

CHAPTER TWO

Lao Zi the Man

The items which will be dealt with in this section are: Lao Zi's names, birthplace, occupation, his meeting with Confucius, his book (this item will just be mentioned here since the previous chapter has dealt with it already), and, finally, his identifications with Lao Lai Zi, Lao Peng, and Taishi DAN (the Grand Historian DAN).

The standard for judging historical fact in this section will be the Chinese classics. Various hypotheses concerning these items will be analyzed in the light of these classics along with the accumulated analyses and commentaries which assist in supporting or rejecting the positions we will consider.

Concerning the subjects with which we will deal, the various hypotheses and their outstanding representatives are as follows:

A. Lao Zi 老子 is to be identified with Lao Dan 老聃 of the sixth century BC, whom Confucius visited.

1. He was author of the *Laozi* and was identical with Grand historian DAN 太史儋 (Bi Yuan 畢沅,⁴⁶⁷ and A.C. Graham⁴⁶⁸).

2. He was author of the *Laozi* and a senior *ju* (literati) of the type of which Confucius eventually became the leader (Hu Shi 胡適).⁴⁶⁹

3. He was author of the *Laozi* (Huang Fanggang 黃方剛).⁴⁷⁰

4. He was author of the *Laozi* but different from DAN 儋 (Ma Xulun 馬敘倫,⁴⁷¹ Chen Zhu 陳柱,⁴⁷² Gao Heng 高亨,⁴⁷³ Chen Guying 陳鼓應,⁴⁷⁴ Ren Jiyu 任繼愈,⁴⁷⁵ Zhang Dainian 張岱年.⁴⁷⁶)

5. His sayings were collected and published by later people (Guo Moruo 郭沫若).⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁶⁷ Bi Yuan: *Laozi daodejing kaoyi*: preface, 1a-b.

⁴⁶⁸ A. C. Graham 1986b: pp. 111-124.

⁴⁶⁹ Hu Shi 1919: pp. 47-49; Cf. 1935: pp. 69-73.

⁴⁷⁰ See Gu Jiegang IV 1933: pp. 362-363, 381.

⁴⁷¹ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 11-13, 18-19.

⁴⁷² Chen Zhu 1934: pp. 10-11.

⁴⁷³ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 186-187.

⁴⁷⁴ Chen Guying 1994: IV: pp. 411-418.

⁴⁷⁵ Ren Jiyu 1974: p. 124.

⁴⁷⁶ Zhang Dainian "Lun Lao Zi zai zhexueshi shang de diwei 論老子在哲學史上的地位" in Chen Guying (General ed.) 1992: I: pp. 74-78.

⁴⁷⁷ Guo Moruo 1982: pp. 245-246. Cf. p. 78 below.



老子畫像

吳興趙孟頫書并畫

Lao Zi portrayed by Zhao Mengfu.

B. Lao Zi lived in the Spring and Autumn Period but was not author of the *Laozi*.

1. He lived before Mo Zi 墨子 (5th-4th centuries BC), but never wrote a book. Confucius never visited him, but he may or may not have been an expert on ceremonies (Cui Shu 崔述).⁴⁷⁸

2. He saw Confucius in 501 BC, but the book was written toward the end of the Warring States Period (Liang Qichao⁴⁷⁹ and Xu Kangsheng 許抗生⁴⁸⁰).

3. He was identical with Lao Lai Zi 老萊子 (6th century BC), but the author of the *Laozi* was probably Chan Ho (350-270 BC) (Qian Mu 錢穆).⁴⁸¹

C. Lao Zi lived during the Warring States Period (480-222 BC).

1. He was identical with the Grand Historian DAN (Luo Genze 羅根澤,⁴⁸² Dubs⁴⁸³).

2. He was identical with DAN, the author of the *Laozi*, but different from Lao Dan, whom Confucius visited (Wang Zhong 汪中).⁴⁸⁴

3. He was identical with Li Er of the Warring States Period, but uncertain is whether any one named Lao Dan existed during the time of Confucius (Feng Youlan).⁴⁸⁵

4. He lived after the time of Yang Zhu 楊朱 (the 4th century BC) and was not the author of the *Laozi* (Gu Jiegang 顧頌剛).⁴⁸⁶

D. Lao Zi was not a real person but is a mere legend (Arthur Waley,⁴⁸⁷ Itō Rangu,⁴⁸⁸ Tsuda Sokichi (1872-1961),⁴⁸⁹ Hou Wailu 侯外廬).⁴⁹⁰

Above, then, are the major conflicting positions concerning Lao Zi. And thus far little new information concerning Lao Zi has been discovered beyond that possessed by Sima Qian. Scholars usually accept certain parts of the biography that seem to them most

⁴⁷⁸ Cui Shu 1924: 1:14a.

⁴⁷⁹ Liang Qichao's *Laozi zhexue* in 1923c: p. 1, and 1923b I: p. 18-21.

⁴⁸⁰ Xu Kangsheng 1985: pp. 144, 141-146.

