

Chapter 2

Did Daoism Have a Founder? Textual Issues of the *Laozi*

Xiaogan Liu

Was there a founder of Daoism? If we are concerned with Daoism as a tradition of thought or philosophy, our question must address the historical position of the *Laozi* 老子 (or *Lau-tze*), which later came to be known by the title *Daodejing* 道德經 (or *Tao-te-ching*; Eng., *The Classic of the Way and Its Virtue*). This text was circulated, cited, discussed, and transmitted for centuries before the earliest religious movements, which worshipped Laozi as a kind of god and immortal, emerged at the end of the second century CE.¹

So was there an originator of Daoist thought? This seems a simple enough question, but the answer becomes complicated if we want to get at historical truth. Traditionally, people believed that a person known as Laozi was the first Daoist thinker, based on an account in the earliest official history, the *Historical Record* (*Shiji* 史記, Sima 1975). This earliest wisdom, however, fell into doubt and underwent serious scrutiny in the twentieth century. Many alternative and competing hypotheses about Laozi and the key text that bears his name have emerged.

Some scholars, especially Westerners, do not believe there was a specific person named Laozi; they have argued that the text that bears this name had no single initiator and was created by many anonymous authors from different ancient states across the Chinese heartland over hundreds of years (Moeller 2006: 1–3; Graham 1990; Kohn and LaFargue 1998). This may be quite true for the much later Daoist scriptures, but the *Laozi* is different. It contains nothing about divine revelation, and is instead a brief text of groundbreaking thought organized in a roughly coherent

¹See Chap. 20: “Daoism from Philosophy to Religion.”

X. Liu (✉)

Department of Philosophy, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, New Territories,
Hong Kong SAR

e-mail: liuxiaogan@gmail.com

system of inventive concepts and theories. The common word *dao* 道 is used as a stand-in for the ineffable source and ground of the universe, which is claimed to precede God or gods.² *Ziran* 自然 (naturalness) is presented for the first time as the highest principle and core value embodied by Dao. Another new principle, *wuwei* 無為 (non-action), is described as being practiced by sages, following the principle of Dao, to create better political order and prosperous societies. The theory of transformational oppositions is repeatedly expounded and applied in many of the chapters.³ It is difficult to imagine that this short text, with its brief but roughly coherent system of thought, was completed by many strangers over centuries in distant antiquity when communication was terribly difficult.⁴

More strikingly, bamboo and silk versions of the text dating from the third or fourth centuries to the second century BCE have been excavated by archeologists in different provinces.⁵ These discoveries prove that SIMA Qian did indeed have good grounds for his account, which was compiled from historical literature we would never know otherwise. This is significant for our understanding of the life of texts in antiquity, and these new discoveries prompt us to reexamine our “conclusions” about ancient Chinese texts, especially the methodologies and reasoning from which we have derived mistaken judgments. Our new investigations are squarely academic: They are aimed at correcting prevailing assumptions in Chinese textual studies based on the latest scientific discoveries, which can improve the sophistication of our arguments and the bases of the questions we ask. Serious scholars and researchers—Asian, European, and North American—can all benefit from this effort to promote academic quality in the study of Daoism and Chinese philosophy generally.

Why should we discuss historical and textual issues in a philosophical companion? Because we need a bridge between philosophy and Sinology that will provide philosophers convenient access to fundamental and complex arguments specific to the Chinese philosophical literature. That literature has been dramatically renewed by an abundance of texts recovered by archeologists over the last few decades. Most of these fall outside the scholarship of received texts and thought—we simply have never heard of them! Only a few appear to be identical to items listed in the traditional bibliographies of antiquity.

Any philosophers who want to borrow the *Laozi*'s ideas as a resource in developing their own theories may not need to know the historical background of the

²There was no concept of God in the sense of monotheism in ancient China. In early Chinese culture, God or gods were related to ancestral worship.

³The term “transformational oppositions” was suggested by Prof. Douglas L. Berger in a personal communication.

⁴The hypothesis that the *Laozi* has no author or many unconnected authors confuses the roles of textual initiator and later transcribers, editors, and revisers. We will discuss this point at the end of this essay.

⁵For a translation of the Guodian bamboo slip version, see Henricks 2000; for translations of the two silk versions, see Henricks 1991. For a recently published Western Han bamboo slip version, see Beijing University Institute of Archeologist Literature 2012. An English translation of this last may not be available.

text; however, if they want to interpret and comment on Laozi's thought seriously, then a general acquaintance with the latest discoveries and new scholarship is useful. Otherwise, they might merely repeat popular but obsolete opinions or read modern ideas into the *Laozi*.

The issues of the text have been importantly shaped by the reading and understanding of the earliest biography of the figure Laozi, that featured in the *Historical Record* of SIMA Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BC). In the twentieth century, serious debates raged and opinions proliferated about the authorship and dating of the *Laozi*, based on the diverse readings of that early biography. For convenience of discussion, we may roughly classify the various opinions on the date of the text into three groups, though some scholars think the person Laozi could be earlier, while the eponymous text might be later:

1. the early, or Laozi-and-Confucius (551–479 BC) theory;
2. the middle, or before-Zhuangzi (369–286 BC?) theory;
3. the later, or after-Zhuangzi theory.

The Mawangdui 馬王堆 silk manuscripts of the *Laozi* discovered in 1973 and the Guodian 郭店 bamboo-slip edition excavated in 1993 generally seem to support the early theory, though the evidence they provide is not sufficient to overturn and sweep away the others. Therefore, further analyses of the biography and discussion of methodological issues remain necessary and helpful.

The divergent hypotheses and theories about the book and its author that emerged solely from readings of the Laozi biography were based on little hard evidence, but now these conjectures and once-popular theories can be reexamined in light of new information and scholarship derived from recent archeological evidence.

1 A Survey of the Three Theories

Let's return to the three theoretical positions regarding Laozi and his book. Scholars who trust for the most part in the historicity of Sima's record ascribe to the "early theory." This theory is based on both traditional literature and new investigations, which suggest that the core themes of the *Laozi* text represent the thought of Laozi, a senior contemporary of Confucius. Modern scholars CHEN Guying (陳鼓應), YAN Lingfeng (嚴靈峰), ZHANG Yangming (張陽明), and BAI Xi (白奚) are representative of this group. It seems no Western scholars belong to this camp. After a re-examination of the arguments, and encouraged by archaeological discoveries, the leading scholars ZHANG Dainian (張岱年) and XU Fuguan (徐復觀) have also returned to this position. Our reexamination in this chapter of Sima's biography of Laozi is generally favorable to this theory.

