,” as this article translates them. This short collection is one of the classic prophetic texts in Chinese and enjoyed something of a rediscovery in the 1980s in the Peoples Republic.³³

The text of the prophecy is related as a conversation between Liu and the first emperor of the Ming and is said to be “documented in the Ming dynasty royal archives.” The conversation as reproduced on the Minghui site does not appear in *Shaobingge* although the form of it resembles some parts of the text attributed to Liu.³⁴

The texts and verses that Liu speaks are unequivocal in their predictions.³⁵ In “the last Fa-declining period” Maitreya will descend, though he will not be associated with Buddhism or Daoism. He will be born into an indigent family rather than in a court and will travel in “Northern Zhao and Southern Yan 燕南赵北” where he will scatter his gold. After the Qing dynasty, China will open out. After a second opening when “Lao Shui” 老水 is reigning a great cultivation practice will appear. At that time, the descended Maitreya will spread his doctrine. Only those associated with the doctrine—which will make people look younger than they really are—will be saved.

Rong Fa’s notes to this text—not surprisingly—see them as related to Li Hongzhi and Falun Gong. As he says, they “most explicitly reveal the origin, beginning and dissemination of Falun Dafa.” Rong observes that Li is not associated with Buddhism or Daoism; he was raised in an indigent family³⁶; he went to Beijing (“the area identified as ‘Northern Zhao and Southern Yan’ clearly is Beijing”) where he made his doctrine (“the gold”) public in 1992; “the second opening” is the reform period and “Lao Shui” is Jiang Zemin.³⁷ Finally, Rong claims that the prophecy’s final part, “vividly depicts the Fa-rectification process” and that “it is noteworthy that the Buddha coming to save sentient beings is identified as ‘Buddha of the Future’, who is also called Maitreya.”

In other words, the purport of the prophecy attributed to Liu Bowen, like that of Nam Sa-go, is that Li Hongzhi should be identified as Maitreya and that only those who adhere to his doctrines will be saved from the future calamity. This identification resonates with the importance placed on Maitreya in popular religious movements in late imperial China, as discussed in the introduction. Such a reading of Maitreya remained current into the twentieth century when it endured despite repeated and brutal government attempts to stamp it out. Thus, to claim Maitreya status in contemporary China is to challenge political authority. Under these circumstances, it is significant that the claim of Li Hongzhi’s identity with Maitreya has been made only after Falun Gong’s suppression and the exile of its leaders when it has wished to challenge the Chinese authorities directly.

³³ Private communication, Geremie Barmé, March 2001.

³⁴ One minor, though important, difference is that while in *Shaobingge*, the conversation is introduced by “*Di yue* 帝曰 (the Emperor said)” and “*Ji yue* 基曰 (Ji said),” the Minghui conversation is introduced with “*Di yue* (the Emperor said)” and “*Wen yue* 溫曰 (Wen said).” This latter method of referral is most strange as Liu Ji’s alternate name is Bowen, not simply Wen.

³⁵ Here I am using the English translation provided. It departs in significant ways from the Chinese original by introducing interpretations into the translation. For instance, “the last Fa-declining period” as it appears in the English is actually simply “*mobou*” 末後 (“in the end”) in the original Chinese. However, in the Chinese gloss to this verse—but not in the English glosses—it explains that “*mobou*” is a shortened form of “*mofa bouqi*” 末法後期, the latter period of the decline of the Fa. Thus, when the translations and glosses are read together, essentially the same information is provided in both versions.

³⁶ On Li’s upbringing and particularly on the question of whether his family were poor or not, see Penny, “The life and times of Li Hongzhi.”

³⁷ In the English version, the following footnote is provided: “‘Lao’ means ‘old’ and ‘Shui’ is ‘water’. The mention of ‘Lao Shui’ here is interesting as its implications are consistent with those of current despotic leader Jiang Zemin. ‘Jiang’ in Chinese refers to river; ‘Zemin’, by literal translation, is ‘helping people to grow by watering them continuously.’ Ironically, during the summer of 1990, the first year Jiang assumed the top office in the country, China saw a large part of its territory most damagingly flooded; and human tolls were in the thousands. It was widely circulated within the somewhat ‘superstitious’ segment of the population that the flood might have something to do with the name of the leader. Since that time, however, severe floods have become a usual occurrence every year in China.” In the Chinese version there is no such footnote; however, the Chinese gloss says: “It must be that Lao Shui is returning to the capital; ‘Lao Shui’ indicates a creature of the water with water as its name; ‘returning to the capital’ indicates sitting in the capital as the lord of an entire country.”

³⁸ Anon, “The Hopi prophesy (II),” Chinese version, 18 November 2000, <www.minghui.cc/gb/0001/Nov/17/hopi_prophecy_111700_shishi.html>; English version 20 November 2000, <www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/Nov/20/SCF112000_1.html>.