⁴⁸¹ Qian Mu 1956: pp. 212-213, 224. Cf. p. 73 below

⁴⁸² Luo Genze 1958: p. 279.

⁴⁸³ *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXI (1941), 217-219. For further discussion, see the same journal, LXII (1942), 8-12, 300-4; LXIV (1944), 24-27.

⁴⁸⁴ Wang Chong s.a.: *Shuxue's* supplement, 28a+b.

⁴⁸⁵ Fung Yu-lan (tr. Bodde) 1983 I: p. 172.

⁴⁸⁶ Gu Jiegang IV 1933: 500-501.

⁴⁸⁷ Waley 1934: pp. 106-108.

⁴⁸⁸ See Takeuchi's *Rōshi no kenhyū*, I: pp. 150-151.

⁴⁸⁹ *Dōke no shisō to sono tenkai* (Taoist Thought and Its Development): p. 27. For a brief summary of Japanese scholars' theories on Lao Zi, the person, see Yamada Sumeru, *Rōshi* (Lao Zi): p. 38.

⁴⁹⁰ Hou Wailu 1950: pp. 9-11, 159. See also 1963: p. 59 and 1957: 257-263.

reasonable or most suitable for their own theories and then try to substantiate or justify them. And, no matter how much one might doubt the records of Sima Qian, one cannot yet assert that his records are incorrect. "Under such circumstances," Chan Wing-Tsit says in 1963, "scholars can accept the biography without question, on the assumption that Ssu-ma Ch'ien was in general a very reliable historian and was some two thousand years closer to the events, and that, essentially speaking, we have no more information than he had."⁴⁹¹ This is also the point of view of the present work. In the following we shall discuss it in detail.

2.1 The names of Lao Zi

The names of Lao Zi are surrounded with mystery. In both his biography of Lao Zi and in his autobiography,⁴⁹² Sima Qian refers to him as Li Er 李耳. The private name Er, meaning "ear", has been generally accepted.

2.1.1 Surname

The surname Li 李, ordinarily meaning "plum," has led to both amusement and puzzlement. It has given rise to stories that he was born under a plum tree and that he got the surname because he ate bitter plums when he was a refugee. These are amusing stories, but the humor is more than offset by the puzzlement. As Wing-Tsit Chan pointed out, no such surname was evident before the fourth century BC. Furthermore, during the Warring States Period (480—222 BC) no one referred to him as Li.⁴⁹³

To avoid difficulty on this point, Yao Nai 姚鼐 (1731 - 1815) has suggested that his original surname was actually Zi 子, but, because of its similarity in pronunciation to 'li' in ancient times, he was known as Li.⁴⁹⁴ Ma Xulun 馬紘倫 thinks Yao's analysis is close to the truth.⁴⁹⁵

But as Gao Heng 高亨 has pointed out, Yao presented no evidence for his theory.⁴⁹⁶ Gao himself believes Lao Zi's real surname was Lao, but because its pronunciation is similar to that of 'li', he came to be known as Li.⁴⁹⁷ Concerning Gao's opinion, Chan has pointed out that "It is interesting that Gao has argued along the same line as Yao Nai and has offered no more evidence than Yao did."⁴⁹⁸

As I studied Gao Heng's notes, however, concerning the biography of Lao Zi in

⁴⁹¹ Chan 1963: pp. 50-51.

⁴⁹² Sima Qian's *Shiji* 130: 93a.

⁴⁹³ Chan 1963: p. 38.

⁴⁹⁴ Yao Nai: *Laozi zhangyi*: preface, 1a.

⁴⁹⁵ Ma Xulun 1924: p. 21.

⁴⁹⁶ Gao Heng 1973: p. 157.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ Chan 1963: p. 40.

Shiji Laozi zhuan jianzheng 史記老子傳箋証,⁴⁹⁹ I was surprised to discover that, Chan's criticism notwithstanding, Gao does present strong evidence for his position. Thus, Gao's theory that Lao is the correct surname for this reason gains credibility. We will discuss this evidence in the section on "The reason for the name Lao Zi".

2.1.2 The private name

No one doubts that the name Dan 聃 itself is important in this question. And its meaning is clear (long ear). The question is whether Li Er and Lao Dan refer to the same person. The *Zhuangzi* refers to Lao Zi and Lao Dan many times.⁵⁰⁰ It relates in three places the story of Confucius visiting Lao Dan.⁵⁰¹ And it records in another place an additional conversation between Confucius and Lao Dan.⁵⁰² Four times it speaks of Lao Zi and Lao Dan as one person.⁵⁰³ It also quotes twice from the *Laozi* words attributed to Lao Dan.⁵⁰⁴ Likewise, the *Hanfeizi* quotes twice from the *Laozi* words attributed to Lao Dan.⁵⁰⁵ The *Huainanzi*, too, quotes two passages from the *Laozi* as words of Lao Dan,⁵⁰⁶ while other quotations from the *Laozi* are said to come from Lao Zi. Clearly Lao Zi and Lao Dan are treated as one man in these books. The *Lüshi chungiu* mentions Lao Dan in a number of places.⁵⁰⁷ In two of these, however, the Chinese character is not Dan 聃 but another one whose pronunciation is also *dan* 聃 and means the same thing.⁵⁰⁸ In fact, the name DAN 儋, the Great Historian in the third account of Sima Qian's record, was also pronounced the same and meant "long ear". This raises the question whether the Grand Historian DAN was not the same person as Lao Zi. This is a complicated problem with which we cannot be deal until we come to the third account.

