

Huang-Lao Daoism Research in Light of Excavated Texts

1 INTRODUCTION

The Huang-Lao tradition is a mode of thought that is theoretically sophisticated and highly realistic. A form of political thought with predominant Daoist characteristics, it remained extremely popular from the mid-to-late Warring States period through the Qin and Han dynasties. Although the tradition of Daoism based primarily on studies of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* texts had offered profound philosophical principles, it had failed to offer approaches aimed at the real world. Huang-Lao Daoism adopted aspects of the Schools of Names (*Mingjia* 名家) and Legalism (*Fajia* 法家) into what was predominantly a Daoist system of thought, and further borrowed a framework from the School of Yin-Yang (*Yin-yangjia* 陰陽家); it also continued to give weight to the ethical education of the Confucians, thereby allowing existing cultural traditions to go unchallenged. Rather than replacing cultural norms, this tradition had its eye on establishing realistic values and order, realizing a revitalization of Daoist ideas and transforming them into a feasible system of political philosophy. A main stream in the history of political ideas from the Warring States to the Qin-Han dynasties, Huang-Lao thought is an ideal candidate for meaningful research into the history of Early Chinese philosophy.

First, we must clarify what we mean by “Huang-Lao.” In this chapter we are concerned with the main principles of a tradition of thought, rather than a strict line of tutelage. In the “Yueyi Biographies” of the *Annals of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史記, hereafter the *Annals*), Sima Qian does indeed clearly

describe the lineage of a School of Huang-Lao thought. However, at the same time the *Annals* also use the term “Huang-Lao” to refer to a system of political thought that existed broadly throughout the Warring States period through to the Qin and Han dynasties, the scope of which is much wider than that of the School of Huang-Lao in the narrow sense. In the broader sense, we are looking at a philosophical system that is based upon the idea of Dao as expressed in the *Laozi*, with the idea of a Way or Dao of Heaven (*Tiandao* 天道) attributed to and represented by the Yellow Emperor, whose tradition contributes specific principles to guide the actions of humankind. Throughout this system of thought we see parallels drawn with the image of contrast between the root and branches; between the all-encompassing Dao and more specific techniques. With Sima Qian 司馬遷 establishing the precedent of using this later term retrospectively to identify earlier-occurring areas of complimentary thought in history, we find that even texts that make no explicit reference to either Laozi or the Yellow Emperor may yet be classified as “Huang-Lao” materials.

Looking at the range of “Huang-Lao” materials from this perspective, scholars from earlier generations including Meng Wentong 蒙文通 and Guo Moruo 郭沫若 broke new ground in academic research. Meng Wentong presented a thorough analysis of historical figures that the *Annals* referred to as: “the techniques of Huang-Lao” (*xue Huang Lao zhi shu* 學黃老之術), “(studies or schools being) rooted in Huang-Lao” (*ben yu Huang Lao* 本於黃老), “speaking of Huang-Lao (*yan Huang Lao yi* 言黃老意).”¹ Guo Moruo focused on the reference to the “High Ancestor Yellow Emperor” in the bronze inscription on the Yinzi Vessel of Marquis Chen (陳侯因賁敦), inferring from this the reasons for the popularity of Yellow Emperor studies in the state of Qi (齊).² However, owing to a general lack of resources, these scholars were only able to trace parts of an outline, and were unable to grasp the entirety or fundamentals of Huang-Lao Daoism, which limited the potential for advancement in research in this area.

¹See Meng Wentong 蒙文通, “A Brief Outline of the Huang-Lao Studies,” in his *Zhuizi Philosophy in Pre-Qin Days and Rationalism*. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2006, pp. 191–223.

²Guo Moruo 郭沫若, “A Critique of the Huang-Lao Daoist School of the Jixia Academy,” in *Ten Critiques*. Beijing: Orient Publishing Press, 1996, pp. 142–173.

This state of affairs was dramatically altered with the discovery of silk manuscripts at Mawangdui in the 1970s, with texts such as the *Huangdi Sijing*³ seeing the light of day once more. A considerable number of texts related to the Huang-Lao Daoist tradition appeared, contributing to the first round of genuine interest in Huang-Lao studies. Scholars for the most part treated the *Huangdi Sijing* as a text representing the full maturity of Huang-Lao thought, and so the curtain officially rose on research into Huang-Lao Daoism. In recent years, newly discovered resources have led to a second round of fresh interest in Huang-Lao Daoism. A bamboo-slip manuscript from the State of Chu (楚) entitled *Taiyi Sheng Shui* was unearthed at the Guodian (郭店) site; in addition the excavated texts the *Hengxian*, *Sande* and *Fanwu Liuxing* and other bamboo-slip manuscripts from the State of Chu in the Warring States period and which are held at the Shanghai Museum were gradually made public. Huang-Lao Daoism is an excellent example of the extent to which excavated texts may substantially alter the landscape of the history of thought. With new resources appearing as time passes to provide new material for comparison, the content of Huang-Lao Daoist thought is being filled out all the time and our understanding of it is gradually becoming more three-dimensional. The excavated texts have also renewed interest in rereading transmitted texts such as the *Guanzi*, *Lüshi Chunqiu*, *Huainanzi* and *He Guanzi* amongst others, challenging the conceived structure of schools of thought and restoring the academic value of texts once discounted as syncretic works and thus unworthy of serious study.

2 TWO TYPES OF THEORIES REGARDING DAO AND GOVERNANCE IN THE *HUANGDI Sijing*

Although the documents and systems of thought pertaining to Huang-Lao Daoism appear to vary greatly at first glance, as it is a political theory closely uniting the themes of the Dao of Heaven and the affairs of humankind,

³The *Huangdi Sijing* 黃帝四經, previously entitled *Lost Ancient Text Preceding the Laozi B of the Mawangdui Silk Manuscripts*, is made up of four chapters, the *Jingfa* 經法, *Shiliu Jing* 十六經, *Cheng* 稱 and *Daoyuan* 道. Some scholars refer to these texts as the *Huang-Lao Silk Manuscripts*, following Tang Lan 唐蘭 who suggests that they are the *Four Classics of the Yellow Emperor* named in the *Hanshu Yiwenzhi*. Although there is some debate, this is generally accepted as a valid identification.

with theory and practice closely entwined, it is common practice for scholars to approach it precisely from these aspects: theories of Dao and of governance. However, to simply discuss the existence of these two elements is insufficient; one should also pay mind to identifying clearly what specific form of these theories we are presented with. Based upon years of research into the *Huangdi Sijing*, we feel that it is possible to further identify two distinct and separate themes: theories of Dao and governance after the tradition of Laozi and the Yellow Emperor respectively. This division reflects the basic structure present in mature Huang-Lao Daoist materials, especially the areas related to the Yellow Emperor, which we feel should not be dismissed as a collection of unreliable works, randomly or incorrectly attributed to the Yellow Emperor, but are a collection of texts with a specific content and practical functions.