Scholars who do not trust Sima's account have tried to build new theories based on the story about Taishidan 太史儋, another name mentioned in the *Historical Record* biography; these scholars belong to the "late theory" group, which claims that the *Laozi* text actually followed the traditionally later *Zhuangzi* text (the second

key text of Daoism) or at least postdated the *Zhuangzi*'s core Inner Chapters. QIAN Mu (錢穆) and A.C. Graham are representatives of this position. The Qian and Graham views have been seriously challenged by the recovery of bamboo-slip editions of the *Laozi*. The tomb from which the slips were unearthed has been dated to before 278 BCE, and it is thus reasonable to suppose that master copies from which the bamboo versions were transcribed may well have existed before 300 BCE. Therefore the completion of the *Laozi* is less likely to have come after Zhuangzi, who is believed to have lived between about 369 and 286 BCE.

Still other scholars who do not entirely credit Sima's biography but do not go as far as the "late theory" fall into the "middle theory" group, which assumes that Laozi probably lived later than Confucius but before Zhuangzi. This position arose from a synthesis of the early and late theories and is a position represented by D.C. Lau, FUNG Yu-lan (FENG Youlan 馮友蘭), and XU Kangsheng (許抗生). Schwartz and many other Western scholars also take this position. This middle theory includes the position that we should separate the historical figure Laozi from the text *Laozi*; that is, the figure could be early but the text may well be late.

Why have the early Guodian bamboo editions not resolved the conflicts among these three lines of argument? Because the proponents of each theory can find certain facts in the slips that support their own hypotheses. Naturally, much depends upon how one evaluates the *Laozi* bamboo slips. Archeologists and most scholars in Chinese philosophy assume that the Guodian versions are three excerpts from an earlier and relatively complete text. This suggests support for the "Laozi and Confucius" theory. The evidence for this position is that Bamboo A and Bamboo C each has a section that is easily recognized as the second half of Chapter 64 in the received versions; yet these passages exhibit certain differences in wording. These slight differences suggest that the two bamboo versions were inscribed from two different, earlier editions of the text, which in turn had an ancestral edition. If content in the bundles of slips matches chapters or passages in the received versions, their ancestral edition must be the text later known as the *Laozi*. The theory agrees with, and is supported by, historical literature about Lao Dan, the reputed author of the text. But it fails to explain why the slips have no counterparts to Chapters 67–81, that is, the last fifteen chapters of the received versions. It seems plausible that the scribes who wrote the slips selected just those chapters and passages that suited their or their patrons' needs and preferences.

Some scholars have assumed that the Guodian bamboo slips represent the earliest complete text of the *Laozi* for keeping their late-theory. The difficulty with this assumption is the above-mentioned repetition with slight variations between the A and C versions of Chapter 64. Still other scholars assume that the bamboo versions represent the middle phase of a process carried out by compilers and editors over a long period of time. This assumption might support either the "before-Zhuangzi" or "after-Zhuangzi" theory. The argument is that only sixteen of the thirty-one chapters found in these slips are complete, which suggests that later compilers and editors may have added other sayings. Yet, these claims are based on inferences from and speculation about the isolated texts and do not take into account the historical literature and other records. Scholars making these claims typically have

to devise a story to explain why this short coherent text took many people a long time to compose and work around, and why all pre-Qin texts attributed the doctrines preserved in the received versions of the *Laozi* to a person called Lao Dan, who some skeptics say never existed.

Most of the articles in this debate have been published in Chinese, and according to my observation, many Chinese scholars who study Daoism incline to the early theory. Not many oversea scholars seem to have taken this position, at least in their publications. Few Chinese scholars have followed QIAN Mu to champion the late theory, so its most influential advocate has been A.C. Graham. For a long time, Chinese and Western academic worlds were isolated from each other due to issues of politics and language, but in recent decades the gap between these academic circles is gradually shrinking, though it is still not likely to disappear in the near term.

2 How to Read the Earliest Biography?

According to SIMA Qian, Laozi hailed originally from the hamlet of Qurenli 曲仁里 in the village of Li 厲鄉 in Ku 苦 County, in the state of Chu 楚.⁶ His family name was Li 李, his given name was Er 耳 and he was styled Dan (聃). As an adult, he had charge of the royal archives in the capital city of the Zhou 周 dynasty (Sima 1975: 2139).

Now Sima's narrative shows that he believed that the three names—Laozi, LI Er, and LI Dan—refer to the same figure. Once, Confucius (551–479 BCE) went to Zhou and consulted with Laozi about the performance of rites. What did Laozi tell Confucius? Here is a brief excerpt:

[A] good merchant hides his stores in a safe place and appears to be devoid of possessions, while a gentleman, though endowed with great virtue, wears a foolish countenance. Rid yourself of your arrogance and your lustfulness, your ingratiating manners and your excessive ambition. These are all detrimental to your person. (Sima 1975: 2139–43)⁷

Upon leaving, Confucius told his disciples, “Today I have seen Laozi, who is perhaps like a dragon.” Although the wording and rhetoric skill here and in other places in the story, might well be Sima's, the content and denotation must be based on the documents and local literatures Sima and his father had spent years collecting. That Sima's *Historical Record* was based on numbers of lost documents we cannot know or even imagine has been repeatedly supported by the excavation in recent decades of hitherto unknown oracle-bone inscriptions,

⁶Ku 苦 County originally belonged to the state of Chen 陳, which was taken over by Chu 楚 in 478 BCE. Therefore Laozi was not of Chu by birth.

⁷The “Biography of Laozi” is from *Shiji*, vol. 63. The translation of *Shiji* in this chapter is adapted from Chan (1973: 36–7), Henricks (2000: 133–34), Lau (2001: x–xi), and Niehauser (1994: 21–23).

and silk and bamboo-slip texts. It is worth noting that the meeting and dialogue between Laozi and Confucius are echoed and confirmed in two other biographies in the same *Historian Record*, namely “Confucian Lineage” (*Kongzi shijia* 孔子世家) and “Biographies of Confucian Disciples” (*Zhongni dizi liezhuan* 仲尼弟子列傳). Obviously Sima was serious and confident about the event, hence his tone in these narratives is unmistakably assertive. Also worth noting, the spirit of Laozi’s words to Confucius is consistent with philosophical themes found in the received *Laozi*. Sima then continues:

Laozi cultivated Dao and De (virtue). In his studies he strove to conceal himself and be unknown. He lived in Zhou for a long time, but seeing its decline, he decided to leave; when he reached the pass, the keeper there was pleased and said to him, “Sir, you are about to retire. You must make an effort to write us a book.” So Laozi wrote a book in two *pian* (篇, sections) setting out the meaning of Dao and De in something around five thousand characters, and then he departed. None knew where he went to in the end (Sima 1975: 2141).

Here the author seems to have honestly recorded what he knew and what he did not know. Despite his uncertainties, his statement about a book of two parts concerning *dao* and *de* in more than 5,000 characters perfectly matches the received and silk-manuscript editions of the *Laozi and the Beida Bamboo version*, which have been transmitted and circulated for more than 2,000 years. These passages make up the largest and most authentic part of the biography, and they provide our main clues to Sima’s understanding of the figure Laozi.