Concerning the courtesy name Boyang 伯陽, Wang Niansun 王念孫 (1744-1832) has pointed out that the original edition of *Shiji* reads, "His private name was Erh, courtesy name Dan, and surname Li." Since Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (*fl.*727) explicitly says

⁴⁹⁹ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 156-159.

⁵⁰⁰ In the *Laozi*'s thirteen chapters, namely 3,5,7,11,12,13,14,21,22,23,25,27, and 33.

⁵⁰¹ Chapters 13,14, and 21, SPTK, 5:29b to 30b, 5:49b to 51a, 7:33a. See Giles (tr.), *Zhuangzi*: pp. 136, 147-149, and 202, respectively.

⁵⁰² Chapter 22, SPTK, 7:45a; Giles: p. 213.

⁵⁰³ Chapters 14 (twice), 23, and 27, SPTK, 5:43b, 5:49b, 8:1a to 6a, 9:17a. See Giles: pp. 147, 151, 221-224, and 269.

⁵⁰⁴ Chapter 27, SPTK, 9:17b (Giles: pp. 269, 270), quotes from *Laozi*, ch. 41. Ch.33, SPTK, 10:35b (Giles: p. 320), quoting from *Laozi*, ch.28.

⁵⁰⁵ Chs.31 and 46, SPTK 10:1a, 2b, 18:4a (Liao (tr.), *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu*, II, 1 to 6,246), quotes from *Laozi*, chs.36 and 44, respectively.

⁵⁰⁶ *Huainanzi*, 1:10b and 22:2b (Morgan (tr.), *Tao, The Great Luminant*: pp. 17 and 105), quotes from the *Laozi*, chs.43 and 14, respectively.

⁵⁰⁷ Ch.1, sec.4; ch.2, sec.4; ch.13, sec.3; ch.17, sec.7; and ch.18, sec.2; SPPY, 1:9a, 2:9b, 13:6b,17:15b, and 18:5a, respectively.

⁵⁰⁸ See Chs.17 and 18 of *Lushi Chunqiu And Laozi Daodejing kaoyi*: preface, 1a.

in his *Shiji suoyin* 史記索 that the words "courtesy name Boyang" were not correct, Wang has concluded that the name is a later addition.⁵⁰⁹ In point of fact, the name comes from the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, attributed to Ge Hong 葛洪 (253-333?).⁵¹⁰ It was added because a Boyang in the eighth century BC was reputed to have supernatural power and foreknowledge of the end of the Zhou Dynasty (1111-249 BC), and followers of the Daoist religion attempted to attribute this power and foreknowledge to Lao Zi by giving him the name of this prophet.⁵¹¹ The courtesy name Boyang 伯陽 is definitely a false name.

Concerning the statement that Lao Zi had a posthumous name, Wing-Tsit Chan states concerning Yao Nai's research: not only does no posthumous name appear in the original edition of the *Shiji*, but conferring a posthumous name on Lao Zi would have been considered improper, because he was a commoner and not eligible for one.⁵¹² Chan was certainly correct in this. Thus, the notion that Lao Zi had a posthumous name is also false.

2.1.3 The reason for the name Lao Zi

Why has he been called Lao Zi? Many attempts have been made to answer this question. The most common explanation is that of Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200), according to whom "Lao" means "old age".⁵¹³ Ge Xuan 葛玄 says that Lao Zi was so called because, when he was born, he was already old with white hair.⁵¹⁴ The later theory is too fantastic to be taken seriously, whereas the former has been generally accepted.

Some, however, take "Lao" to mean "to inquire". Thus, Lao Zi acquired his name, because he penetrated and understood the principles of things. Chan Wing-Tsit says about this notion that it is "a theory too speculative to be of any merit".⁵¹⁵

2.1.3.1 Lao 老

Modern scholars have not been satisfied with the interpretation of *Lao* as meaning "old age", for no reason according to this theory forbids all old people rather than just one man being called "Lao".

⁵⁰⁹ Wang Niansun: *Dushu zazhi* 读书杂志, BK II, sec. 4: p. 78. Cf. Wing-Tsit Chan 1963: pp. 39, 54 and 55.,29. *Shenxian zhuan*, ch. 1, Biography of Lao Zi.

⁵¹⁰ *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙传, ch.1, Biography of Lao Zi.