What we must clarify here is that these two separate styles of theories after the traditions of Laozi and the Yellow Emperor were not necessarily present at the beginnings of Huang-Lao Daoism, but rather can be identified as taking shape at the turn of the Qin to Han dynasties in the *Huangdi Sijing* text.⁴ Despite the fact that there are no explicit references to be found of the Yellow Emperor saying one thing and Laozi saying another, enabling us to form an obvious distinction between the two, we can still distinguish and identify two clear, significant traditions, and for the sake of simplicity we may refer to them as being based on the Laozi or the Yellow Emperor type. Although this structure is clearly visible in the *Huangdi Sijing*, we feel that it is missing the mark slightly to suggest that two separate theories of Dao and governance exist and in places interact within the Huang-Lao Daoist tradition. To see the structure as two sides of the same coin, and that different texts incline more towards one or the other may be a more accurate description. For example, within the *Liezi* 列子 we see reference to an apocryphal *Book of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi Shu* 黃帝書), whilst the contents of these references may also be found in the transmitted *Laozi*. In addition, the transmitted *Laozi* contains no

⁴There are varied opinions on the dating of this text: see Zhang Zengtian 張增田, "A Review of Research into the Huang-Lao Silk Manuscripts," *Journal of Anhui University* 4 (2001), which states that although some parts of the text can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn period, its overall style is undoubtedly closer to the mid-to-late Warring States period, therefore the date of completion of the text ought to be closer to the end of the Qin and beginning of the Han dynasty.

shortage of discussion on the Dao of Heaven; and so we see that there is a certain amount of interaction between textual lineages. An ideal focus for our research would be to pinpoint how the two traditions within Huang-Lao Daoism gradually clarified and became distinct from each other; such research would rely on excavated texts for supporting evidence.

The theory of Dao is the basis of Huang-Lao Daoist philosophy. In the *Huangdi Sijing* text we see the world as a whole, including human society, arranged according to the parallels of Dao and things (*wu* 物), the meta-physical and physical, the essential and phenomenal. Dao is the original source, pre-existing the “ten-thousand things,” and at the same time is the ontological entity that allows for their existence. This relationship is discussed at length in the “Daoyuan” chapter of the *Huangdi Sijing*. The first half of the “Daoyuan” chapter focuses on cosmological theory, describing the entity Dao as nameless and formless, independent and alone, whilst the ten thousand things derive their creation from it and “one hundred matters” come about as a result of its metaphysical characteristics. The second half of the “Daoyuan” chapter turns to how the sage person embodies and utilizes Dao in order to realize the political motive of “embracing Dao, grasping the measure, making the kingdom be as one (unified).” Quite clearly this is inherited directly from the *Laozi*, which emphasizes Dao as the highest entity and accentuates the decisive nature of Dao on society and human lives. Here we will call this idea “A Theory of Dao after the Tradition of Laozi.” This notion of Dao provides a rationale for the existence of the ten thousand things as well as for how the sage person (often referred to as “one who grasps Dao” in the *Huangdi Sijing*) rises to stations of political power and realizes the political aim of unifying the kingdom, making this theory a significant one.

Although this concept of Dao is important within the *Huangdi Sijing*, it appears not to be the ultimate point that the text seeks to emphasize. Another model of Dao catches our attention, which we might simply call that of the Dao of Heaven. This theory presents Heaven, Earth and humankind as interrelated parts of a whole, indicating ideal political actions in the human sphere according to the order of the universe. There are frequent references to the Dao of Heaven and Earth in the *Huangdi Sijing*, sometimes referring to the movements of the sun and moon, the changing of the seasons and other natural phenomena, or to the universally applicable principles (*li* 理), numbers (*shu* 數) or order (*ji* 紀) that they represent; sometimes it refers to the universal principles of the interdependent changes of Yin and Yang, changes of movement and stillness, waxing and

waning, hardness and softness interacting, all of which are aspects of the Dao of Heaven that the ruler must recognize and manipulate. By comparison with the abstract Dao that is unperceivable and impenetrable to the average individual, the Dao of Heaven is a form of Dao that all might perceive, as well as consisting of the rules and principles (*faze* 法則) of the heavenly bodies that all are subject to. Therefore, the Dao of Heaven has a form that may be directly perceived whilst still sharing in the authority and ultimate qualities of Dao; as a result, adhering to the Dao of Heaven becomes the most direct and effective means of controlling the kingdom. The most important political task for the sage person is to model their own actions after Heaven and Earth to approach mastery in the human realm, inferring and perfecting a set of rules for governance and principles of right and wrong from the order of the universe that permeates the realms of Heaven, Earth and humankind. As a result, this theory of Dao is a more practical one than that modeled after Laozi.

Discussing a Dao of Heaven that presents itself as the order or principles of the universe, and employing the process of inferring a Dao of humankind from the Dao of Heaven, are phenomena we find in transmitted texts such as the *Guanzi*, *Lüshi Chunqiu*, *Huainanzi* and *Heguanzi*. By taking these as a selection of complementary materials, we find that the Dao of Heaven is a view of the universe that encompasses all things and has constant and permeating principles closely related to knowledge, technical expertise, taboos and rules. The Yellow Emperor holds an undeniable position,⁵ for it is with him that this faith, obedience to rules and avoidance of taboos is directly associated. The Yellow Emperor appears frequently in this role in the *Huangdi Sijing*: for example in the “Guan” subchapter of the “Shiliu Jing” chapter, the Yellow Emperor plays an important part in the creation process of Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang, the seasons, darkness and light and the ten thousand things. In the “Liming” chapter of the same chapter we see the quote, “The Yellow Ancestor of old kept close to the Dao and insisted upon trust, he divined symbols based upon his own form, with four faces facing in all four directions and his

⁵For further discussion on the image and roles of the Yellow Emperor in transmitted texts, see Qian Mu 錢穆, *The Yellow Emperor*. Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2004; Chen Ligui, 陳麗桂, *Huang-Lao Thought in the Warring States Period*. Taipei: Linking Publishing, 1991, particularly the first chapter; and Jin Chenghuan 金晨煥, *Origins of Huang-Lao Daoism*. Beijing: Social Sciences in China Press, 2008.