Sima also recorded hearsay seemingly related to Laozi and his work: “Someone said there was a Laolaizi 老萊子 who was *also* a native of the state of Chu. He wrote a book in *fifteen pian* 篇 setting forth the applications of Daoist teachings and was contemporary with Confucius” (Sima 1975: 2141).⁸ Obviously, the word “also” means this is a different person. Moreover, Laolaizi’s book of fifteen *pian* has nothing to do with the received *Laozi*, which has only two. Sima clearly realized that Laolaizi and Laozi were not the same. He wrote in the “Biographies of Confucian Disciples”: “Those whom Confucius regarded reverently as mentors: *Laozi* 老子 in *Zhou* 周, *QU Boyu* 蘧伯玉 in *Wei* 魏, *YAN Pingzhong* 晏平仲 in *Qi* 齊, *Laolaizi* 老萊子 in *Chu* 楚, *ZI Chan* 子產 in *Zheng* 鄭, and *MENG Gongchuo* 孟公綽 in *Lu* 魯” (Sima 1975: 2186). It is clear that when Confucius visited them, Laozi was in Zhou while Laolaizi was in Chu. Sima was not confused on this point. So we can see from the two mentions of Laolaizi that Sima was an honest historian: he recorded information, including relevant hearsay, which he carefully distinguished from the main thread of his account. Another instance of hearsay he reports:

One hundred and twenty-nine years after the death of Confucius,⁹ as the scribes have recorded, Grand Historian Dan (Taishi Dan 太史儋) of Zhou had an audience with Duke

⁸In this article, all emphases in quotations are mine.

⁹According to WANG Quchang 王蘧常, the number 129 years should be 105 (Wang 1993: 48, n. 5); however, this is not an important issue and neither number can be convincing because the historical record is insufficient to support a judgment one way or the other.

Xian of Qin (Qin Xiangong 秦獻公) during which he said, “In the first instance, Qin and Zhou were united, and after being united for five hundred years they separated, but seventy years after the separation a great feudal lord is going to be born.” Some say this Dan was actually Laozi; others say no. Nobody knows which side is right. Laozi was really a gentleman who lived in retirement from the world. (Sima 1975: 2142)

Because one character in the name and style of these men share the similar pronunciation “Dan,” and both men served as officials in Zhou, this Taishi Dan has been confused by some with Laozi. But according to Sima’s earlier, more assertive, record, they should not be considered the same person. First, Taishi Dan lived in the middle period of the Warring States (475–222 BCE) and could never have met Confucius. Second, his statement bears not the slightest resemblance to what Laozi says in the core part of his biography and from what we read in the received *Laozi*. Thus, Taishi Dan could not be Laozi or Lao Dan. Obviously Sima did not buy this suggestion. He certainly ignored it when he arranged the chronological biographies: Laozi’s is the third chapter of *Liezhuan* (列傳, general biographies), appearing among five figures from the late Spring and Autumn period (Confucius is listed among the *shijia* 世家, a different section on noble families), while the “Confucian Disciples” chapter follows as seventh, with Mencius as fourteenth (Chen and Bai 2001: 9; Niehauser 1994). This is consistent with the key information presented in the main passages of the Laozi biography.

The last sentence, Sima’s exclamation that “Laozi was really a gentleman who lived in retirement from the world,” echoes the earlier comment that “In his studies he strove to conceal himself and be unknown” and “None knew where he went to in the end.” It is also a fair explanation of why people knew so little about his personal life save his official position as court curator in the state archives of Zhou and his meeting with Confucius. But this does not mean that Sima had no documents from which to compose the biography. In Sima’s time, careful footnoting and a bibliography were not required of a scholar and historian.

Sima’s statement and narrative are for the most part plain and decisive; he only becomes hesitant in his recounting of additional stories and rumors. Here is another illustration: “Laozi probably lived to over 160 years of age—some even say to over 200—since he cultivated the Way and was thus able to live to a great age.” The word *probably* is a translation of the Chinese character *gai* (蓋), used to introduce a sentence and suggest that what follows is conjecture or an inference. Sima clearly did not take this assertion as historical fact.

As part of his narrative structure, Sima offers a concluding remark:

Today followers of Laozi degrade Confucianism and students of Confucianism also degrade Laozi. This may be what is meant when it is said, “People who follow different *dao* (ways) never have anything helpful to say to one another.” Li Er [holds that the Sage] “takes non-action (*wuwei*) and [the people] of themselves are transformed”; [he] “loves tranquility and [the people] of themselves become correct.” (Sima 1975: 2143)

In the end, Sima's text refers back to the biography's opening paragraph and confirms that Laozi is Li Er, who is styled Dan. This last sentence, where Li Er and Chapter 57 of the *Laozi* are explicitly linked, is no accident.¹⁰

To sum up, Sima's biography of Laozi can be characterized thusly: of its 454 characters, three-fourths (340 characters) present an affirmative narrative that its author believed reports authentic facts, and one-fourth (114 characters) provides two additional bits of hearsay that Sima seems to have felt was marginal. These two additional stories indicate that the author tried to make his account comprehensive and discerning. Although Sima did not specifically cite his references, we cannot conclude from this that he had no sources whatsoever, and that his biography is fiction. Archaeologists have found evidence that proves the record in Sima's history and other Han literature was indeed based on then-extant texts and documents, though most of them are no longer available to modern scholars (Liu 2001: xx–xxiii; Li 2002a, b; Qiu 2004).

Based above reading and analyses, we realize that Sima did indeed have a clear position about just who Laozi was and when he lived. We may not accept or believe all the details of the biography, but we cannot say that Sima has no certain position in the matter, or no grounds in the historical literature. We should not abandon his account, simply because it may not be perfectly accurate.¹¹ It is especially important, moreover, to recognize the differences Sima saw between an authentic account and marginal hearsay from which speculation and hypotheses have subsequently developed, with no further documentation or evidence.

3 Reexamining the Methodology of Lau and Graham

I turn now to the methods used to support arguments for the middle and later theories. My purpose is not to criticize them nor to reach an exact conclusion, but to encourage rethinking general methods often employed in textual studies. My examination focuses on D.C. Lau (1921–2010) and A.C. Graham's (1919–1991) argumentation because their works have been influential and broadly accepted, yet they deserve serious rethinking before we can accept their hypotheses.

¹⁰Chapter 57 of the *Laozi* reads: "I take non-action (*wuwei*) and the people of themselves are transformed. I love tranquility and the people of themselves become correct" (Chan 1973: 166).

¹¹Some scholars think the *Shiji* is not a reliable history, but a literary work. This view obviously exaggerates the literary element of this work and is neither comprehensive nor objective. Archeological discoveries have repeatedly proved that Sima Qian's records have historical worth. Certainly literary skill and imagination are helpful in understanding and writing to reveal historical truth. Even modern academics write history that relies on certain literary techniques. For example, the books Jonathan D. Spence and Ray Huang wrote on Chinese history became bestsellers partly thanks to their storytelling skills and literary talents, which in turn strengthened their historical interpretations rather than weakened their works' trustworthiness.