⁵¹¹ For the attribution of the earlier name of Boyang to Lao Zi, see Gao Heng, *Chongding Laozi jiaogu*, pp. 159-160. Cf. Ma Xulun, *Laozi jiaogu*: pp. 21-23, concerning this name.

⁵¹² Chan 1963: p. 39. Cf. Yao Nai, *Laozi zhangyi*: preface, 2b.

⁵¹³ In his summary on ch. 7 of *Liji* 礼记 (the Book of Rites).

⁵¹⁴ In his preface to the Heshang Gong 河上公 text of the *Laozi*.

⁵¹⁵ See Chan 1963: p. 40, which also reports this theory of one Zhang Zhunxiang, quoted in the biography of Lao Zi in Zhang Shoujie's 张守节 *Shiji zhengyi* 史记正义. Nothing is known concerning Zhang Zhunxiang.

Gao Heng thinks that "Lao" was a surname.⁵¹⁶ Concerning this opinion, Chan says, "The trouble with this theory is that it does not explain why the *Records of the Historian* says his surname was Li."⁵¹⁷

In trying to resolve the difficulty, Hu Shi suggests that Lao may have been the surname, and Li the clan name. He thinks that, although Lao Zi was not a noble and was therefore not entitled to a clan name, he may have had a courtesy name. For the usual practice during the Spring and Autumn Period was to put one's courtesy name before the honorific one.⁵¹⁸ Chen Zhu 陳柱 also believes that Lao was a surname but for a different reason. He is of the opinion that *li* and *lao* were interchangeable because of their similar pronunciation. And this interchangeability is the reason that he was called "Lao".⁵¹⁹

This study, however, agrees with Gao Heng that "Lao" was the surname of Lao Zi. The reason of he was called both Lao and Li is that the pronunciation of the two characters was the same. Below four items of evidence, which have been provided by Gao Heng, can support this theory.

A. The first proof

In classics such as *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Xunzi* 荀子, *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, *Lülan* 呂覽, *Liji* 禮記, *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, references to Kong Zi 孔子 (Confucius), Mo Zi 墨子, etc., all employed their surnames. Only in reference to Lao Zi was an exception made and the name Lao Dan 老聃 was employed. But this name was chosen rather than Li Dan 李聃, and Lao Zi 老子 was chosen rather than Li Zi 李子. These naming preferences are evidence that Lao is the original surname.⁵²⁰

B. The second proof

The surname Lao老 could be found in ancient times, but not Li 李 (*i.e.*, before the Qin Dynasty). Examples can be found, *e.g.*, in *Shiben Zhuanxu* 世本顯頊 "There was one called Lao Tong" 老童. *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 reads: "Lao Shi 老氏 is the descendant of Lao Tong 老童, who is the son of emperor Zhuan 顓." *Zuozhuan* 左傳 Duke Cheng 成 in the fifteenth year says that there was once a *sima* (a kind of official name rather than a surname like Sima Qian) named Lao Zuo 老佐. And in the same book Duke Zhao 昭 in the fourteenth year says that there was a Sima named Lao Qi 老祁 in the state of Lu 魯. Gao says: "Probably both Lao Zuo and Lao Qi had the surname 'Lao'. They were not necessarily descendants of Lao Tong, though this proves that there was a surname

⁵¹⁶ Yao Nai: *Laozi zhangyi*: preface, 2b. Cf. Chan 1963: p. 40.

⁵¹⁷ Chan 1963: p. 40.

⁵¹⁸ Hu Shi 1919: p. 49.

⁵¹⁹ Chen Zhu 陳柱1928a: p. 12. He has been followed by Gao Heng 1956 in his *Chongding Laozi zhenggu*: p. 157.

⁵²⁰ Gao Heng 1973: p. 157.

'Lao' ancient times."⁵²¹ Gao also doubted that the surnames of Lao Peng 老彭 from Shang 商 and Lao Lai 老萊 from Chu 楚 were perhaps 'Lao 老'.⁵²²

Concerning the surname Li 李, Gao says that no such surname was current during the 240 years of the Spring and Autumn Period except in one case in the *Zuoshizhuan* 左氏傳. Duke Min 閔 in the second year says that there was a Li Ke 里克 in Jin 晉. Here Li 里 is different from Li 李. In Gao You's 高誘 notes for *Lulan: Xianji* 呂覽先己, Li Ke 里克 had been quoted as Li Ke 李克. Gao says this former word was changed by later writers from 里 to 李. This was just because their pronunciations were same. According to Baxter, the two words' pronunciations were:

里 lǐ < liX < *C-rj? (978a)

李 lǐ < liX < *C-rj? (980a)