heart-mind saw clearly, and with a clear heart-mind he observed the four directions. Central to the four directions, he drew from the Heavens for symbols (*xiang* 象), from the Earth for measures (*du* 度), from humankind for laws (*fa* 法). This he maintained throughout his reign, hence he was able to become the ancestor of the kingdom).” This confirms that the image of the Yellow Emperor is closely tied to the concept of the five phases, the contents of such a passage only makes sense if we refer to the systems of Yin, Yang and numerology (*shushu* 數術).⁶ This, then, is what we refer to as the theory of Dao after the Yellow Emperor.⁷

By investigating the function and role of the Yellow Emperor we find the rationale behind the name: Huang-Lao Daoism. It is precisely via the medium of the Yellow Emperor that the system of rules and taboos for society to abide by are introduced into the theoretical system of Huang-Lao Daoism, making its theoretical aspects practical and applicable, as well as endowing them with a natural trustworthiness and authority. Some scholars believe that the Yellow Emperor was introduced into Huang-Lao Daoism to raise the profile and influence of its theories, so that his name is, in essence, nothing more than a pseudonym and an accessory to the more essential elements.⁸ In fact this is not the case, for it is via the

⁶Regarding the relationship between The Yellow Emperor and the five phases, see Liu Bin 劉彬, *A Study of the Silk Manuscript of the Yao Chapter of the Changes*. Jinan: Studies of Zhouyi, 2007; Ge Zhiyi's 葛志毅 two papers, “The Yellow Emperor and Related Studies,” and “A Study into the Silk Manuscripts of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi and Related Studies,” in his *The System and Culture of Pre-Qin and Han Dynasties*. Harbin: Heilongjiang Education Press, 1998: these combine an investigation of the *Huangdi Sijing* with detailed research into the School of Yin-Yang characteristics of the so-called “lost words of the Yellow Emperor” (*Huangdi yi yan* 黃帝遺言).

⁷Discussion of the Dao of Heaven is not entirely absent from the *Laozi*, nor are the passages attributed to the Yellow Emperor entirely free of mention of the parallel drawn between Dao and things. However, here we make the distinction based upon their relative emphases.

⁸For example Ding Yuanming 丁原明, *Overview of the Huang-Lao School*. Jinan: Shandong University Press, 1997, claims that most of the texts that are related to the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi*) are in fact using the term as a pretext, and “Yellow Emperor studies” are not based on any particular theoretical system—meaning that the characteristic content of Huang-Lao learning is not “Huang” but “Lao”. See pp. 21–25.

system of rules and taboos represented by the Yellow Emperor that the process of inference from the Dao of Heaven to humankind is fully realized. To reiterate, the *Huangdi Sijing* text tells us that the Huang-Lao did not become an authoritative and applicable system of thought solely based on its aspects pertaining to the tradition of Laozi; therefore, pursuing the Yellow Emperor side of the theories is crucial, and excavated texts provide us with a wealth of resources for this purpose, allowing us to discover the rationale and certainty of these two types of theory being bound together.⁹

Theories related to politics in the *Huangdi Sijing* are also built upon two types of theories of Dao and can thus be divided into political theories after Laozi and the Yellow Emperor respectively.

According to the Dao theory after Laozi, Dao created all beings via a progression from the nameless and formless to the named and formed, with the physical and phenomenal as embodiments of Dao. In a direct parallel to this, the ruler is “one who grasps Dao”; a significant portion of his role is to recognize and grasp forms and names, to establish a system of names and roles and related rules for human society based on these forms and names, and then to simply allow this system to work *laissez-faire*, organizing and managing itself. In the *Huangdi Sijing*, the term “Names” (*Ming* 名) appears to hold greater significance than the term “Law”

⁹Zhang Zengtian 張增田 points out in “The Huang-Lao Silk Texts” 黃老帛書, “‘Dao’ is merely an important justification for the silk manuscripts’ Dao of governance and the theory of governance is likewise established according to the Dao of Heaven. Thus, there are two justifications for the Dao of governance in the silk manuscripts. Even though ‘Dao’ in the silk manuscripts and all Daoist doctrine is the highest category, and thus plays a role in the silk manuscripts as the most important justification for governance, yet the author of the text tends to emphasize ‘the Dao of Heaven’ over the unqualified entity of Dao.” At the same time, he identifies a deficiency in contemporary research, saying, “Yet when analyzing the theory of Dao in silk manuscripts, most scholars consciously or unconsciously take ‘the Dao of Heaven’ as another name for ‘Dao’, and use the function of ‘the Dao of Heaven’ to confirm the fundamental action of Dao upon the Dao of humankind and its basic paradigm, properties and status. This kind of methodology inevitably lacks rigor.” See Zhang Zengtian 張增田, *The Huang-Lao Dao of Governance and its Application*. Guangzhou: Zhongshan University Press, 2005, pp. 41–42. This is very close to the position we take here; we further categorize these as “a theory of Dao after Laozi” and “a theory of Dao after the Yellow Emperor,” and discuss these two types of theory of Dao alongside two types of theory of governance.

(*fa* 法 law, principals, also the character denoting the Legalist school of thought), as the principles of law can only work when the system of names has been properly established. This is the point at which Huang-Lao Daoism becomes more penetrating than the Legalist School. The “Cheng” chapter points out that when “Dao” descends to the level of “things” (*wu* 物), and the physical world begins to take form, “establishing according to forms and giving the appropriate names” is the most important task to be undertaken, as this then ensures that all beings will be differentiated, recognized and managed. This agrees with the passage of the *Laozi* (Chap. 1 in the Wang Bi 王弼 recension) that states, “Named, is the origin of the ten thousand things.” We find evidence of a similar strain of thought in the “Daofa” subchapter of the “Jingfa” chapter: “The Dao of that which may be seen and known is empty and vacuous. The vacuous when realized in even the finest filament, must be given a form and a name. Form and name being established, dark and light are distinguished.” Which is to say that even the smallest thing has a form and a name. Once these have been established they are as clear as “black and white”; that is to say that the characteristics, role and standards for judging that thing are established. As a result, the theory of governance in the *Huangdi Sijing* begins with the concept of names.

Because it is the function of the one who “grasps the Dao” to “see and know” the tools of the kingdom, i.e. “forms and names,” the one who “grasps the Dao” must ensure that names reliably reflect the object which they refer to, thus the ruler observes and grasps political objects, and thereby forms political strategies. In the “*Jingfa*” chapter, the founding of guiding principles for political strategy upon a theory of forms and their names is not embodied by the ruler using a fixed theory of forms and names to control his ministers, rather we see the activity of reviewing names (*shenming* 審名) as a scholarly pursuit executed with a much broader purview. Reviewing Names is a crucial act of observation that plays a decisive role in the maintenance or loss of control over the kingdom. When the kingdom and its ruler are each in their correct forms and in their proper place and state and these things are in agreement, this is known as the rectitude of names (*zheng ming* 正名), otherwise they enter into a state known as biased names (*yi ming* 倚名). The future of a state may be decided according to the extent to which the rectitude of names has been ensured, and which also determines whether rewards or punishments need to be applied.