³⁹ Anon, “The Hopi Prophecy (II),” Chinese version, 18 November 2000, <www.minghui.cc/gb/0001/Nov/18/hopi_prophecy2_111800_shishi.html>; English version, 21 November 2000, <www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/Nov/21/SCF112100_1.html>. In February 2001, a third article appeared called “The teaching of Hopi God—earth, water, fire, wind and their relationships to four colored human races,” which merely reproduces a 1986 speech by Lee Brown. The credited source is, again, a website of the Rainbow Family. (Chinese version, 12 February 2001, <minghui.cc/mh/articles/2001/2/12/7963.html>; English version, 16 February 2001, <www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2001/Feb/16/WWS021601_1.html>.)

⁴⁰ Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi* (Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin, 1977; originally New York: Viking Press, 1963). On the cover of the 1977 Penguin edition it describes the book as providing “The first revelation of the Hopi’s historical and religious world-view of life.”

The Hopi

Just a fortnight after the Liu Bowen article appeared, the Minghui website published two anonymous articles concerning prophecies made by the Hopi under the titles “The Hopi Prophecy (I)”³⁸ and “The Hopi Prophecy (II).”³⁹ The Hopi are a native American nation whose land is in Northern Arizona. They have been the subjects of anthropological discussion since the 1890s and academic publications on them are extensive. In the popular imagination, they achieved a new prominence in 1963 with the publication of Frank Waters’s *Book of the Hopi*.⁴⁰

The two articles on the Minghui website both feature a “Re-drawing of Image on the Prophecy Stone on Hopi Land,” although discussion of it is only found in the second as will be discussed below. Under the diagram, the first has the following text (preserving the layout on the page):

Year 2000 is close approx. time. Everything happens right after another like dominos.

Caused by Peoples’ corruption.

Will have star people visit, but he doesn’t know who or if they will help or hinder us.

Has happened before in times past. Changes will take place in such a way that planet will become a different planet.

Afterwards life changes. One language (doesn’t know which one) and one law. (not NWO type of one law). The dark-hearted ones will be eliminated and the good hearted ones walking with the One will continue this world.

— Excerpts from “Hopi Prophecy”

Following this rather perplexing opening a kind of explanation for how the prophecies of a native American nation appeared in Falun Gong circles is provided:

A kindhearted person invited some Falun Gong practitioners to teach Falun Gong exercises at a church in mid US. She contacted some Americans who are interested in cultivation to attend. The audience was convinced by the profound principles of Falun Gong. When a practitioner explained the Falun Emblem to the audience that the Dharma Wheel from Buddha’s School, the Yin and Yang from the Taoist School and everything in this ten-directional world are all embodied in this Falun Emblem, a person from the audience said excitedly, “I’ve seen this Swastika sign before. I know that there will be a Saint of the East come at around this time and he will bring sacred power and justice to people of all races. I’ve been paying close attention to Asia, waiting for Pahana to appear. I think that Falun Gong is the only thing that is connected to this prophecy.”

This person is a teacher for disabled children. He is very kind and has studied various prophecies, Taichi, internal cultivation, etc. When he came to do the exercises for the second time, he brought us an URL for a website and showed us an ancient Indian prophecy diagram. The prophecy diagram indeed affords food for thought. There is a Swastika sign (similar to a part of the Falun Emblem) inside the leftmost circle, which symbolizes the origin of the universe.

From this explanation it appears that the Hopi prophecy material has found its way into Falun Gong circles through the agency of an American seeker who happened to attend an introductory session in a local church. Apart from the brief description offered in this excerpt, “He is very kind and has studied various prophecies, Taichi, internal cultivation, etc,” some notion of his interests may be gathered from the internet references—the URLs—he gave to the Falun Gong practitioners. These websites are given as the sources of the material excerpted into the Falun Gong article, and will be addressed below.

The five short paragraphs that follow the drawing are not annotated in any way so any interpretation of them must remain speculative. However, following the lead that Li Hongzhi has given in his original article on Nostradamus, the first statement “Year 2000 is close approx. time. Everything happens right after another like dominos” can reasonably be read as describing events that have already happened rather than as a prediction. From the point of view of Falun Gong, the crackdown and suppression of the group by the Chinese government could easily be understood, metaphorically, as the fall of dominos, and the presence of “approx.” in the dating would allow the anomaly between mid-1999 and 2000 not to be of serious significance. It may also refer (as presumably it did to the original author of these prophecies) to generalised cataclysmic events around the world.⁴¹ “Caused by People’s corruption” can also be read in two ways: first, it may refer to people in general who, as Li Hongzhi has observed many times, have departed from the true path and are therefore spiritually corrupt. Secondly, the referent could be the Chinese leadership, specifically Jiang Zemin, who stand at the head of a corrupt government. “Will have star people visit, but he doesn’t know who or if they will help or hinder us” probably refers to Li Hongzhi’s discussions of extraterrestrials and people who live on other planets. The most famous case was in his April 2000 interview with *Time Magazine* when he claimed that aliens had controlled the development of twentieth-century science in order to control humanity spiritually. Ultimately, according to Li, the goal of the aliens is to replace humans entirely.⁴² “Has happened before in times past. Changes will take place in such a way that planet will become a different planet” fits well with Li Hongzhi’s theories of multiple annihilation of civilisations in the past⁴³ and, in conjunction with the first statement, may indicate that the next annihilation is due “approximately” in 2000. The final statement that “Afterwards life changes. One language (doesn’t know which one) and one law. (not NWO type of one law). The dark-hearted ones will be eliminated and the good hearted ones walking with the One will continue

⁴¹ During 2001, the Minghui website has published regular essays and reports of violent or unexpected weather and natural disasters. These appear to refer both to the traditional Chinese notion that unusual weather can be read as having political meaning—as in the “Treatises on the Five Phases” in many of the standard histories—and to the interest in New Age circles with so-called “earth changes.”