D.C. Lau has said, “I am inclined to the *hypothesis* that some form of the *Laozi* existed by the beginning of the third century BC at the latest” (2001: 140). Lau maintains that SIMA Qian “had difficulty even with Laozi’s identity. He explicitly suggests that [Laozi] was probably the same person as Dan the historian, though the latter lived more than a century after the death of Confucius.” (2001: xi). Here Lau has misread the biography: he neglects the distinction between the positive aspect of Sima’s affirmative statements and his uncertainty with rumor; Lau takes one of the hearsay accounts seriously ignoring that this position faces greater difficulties than the traditional one. The words “explicitly suggests” are used to support his hypothesis, but they are not true. Lau omits key points: “Some say this Dan was actually Laozi; *others say no. Nobody knows which side is right.*” In addition, Lau ignores both the irrelevance of Dan’s prognostication to the ideas in the *Laozi* and the tenor of the comments in the meeting between Laozi and Confucius, which are repeatedly cited in pre-Qin and Han literature. Lau’s hypothesis conflicts more with historical documents than do the key parts of Sima’s biography. We cannot help wondering why Lau believed the hearsay in Sima’s record while dismissing his positive statements.

Lau shows admirable honesty when he says, “Indeed my whole account of Laozi is *speculative*, but when there is so little that is certain, there is not only room but a need for speculation” (2001: 132). Unfortunately, students may mistake this speculation as a conclusion, and even as license for further speculation. Here we should ponder whether speculation is more reliable or useful than an imperfect historical record. Is any written history flawless?

A.C. Graham devised a brilliant maneuver to attack the problem left by Sima. His hypothesis supports a late Warring States dating, based on an *absence of evidence*. This argument emphasizes the fact that no books prior to the *Zhuangzi* had quoted the *Laozi*, and so this constitutes “evidence” that the *Laozi* probably appeared after the *Zhuangzi*. Graham claims, “Since the ‘Inner Chapters’ [of the *Zhuangzi*] show no clear evidence of acquaintance with *Laozi*, the book is *conveniently treated* after *Zhuangzi*, although there is *no positive proof* that it is later” (1987: 217–18). This convenient assertion with “no positive proof” should not be mistaken for a conclusion.

Graham’s method of argumentation resembles that of Herbert A. Giles (1845–1935), who once contended that the *Laozi* was forged in the early Han dynasty (206 BCE–8 CE). Giles’ argument was based on his claim that Confucius, ZUO Qiuming 左丘明, Mencius, Zhuangzi, Xunzi 荀子, Huainanzi 淮南子, and SIMA Qian 司馬遷 never saw or claimed to have seen the text of the *Laozi*.¹² Hence Giles came up with the hypothesis that the *Laozi* was forged in early Han times.

¹²When Giles mentions Hanfeizi’s work, he writes “[Hanfeizi] devotes the best part of two whole sections to ‘Explanations of Laozi’ and ‘Illustrations of Laozi’; and, in two places, writes *as though* he were consulting a written document” (Giles 1886: 231–32). (In this Giles quote I replace his Wade-Giles romanization with pinyin, and the emphasis is mine.)

This theory was forgotten and definitively put to rest after the discovery of the Mawangdui silk versions, which have been confidently dated to before 195 BCE (Silk A) and 169 BCE (Silk B). Giles' reasoning and argumentation were proved invalid, but few scholars have drawn lessons from his failure. Graham actually drew on Giles method when he based his hypothesis on no positive evidence, but on *lack of evidence* and a neglect of conventional literature.

Giles was a seasoned and serious scholar, and his arguments seemed logical given the evidence; however, his conclusion was clearly a mistake. What was wrong with it? Or where is the pitfall in his argumentation? The answer is this: his problem lay not in his reasoning, but in his presuppositions. They were:

1. all ancient books should be recorded or mentioned in other books;
2. all those other books should have survived over two millenia to be available to us today;
3. as long as we cannot see X, we have grounds to suppose that it never existed.

However, the great numbers of unearthed texts have repeatedly proved these three presuppositions to be groundless, and so they should not be the basis for textual analysis. Giles method is only valid for a defined and known objects, but the realm of ancient books has proved an infinite, unknown kingdom. Graham shared Giles method and presuppositions, so his conclusion must also be viewed as suspicious.

In the past decades abundant, though formerly unknown, silk and bamboo-slip texts have come to light; not only are they new discoveries, but they reveal a simple truth: the extant texts we have today represent only a tiny part of the historical legacy of ancient China. The bibliography section ("Yiwenzhi" 藝文志) of the *History of the Western Han (Hanshu 漢書)* mentions 57 Confucian books, of which only seven have survived; 37 Daoist texts, with only five are extant; and ten Legalist books, only two of which survive today. Furthermore, between 80 and 90 % of the texts recently excavated were not recorded in the various bibliographies of antiquity. But historians in Han China must have seen many more texts and records that predated them than we can hope to do. Certainly they may have made mistakes, but they did not dream up historical figures and bibliographical matters. Newly excavated texts show that the histories and bibliographies from Han times are much more reliable than previously acknowledged. We simply do not have the resources and references to argue with them about the authenticity of ancient works, though our reasoning may be more consistent (Liu 2001: xx–xxiii, 2009, 2010).

A key piece of evidence that can settle the dating of the *Laozi* is the encounter between Laozi and Confucius, which suggests that the two were contemporaries. This event is referred to repeatedly in various versions, in not only three of the biographies in the *Shiji*, but also in an eclectic anthology of the period, *Lüshi chunqiu* (呂氏春秋), and in Confucian works such as the *Liji* (*Book of Rites* 禮記), *Hanshi waizhuan* (*Practical Annotation of Han's Book of Songs* 韓詩外傳), *Kongzi jiaju* (*Confucian Family Teachings* 孔子家語), and *Shuoyuan* (*Collection of*

Anecdotes 說苑).¹³ (We can leave out the *Zhuangzi*, which also records this event, because it is written as an explicitly literary account and is probably not suitable to rely on for historical fact.) Given the multiple records of this event, it is difficult to ignore it completely and simply place Laozi in an era sometime after Confucius.

Lau and Graham, however, insist on a mid- or late Warring States dating by explaining away this very encounter. They contend that the event was probably created in the service of the struggle between Confucians and Daoists. Intriguingly, Lau presumes that Daoists created the story to make a mockery of Confucius (Lau 2001: 130); while Graham proposes that it was the Confucians who invented the legend to praise Confucius (Graham 1990). Graham even “proposes a scheme of five stages in the evolution” of the meeting of Laozi and Confucius, which sounds like an amazing imaginary fiction (Graham 1990: 124). Both Lau’s speculation and Graham’s scheme cannot pass the test offered by the historical literature. We find no signs of struggle or conflict between Confucian and Daoist groups in the pre-Qin period. The term “Daoism” had not even emerged at that point. The term “Daoist” 道家 was first used by SIMA Tan (司馬談), SIMA Qian’s father, in the early Han era.