The “Jingfa” chapter is full of various means of reviewing names, which form the richest part of the political theory contained therein. However, this kind of political activity can only be performed by one who “grasps the

Dao.” That is to say that only such a person can realize the process by which Dao becomes named forms; this person grasps forms and names by understanding the nameless and formless, and so they themselves are not restricted to the realm of forms and names alone. This state of affairs accomplished, the ruler controls the most essential political capital which draws its authority from Dao itself, placing him in a position safe from challenge and ensuring absolute political command. Therefore, Huang-Lao Daoist political theory, as seen in the *Huangdi Sijing*, is essentially and necessarily inseparable from theories of self-cultivation, of pursuing a state of quietude, indirect action and a pure character. Although this approach of building theories of governance upon physical and spiritual well-being is not seen frequently throughout the *Huangdi Sijing*, where present, the spirit of this approach is quite explicit.¹⁰

Now let us look at political theory after the Yellow Emperor. As we have discussed above, in this type of theory, responding correctly to the Dao of Heaven is the most direct and effective method of controlling the kingdom. The *Huangdi Sijing* repeatedly emphasizes that the Dao of Heaven presents a clear set of standards for human behavior (or for the Dao of humankind *rendao* 人道); one could say that human behavior should in fact be an extension of the Dao of Heaven is an extension of the, in fact. In the original text there are an abundance of expressions qualified by the prefix *Tian* (天), which could be translated for the most part into English as the suffix “of Heaven,” such as: “that which is fitting of Heaven” (*Tian dang* 天當), “the epitome of Heaven” (*Tian ji* 天極), “the achievement of Heaven” (*Tian gong* 天功), “the seasons (or times) of Heaven” (*Tian shi* 天時), “the destruction of Heaven” (*Tian hui* 天毀, where Heaven is the agent of destruction, as it is the agent in the following three examples), “the penitence of Heaven” (*tian zhu* 天誅), “the punishment of Heaven” (*Tian fa* 天罰), “the disaster of Heaven” (*Tian yang* 天殃), and the verb-noun pairs “to attain (that which is of) Heaven” (*de Tian* 得天), or “to lose (that of) Heaven” (*shi Tian* 失天), and so on. This imbues the inherent political

¹⁰For more detailed discussion by the author regarding the terms Dao, Names and Law, see also Cao Feng 曹峰, *Categories of Ming in the Huangdi Sijing*. Changsha: Journal of Hunan University Social Sciences, 2007 and Cao Feng 曹峰, *The Relationship between ‘He Who Grasps the Dao’ and Ming in Huangdi Sijing*. Changsha: Journal of Hunan University Social Sciences, 2008. See also Chap. 6 of this book.

theory with heavy intonations of the Dao of Heaven. However, this theory of the Dao of Heaven does not simply require humankind to bow down to the authority of Heaven with a religious piety, but to actively participate in the creation of Heaven and Earth; the most typical area of learning that embodies this concerns Yin, Yang (陰陽) and rule by Punishment or Virtue (刑德), this means that political order is required so that the kingdom may conform with the natural patterns of the interactions of Yin and Yang. As the “Guan” subchapter of the “Shiliu Jing” chapter states, “grasp the times and cultivate the people’s achievements, administer first to virtue and then to punishment, thus following the Heavens.” Here we see that if one conforms to the Dao of Heaven, ethical education and Punishment can be organically entwined. The “Sidu” chapter of the “Jingfa” section, says, “Turning back when reaching its extreme, decreasing when reaching its fullest, such is the Dao of Heaven and the principles of humankind also.” Responding to the times and avoiding excesses that bring about the opposite effect are emphasized here. It was in precisely this way that political activities drew their rationale from natural principles.

So we see from the passages discussed that the theories of Dao and governance after Laozi and the Yellow Emperor need not necessarily appear as isolated in separate texts. In terms of a guiding principle, these two systems are clearly described but yet subsume each other, each offering reflections of the other and compensating for each other’s deficiencies. When taken together and in conjunction, they form the politically practical and effective theory of Huang-Lao Daoism.

3 EARLY HUANG-LAO THOUGHT IN BAMBOO MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE ANCIENT STATE OF CHU

Since the 1990s we have seen the emergence of a series of bamboo manuscripts from the State of Chu, including the Guodian hoard and those currently held at the Shanghai Museum. Of these texts, those that present with typical characteristics of Daoist thought represent no small proportion; they include the *Taiyi Shengshui* from Guodian and the *Hengxian*, *Sande* and *Fanwu Lixing* texts held at the Shanghai Museum, to name a few. These documents contain a form of Daoism different from that which takes a critical stance towards society; these texts are instead deeply concerned with the real issues of government. In terms of the dates of completion of these manuscripts, the bamboo manuscripts dated to the mid-

to-late Warring States period predate the Western Han silk manuscripts from the Mawangdui site by a good century, providing us with valuable resources for examining an earlier stage of Huang-Lao Daoism. Of course, it is a matter of logic that we cannot declare that the creation of the *Huangdi Sijing* text was necessarily later than that of the bamboo manuscripts just because the silk manuscripts were handwritten at a later date. However, although one can find evidence of the dual system of theories of Dao and governance in the bamboo manuscripts from the State of Chu, they are far less systematic, clear, and complete than those found in the *Huangdi Sijing*. In particular, the former lacks theories on politics, and call to allow the state to flourish whilst strengthening its armies; nor do we see the political philosophy that adopts ideas from the Schools of Names and Legalism whilst adhering to the essential principles of Dao. Therefore, we cannot apply our categories of theories of Dao and governance after Laozi and the Yellow Emperor, which form the basic framework of thought in the *Huangdi Sijing* directly to the Chu State bamboo manuscripts. That said, we do find that the content of the bamboo manuscripts is closely related to these two systems of theories on Dao and governance, hinting at the possibility of a process of refinement taking place that involved the two sets of texts. As we have said, it is possible to utilize excavated texts to understand these two systems, and determine how the ideas within them gradually developed to become clear and distinct.