⁴² See <www.time.com/time/asia/asia/magazine/1999/990510/interview1.html>.

⁴³ *Zhuan Falun* (Taipei: Yuzhou Chubanshe, 1990), p.23; Third Translation Edition (updated in March 2000, New York: Universe Publishing Company, 2000), p.21.

⁴⁴ NWO stands for New World Order, one of the bogies of the lunar right, sometimes associated with the UN.

⁴⁵ <www.cazekiel.org/earthchanges/hopi.htm>. The 20 predictions appear in Gilliland's list as numbers 7, 10, 12, 8 and 16. The Falun Gong site changes Gilliland's introductory "Hopi Elders say:" into "Hopi Elders said that important things would happen at a time close to now."

⁴⁶ The same list appears on the website of "The Academy" of which H. Lynn Herrmann is the "overseer," in "Academy Sidepost #71: three views on the days ahead (6-17-98 Wednesday late PM)" a posting from "Sherri" who "lives in upper mid USA" at <www.nebulus.org/academy/archives/side71.html>. This posting compares predictions by Scallion, the Hopi and Ed Dames. Scallion is Gordon-Michael Scallion who "has received thousands of messages about the upcoming changes on our planet" in his dreams (see <www.crystalinks.com/gordon.html> and <www.matrixinstitute.com/>). Ed Dames is a "remote viewer" (see <www.trv-psitech.com/eddames.htm>). Gilliland's use of Hopi prophecy is, in fact, only a small part of his message. It, along with "Current predictions & prophecies for 2000," and "4th of July message from Mother Mary" (<www.cazekiel.org/earthchanges/dreams.htm>) appear to be present on the site to bolster the claims of Gilliland's own excursions into the future in the form of "The Cazekiel prophecies" which he has available for sale (<www.cazekiel.org/smei/order.htm>). The general flavour of Gilliland's interests can be gleaned from the list of topics on which he has granted interviews: "Near death experience. Life after death, the process and where one goes according to consciousness. Planes, dimensions, and the vibrational continuum. Healing negative influences, discarnate spirits, poltergeists, thought forms, and limiting mental concepts. Angelic Guides, Ascended Masters, and other spiritually and technologically advanced beings. UFOs, Ancient Ancestors, their origins and their intentions. The vibrational lifting and healing of Humanity and the Earth. Social, economic, and physical Earth changes, tumultuous times ahead" (<www.cazekiel.org/smei/james.htm>).

⁴⁷ In this story, White Feather accepts a lift while hitchhiking and tells his driver, "a minister named David Young," that "now, White Feather is dying. His sons have all joined his ancestors, and soon he too shall be with them. But there is no one left, no one to recite and pass on the ancient wisdom."

this world" can be construed as describing the world, post-cataclysm.⁴⁴

Reading the full list of twenty dot-pointed predictions from which these five are excerpted—the entire list is reproduced later in the Falun Gong article—it is clear that the message of the original has been radically rewritten. The original list comes from the website of the Self-Mastery Earth Institute from Trout Lake, Washington, an organisation run by James Gilliland.⁴⁵ Gilliland's original list begins with "Anti Christ and WW3 coming" and proceeds to "Where it was hot will be cold and where it was cold will be hot" via crop circles as "teaching symbols from another race (don't know who)", animals turning against people, a prohibition on inter-racial marriage and much else besides.⁴⁶

To return to the teacher of disabled children: he is reported to have said that Pahana, the saint of the east, will come "at around this time" bringing sacred power and justice, also claiming that Pahana will come from Asia. He made a link, the report says, between the Falun Gong emblem and part of the diagram on prophecy rock. The rest of his statement would indicate that Pahana refers to Li Hongzhi. In the first Hopi prophecy article there is a short essay entitled, "The nine signs of Hopi prophesize that the Fourth World shall end soon/Pahana shall bring with him the dawn of the fifth world." This essay largely consists of a transcription of the words of an elder of the Hopi Bear clan called White Feather.⁴⁷ The essence of White Feather's message is that the Fourth World, into which Hopi emerged, is about to end and the Fifth World will dawn soon.⁴⁸ At the emergence into the Fourth World, two brothers—a Hopi bother and a White, elder, brother—were each given a stone tablet (or in some versions two halves of the same tablet).⁴⁹ The White brother was to migrate with his clans to the east. When they had reached the sun, they would end their migrations. The Hopis straying from their proper path would, it is said, precipitate the return of the White brother. The white brother is Pahana. The east in this myth clearly relates to the lands east of the Hopi lands, that is, where the sun rises from their point of view—and not Asia.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The first to third worlds have already passed through the cycle of decline from a paradisaical beginning to inevitable destruction. He gives seven signs that the time of the destruction of the Fourth World is soon. These signs are couched in poetic language and are interpreted in this text as various manifestations of white settlement from guns and covered wagons to oil spills, hippies and skylab. These signs indicate that, "the great destruction is coming. The world shall rock to and fro And soon—very soon afterward—Pahana will return. He shall bring with him the dawn of the Fifth World. He shall plant the seeds of his wisdom in their hearts. Even now the seeds are being planted. These shall smooth the way to the Emergence into the Fifth World."

