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老子 Lao Zi

The Book and the Man

by

Paulos Huang



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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present work is to do an analysis of *Laozi* the book and of the sources dealing with Lao Zi the man in order to find important truths concerning them. The materials on which the work relies are mainly in the Chinese language. The work studies the Chinese research in the Chinese language on the *Laozi* issue with the purpose of making these known to the western world.

Concerning *Laozi* the book, the various available editions, the titles, structure, and nature of the works, as well as the authorship and the date have been studied.

Concerning the authorship and date of the book, the author, departing from recent positions, is of traditional opinion clearly stating that the author of the *Laozi* is Lao Dan, who was also called Lao Zi. He was a contemporary of Confucius who lived at the end of the Spring and Autumn period. This position has been taken in respect to an analysis of the arguments of Liang Qichao and his followers as well as to the contemporary references, the vocabulary, the idea, and the style of *Laozi*. First, the present work has found much evidence to support the following hypotheses: 1) Contemporary references to the *Laozi* are in fact extant. 2) The vocabulary used in the book is shown in this work to be from that of the Spring and Autumn period; thus, it does not allow us to understand the *Laozi* as a later work but proves it to be earlier. 3) The ideas of the *Laozi*, which Liang and his followers try to show were too radical for the time of Lao Zi and Confucius, have also been proved to belong to the Spring and Autumn period. 4) The style of the *Laozi*, which Liang and his followers believe can prove the *Laozi* to be a later work, has been shown to indicate instead an earlier date of writing. Second, the present work has proved by two means that the *Laozi* is a work that dates from the end of the Spring and Autumn period or the beginning of the Warring States period: the style characteristics and the regional Chu background of the *Laozi* shows this as do the contrasts that emerge from comparative studies of the *Laozi*, *Shijing* and *Chuci*.

Concerning Lao Zi the man, his names, place of birth, occupation, and his meeting with Confucius have all been studied. Issues concerning the historicity and date (s) of Lao Zi's meeting with Confucius and the problems of identifying Lao Zi in the sources yield two main reasons for new scholars to reject the traditional opinion. The present work has proved these reasons to be unfounded.

Concerning the meeting, those representing the new scholarship, Liang Qichao and his followers, reject the historicity of the meeting and build their arguments mainly on two foundations: one is the inconsistencies in the various speeches of Lao Zi as they appear in different records; the other concerns the reliability of the source claiming to record the meeting. The present work has proved both arguments of the new scholars to be incorrect. Concerning the identification of Lao Zi with other figures, I show in this work that Lao Zi, Lao Lai Zi, Lao Peng and Taishi Dan were all different people. Zong was the son of another Lao Zi. Thus, Lao Zi was a contemporary of Confucius and his dates are properly placed at the end of Spring and Autumn period.

I conclude, therefore, that the new scholars' opinion concerning the *Laozi* the book and Lao Zi the man, which is also popular in the West, is not as well founded as is the traditional one.

Keywords

Lao Zi, the *Laozi*, the author of the *Laozi*, the date of the *Laozi*, terminology, the contemporary reference, the present version.

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Paulos Zhanzhu Huang

NOTATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Pinyin 拼音

The transliteration of the Chinese characters follows *pinyin* 拼音, the system used in the People's Republic of China. This system has recently become almost universally accepted in English-language publications either as the sole standard of romanization or as an optional alternative to the previously common Wade-Giles system. For the sake of uniformity, the present work follows the trend, giving names and terms in *pinyin*. Exceptions, however, are made in the cases of Kong Zi 孔子, and Xianggang 香港 in favor of the conventional forms Confucius and Hong Kong. In quotations, the original form of Wade-Giles system are kept.

Bibliography

The bibliography includes the books cited directly in the work as well as references to other important studies on Lao Zi. Some indirect references appear in the footnotes which do not appear in the bibliography. In the bibliography and wherever a Chinese book's name appears in the romanization system, the author changes them freely into the *pinyin* system. This provides some uniformity in the dissertation and facilitates reading.