One has to read the record to understand the context and atmosphere of the meeting between Confucius and Laozi. Here is one representative piece of historical literature. The “Zengzi wen” (questions from Zengzi 曾子問) section of the *Book of Rites* or *Liji* 禮記 contains four passages that record Confucius’ recall of Laozi. Under the influence of the so-called “Doubting antiquity” 古史辨 movement of the twentieth century, this work was considered an unreliable Han text. However, after the discovery of Guodian bamboo-slip texts, academic societies have recognized that it includes reliable historical materials and at least some sections may preserve pre-Qin works. Confucius’ memories in the four passages revolve around details of ritual, the major topic of his conversation with Laozi, and are parts of an explanation of how to deal with specific issues in funerary practice. One of them goes like this:

Zengzi asked: “Anciently when an army went on an expedition . . .” Confucius replied: “When the son of Heaven (king, 天子) went on his tours of inspection . . . I heard the following statement from Lao Dan (吾聞諸老聃曰): ‘On the death of the son of Heaven or the prince of a state, it is the rule that the officer of prayer should take the tablets from all the other shrines and deposit them in that of the high ancestor. When the wailing was over . . .’ So said Lao Dan (老聃云).” (Legge 1968: 324–25; Sun 1989: 545–46)¹⁴

Another reads:

Zengzi asked, “At a burial, when the bier has been drawn to the path leading to the place, if there happens to be an eclipse of the sun, is any change made or not?” Confucius said: “Formerly, along with Lao Dan, I was assisting at a burial in the village of Xiangdang

¹³*Kongzi jiayu* and *Shuoyuan* were traditionally considered apocryphal, “false books.” However, numerous bamboo slips from an early Han tomb unearthed in 1973 at Ding Xian 定縣, Hebei 河北, contain passages identical to those in both those works. This suggests that the contents of these books were collected from pre-Qin or early Han sources.

¹⁴The translation of *Liji* is adapted from Legge 1986 with minor amendments for readability and accuracy.

(昔者吾從老聃助葬於巷黨), and when we had got to the path, the sun was eclipsed. *Lao Dan said to me* (老聃曰): ‘Qiu, let the bier be stopped on the right of the road; and then let us stop to wail and wait till the eclipse has passed.’ When it was light again, we proceeded.” (He) said: “This was the rite.” When we had returned and completed the burial, I said to him: “In the progress of a bier there should be no returning . . .” *Lao Dan said* (老聃曰): “When the prince of a state is going to the court of the son of Heaven, he travels while he can see the sun . . .” *This is what I heard from Lao Dan* (吾聞諸老聃云). (Legge 1968: 338–39; Sun 1989: 545–46)

These example are sufficient since the other two passages are very similar. All utterances mentioning Laozi cite what he said to Confucius regarding the practical details of funeral ceremonies. We find no signs of praise or deprecation between Confucius and Laozi. Furthermore, we detect no expression of the author’s like or dislike of Confucius or Laozi from the text. If we read seriously and without bias, we cannot agree that the meeting between Confucius and Laozi is merely a story created to praise or belittle either figure. Interestingly—and meaningfully—the *Laozi* makes only one mention of rites in a positive sense, and that treatment is reserved for funeral rites.¹⁵ Is this merely coincidence?

We must concede that both Lau and Graham did not know of the discovery of the bamboo-slip versions of the *Laozi*, and they knew nothing about the Guodian texts at all.¹⁶ But the point here is to reflect on the methodology of textual studies for future research. If we want to make more mature analyses of Chinese texts, we must learn from our great predecessors’ mistakes.

4 The Weakness of Sample Argumentation and a New Linguistic Approach

Some might raise the reasonable question, Even if we accept that Laozi could be a contemporary of Confucius, the text that bears his name might still be a later work or created by someone else. And some scholars do take this position. These suppositions belong to the theoretical groups two and three, which contend that the *Laozi* was written or compiled in the middle Warring States period or even later.

Before responding to this problem, we might well consider the strategies that have been used in the Laozi debates. Why have these debates been so broad, engaging both Chinese and English scholarship and lasting more than a century without reaching any reasonable result or even moving toward resolution or accommodation? There are two reasons for this: (1) a lack of objective material evidence and textual proofs; (2) little reflection on the methods deployed in these debates. For the first, we can do little outside of the accidental discovery of fresh

¹⁵Chapter 31: “For a victory, let us observe the occasion with funeral ceremonies.” (Chan 1973: 155) 戰勝則以喪禮居之(竹簡本) (Liu 2006: 334).

¹⁶The Guodian bamboo texts were published in 1998, by which point Graham had passed away and Lau was seriously ill.

evidence such as the Guodian bamboo editions. The second aspect, methodological issues, must be the focus for advancing the discussion and the quality of our textual analyses.

This century-long speculation and debate have certainly been fueled by the dearth of objective evidence, but flaws in reasoning and argumentation have also contributed to the endless disputes. Based on a survey of published articles and books, the major method in these debates can be termed *sample argumentation*. In this method, scholars select certain characters, terms, sentences, or ideas as samples from which to argue their various positions or theories. In most cases, the isolated samples are not adequate to proving anything about the big picture, and so these arguments are not convincing. We can call this a *weakness of sample argumentation*.

Here is an example of this technique. Chapter 63 of the *Laozi* has a sentence that calls for “repaying hatred with virtue” (抱怨以德). This is a saying unique to pre-Qin texts. Interestingly, there is a dialogue directly opposing it in the *Analects*:

Someone said: “What do you think of *repaying hatred with virtue*?” (以德抱怨) Confucius said: “In that case what are you going to repay virtue with? Rather, *repay hatred with uprightness* and repay virtue with virtue” (以直報怨, 以德報德). (Chan 1973: 42)

That someone asked Confucius about “repaying hatred with virtue” suggests that this idea was something in circulation that Confucius had not yet discussed. So the dialogue seems to prove that the *Laozi* was in some sense antecedent to Confucius. It seems very probable that what Confucius refuted here were ideas in the *Laozi*, but that is not sufficient to prove the existence of the text in that period. Such evidence has been dismissed by scholars of the middle and late theoretical groups, first, because the number of supporting examples is small, and most of the samples offered by the early theory group are not as strong as this one. Second, we cannot exclude the possibility that someone else in that period had the same idea. This is actually the greatest weakness of all similar samples.

Likewise, some have used common terms such as *renyi* (humanity-righteousness 仁義) or *wancheng* (ten thousands of chariots 萬乘) to support middle or late theory. Because expressions like these appeared widely in texts of the middle Warring States period they have argued that the *Laozi* could not be of earlier vintage. This argument might be right, but it is still not valid for the following reasons: (1) Although we see the word *renyi* in the Warring States text *Mencius*, we cannot conclude that there were no earlier usages. (2) It is possible that certain words, terms, and phrases were added or modified by later editors or scribes, so the occasional appearance of later expressions is in itself not a convincing basis for judging the whole text. These problems show that it is quite difficult to establish the historical truth of a whole text based on isolated samples from it unless we know that the text is absolutely homogeneous.