(Modern Chinese < Middle Chinese < Ancient Chinese)⁵²³

Their ancient pronunciations were "*C-rj?". In all other places, the surname Li 里 rather than Li 李 was employed. For example, Duke Zhao 昭 in the eighteenth year says there was a Li Xi 里析 in Zheng 鄭. And the *Luyu* 魯語 says that there was a Li Ge 里革 in Lu 魯. *Shiji: Xunlizhuan* 循吏傳 has the form Li Li 李離, but in the *Zuozhuan* this name was written as Shi Li 士離. According to Gao, *Zhanguo* 策 and *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 are the sources of the surname Li 李. The *Zhanguo* yields names such as Li Li 李悝, Li Tan 李談 and Li Mu 李牧, and the *Hanfeizi* offers Li Ke 李克 and Li Shi 李史. The surname Li 李 was not current, therefore, in the time of Lao Zi. And Gao affirms that Lao 老 is clearly the surname of Lao Zi.⁵²⁴

C. The third proof

The *benzi* 本字 (original characters) were not available for the surnames of ancient people, so *jiezi* 借字 (borrowed characters)⁵²⁵ were often employed. One surname in this way often became several surnames. According to the *Jinyu* 晉語, Huang Shi 黃氏, for example, has twelve surnames: Si 巳 was similar to Si 姒 and Yun 允; Ren 任 was similar to Nan 南 and others; Yi 依 was similar to Yan 偃 and Ying 嬴. Examples of this multiplication of surnames are unlimited.⁵²⁶ Xun Qing 荀卿 was similar, e.g., to Sun Qing 孫卿, Tian Zhong 田仲 to Chen Zhong 陳仲, Hui Zi 惠子 to Hui Zi 慧子, *et alia*.⁵²⁷ One can imagine, then, how the surname of Lao Zi changed from Lao to Li.

⁵²¹ Gao Heng 1973: p. 157.

⁵²² *Ibid.*

⁵²³ See Baxter 1992: p. 773.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*: p. 158.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

D. The fourth proof

The initials of both Lao 老 and Li 李 were 'L' (*Lainiu* 來紐). According to Baxter, the initials of both were "*C-", thus they were same:

老 lǎo < lawX < *C-ru? (1055a),⁵²⁸
里 lǐ < liX < *C-rj? (978a) and 李 lǐ < liX < *C-rj? (980a)
(Modern Chinese < Middle Chinese < Ancient Chinese)⁵²⁹

The final of 'Lao', *i.e.*, 'ru?', belongs to *you bu* 幽部 (the part of *you* 幽), and the final of Li, 'rj?', belongs to *zhi bu* 之部 (the part of *zhi* 之) in classic Chinese pronunciation. These two parts were so close to each other in ancient times that no real distinction obtains between them.⁵³⁰ According to Baxter, the two parts *you* 幽 and *zhi* 之 were different but similar in final,

之 zhī < tsyi < *tji (962a)⁵³¹
幽 yōu < ?juw < *(r)jiw(?) (1115c)⁵³²

The two finals "i" and "iw" were different but could be rhymed each other. This is to saay, *li* could be replaced by *lao*. Gao Heng has provided proof of this replacement in the rhymed passages of the text of the *Laozi*, where the pronunciations of *lao* and *li* are rhymed. Chapter two of the text reads, for example: (in order to see some traces of the ancient pronunciation, the pronunciation of the texts in modern Chinese will be also written out in *pinyin*.)

Shengren chu wuwei zhi shi,
xing buyan zhi jiao,
wanwu zuo yan er bu ci,
sheng er bu you,
wei er bu shi.

圣人处无为之事，
行不言之教，
万物作焉而不辞，
生而不有，
为而不恃。

(Therefore) the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action
and practises the teaching that uses no words.
The myriad creatures rise yet it claims no authority;
It gives them life yet claims no possession;
It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;
It accomplishes its task yet lays claim to no merit. (Chapter 2)

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*: p. 772.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*: p. 773.

⁵³⁰ Gao Heng 1973: p. 157.

⁵³¹ Baxter 1992: p. 804.

⁵³² *Ibid.*: p. 809.

In the classic Chinese of the period of Spring and Autumn, *jiao* 教 belongs to the part of *you* 幽; *shi* 事, *ci* 辭, *you* 有 and *shi* 侍 belong to the part of *zhi* 之. (In fact, *jiao* 教 belonged first to the part of *xiao* 宵 and then to the part of *hou* 候; but Gao puts it also with the part of *you* 幽, because at that time the parts of *you* 幽, *xiao* 宵 and *hou* 候 were close.)⁵³³ These two parts can be rhymed.

Another example is from chapter nine, which reads:

Chi er ying zhi,
 bu ru qi yi.
 Chuai er rui zhi,
 bu ke chang bao.
 Jinyu man tang,
 mo zhi neng shou.
 Fugui er jiao,
 zi yi qi jiu.
 Gong sui shen tui tian zhi dao.

持而盈之，
 不如其已。
 揣而锐之，
 不可常保。
 金玉满堂，
 莫之能守。
 富贵而骄，
 自遗其咎。
 功遂身退天之道。

Rather than fill it to the brim by keeping it upright
 Better to have stopped in time;
 Hammer it to a point
 And the sharpness cannot be preserved for ever;
 There may be gold and jade to fill a hall
 But there is none who can keep them.
 To be overbearing when one has wealth and position
 Is to bring calamity upon oneself.
 To retire when the task is accomplished
 Is the way of heaven. (Chapter 9)

Bao 保, *shou* 守, *jiu* 咎 and *dao* 道 belong to the part of *you* 幽; *y i* 已 belongs to the part of *zhi* 之. These examples show as well that the two parts *you* and *zhi* can be rhymed.