⁴⁹ In this discussion I am indebted to Armin W. Geertz's *The invention of prophecy: continuity and meaning in Hopi Indian religion* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1994)

⁵⁰ Geertz discusses what he calls "The Pahaana syndrome," in *The invention of prophecy*. Apparently, after the publication of Frank Waters's *Book of the Hopi*, there was "a veritable invasion of the reservation by hippies and other Euro-Americans driven by curiosity and not a few exotic delusions" (p.291). He cites one example of an "all too common" incident where a hippie came to the village of Hotevilla bearing a piece of stone wishing to present it to the chief, claiming that it had "certain spiritual powers."

The source given on the Minghui site for this White Feather material is one of the websites associated with The Rainbow Family of Living Light.⁵¹ The Rainbow Family is a group, or according to their explanation a non-group, of people dedicated to alternative lifestyles.⁵² On the site that the Minghui article refers to, the relationship between The Rainbow Family and the native peoples of North America is succinctly enunciated:

Many people feel the birth of the Rainbow Family was foretold many, many years ago by various Native American tribes. Unfortunately, all of these tales are Oral Histories, so the specifics vary from version to version. About all we can do is compare the versions, and try to get the basic “feel” of the prophecy This prophecy [described under the title “Warriors of the Rainbow”] is the one that has become famous as it fortells [sic] the birth of the “Rainbow Warriors”, who will save the earth from environmental destruction. Many people feel that we are these Rainbow Warriors.

The relationship of The Rainbow Family to native American religion and spirituality, is not of direct interest here.⁵⁴ Instead, what is of concern in this context is the way that Falun Gong has used various interpretations of native American religion and from where those interpretations have been derived. From this brief excursion it is clear that their information on Hopi prophecy does not come from what we might think of as mainstream anthropological literature, and, while we might see Gilliland and The Rainbow Family as both belonging, in some sense, to the New Age, their approaches are actually radically different. This typifies the way that at least some adherents of Falun Gong have indiscriminately gathered spiritual resources from what lay at hand, with apparently little cognisance of their original contexts or meanings.

The second article, “The Hopi Prophecy (II),” concerns the inscription on prophecy rock, near the village of Oraibi in Arizona. The prophecy rock provides an exceptional example of the way that a variety of meanings can be read and reread into material artefacts. As Geertz has pointed out in his tracing of the different meanings read into these carvings, prophecy is always related to the audience to whom it is directed. Thus, he is able to identify a series on interpretations that have been made as to the meaning of what he calls this “intriguing petroglyph” (See Figures 2 and 3 below).⁵⁵

The Falun Gong version came, if we follow their internet references, from either The Rainbow Family’s site discussed earlier, or from the site of VJ

/it here. Be prepared for civil war and invasion by China. This is the definitive study, updated 1997.”

⁵² The explanation on the site Falun Gong’s friend informed them of, answers the question “What is the Rainbow Family?” in these terms: “Some say we’re the largest non-organization of non-members in the world. We have no leaders, and no organization. To be honest, the Rainbow Family means different things to different people. I think it’s safe to say we’re into intentional community building, non-violence, and alternative lifestyles. We also believe that Peace and Love are a great thing, and there isn’t enough of that in this world. Many of our traditions are based on Native American traditions, and we have a strong orientation to take care of the the [sic] Earth. We gather in the National Forests yearly to pray for peace on this planet” (<www.welcomehome.org/rainbow>). They operate around the world and, although most of its activities occur in the US, 2000 saw “Gatherings of the Tribes” in Guatemala, South Africa, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, Russia, Romania, Croatia, India, Israel, North Queensland, and next to Boonoo Boonoo National Park near Tenterfield, NSW. The first gathering was in 1972 in Colorado. One participant in the Rainbow Family describes the activities of the gatherings as “lots of accoustical music, drumming, dancing, workshops, herb-walks, council circles, sister circles, brother circles, brother-sister circles, people hanging out, people bartering, people enjoying nature, people meditating, chanting, and praying, people talking politics, people talking spiritual and personal growth, people visioning the future, people doing bodywork and other healing work, The list could go on forever” (Carla, “What is the Rainbow Family of Living Light?” at <www.welcomehome.org/rainbow/info/carla-what.html>).

⁵³ “Native American prophecies” at <www.welcomehome.org/rainbow/prophecy/prophecies.html>.

⁵⁴ See *The invention of prophecy*, ch.10, “Hippie-Sinom (Hippie people) and the crisis of meaning.”