Once the weakness of sample argumentation becomes clear, we have to find a better way. How can we best investigate features of the *Laozi* as a whole, so that isolated examples from it will not distort a holistic investigation? After many years of trial and error, a promising approach has been found: a comprehensive linguistic analysis that pays special attention to the rhyming patterns throughout.

Table 2.1 Linguistic features of verse

Linguistic features		<i>Book of Odes</i> 詩經 (%)	<i>Laozi</i> 老子 (%)	<i>Songs of Chu</i> 楚辭
Rhyming patterns 韻式	Rhyming in each sentence	27	47	0
	句句韻			
	Mixed Rhyming pattern	48	35	0
	混合韻			
	Rhyming alternately	25	18	100 %
	偶句韻			
Rhetoric 修辭	Repetition	90	94	0
	迴環往復			
Sentence Patterns 句式	Four-character sentence	94	50	14 % ^a
	四言為主			

^aThe pattern of four-character sentences in the *Songs of Chu* is different from those in the *Laozi* and the *Book of Odes*. They are actually seven-character sentences plus an auxiliary particle (*zhi* 之, *xie* 些, *xi* 兮) at the end, therefore becoming two four-character clauses in a row to complete one meaningful sentence. This is different from *Shijing*’s four-character sentence, in which the meaning of each such sentence is complete (Liu 2005: 20–23)

We know that the *Shijing* (*Book of Odes* 詩經) dates to before the sixth century BC, while *Chuci* (*Songs of Chu* 楚辭) is from the fourth and third centuries BC. By taking advantage of poetic stylistic analysis and comparing the verse features of the *Laozi* to those of the *Shijing* and *Chuci*, we can look for indirect evidence that could provide dating clues. Just which theory this investigation and its statistics would favor was unknown before the project was completed. The results such a holistic analysis would yield must in any case be more objective than sample argumentation, which relied on identifying examples that supported one or another standpoint. The results of our analysis of verse style can be summed up in two tables.

Table 2.1 demonstrates the similar and different features of verse passages among the three texts. The factors under analysis here are broad, including: (1) rhyming intensity and frequency; (2) various rhetoric styles, for example, word and phrase repetition within and between chapters, rhyme changes by reversing word order 倒字換韻, and anadiplosis 頂真; (3) sentence patterns, such as four-character sentences. The table shows a clear-cut statistical result: the verse style and patterns in the *Laozi* are more similar to those in the *Book of Odes* and different from the *Songs of Chu* in all categories, without exception. Now let’s consider Table 2.2, which shows the sharing of rhyming groups.

Table 2.2 compares the interchangeable rhyming in the three texts, and shows that this pattern is broadly common to the *Laozi* and the *Book of Odes*.¹⁷ We can see that six groups of the rhyming words shared by the two texts are not found in the

¹⁷Feng Shengli found that while a fixed dipodic prosody was used in *Shijing*, a caesura-based prosody was developed in *Chuci*. According to his findings, the *Laozi*’s prosody is close to *Shijing* instead of *Chuci*. See Feng 2011.

Table 2.2 Comparison of interchangeable rhyming

Interchangeable rhyming 合韻	<i>Book of Odes</i> 詩經	<i>Laozi</i> 老子	<i>Songs of Chu</i> 楚辭
Zhi and Yu 之魚	5	2	0
You and Hou 幽侯	3	1	0
Xiao and You 宵幽	4	1	0
Wu and Jue 屋覺	2	1	0
Yue and Zhi 月質	8	1	0
Zhen and Yuan 真元	1	5	0

Songs of Chu. Again, there is no opposite case, in which interchangeable rhyming groups are only shared by the *Laozi* and the *Songs of Chu*. These common elements in the *Books of Odes* and the *Laozi* strongly suggest that the *Laozi* completed toward the end of Spring and Autumn period, when the *Book of Odes* was compiled and its rhyming styles were still dominant.

Evident from all this linguistic statistical data is the *Laozi*'s striking similarity to the *Book of Odes* and difference from the *Songs of Chu*, which suggests that the core or major part of the *Laozi* may have been completed when the *Book of Odes* style was still prevalent. The advantage of this approach is that it is whole-picture oriented and is not distorted by exceptional inconsistencies. We have no evidence that every piece of the text was written at one time by one author, but the core or major parts of the text share the same style. We do not have a reliable standard by which to pick out sentences or words that were modified or added by later editors, though some scholars argue that might be done according to criteria they have set up. These include some sentences not quoted in the *Hanfeizi*, some chapters not found in bamboo-slip versions, and some terms prevalent in the middle Warring States, etc. These so called criteria, all based on subjective assumptions, are difficult to prove valid.

Now we must face two challenges. First, it is possible that differences between the *Book of Odes* and *Songs of Chu* are regional/cultural in nature rather than chronological. But there is an answer to this question that is based on historical fact. Historians and archeologists have found and proved that in the Western Zhou 西周 dynasty, northern and southern China already maintained close communications and had ready transportation between regions. There was no cultural gap (Hsu 1984: 17, 309–11). As for poetic style, it is well known that in the *Book of Odes* era envoys from the southern state of Chu fluently used poems from the *Odes* in their diplomatic debates and communications, and extant Chu poems from the Spring and Autumn era carried on those same styles and patterns. Moreover, middle–Warring States poetry from the northern states of Yan 燕 and Zhao 趙 share sentence and rhyming patterns with the *Songs of Chu*.¹⁸

¹⁸For detailed arguments, see Liu 2005: 7–65; for a brief English version see Liu 1994: 172–86.

The second challenge arises from speculation that later writers chose to imitate the *Book of Odes* style to shape the so-called *Laozi* text. This thinking is not unreasonable; nevertheless, we find no examples of, and can see no motivation or benefit to, someone of a later era writing such a text in the *Book of Odes* style. We can only answer this speculative question with speculation. Why would someone want to imitate the poetic style of the *Book of Odes*? If the writer were pursuing fame, why name the text after another person? If he wanted the text to be recognized as having its origin in the *Book of Odes*, why imitate its verse passages in only in 63 % of the chapters? And why do only half the verse sentences have the four-character sentence pattern, which was used in over 94 % of the *Odes*. Why would this imitation be so well hidden that some modern scholars would believe the text followed the *Songs of Chu* instead of the *Odes*? With all the difficulties this imitation theory presents, it is perhaps more plausible to consider the core part of the *Laozi* text to have been formed under the influence of the song style of the *Book of Odes* or *Shijing*, though we cannot use this to decide the specific dates of its author and compilation lacking further evidence.