The third example is from chapter 14, which reads:

Ying zhi bu jian qi shou;
 Shui zhi bu jian qi hou.
 Zhi gu zhi dao,
 yi yu jin zhi you.
 Neng zhi gu shi,
 shi wei dao ji.

⁵³³ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 158-159.

迎之不见其首，
随之不见其后。
执古之道，
以御今之有，
能知古始，
是谓道纪。

Hold fast to the way of antiquity
In order to keep in control the realm of today.
The ability to know the beginning of antiquity
Is called the thread running through the way. (Chapter 14)

Shou 首, *hou* 后 and *dao* 道 belong to the part of *you* 幽; *you* 有, *shi* 始 and *ji* 繼 belong to the part of *zhi* 之. These are a third set of examples which prove that the two parts of *you* and *zhi* can be rhymed.

The fourth example is from chapter 33, which reads:

Zhizu zhe fu;
Qiang xiang zhe you zhi;
Bu shi qi suo zhe jiu;
Si er bu wang zhe shou.

知足者富;
强行者有志;
不失其所者久;
死而不亡者寿。

He who knows contentment is rich;
He who preserves is a man of purpose;
He who does not lose his station will endure,
He who lives out his days has had a long life. (Chapter 33)

Shou 首 belongs to the part of *you* 幽; *fu* 富, *zhi* 志 and *jiu* 久 belong to the part of *zhi* 之. These are a fourth set of examples which prove that the two parts can be rhymed. The parts of *you* and *zhi* are very often rhymed in the *Laozi*. Gao suggests that one can even suppose that they belonged to one and the same part at that time.⁵³⁴

The above analysis demonstrates that the initials of *li* 李 and *lao* 老 were the same, and their finals were different but could be rhymed; therefore, the pronunciations of *li* and *lao* were quite close to each other.⁵³⁵ Gao Heng thus gives a fourth item of evidence to prove that Lao was the surname of Lao Zi. Gao also says that in the classics prior to the Qin Dynasty only the names Lao Dan and Lao Zi were used. The surname Li was not used. Thus, Gao thinks that as a name "Lao" was changed to "Li" in the Han Dynasty.⁵³⁶ He also says: "According to the ancient classics of Zhou and Qin, all called the man Lao Dan 老聃 (note by Paulos Huang: 聃 was taken to be the same as 聃. Cf.

⁵³⁴ Gao Heng 1973: p. 158.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*: p. 158.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*: p. 159.

above.) or Lao Zi 老子 without use of Li 李."⁵³⁷

Based on these four strong items of evidence, then, this study agrees with Gao Heng taking "Lao" as the surname of Lao Zi.

2.1.3.2 Zi 子

Concerning the word *zi*, Homer H.Dubs offers the novel interpretation that it may have the ordinary meaning of a viscount.⁵³⁸ Concerning this theory, Chan says: "Evidently he was influenced by his belief that Lao Tzu's son was a general in the fourth century BC. With these rare exceptions, scholars, both past and present, and both Asian and Western, are content with its being an honorific, meaning a gentleman, scholar, or master, as in the case of Chuang Tzu (Zhuang Zi), Hsun Tzu (Xun Zi) (*fl.* 298-238), and the rest."⁵³⁹

Chan, however, correctly criticizes Dubs, when he points out that it was not Lao Zi's son but the Grand Historian DAN's son who was a general in the fourth century BC.⁵⁴⁰ The word 'Zi' should be understood as a term of honor meaning a gentleman, a scholar, or a master.

2.1.3.3 When did Lao Dan 老聃 begin to be called 'Lao Zi 老子'?

We cannot say for certain when Lao Dan began to be called Lao Zi. Some scholars even doubt that the names Lao Dan and Lao Zi refer to the same person. This study accepts the theory that they are the same person, and that person was the author of the book called the *Laozi*. Concerning this issue one can see the section on "Lao Dan and Lao Zi" below.

• Summary: Lao Zi's surname was Lao 老, but this name was probably changed to be Li 李 in the time of the Han Dynasty. His private names were Er 耳 and Dan 聃. Boyang 伯陽 was not his true private name. He was called Lao Zi as an honorary name, meaning a gentleman, a scholar, or a master, as in the cases of Kong Zi, Zhuang Zi, Xun Zi, Hanfei Zi, etc.

2.2 Lao Zi's birthplace

We can claim some certainty about Lao Zi's native district. He was a native of Quren 曲仁 in Li 里 county, which was in the state of Chen 陳 until it was captured by Chu 楚 in 535 BC. It was general practice for Han Dynasty writers to refer to places by their current rather than by their ancient names; so Sima Qian said that Lao Zi was a native of

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ "The Date and Circumstances of the Philosopher Lao-zi," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXI (1941), 221.