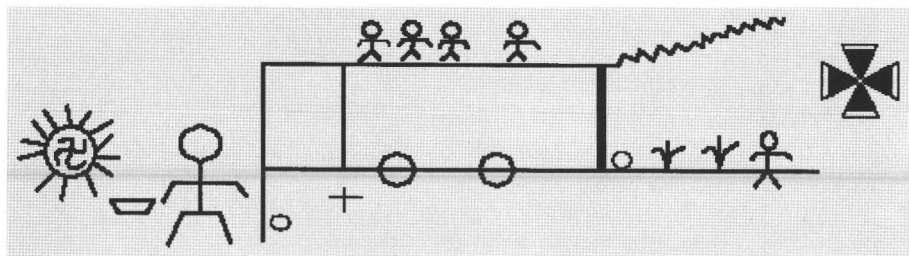
⁵⁵ See *The invention of prophecy*, chapter 9, “The legacy of Prophecy Rock: on the mutability of petroglyphs,” quotation at p.257.

⁵¹ <www.welcomehome.org/rainbow/prophecy/hopi1.html>. The text on the Falun Gong website is actually an excerpt from a larger essay on The Rainbow Family site which, in turn, gives the sources of its information as Frank Waters’s *Book of the Hopi* and a work called *American prophecy* by one Mobius Rex, otherwise known as Robert A. Nelson, also author of *Hempology, Prophecy: the history of the future, Electro-culture,*

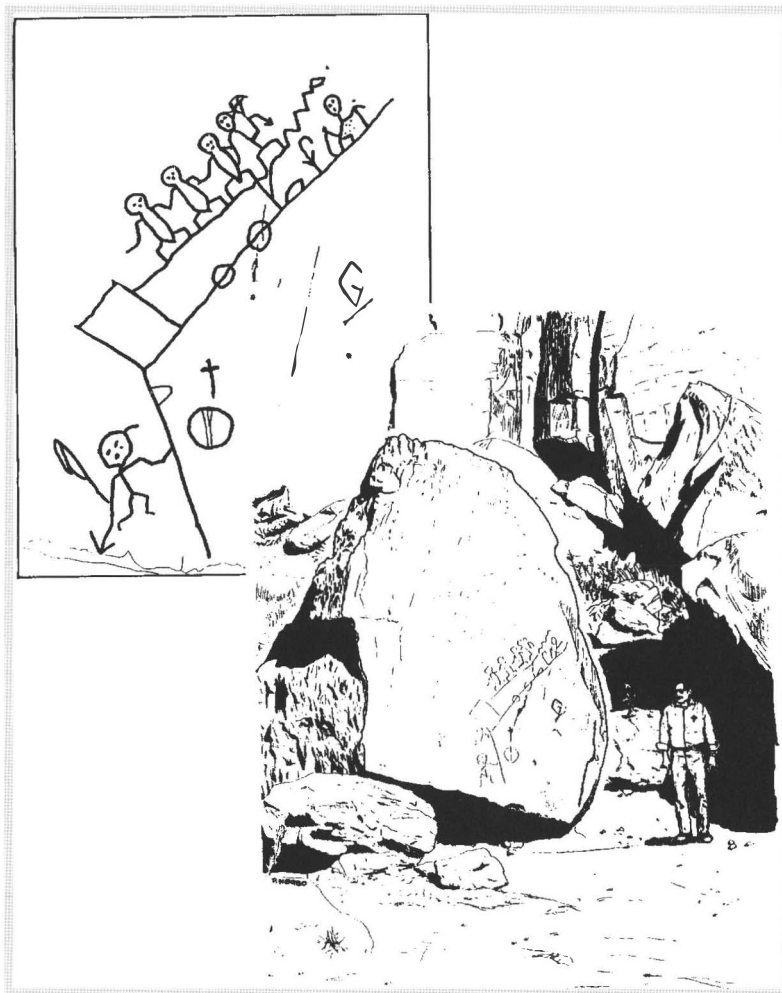
Transmutations of ores and some other works. Rex’s works are hard to obtain but a book catalogue gives the following short description of *American prophecy*: “America’s near future according to Indian prophets, George Washington, Mormons, Cayce, & 20 others. These seers gave accurate forearnings [sic] of major events that occurred during and after their lives. Their messages about our present & near future deserve special attention. They have received

Figure 2

A "Re-drawing of Image on the Prophecy Stone on Hopi Land" that appears at www.clearwisdom.net/emb/articles/2000/11/20/6108.html. The immediate source for this image is www.welcomehome.org/rainbow/prophecy/hopi1.html. This version of the inscription on Prophecy Rock is rather different from the original

**Figure 3**

Drawing by Paul Nørbo based on a photograph taken by Armin W. Geertz, 1988 (reproduced, with permission, from Geertz's *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*, fig. 16, p.258 [copyright 1994 by Armin W. Geertz])



Enterprises, the homepage of which says that it presents, “Aquarian Age Information Central. 2000, The Time of the Beginning, as fortold [*sic*] by many ancient prophecies.”⁵⁶ URLs for both the Rainbow Family and VJ Enterprises are given as references on the Minghui site and both show identical diagrams.⁵⁷ The interpretation of the inscription on the Minghui site claims to be “a summary of the past interpretations of the Prophecy Rock.” The message of its prophecy is that the world will suffer periodic annihilation and that humanity must choose between the material and the spiritual path.