Firstly, we find a phenomenon within the *Sande* text that should not be ignored: that there is a startling degree of linguistic similarity between this text and the *Huangdi Sijing*. Both texts refer to the Yellow Emperor by name and as a spokesperson for the Dao of Heaven, offering guidance to humankind on matters of governance. We cannot take this to be coincidental; rather we believe that this reflects the fact that the theories of Dao and governance after the Yellow Emperor seen in the *Huangdi Sijing* may be traced back to the intellectual resources of the *Sande*.¹¹

Secondly, although the three bamboo manuscripts (i.e. *Taiyi Shengshui*, *Hengxian* and *Fanwu Liuxing*) differ from the *Huangdi Sijing* text in terms of content, their theories on Dao and governance are conducted along a similar line of thought. We do not see the names of the Yellow

¹¹For more detail see articles by Cao Feng 曹峰, *Huang Hou as Huang Di in the Sande*. Qufu: Qilu Journal, 2008; Cao Feng 曹峰, *A Comparative Study of the Sande and Huangdi Sijing*. Wuhan: Jiangnan Tribune, 2006. See also Chap. 5 of this book.

Emperor or Laozi in these texts; however, the logical reasoning presented here is also based on the appeal to the Dao of Heaven (primarily through descriptions of the creation of the universe) as a model for human behavior, with the ruler drawing upon Dao (in these texts represented by One *Yi* —) to gain his political capital. This aspect is shared by the *Huangdi Sijing* and bamboo manuscripts. Therefore, from the perspective of a stage in history, and based upon seeking common ground between systems of thought, whilst observing points of difference, we find this methodology helps us to appreciate the way that Huang-Lao Daoism changed with the times. It further helps us to discover the process of interaction between the theoretical and practical aspects of Huang-Lao Daoist thought and its variety.

Amongst the Chu bamboo manuscripts we are yet to find passages similar to the “Daoyuan” chapter of the *Huangdi Sijing* that set out a framework of Dao and things, and describe a nameless and formless, independent Dao as well as an ontological structure where this Dao is the cause of the existence and processes of all things. We find that although both the *Huangdi Sijing* and bamboo manuscript texts explain human behavior by appeal to a Dao of Heaven, the Chu manuscripts more often refer to the creation of the universe for their expression, even though what we are faced with is a wide spectrum of different and even drastically varied theories of cosmogonic processes and differing views on the Dao, from which equally varied principles for human behavior can be inferred. To look at it from another point of view, perhaps this reflects some degree of variation in the practical political needs of the day, hence differing aspects of the Dao of Heaven are appealed to according to differing requirements. Although the term “Dao” appears frequently in these theories of creation, it is not the key concept, which might be because Huang-Lao Daoism in its early stages instead favored feasible, applicable principles. Next we will look specifically at examples from *Taiyi Shengshui*, *Hengxian* and *Fanwu Liuxing*.

A unique process of universal creation is described in the *Taiyi Shengshui*, with Taiyi (太一) or the “Great One” as the source, and with a strong emphasis on water (*shui* 水). This process moves forward in interlinked stages to form an exquisite drawing of creation, which runs as follows:

Taiyi—Water—Heaven—Earth—*Shenming*—Yin and Yang—Seasons—Temperature (Cold and Hot)—Humidity (Dampness and Dryness)—The Year.

Apart from the initial stage, where Taiyi creates water, the remaining stages are all the result of mutual interaction between adjoining stages. It is worth noticing that this text does not simply present Taiyi as the initial

starting point of creation: the thought process implies a recognition of an implicit relationship similar to the Dao-beings parallel; that is, by drawing a parallel between Taiyi and all beings, the entity called Taiyi and its function as the “mother of the ten thousand beings” and “path of ten thousand beings” becomes clear. What is even more worthy of attention is that having described the process of generation the author turns to a new subject, “the ruler knows this and calls it...” It is most unfortunate that at this point the bamboo slips are damaged, leaving the following content lost. However, what we can say is that clearly the following passage would have related matters of the human realm to the realm of Heaven. This thought process can also be seen in the second half of *Taiyi Shengshui*, where the author describes natural phenomena: “Heaven is lacking in the north-west,” “the Earth is lacking in the south-east”; from this, we derive the conclusion that the Dao of Heaven prizes weakness, of actively pursuing decrease of “formation” in order to replenish “creation,” or “[t]aking from the strong, to give to the weak.” This clearly is the Dao of Heaven that we are supposed to imitate. The *Taiyi Shengshui* also emphasizes that the “sage person,” if they wish to achieve “the completion of affairs and the growth of the body [or self, *shen* 身]” ought to do so in the name of Dao, “pursuing affairs through Dao.” The Dao referred to here, we believe, is not an abstract concept, but the Dao of Heaven that humankind may take directly as a model for action.¹²

If we look next at the *Hengxian*, for example the passages, “The primordial constancy is a state of nothingness, simplicity, quietness, emptiness”, and “Empty stillness or the One, as if in a lonely state of chaos, still and yet to be illuminated, yet to be created,” the description of the original nature of Dao seen in these quotes demonstrates a similarity between the *Hengxian* and the “Daoyuan” chapter of the Mawangdui silk manuscript the *Huangdi Sijing*. However, the *Hengxian* differs in that its author does not dedicate much space to such descriptions, but focuses rather on the

¹²On the relationship between the Dao of Heaven and Huang-Lao Daoism, see Cao Feng, “Annotation of ‘the Dao of Heaven Prizes Weakness’ Chapter of the *TYSS*, and its Relationship to the Guodian *Laozi*,” from the Proceedings of the International Conference on Excavated Texts and Ancient Culture, Qinghua University, June 2013 (*Taiyi sheng shui Tiandao gui ruo pian xin quan—jianlun yu Guodian Laozi de guanxi* 太一生水“天道貴弱”篇新詮—兼論與郭店楚簡老子的關係 *chutu wenxian yu zhongguo gudai wenming guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 出土文獻與中國古代文明國際學術研討會論文集 *Qinghua daxue* 清華大學) Beijing: Journal of Tsinghua University, 2015.

process of creation. The first half of the *Hengxian* concerns a cosmological theory, which may be divided into two systems. The first of these runs from nothingness to existence, from the metaphysical to the physical, a system of creation that is complete and set in abstract terms, in the following sequence: space (*huo*)—*qi*—existence—beginnings—movement. The second system specifically touches upon human society and all sorts of cultural development, and runs in the following order: generation (creation)—ideas—speech—naming—affairs. The second half of the *Hengxian* concerns political philosophy: that is, how the principles of cosmology might allow “the wise king, the wise ruler, the wise scholars” to solve “the issues of the kingdom,” and manage “naming within the kingdom” (including the “works of the kingdom,” “the actions of the kingdom,” “creation within the kingdom”), and at the same time provide guidance on the principles of government in general.