⁵³⁹ Chan 1963: pp. 40-41.

⁵⁴⁰ See the section, "The Son of Lao Zi" in the same chapter of this study.

Chu.⁵⁴¹ Zhang Chengqiu 張成秋 has the opinion but for a different reason. He says Confucius died in 479 BC, and the next year, *i.e.*, 480 BC, is the beginning of the period of Warring States. If Lao Zi died after 535 BC, when Chen was captured by Chu, Lao Zi was an official native of Chu. And if Lao Zi died after Confucius, living at least ninety years, he lived until the period of Warring States.⁵⁴² We do not have to suppose that Lao Zi managed to get to the age of 160 or 200 years, then, in order to place him within the Warring States Period.

2.3 Lao Zi's occupation

With reference to Lao Zi's occupation, Sima Qian says that he was a curator of archives (Shoucang shi zhi shi 守藏室之史) in the Zhou capital (present Luoyang 洛陽). The term the historian uses in his description merely means a collector and curator.⁵⁴³ Apart from this tradition opinion, however, several different hypotheses have been proposed.

2.3.1 The hypothesis of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子

According to the *Zhuangzi*, which reports that Confucius wanted to deposit his writings in the capital through the good office of Lao Zi, the latter's occupation was "Zhengcang shi 徵藏史" (a curator of books).⁵⁴⁴ Sima Zhen in his *Shiji suoyin* says that, according to the *Zhangcang zhuan* 張倉傳, Lao Zi was Zhuxia shi 柱下史 (a curator by the column)⁵⁴⁵ but Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648), quoting the *Shiji*, says that Lao Zi was a "curator of books or a curator by the column."⁵⁴⁶

2.3.2 The hypothesis of Zheng Xuan 鄭玄

Zheng Xuan says: "Lao Dan was the Taishi 太史 (historian) of Zhou."⁵⁴⁷ As Kong Yinda has pointed out concerning this theory, we lack information concerning the basis for his assertion.⁵⁴⁸ But Gao Heng agrees with Kong.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴¹ Chan 1963: pp. 37-38.

⁵⁴² Zhang Chengqiu 1977: p. 99.

⁵⁴³ Sima Qian's *Shiji: Laozi Hanfei liezhuan*.

⁵⁴⁴ *Zhuangzi: tiandao*.

⁵⁴⁵ Gao Heng says that this is based on the theory of Qian Daxin 錢大昕, and this quotation from the *Zhangcang zhuan* does not appear in the present *Shiji* but should have appeared in the original edition. On this point see Gao Heng 1973: p. 160.

⁵⁴⁶ In his *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, 18:11b. The quotation does not appear in the present *Shiji* but may have been in the original edition, as Chan says. See Chan 1963: p. 55 note 40.

⁵⁴⁷ In *Zengzi wen shu* 曾子問疏, Zheng's saying was quoted. Cf. Gao Heng 1973: p. 161.

⁵⁴⁸ Zheng Xuan's commentary on the Analects, quoted by Kong Yingda. Cf. Chan 1963: p. 55 note 42.

⁵⁴⁹ Gao Heng 1973: p. 161.

2.3.3 The hypothesis of the *Liexianzhuan* 列仙传

The *Liexianzhuan* 列仙傳 (Biographies of Many Immortals) says: "Lao Zi was the Zhuxia shi 柱下史 (curator by column) of Zhou, which was changed to Shoucang shi 守藏史 (curator of books)."⁵⁵⁰ Agreeing with this theory, Lu Deming 路德明 also says: "All say that (he) was first Zhuxia shi and then was changed to be Shoucang shi."⁵⁵¹

• Summary: Putting all these various hypotheses together, the present author does not think any irreconcilable conflict emerges between the two titles, "Shoucang shi" (curator of archives or books) and "Zhuxia shi" (curator by the column). The two offices were probably identical, since the phrase "by the column" may mean being near the columns of the palace, that is, having an important office near the ruler. Alternatively, it may literally mean that the collection was placed at the foot of the columns. The change of title, then, did not necessarily imply a change of office, and we can consider the titles as identical. This identification has been proved by Gao Heng. For further information concerning this subject, one can refer to Gao Heng's *Shiji Laozi zhuan jianzheng*.⁵⁵² Thus, this work accepts the opinion that Lao Zi was a curator of books, regardless of whether he was in an office by the columns.

2.4 The meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius

2.4.1 The records concerning the meeting

The meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius has been recorded in many classics, and this point should be adequate evidence that the meeting really happened.

That Confucius learned from Lao Zi is recorded many times in the *Zhuangzi*,⁵⁵³ once in the *Lüshi chungiu*,⁵⁵⁴ and four times in the *Book of Rites*.⁵⁵⁵ That the two met is recorded three times in the *Zhuangzi*,⁵⁵⁶ and once in the *Book of Rites*.⁵⁵⁷

The records of the *Zhuangzi* report many times that this meeting took place. This issue concerning the reliability of the book of *Zhuangzi* will be discussed below.