The introduction to the Falun Gong interpretation is, perhaps, the most telling part of the article. It reads:

Near Oraibi, Arizona, there is a petroglyph known as Prophecy Rock that symbolizes many Hopi prophecies said to be over 10,000 years old. Hopi is an ancient Indian village. Their ancestors passed down many prophecies on the origin, history and future of mankind. They did not use scripts but passed down them down by word of mouth from generation to generation. In the 1950’s, the prophecies were made public in English for the first time. Due to the remote history, hardly any one can provide an appropriate explanation of the leftmost radiating circle and the swastika in the center. Some websites even removed the left part and only explained the center part.

The last two sentences are fascinating. The circle with the swastika in it was referred to explicitly by the teacher of disabled children and, of course, is seen to refer to Falun Gong’s own symbol. Thus, by implication, this age-old inscription relates to the rise of Falun Gong. And if this is the case, then it should come as no surprise that “hardly any one can provide an appropriate explanation of the leftmost radiating circle and the swastika in the center,” as previous interpreters were reading the meaning of the inscription before Falun Gong had been made known to the world. Appropriateness is, of course, in the mind of the beholder but there are certainly attempts at its interpretation from “signs on the Powamuy rattle”⁵⁸ to one of the two helpers of Pahana.⁵⁹ However, the authors’ claim that “Some websites even removed the left part and only explained the center part”—that is, they have not mentioned the swastika emblem that the author regards as a prophecy of Falun Gong—is complicated by the fact that the original inscription did not include this part of the image at all, as can be seen from the drawing in Figure 3.⁶⁰

Master Buxu

On 24 November 2000 an article appeared under the title “Reflections on ‘Prophecies of Master Buxu,’” which is certainly the most obscure of the Falun Gong prophecies and also, in many ways, the least apparently related to Falun Gong.⁶¹ Master Buxu, the essay claims, was originally a Sui dynasty general who became a monk on Tiantai shan 天台山 in response to the social chaos as the dynasty crumbled. His non-clerical name is not given and while

⁵⁶ <www.v-j-enterprises.com>.

⁵⁷ The version of the inscription on these sites, in turn, conforms most closely to one published in 1975 in a small distribution newspaper called the *East West Journal* in an article by a Hopi traditionalist called Thomas Banancya who appears to have promoted himself as spokesman for the Hopi to white Americans. On Thomas Banancya, see Shuichi Nagata’s description of him reproduced in *The invention of prophecy*, pp.261–2.

⁵⁸ Banancya’s interpretation in 1970. See *The invention of prophecy*, p.265

⁵⁹ This appears to be Mobius Rex’s interpretation as found on the Rainbow Family’s site.

⁶⁰ Private communication with Armin Geertz.

⁶¹ Chinese version, 14 Nov. 2000, <www.minghui.cc/gb/0001/Nov/14/buxu_1009_shishi.html>; English version, 27 Nov. 2000, <www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2000/11/27/6003.html>. Unusually, in this case the English-language version of the article is a rough précis of the Chinese rather than a direct translation, as is the case with most of the essays discussed here.

buxu (literally “pacing the void”) is a standard term in Chinese religious discourse, the historicity of a “Buxu dashi” must remain in doubt. Adding to these suspicions is the fact that, apparently, Master Buxu’s prophetic writings were only discovered at the end of the nineteenth century by a lay Buddhist in the Biyun temple 碧雲寺 in Beijing’s western hills.

The prophecies themselves are written in an extremely allusive style and, on first reading, seem to make little sense. The claim made for them is that they accurately predicted nineteenth and twentieth century events in China from the accession to the throne of the Xuantong 宣統 emperor to Communist rule, but as the essay says, its predictions are “probably meaningful only in retrospect.” An example of the style in which this essay is written is indicated by the following passage:

Twenty-seven in length and breadth,
 One ox has a pair of tails,
 Never again in human shape,
 The sun travels on its eternal course,
 The ocean brings forth the golden turtle ...

The author’s glosses to this passage say that ‘twenty-seven’ refers to Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (the characters for two and seven combined form the character Mao) while the ox with two tails refers to Zhu De 朱德 (the character for ox with two added strokes forms the character Zhu). For reasons that are obscure to me, the golden turtle is said to represent Taiwan. Many elements in this passage, and in the text as a whole, remain unexplained.

After establishing the unimpeachable credentials of this text as genuinely prophetic, the author claims it predicts the rise of Falun Gong and the appearance of a sage ten dynasties after the Sui dynasty in which the prediction was made. The sage will, furthermore, teach for nine years. Associated with the rise of the sage, the universe will be divided into three parts. “Let’s see who can accomplish this feat,” the author asks, and answers with citations from *ZhuanFalun* 轉法輪 that refer to truthfulness, compassion and forbearance—the tripartite morality of Falun Gong—as the “most fundamental characteristic of the Universe.” The other two parts of this prediction, that is, the nine-year teaching period and the ten dynasty wait until the sage appears do not come from the prose text from which the passage above was excerpted. Rather, they come from a supposedly autobiographical poem that acts as a kind of preface to the prose text. The relevant couplet reads:

Facing the wall [in meditation] for nine years I approached the Great Dao,
 With a snap of the fingers, ten periods [pass] and it changes to a new form.