There are certainly different opinions and approaches to this problem. William H. Baxter demonstrates differences between the *Laozi* and the *Shijing* using rhetorical and phonological examples (Baxter 1998). I fully accept his points, and in fact I believed that there were differences between the two texts even before reading his examples. His points do not affect the thrust of my investigation, since my arguments are not based on the hypothesis that the *Laozi* was meant to be the same genre as the *Shijing*, though I do find linguistic similarities between them. I am pleased that Baxter comes to the same conclusion, if from a different angle: “From a phonological point of view, improvements in Old Chinese reconstruction make it possible to see that the *Lao-tzu* preserves a number of distinctions in pronunciation which the *Ch’u-tz’u* [Chuci] and the ‘Inner Chapters’ of the *Chuang-tzu* [Zhuangzi] have lost, and this suggests that it may be earlier than they are, and closer to the time of the *Shih-Ching* [Shijing]” (ibid. 249).¹⁹ This is exactly my own conclusion. However, I must point to the possibility that the *Laozi* was composed much earlier than many scholars believe. I cannot date it within a specific century because we cannot be sure we have its earliest version, and we lack sufficient references and other evidence. Baxter, for his part, dates it to “the mid or early fourth century.” I am not sure what prevents him from dating it even closer to the time of the *Book of Odes* based on his phonological analyses.²⁰ My position, however, is to remain open to a prudent early theory, even without decisive dating.

¹⁹The emphasis is mine.

²⁰Baxter seems to hint that the *Laozi* also shares generic aspects with parts of the *Guanzi*. This is not really helpful because (1) the dating and authorship of the *Guanzi* are more difficult to decide, and (2) the *Guanzi*’s style is obviously different from that of the *Laozi*.

5 Extended Discussion and Concluding Remarks

One of the causes of divergence on the origin of the *Laozi* is confusion between initiators of thought and concepts and later transcribers and editors. Certainly the text has a long history of transformation, with many people taking part in its transcription, circulation and modification from different states and provinces across the ancient Chinese heartland. But should they be considered authors or even co-authors? According to a comprehensive examination and comparison of different versions of the *Laozi* from the earliest Guodian bamboo slips of the third century BCE to current received versions (the Wang Bi and Heshang Gong versions), we find no editor or modifier of the text who qualifies to be counted an author or co-author (Liu 2003, 2006). Let us consider a typical instance of textual change from the ancient to received versions that includes the very latest Beida-published edition of bamboo slips (Table 2.3).

This table compares the last phrases from Chapter 64, from the earliest to the received versions. There are three steps in the gradual transformation from line 1 to line 6.

1. The fullest version appears in line 1, which structurally contrasts *able* 能 and *unable* 弗能. This suggests a clear division between what the sage should and could do, namely, he can assist myriad things to develop naturally, but he cannot

Table 2.3 Historical transformation: a passage from chapter 64

1.	Guodian A	Therefore the sage is <i>able</i> to support the naturalness of myriad things,	but is <i>unable</i> to take action.
	郭店簡甲	是故聖人能輔萬物之自然	而弗能為
2.	Guodian C ^a	Therefore ... is <i>able</i> to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But <i>dare not</i> take action.
	郭店簡丙	是以能輔萬物之自然,	而弗敢為
3.	Silk A and B	Be <i>able</i> to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But <i>dare not</i> take action.
	帛書甲/乙	能輔萬物之自然,	而弗敢為
4.	Beida Bamboo ^b	... to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But <i>dare not</i> take action.
	北大漢簡	以輔萬物之自然,	而弗敢為
5.	Fuyi	... to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But <i>dare not</i> take action.
	傅奕	以輔萬物之自然,	而不敢為也
6.	Heshang, Wang	... to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But <i>dare not</i> take action.
	河上/王弼	以輔萬物之自然,	而不敢為

^aThere are three batches of bamboo slips of the Guodian version, named A, B, and C. Usually we take them as one Guodian version because for the most part they do not include the same chapters. However, the second part of Chapter 64 has two different versions, in A and C, respectively, thus we have two rows from the Guodian version in this table, namely Guodian A and C

^bIndicating Beijing University Institute of Archeological Literature (2012)

(or should not) *wei* 為, that is, take regular action such as common rulers do. This language makes crystal clear the sage's responsibility and principles; it is not merely a description.

2. In lines 2 and 3, the structural contrast has vanished because the word *unable* is replaced with *dare not* 弗敢, thus we lose the clearly oppositional relationship between *able* and *unable*, and the relation between *able* and *dare not* becomes less sharp.
3. In lines 4–6, the word *able* disappears, too. So the key verbs and contrast of earliest version have vanished completely. The original thrust asserting the principle of the sage's leadership has become a mere description of sagely actions.

There are dozens, even hundreds, of instances like this in the long history of the transformation of the text, and though some are more significant, most are trivial. Certainly many agents took part in making the alterations and modifications. Most of them tried to follow the original ideas and features to improve and strengthen the original language of the text, though sometimes they actually made the text weaker or unnecessarily obscure. Over time, for example, the frequency of the word *dao* increased from 72 to 76, the mentions of *wuwei* increased from 9 to 12, and use of the four-character sentence also significantly increased (Liu 2003: 352). Instances of serious distortion of the text, however, are rare (ibid. 371–373). Based on such comparisons, do these modifying agents rate the status of initiators of this line of thought? Do they qualify as collective co-authors of the text? It is unlikely that we can conclude “yes” if we stand by the accepted meaning of the word “author.”

Another significant implication of textual transformation in the problem of ascribing origins is that we have no way to access or even conclusively identify a first version. The versions we have for linguistic comparison are samples from the *Laozi*'s transformation history, all of which have been modified, more or less, by later agents; the results of our dating based on phonological analysis have not helped us arrive at an accurate date for the original text, though they do improve our knowledge about ancient texts generally.

In sum, the later theories of the *Laozi*'s origin have been proved wrong by the discovery of the Guodian bamboo versions and phonological and linguistic studies. The middle theories have provided no positive evidence either, and are merely a compromise between the puzzling traditional position and the scepticism of the later theories. Comparatively, an *open* or prudent early theory enjoys the support of textual, linguistic, historical, and archeological findings; it is a position with which the other two theories cannot compete in light of this positive evidence.

That said, we can return to our early question: Was there a founder of Daoist philosophy? The answer remains, it depends.

If our word “founder” means one who builds an institution or school, then there *was no* such person for Daoism. If, however, we hold that a founder could have originated this system of thought and the core part of the *Laozi* was probably written by someone who went under that name before the emergence of the *Zhuangzi* text,

that Laozi seems a fair candidate. If we take a different position, we may find ourselves forced to say there was no founder of Daoism at all, because there is little evidence to support the possibility that the later thinkers Yang Zhu, Liezi, or Zhuangzi were the first to formulate Daoist ideas.