The bibliography is arranged alphabetically according to the first letter of each author's surname. Works which are edited by teams rather than persons, however, are arranged alphabetically according to the first letter of each community's name. A complete bibliography is given at the end of the dissertation in the following forms:

1) The names of authors are given in Roman type. As a rule the personal names follow the surnames. If a book or article has two authors, their names are joined by the word "and".

2) The date of publication is given in parentheses immediately after the author's name.

3) The titles of books and periodicals are given in italics, while the titles of articles in periodicals, proceedings, etc., are given in Roman type.

4) The place of the publication of a book is given in the form in which it appears on the title page. The number of a volume in a series is given in Roman numerals. If the numbering of the volumes of a periodical is independent of the issue date or if the pagination is not continuous throughout the volume, more detailed information is given.

References to the bibliography are given in parentheses in the body of the text and include the author's surname in Roman type, the year of publication followed by a colon, and the relevant page number(s).

PREFACE

The present study presents only the first part of a wider project, which is divided into two parts. The division into two parts is based on the sources with which I deal. The first part concerns the sources prior to the archaeological discovery in 1994 of No. 1 Chu State Tomb in Jingmen, Hubei province in the People's Republic of China. The second part will deal mainly with the *Laozi* written on bamboo slips that was discovered in Jingmen.

Studies of *Laozi* the book and of Lao Zi the man have been going on for many centuries. Like Biblical studies in the western world, however, many aspects of such inquiry either founder in the unknown or become lost in the mystical. Compared with the philosopher Confucius, Lao Zi seems more like a religious sage; and compared with the religious sage Gautama Buddha, Lao Zi seems more like a mystical philosopher. This unique integration of the philosopher and the sage makes Lao Zi supremely interesting to both Chinese intellectuals and the average person. The western world has understood Lao Zi as a deep philosopher and great religious sage, and those western scholars who have become disenchanted with the Christian religion have looked to the mystical aspects of "the Way" for guidance or for absolute truth from eastern religions and philosophies. From generation to generation many things have changed, but interest in Lao Zi the man and his book has never ceased.

In turning to this ancient topic again, however, I do not propose just to repeat the opinions of others. Instead, I have set out to accomplish two concrete ends. One is to discuss mainly the research sources available in the Chinese language, and the other is to discuss the newest archeological discovery, *i.e.*, the Jingmen Bamboo Slips *Laozi* found in 1994.

The principal task of the first part of this study is to analyse *Laozi* the book and Lao Zi the man according to what is available in the traditional materials. It focuses mainly on the Chinese linguistic research, which, having been done by Chinese scholars, has remained unknown to western scholars. Chinese sinological study has as its weak point, however, that the research is usually done only in Chinese, which prevents an exchange of ideas on the international level. But its strong point is that it is based on the correcter understanding of the classical Chinese language and possesses a good grasp of the Chinese historical tradition. In this study most attention has been given to those Chinese works and authors who have had something new to say and to those whose opinions have been ignored by western scholars.

There are some terms used throughout the book which require definition. First, reference to "the *Laozi*" always means the book called the *Laozi* and not to the man of

this name. The person is called Lao Zi, the second word of which is never in italics and is a separated word, the second part of which begins with a capital letter. The same system is used as well for other Chinese classics and their authors: for example, the *Mozi* and Mo Zi, the *Xunzi* and Xun Zi. Furthermore, when I refer to “the traditional version of the *Laozi*” I mean that version which has been collected with the notes by Yan Zun, Wang Bi and Heshang Gong. By “the ancient version” (Gu Ben or Ku Pen) I mean the versions of Fu Yi and Fan Yingyuan.

The present study, part one of a larger project, has its own sources and its own approach to the issues. Although it deals both with *Laozi* the book and Lao Zi the man on the basis of traditional materials, it can be read as an independent work. The second part as well can be read as an independent work.