It is clear from the context that these lines refer to Master Buxu’s own spiritual development and have nothing to do with the prophetic text that follows. The author discusses these lines in the following way:

In [Master Buxu’s] eyes, China would see the spread of “Great Tao” cultivation practice for nine years—which coincided with the public dissemination of Falun Dafa from 1992 to presumably 2001. It also mentions ten primary

historical periods China would go through before a world-changing event occurs. Interestingly since Sui dynasty, China has already been ruled by nine dynasties: Sui, T'ang [唐], Five Dynasties [五代], Sung [宋], Yuan [元], Ming [明], Ch'ing [清], Nationalist, and the current Communist.⁶²

⁶² Accepting the assertion of the five dynasties as one dynasty.

Apart from the misreading of the poem from which these supposed prophecies come, it is clear that their interpretation as referring to Falun Gong relies on the unfolding of events after the time of writing this article, namely the cessation of the public dissemination of Falun Gong after 2001. There is, as yet, no indication of this in Falun Gong literature or amongst adherents nor any sign of the advent in China of a new dynasty.

Revelations and the Flood

On 26 December 2000, the English version of "Some Prophecies from the Book of Revelations From the Bible" by Zheng Yi 鄭意 was published on the Minghui site.⁶³ In this article, three passages from the 16th, 17th and 19th chapters of the *Book of Revelations* are cited.⁶⁴

⁶³ Zheng Yi, "Some prophecies from the Book of Revelations from the Bible," Chinese version, <minghui.cc/gb/0001/Dec/19/shengjin_qishilu_121900_dajia.html>; English version, <www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2000/12/26/3737.html>.

⁶⁴ *Revelations*, 16: 12–15; 17: 1; 19: 2 and 11–16.

In the 16th chapter the sixth of the seven angels with seven plagues dries up the Euphrates River and "three unclean spirits like toads" come from the mouths of a dragon, a beast and a false prophet. These toads are said to be the spirits of devils who will gather the kings of the world for the great battle. Zheng Yi's commentary to this passage claims that the unclean spirits will possess the bodies of humans. "They use their mouth to spread fabrications—or exploiting the media to smear Falun Dafa. It is their mouth that they use to vilify Truthfulness-Benevolence-Forbearance." Furthermore, "people with supernatural abilities have long discovered that Jiang, chief architect of the persecution of Falun Dafa and Christians, is a toad. He also has an 'assistant being' that is a very ferocious crocodile." The beginning of Chapter 17 introduces the judgment of the Whore of Babylon, which Zheng Yi says "demonstrates the punishment for wickedness, declined morality and corruption." Finally, the passage from Chapter 19 describes the opening of heaven and the appearance of a rider on a white horse whose name is "Faithful and True." In addition, "he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself;" that "his name is called The Word of God," and finally, that on his thigh was written the name, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Out of the mouth of this rider, "goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." Zheng Yi's comments on this passage focus on two points. First, he or she makes a link between the "repeated appearance" of words like faithful, true and righteousness in the biblical passage and truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance, the moral code of Falun Gong. Secondly, Zheng Yi comments on the issue of names and refers in particular to the claim that "he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself," and concludes, "Since he came from the heaven to disseminate the Fa, and he is 'King of Kings, and Lord of Lords', this is definitely not meant for humans

⁶⁵ Anon., “Historic truths—myths and prophecies of the world,” Chinese version, <www.minghui.cc/mh/articles/2001/2/12/7962.html>; English version, <www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/2/17/4553.html>

⁶⁶ The author also refers to a website on which photos of Noah’s alleged ark are to be found at <www.pilgrimpromo.com/WAR/>.

of the worldly plane. Neither Buddha, Tao nor God can attain a realm as high as that. As a result, nobody knows his identity but himself.” This figure is presumably Li Hongzhi.

This essay represents an attempt to introduce perhaps the best-known tradition of prophecy for a western audience—the apocalyptic Christian tradition—into Falun Gong’s discussions. And while the specific claims involved in it are different from what has been enunciated in previous essays, its purport, like that of those previously discussed, is that Falun Gong cannot be regarded merely as a phenomenon of modern times but is part of an age-old plan of universal significance. Furthermore, Li Hongzhi, is again understood to be the most supreme being of the cosmos.

The final essay in this series appeared on 17 February 2001. Entitled “Historic Truths—Myths and Prophecies of the World,” it was also anonymous.⁶⁵ It does not concentrate on any one tradition but rather makes the general case that “we are people who have forgotten our past and do not know where we belong” and that “myths, religious stories and historical records” are the repositories of our forgotten history. Referring implicitly to the doctrine that there have been many previous civilizations on earth and that they have all been destroyed in turn, the author claims that myths from around the world all relate the story of a great flood.⁶⁶ “Why did humans have to encounter this disaster? Every country’s fairy tales offered identical explanations—the great gods decided to punish humans because of humanity’s degeneration.”

The concluding statement of this essay links these analyses with the discussion of prophecy:

Not only have we forgotten our past, we know nothing about the future. Prophets throughout history have made many prophecies for human history and many countries in the world have great prophets Some prophecies mentioned a time period (around this time) when humans and gods would coexist. Some prophecies have predicted a disaster for humanity, and also mentioned that the prophecies would not come to pass if a certain event would happen.