There is an especially lucid train of thought in the *Hengxian*, that is that from the point of view of universal creation, “*qi*-energy is born of and acts of itself,” hence things created from *qi*-energy, including humankind within the broad category of the “ten thousand things”, are also “born of and act of themselves”, and their acts are autonomous. Therefore the unknowing, aimless, non-interference, non-compulsion style of government as a means necessarily leads to subjects, the ten thousand things, including humans acting autonomously.¹³

The term “appropriate responses” (*yinxun* 因循), an important characteristic of Huang-Lao Daoist thought, is often taken to be realized on two levels: the first responds to the seasons of nature, an idea seen most frequently in the *Huangdi Sijing*, and could also be seen to be the source of theories of Punishment and Virtue (*xingde* 刑德); the second level responds to human nature, and is often seen throughout transmitted texts of Huang-Lao origin, such as the “Yinxun” chapter of the *Shenzi* (慎子), which says, “Greatness comes from following the Dao of Heaven, which is reduced during transformation. Responses mean responding to human emotions. All of mankind is autonomous, becoming themselves through a

¹³For more details, see Cao Feng, “From Self-Born to Autonomy—An Exploration of Political Philosophy in the *Hengxian*,” *Gujin Lunheng* 14 (May 2006) (*cong zisheng dao ziwei—Hengxian zhengzhi zhixue Tanxi* 從“自生”到“自爲”—恒先政治哲學探析, 臺灣中央研究院歷史語言研究所編 *Gujin lunheng* 古今論衡第十四期). See also Chap. 4 of this volume.

process of transformation ... when in the wrong position, acting autonomously means the ruler will not employ you. One can make use of people's acting for themselves or for me, this is a matter of responding." The "Taizu" (泰族) chapter of the *Huainanzi* also states, "the seasons, Heaven and Earth, do not give life to the ten thousand beings, the spirit joins them, Yin and Yang harmonize them and the ten thousand things are born. The sage person in governing the empire does not seek to alter the nature of his people, hence appropriate responses lead to greatness, transformation leads to reduction."¹⁴ Huang-Lao Daoism seeks to establish "non-interference" governance above the rule of law, so that the dual-layered theory of appropriate reactions forms a philosophical basis that is legally wide-reaching and objective.¹⁵ In the *Hengxian* we not only see the phrasing "autonomous" (*ziwei* 自为), but also discussion of "responses" (*yin* 因), such as, "The creation of constant *qi* is great because of responses. Actions are grand and non-autonomous [*bu zi ruo* 不自若]. Actions may come to pass as intended or not, neither are rejected." This passage is similar to those found in the *Shenzi* and *Huainanzi*, not only in spirit but also in literary expression. One could say that in the *Hengxian* we have located an early form of the "appropriate responses" theory.

However, a phenomenon even more worthy of our attention is that to solve the theory that mankind is self-born and autonomous, the *Hengxian* describes a theory of *qi*-energy unseen in transmitted texts, which is that *qi*-energy itself is self-born. As in the *Taiyi Shengshui*, the latter part of the *Hengxian* contains political theory and is the key part of the work, whilst the cosmological speculation in the first part is presented as a basis for the philosophy of the self-born and autonomous in the political realm. In the past, relying on transmitted texts alone, the only origin we could find for

¹⁴Following the suggestion of Wang Niansun 王念孫, we read the graph *zuo* 作 as *hua* 化. For more see Wang Niansun, *Reading Notes* ((*Dushu Zazhi*) 《讀書雜誌》). Nanjing: Jiangsu Ancient Books Publishing House 南京:江蘇古籍出版, 2000, p. 949.

¹⁵On the question of the relationship of commonality and objectivity between the theory of appropriate responses and rule of law in Huang-Lao Daoism, see Wang Zhongjiang 王中江, *Principle of Law Philosophy, Publicity and Ideal of Law's Community in Huang-Lao School—Why is Ruling of Dao and Law*, in *International Conference on Excavated Texts and Ancient Culture*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2011 (*Huanglao de Fazhexue yuanli gongongxing he falü gongtongti lixiang* 黃老學的法哲學原理公共性和法律共同體理想 *jianbo wenming yu gudai sixiang shijie* 簡帛文明與古代思想世界 *Beijing daxue chubanshe* 北京大學出版社).

living things was a theory based on Yin-Yang and the creation of *qi*-energy. Now we can refer to the *Hengxian* and discover an alternative source of life, that of the self-born. We believe that this is a discovery of great significance; not only have we managed to discover an alternative theory of the creation of living things in the history of Chinese thought, we have also revealed that within the Huang-Lao Daoist tradition it was possible to make conscious selections regarding contemporary theories of the Dao of Heaven in order to provide evidence and argumentation for the validity of certain political principles. That is to say, in standard ontological theories the reference to *qi*-energy created from Yin-Yang is seen as sufficient; however, owing to the existence of certain political necessities, we see that the “self-born” quality of *qi*-energy can be consciously and selectively emphasized.¹⁶

Fanwu Liuxing is a treatise whose train of thought runs from the Dao of Heaven to the Dao of humankind, and can also be divided into two parts, with the second half describing how “the hundred beings are maintained” (*bai wu bu shi* 百物不失), and the topics of “knowing the kingdom” (*zhi tianxia* 知天下) and “governing the clans” (*zhi bangjia* 治邦家) so as to amalgamate the kingdom to hold and govern it (*bing tianxia er zha zhi* 並天下而掎之)—and so on, statements reflecting strong political ambitions. In order to fulfill these ambitions, the *Fanwu Liuxing* states the need to “grasp the One” (*zhi Yi* 執一), “attain the One” (*de Yi* 得一), “have the One (unity)” (*you Yi* 有一), “be able to unify” (*neng Yi* 能一) and “prize unity” (*gui Yi* 貴一). If we recall the passage from the *Fanwu Liuxing*, “The forms of all beings flow, from whence are they created? Flowing forms become physical forms, how is it that they do not expire?”, the first half of this passage is not dissimilar to Qu Yuan’s (屈原) poem, “*Heavenly Questions*” (*Tian wen* 天問), which uses exaggerated literary techniques to describe nature, the realm of ghosts and deities, the human realm and the various unimaginable phenomena therein, in an attempt to discover some secret source or reason behind them. The passage continues to define the source of creation, the reason for the existence of Heaven and Earth and to speak of all living beings as the One. Unity is seen as the source of life in the universe and creator of all things, Unity in this sense clearly takes on a role similar to Dao, with comparable metaphysical characteristics. However, the

¹⁶For further details see Cao Feng 曹峰, *A Theory of Qi-Energy in the Hengxian—A New Source of Creation for All Things*. Beijing: The Synopsis of Philosophical Researches, 2012 vol. 5 (*Hengxian de qilun—yi zhong xin de wanwu shengcheng dongli moshi* 恒先的氣論——一種新的萬物生成動力模式 *Zhexue Yanjiu* 哲學研究).