Finally, we concede that there is no simple approach or standard by which to reach a decisive resolution of this problem. Still, there are ways to improve the quality of our discussion and research: We may read texts and historical records more faithfully and seriously; we can examine and compare various theories based on historical records, archeological discoveries, and linguistic features; and we may develop more comprehensive and holistic insights by avoiding positions that are based on mere samples or on beautiful but untestable conjecture.²¹

References

- Baxter, William H. 1998. Situating the language of the Lao-tzu: The probable date of the Tao-te-ching. In *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, ed. Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Beijing University Institute of Archeological Literature 北京大學出土文獻研究所. 2012. *Western Han dynasty bamboo books collected by Beijing University II*, 北京大學藏西漢竹書(貳). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Chan, Wing-tsit 陳榮捷. 1973. *A source book in Chinese philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (A collection of reliable translations of the most important texts of Chinese philosophy.)
- Chen, Guying 陳鼓應, and Bai Xi 白奚. 2001. *Critical biography of Laozi* 老子評傳. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press.
- Feng, Shengli. 2011. A prosodic explanation for Chinese poetic evolution. *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 41(2): 223–257.
- Giles, Herbert A. 1886. The remains of Lao Tzǔ (Laozi). *The China Review* 14(5): 231–281. (A pioneering work in textual studies on the dating of the *Laozi*; claims that it was forged in the early Han dynasty. Published by the China Mail Office, 1872–1901.)
- Graham, A.C. 1987. *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical argument in ancient China*. LaSalle: Open Court. (Research on pre-Qin thinkers with original ideas and comments.)
- Graham, A.C. 1990. The origins of the legend of Lao Dan. In his *Studies in Chinese philosophy and philosophical literature*, 111–124. Albany: State University of New York Press. (In this essay, Graham proposed a scheme about the “five stages in the evolution of the story [of the meeting of Laozi and Confucius].”)
- Henricks, Robert G. 1991. *Lao-Tzu Tao-Te Ching: A translation of the Ma-wang-tui manuscripts*. London: Rider.
- Henricks, Robert G. 2000. *Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching: A translation of the startling new documents found at guodian*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hsu, Cho-yun 許倬雲. 1984. *Xizhou Shi, A history of Western Zhou* 西周史. Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 聯經出版事業公司. (A fine study of the history of the Western Zhou, with solid materials and brilliant analyses.)

²¹The work described in this paper was partially supported by a grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China. (Project no. CUHK447909)

- Kohn, Livia, and Michael LaFargue. 1998. *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lau, D.C. 2001. *Tao Te Ching: A bilingual edition*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- Legge, James. 1968. *The sacred books of China*, Texts of Confucianism, Part III, the *Li Ki*, I–X. (Contains a useful translation of the first ten *pian* 篇, or books, of the *Liji* 禮記, even though it was first published in 1885.)
- Li, Ling 李零. 2002a. Archaeological discoveries and a renewed understanding of the chronology of ancient books. *Contemporary Chinese Thought* winter: 19–25. (An essay about the significance of the discovery of Guodian bamboo-slip texts and criticism of the “doubting antiquity” movement.)
- Li, Xue Qin 李學勤. 2002b. Walking out of the ‘Doubting Antiquity’ era. *Contemporary Chinese Thought* winter: 26–49. (The author is a preeminent scholar in Chinese archeology and the article presented the new slogan and instigated a great debate, mainly criticizing the “doubting antiquity” movement.)
- Liu, Xiaogan 劉笑敢. 1994. *Classifying the Zhuangzi chapters*. Trans. William E. Savage. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan. (A translation of the first part of author’s book *Zhuangzi zhexue jiqi yanbian* 莊子哲學及其演變. In the afterword, the author discusses briefly the probable dating of the *Laozi* based on a comparison of rhyming style in the *Laozi*, *Book of Odes*, and *Songs of Chu*.)
- Liu, Xiaogan 劉笑敢. 2001. “Foreword to the reprint edition” of Donald J. Munro, *The concept of man in early China*. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan. (An academic introduction to the reprint of Munro’s classic book with discussion based on archeological discoveries.)
- Liu, Xiaogan 劉笑敢. 2003. From bamboo slips to received versions: Common features in the transformation of the *Laozi*. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63(2): 337–382. (This article explored two trends in the evolution of the *Laozi* over two millennia: language assimilation and conceptual focusing.)
- Liu, Xiaogan 劉笑敢. 2005. *Laozi: Niandai Xinkao yu Sixiang Xinquan* (New studies on the dating and interpretation of the Lao-Zi 老子: 年代新考與思想新詮), 2nd ed. Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi.
- Liu, Xiaogan 劉笑敢. 2006. *The Lao-Zi from the ancient to the modern: Comparative studies of the five versions, including introductory analyses and criticism with comparative concordance* 老子古今: 五種對勘與析評引論, vol. 1. Beijing: China Social Science Publishing.
- Liu, Xiaogan 劉笑敢. 2009. Inspiration for textual studies in light of bamboo-slip and silk texts (part I) 出土簡帛對文獻考據方法的示(之一). *The Journal of Chinese Philosophy and Culture* 中國哲學與文化 6: 25–43. (A reflection on the assumptions of three methods in textual studies in the light of the bamboo-slip and silk texts, specifically those of QIAN Mu 錢穆, A.C. Graham, and D.C. Lau.)
- Liu, Xiaogan 劉笑敢. 2010. Inspiration for textual studies in light of bamboo-slip and silk texts (part II) 出土簡帛對文獻考據方法的示(之二). *History of Chinese Philosophy* 中國哲學史 2010(2): 38–50. (A critical essay on textual analysis, evidence assessment, and textual evolution in light of bamboo-slip and silk texts.)
- Moeller, Hang-Georg. 2006. *The philosophy of the Daodejing*. New York: Columbia University Press. (The book discusses various aspects of the *Laozi*’s philosophy, such as the Dao of sex, paradox politics, war, satisfaction, and negative ethics. Many new ideas demand testing based on careful textual reading.)
- Niehauser, Jr. William, ed. 1994. *The grand scribe’s records*, vol. vii, The Memoirs of Pre-Han China by Ssu-ma Ch’ien (Sima Qian, 司馬遷). Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. (An elegant translation with textual study notes of the volumes of *Liezhuàn* 列傳 on pre-Han figures in the *Shiji* 史記.)
- Qiu, Xigui 裘錫圭. 2004. On rebuilding scholarship of Chinese classics 中國古典學重建中應該注意的問題, in his *Ten lectures on Chinese excavated literature* 中國出土文獻十講. Shanghai: Fudan University Press. (An essay of comprehensive review and criticism of the “Doubting Antiquity” movement.)

- Sima, Qian 司馬遷. 1975. *Records of the grand historian* 史記. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.
- Sun, Xidan 孫希旦. 1989. *Liji jijie* 禮記集解. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju. (A collected annotation of the *Book of Rites*.)
- Wang, Quchang 王遽常. (ed.). 1993. *Collection and annotation of Chinese thinkers* 中國歷代思想家傳記匯詮. Shanghai: Fudan University Press.

Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy

Liu, X. (Ed.)

2015, VII, 569 p. 10 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-90-481-2926-3