Humans, what do you choose? These fairy tales and prophecies may provide us with some deeper thoughts.”

Conclusion

⁶⁷ Is it necessary to note the differences between the classic Judeo-Christian notion of prophecy and their Chinese equivalents or close equivalents. In the Semitic traditions prophecy occurs when a direct connection is made between God and a particular person and certain truths, unknown to the rest of humankind, are revealed. These prophecies *need not* tell of the future. This

Why has Falun Gong made this move to prophecy?⁶⁷ First, we should note that these essays have appeared while Falun Gong is being suppressed in its homeland. The prophecies implicitly make the claim that this movement is of far greater consequence than mere political action within one country at this particular time of tribulation. They look forward to the inevitable time when Falun Gong can be practised once again in China, when Li Hongzhi, now interpreted as a being of cosmic greatness, can once again lead his movement for human salvation. Jan Nattier provides some provocative

thoughts concerning this kind of apocalyptic scenario in relation to her studies of the Maitreya myth and in particular the ones she refers to as the “Here/Now” versions. In these stories, humankind will encounter Maitreya “here,” that is on earth rather than in the Tuṣita heaven, and “now,” that is at present or in the immediate future, rather than in the far distant future.⁶⁸ She argues that the transformation of “here/now” versions of the Maitreya myth into active rebellion required two processes. First, an apocalyptic mythology needed to be created and secondly, that rebellion itself had to be seen as being divinely sanctioned. She writes:

For the creation of an apocalyptic mythology to take place, the political system must be invested with religious significance; that is, it must be seen as a key element in the cosmic structure, not as a trifling creation of mere humans. When the political structure is thus sacralized, its overthrow or perversion by those not adhering to the proper religiopolitical traditions will then be seen not merely as an injustice or a breach of tradition, but as an affront to the cosmic order, calling for a religious response. When concrete action (ie the removal of the usurper or other offender) is impossible, one response is the creation of apocalyptic mythology.⁶⁹

Interestingly, the two prerequisites for the creation of an apocalyptic mythology appear to have taken place in the case of Falun Gong. Clearly, while there have been sporadic demonstrations and very low-level action against the Chinese authorities since the suppression, serious action aimed at the overthrow of the government is simply impossible. Secondly, and more surprisingly, Falun Gong has appeared to transform its understanding of the Chinese government from being a “creation of mere humans” into something, if not of religious significance, that certainly has otherworldly aspects. Thus, Jiang Zemin is, as we have seen, the third antichrist, he is an evil spirit in the form of a toad, his name was foretold. Nattier continues:

Apocalyptic mythology is often generated by those recently expelled from power in a religiously based political system Under these circumstances, such mythology serves to reinforce the threatened identity of those recently ousted from power, while at the same time justifying their reluctance to take concrete (and probably suicidal) political action. The result is the development of what might be called “passive apocalyptic”—an outlook that anticipates the overthrow of the illegitimate religiopolitical order but expects the initiative for such action to come from divine power(s) without any human assistance.⁷⁰

Thus, the move to prophecy can be seen as the creation of a “passive apocalyptic,” where the role of the practitioners is not to practise open rebellion but through their cultivation to assist in the vast cosmic Fa-rectification process that Li Hongzhi himself is undertaking at the time of writing. On the one hand, this move enhances the status of Li Hongzhi, as we have seen, and on the other it gives his followers an intensified rationale for practice and adherence to the movement in its time of exile.

We should also note that the prophecies have been discussed only since Falun Gong has left China. It is now an international movement with a large

/kind of direct revelation is known in the Chinese religious tradition, especially in Daoism, but there is another, perhaps more prevalent set of ideas in the Chinese tradition related to knowing the future. These rely on the acquisition of personal knowledge of the inherent patterns of the cosmos—often understood as numerical. Thus, if one is able to understand the way the cosmos operates, the prediction of the future is a skill, not a gift. Similarly, if, at a certain level of enlightenment in the Buddhist schema, one understands the operations of karma, knowledge of past and future incarnations is perfectly reasonable. But it must be stressed that such knowledge comes from personal cultivation rather than direct revelation.

⁶⁸ See Jan Nattier, “The meaning of the Maitreya myth,” in A. Sponberg and H. Hardacre, *Maitreya, the future Buddha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.42.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.42–3.

number of expatriate Chinese adherents as well as a growing number of western adherents—as is indicated by the increasing eclecticism of its range of sources. The move to prophecy is also one way to satisfy these two groups of the bona fides of their movement. Perhaps of importance to the expatriate community are the references to age-old Chinese texts that reinforce the idea that Falun Gong has deep roots in Chinese culture. At the same time references to Nostradamus and the Hopi prophecies are deeply embedded in western New Age discourse. Thus, discussion of prophecy allows Falun Gong to go where it cannot go simply as doctrine. If this particularly Chinese cultivation system is to offer salvation to all of humankind, it helps if seers from all cultures have foretold its coming.

Benjamin Penny

Humanities Research Centre
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
Benjamin.Penny@anu.edu.au

EAST ASIAN HISTORY 23 (2002)