Fanwu Liuxing seems not to argue for a concept of Unity as part of a philosophical sophistry dividing the universe along the parallel of Dao and beings. Instead, a realistic concern drives the author, as we see in the statement, “if one can grasp Unity, one loses none of the hundred things; if one cannot grasp Unity, all one hundred are lost”: here we see a classic example of Huang-Lao Daoist political thought. In Huang-Lao Daoist political theory, the relationship between Unity, or the one, and the many, in the sense of a theory of universe, is of great political significance: it is the basic reasoning behind the reality of a political system where one ruler governs many subjects. As Wang Zhongjiang 王中江 puts it, “In contrast to the multitude of the ten thousand things, Unity is the life-giver and governor; which relates to society where to the ‘hundred clans,’ Unity is realized through the politicized sage person who acts as both governor and unifier.”¹⁷ In order to explicate how one “grasps Unity,” *Fanwu Liuxing* goes into further detail and presents a theory of self-cultivation: that is, that “grasping Unity” is the sole means of understanding the true operations behind the creation and processes of the world. Only one who conquers their mind and cultivates their person can “grasp Unity,” and only such a person may become the ruler and effectively rule over a kingdom. Not only in the concepts of conquering one’s heart-mind or cultivating one’s person, but also in the actual structure of the *Fanwu Liuxing*, or of such transmitted texts as the four chapters of the *Guanzi* (“Neiye” 內業, “Xinshu Shang” 心術上, “Xinshu Xia” 心術下, “Bai Xin” 白心) there is an undeniable similarity there. The four chapters of the *Guanzi* are commonly accepted as an example of Huang-Lao Daoist writing in a transmitted text, and focus a significant amount of discussion on physical cultivation leading to good governance. The emergence of the *Fanwu Liuxing* text provided us with a valuable resource for exploring the transmission of thought contained in the four chapters of the *Guanzi*, its influence, and theories of cultivation in the early stage of Huang-Lao Daoist thought.

From the above discussion we find that the three bamboo manuscripts of the ancient State of Chu all contain the common element of exploring the Dao of humankind through discussions of the Dao of Heaven.

¹⁷See also Wang Zhongjiang, “The Structure of Thought surrounding Yi and its Position in *Fanwu Liuxing*,” in *International Conference on Excavated Texts and Ancient Culture*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2011, p. 82 (*Fanwu liuxing Yi de sixiang gouzao ji qi weizhi* 凡物流形“一”的思想構造及其位置 *jianbo wenming yu gudai sixiang* 簡帛文明與古代思想世界).

However, they do so by reference to three differing theories of Dao, resulting in differing principles on the affairs of humanity, which we assume would have suited different social requirements at different levels of government. Their theories of Dao are all more or less related to those contained in the *Laozi*: for example, the *Taiyi Shengshui* text was copied along with the Laozi C fragments on the same set of bamboo slips retrieved from the Guodian site, from which we might infer that the *Taiyi Shengshui* text was a part of the version of the *Laozi* recovered from Guodian. The sage person of the *Hengxian* text acts according to the principles of non-action, with an autonomous populace; the description of this is reminiscent of the idea of non-action leading to self-action in the *Laozi*. *Fanwu Liuxing* identifies Unity as the basis for all existence and action, in which it seems to be influenced by Chap. 39 (Wang Bi recension) of the *Laozi*: “Of old, these came to be in possession of the One: Heaven in virtue of the One is limpid; Earth in virtue of the One is settled; gods in virtue of the One have their potencies; the valley in virtue of the One is full; the myriad creatures in virtue of the One are alive; lords and princes in virtue of the One become leaders of the empire.” However, we must not rush to categorize such extracts as evidence of a theory of governance after Laozi, because even though there is sporadic mention of Dao in these texts, it is yet to become a metaphysical concept or a key concept in them.¹⁸ On the contrary, the key concepts are: *Taiyi*, *Hengxian* and *Yi*, all of which refer to a universal

¹⁸As for why we do not find the word “Dao” in these texts, Wang Zhongjiang believes that this is due to intentional avoidance of the metaphysically loaded term “Dao,” and thus a more vivid and intuitive name is used to express the origin of the universe. He discusses this question in his papers “The Creation of the Cosmos and Humanity in the *Hengxian*” (*Heng Xian de yuzhouguan ji renjian de gouzao* 恆先的宇宙觀及人間觀的構造) and “The Creation and Position of the Idea of ‘Yi’ in *Fanwu Liuxing*” (*Fan Wu Liu Xing yi de sixiang gouzao jiqi weizhi* 凡物流行“一”的思想構造及其位置 *Jianbo wenming yu gudai sixiang shijie* 簡帛文明與古代思想世界, *ibid.*, p. 58, 80). Shinichi Yanaka (谷中信一) believes that the fully structured and metaphysically loaded “Dao” seen in the modern *Laozi* does not appear in Chu bamboo texts; see Shinichi Yanaka 谷中信一, “An Analysis of the Idea of Cosmos in the *Hengxian*,” in Ding Sixin 丁四新 ed., *Research of Chu Bamboo Silk Thoughts*, vol. III, Wuhan: Hubei Education Press, 2007 (*Heng Xian yuzhoulun xiyi* 恆先宇宙觀析義 in Ding Sixin 丁四新 ed. *Chudi jianbo sixiang yanjiu san* 楚地簡帛思想研究(三) (*Wuhan Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe* 湖北教育出版社).

ontology with the stylings of a Dao of Heaven. From a directly attainable Dao of Heaven upon which we can model our actions, specific and feasible political concepts and systems are drawn; there are characteristics of theories of Dao and governance after the Yellow Emperor, more practical than the concept of Dao, and focused on its functions. The three main texts under discussion (*Taiyi Shengshui*, *Huangdi Sijing* and *Fanwu Liuxing*) make no mention of the Yellow Emperor by name. The Yellow Emperor is mentioned in the *Sande*, but mostly in the form of quotes and cautions attributed to him, and we see no systematic expressions of a theory of Yin-Yang or Punishment and Virtue. This proves that terms such as theories of Dao and governance after Laozi and the Yellow Emperor respectively, which have been derived from the mature framework of the Mawangdui silk manuscript *Huangdi Sijing*, cannot be mechanically applied to the Chu State manuscripts. At the same time, we find that these Chu State texts are definitely related to the two types of theories of Dao and governance, and we also find common ground in its thought processes, implying the potential for continued development from one set of texts to the next. We can catch glimpses of theories of Dao and governance modeled after Laozi and the Yellow Emperor respectively amongst the descriptions of universal creation and political philosophy; it is as if they are about to break the surface. If we call the *Huangdi Sijing* the mature state of Huang-Lao Daoist thought, then we may be able to find traces of its earlier development in the Chu State texts.

