The Death of a Philosopher - Ruminations on *biji, yulu* and Other Evidence Concerning the Demise of Shao Yong (1012-1077)

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With few exceptions, the “Five Masters of Northern Song” or “Neo-Confucian philosophers” did not compose literary “works”, but instead wrote notes and commentaries, mainly on the so-called classics. Disciples and descendants collected their *ipsissima dicta* (*yulu*), anecdotes (*biji*) and other documents on their lives. This “second-hand” evidence is usually taken at face value, without critical examination, for interpreting the thought of the Song thinkers. I will discuss four different accounts of the same event, namely the death of Shao Yong in 1077, in order to not only show the limitations the sources impose on the reconstruction of historical facts, but also their potential as historical evidence for the motives of those having compiled and edited them.

Michael Friedrich received his PhD in Sinology from the University of Munich after having studied at Freiburg, Taipei and Munich. Since 1994 he is professor for Chinese language and literature at the University of Hamburg. Among his fields of interest are Chinese intellectual history, manuscript studies and the European reception of Chinese culture.

All seminars take place on Wednesdays (unless otherwise arranged) at 5pm in rooms 8 & 9 in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge. Tea will be served at the same venue at 4:45pm. All are welcome.