The number of Chu State manuscripts that has emerged allows us to conduct comparisons with the silk manuscripts from Mawangdui and with transmitted texts, in order to observe whether or not there are common issues addressed in Huang-Lao Daoist writings. By similar issues or styles we mean similar patterns in the areas of structures of thought processes and their forms of literary expression. With the process of inference from the Dao of Heaven to the Dao of humankind as a set standard, we find a two-part structure common amongst Huang-Lao Daoist texts, with the first part addressing the respective theories of Dao and the second part focused on political theorizing, to form a neat contrast. The *Taiyi Shengshui* and *Hengxian* are typical examples of this literary structure.¹⁹ The “Daoyuan” chapter of the *Huangdi Sijing* also follows this pattern.

¹⁹Whereas the *Fanwu Liuxing* is the opposite way round, first discussing phenomena and then the principles behind them.

This type of text is usually short in length, simple, lucid and accessible, presenting neat cause-and-effect relationships, so that a certain cause leads necessarily to a certain effect; in the same way, a certain theory of Dao leads to a certain way of thinking about governance. Although they do not lack theoretical foundations, these types of text tend to steer clear of overly mystical sophistry; any profound theorizing is firmly aimed at resolving the political issues of the day, and tends towards the integration of theory and practice, coloring them with a style that is politically utilitarian. As a result, their applicability, efficacy and their feasibility are their most obvious characteristics. These texts often utilize a special kind of expression to deliver the short concise ideas that they have in common. Firstly, they are predominantly written in rhyme: the *Sande*, *Fanwu Liuxing* and the “Cheng” chapter of the *Huangdi Sijing* are examples of this. Literary creation in rhyming verse suggests that these were not texts designed to be studied by individual scholars or literati, or even to be explored by individual schools of thought, but were composed so as to be easy to recite, accessible to all from the ruler to the common man, with the principles ready to put into practice from first contact. Secondly, Huang-Lao writings, especially those attributed as the “words of the Yellow Emperor,” are often characterized by their style of introducing taboos. The “Sidu” and the “Cheng” chapter of the *Huangdi Sijing* are examples of this characteristic, often using combinations prefixed by the character for Heaven (天 X) when describing the rewards or punishments originating from a deity-type entity or from nature. The descriptions of ideal and non-ideal behavior are often couched in the terms “it is beneficial to do...” (*li* 利), “it is permissible to...” (*keyi* 可以), or conversely the imperative “do not...” (*wu* 勿) or “it is not permissible to...” (*bu keyi* 不可以). These texts often frames sentences with the phrase “it is said that” (*shi wei* 是謂) (or alternatively, “thus it is said” *ci wei* 此謂, “it is called” *ming yue* 名曰, “it is commanded” *ming yue* 命曰, “call it so” *wei zhi* 謂之), and categorized by sets of numbers. In terms of vocabulary, single characters or compound words reflecting particular outcomes are popular, for example: auspicious, fortune, strength, victory, advancement, ease, flourishing, achievement, growth, long-lasting, still, settled, no trouble²⁰; this includes a proportion in a tone of voice reminiscent of foretelling misfortune: inauspicious, misfortune, reduction, weakness, failure, retreat, counter-flow, danger,

²⁰吉, 福, 強, 勝, 進, 順, 昌, 成, 長, 久, 靜, 定, 無事.

abnormal, disorder, killing, war, penitentiary battle, elimination, disaster, complaints, illness, death, loss, breakage, destruction, disrepair and damage.²¹ With their plain and concise linguistic style, clear, to the point and avoiding lengthy and wordy explanations, the texts convey a sense of authority and confidence.²²

4 CONCLUSIONS

Usually it is believed that the Huang-Lao Daoist tradition is a miscellaneous mix which adopts ideas from all its contemporary schools of thought without any discernable basic framework. However, if we take the Mawangdui silk manuscript *Huangdi Sijing* as a representative text of the tradition, as we have discussed above, within the one text we can clearly discern theories of Dao and governance after Laozi and the Yellow Emperor respectively, as two major trains of thought that are mutually indicative, and which complete each other. Although this framework cannot be mechanically applied to the Chu State documents, this group of texts do not as yet offer us an impression of the framework in its formative stages. At the same time, the high degree of similarity of thought processes and literary expressions between both sets of texts reflects the reality that Huang-Lao Daoism has certain set characteristics. This is not in conflict with the idea that Huang-Lao Daoism lacks its own unique characteristics as a school of thought. Observing the Chu State texts, the process of inference from Dao of Heaven to the Dao of humankind, from well-being to good governance, are clear but not specific to any one school of thought. For example, the presence of an idea of the Rites of Heaven (*Tianli* 天禮), described in the *Sande* text and a system of taboos, is similar to passages in the *Shang Shu*, *Li Ji* and *Dadai Liji*. This is what has sparked debate over whether the *Sande* belongs to the Ruist or Huang-Lao tradition. This reminds us that Huang-Lao is a combination of various

²¹ 凶, 禍, 削, 弱, 敗, 退, 逆, 災, 異, 亂, 殺, 戮, 誅, 滅, 殃, 怨, 病, 死, 亡, 喪, 破, 毀, 壞, 損.

²² Regarding Huang-Lao Daoism's literary style, see Cao Feng 曹峰, "Huang-Lao Thought and Numerology in the Folk Tradition—Following the Leads of Excavated Texts." *Zhuzi Journal* 5 (2011) (*Huang-Lao sixiang yu minjian shushu —yi chutu wenxian wei xiansuo* 黃老思想與民間數術-以出土文獻為線索 *Zhuzi xuekan* 諸子學刊 issue 5 Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社).

schools. This may have been a subconscious and automatic adoption of ideas, which is different from the approach described during the early Han where Huang-Lao Daoism takes Daoist thought as its mainstay and actively, consciously adopting from different schools based on real-world political requirements. With a tendency to refer to varying theories of the universe and the Dao of Heaven and inferring political theories from these, we look back now and call such a text an early precursor to Huang-Lao Daoism. In the Warring States period there was not necessarily a clear conscious decision to take one school of thought as mainstay. This is precisely why we suggest that Huang-Lao Daoism should be categorized according to the similarity and cohesiveness of its content, rather than an academic assessment of lineage. In future research, we should make increasing use of excavated texts and dedicate our work to observing how Huang-Lao Daoism progressed from an indistinct to a mature form.

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