Apart from the allusion in the *Inner chapters*, accepted as written by Zhuang Zi

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Gao Heng 1973: p. 161.

⁵⁵¹ Lu Deming: *Jingdian shiwen* 经典释文: preface.

⁵⁵² See Gao Heng 1973: pp. 161-162.

⁵⁵³ Chs. 12, 13, 14, 21, and 22, SPTK, 5:9b, 29b, 43b, 7:33a, 46a. Giles pp. 123, 136-137, 147, 202, and 213.

⁵⁵⁴ Ch.2, sec.4, SPTK, 2:9b.

⁵⁵⁵ "Questions of Tseng Tzu," secs.16, 32, 34, and 36. See Legge (tr.), *The Li Ki*, "Sacred Books of the East," XXVII, 325, 338-39, 340-42, respectively.

⁵⁵⁶ Chapters 13, 14, and 21, SPTK, 7:33a; Giles p. 202.

⁵⁵⁷ "Questions of Tseng Tzu," sec. 32. See Legge (tr.), *The Li Ki*, "Sacred Books of the East," XXVII pp. 338-339.

himself in the late 4th century BC, the earliest firmly datable references to the meeting is the *Dangran* 當染 section of the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (c. 240 BC), which says: "Confucius learned from Lao Dan, Meng Su, and Kui Jingshu" (孔子學於老聃，孟蘇，夔靖叔).⁵⁵⁹ In *Guigong pian* 貴公篇, Lao Dan and Confucius were also mentioned together when they commented on something differently.⁵⁶⁰

In the *Book of Rites* four different passages quote Lao Dan's words on funerals and mourning rites, in which he is serious as well as meticulous. The second passage relates that when Confucius and Lao Dan were assisting at a funeral, an eclipse occurred, and Lao Dan told Confucius to have the bier stopped on the left side of the road. For, according to the rules of propriety, Lao Dan said, a superior man would not expose his relatives to darkness, which is evil. (孔子曰：昔者吾從老聃助葬于巷黨日有食之。老聃曰：丘！止柩右，止哭以聽變).⁵⁶¹ The *Liji* has recorded this meeting several times.⁵⁶¹

These passages are sure indications of a widespread story about Lao Zi from which Sima Qian obtained the information that this tradition has been perpetuated by the Confucian school itself. Chan says: "Therefore, we cannot dismiss it as a Taoist fabrication to glorify Lao Tzu as Confucius' teacher."⁵⁶³

2.4.2 The hypothesis that the meeting never occurred

Concerning the meeting, scholars such as Liang Qichao and his followers deny that it ever took place, arguing mainly from two points: one is the inconsistency among the speeches of Lao Zi in different records; the other concerns the reliability of the source supposedly recording the meeting. This study will analyze both of these points.

Other scholars as well reject the veracity of the story concerning the meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius. D. C. Lau, for example, thinks that the story of the encounter between Confucius and Lao Zi became widely known and accepted only during the forty years or so between 282 BC and 240 BC.⁵⁶⁴

The record of the meeting in many classics, however, is clear. Those who have rejected the story of the meeting, therefore, have done so not so much on the basis of such details as the date and conversation but on the basis of the source of the story itself. Another reason for this rejection is that the words of Lao Zi in these records are

⁵⁵⁹ Lü Buwei: *Lüshi chunqiu*, ch. 2/4.

⁵⁶⁰ *Lüshi chunqiu: Guigong pian* reads: "荆人有鬻弓者，而不肯索，曰：荆人遺之，荆人得之，又何索焉？孔子聞之曰：去其荆而可矣。老聃聞之曰：去其人而可矣。故老聃至公矣。"

⁵⁶¹ "Questions of Tseng Tzu," secs.16, 32, 34, and 36. See Legge (tr.), *The Li Ki*, "Sacred Books of the East," XXVII, 325, 338-39, 340-42, respectively.

⁵⁶² In the other three places, the *Liji* records: One is "吾聞諸老聃云。" Another is "孔子曰：吾聞諸老聃曰：昔者史佚有子而死，下殤也，..." The third is "子夏曰：金革之事無辟也者，非與孔子曰：吾聞諸老聃曰：昔者魯公伯禽有為之也。"

⁵⁶³ Chan 1963: p. 46.

⁵⁶⁴ D. C. Lau 1963 and 1982: p. 129.

different from those in the *Laozi*, allowing scholars to argue that these two different statements cannot be given by one and the same person, Lao Zi.

Liang Qichao led many writers in this direction. Liang presented six arguments against the entire biography of Lao Zi. His third and fourth arguments directly deny the veracity of any report of the meeting.⁵⁶⁵

This work will argue below after a keen analysis of the position of Liang and his followers that the traditional records concerning the meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius cannot be rejected.

2.4.2.1 The inconsistency among the speeches of Lao Zi in different records

One argument for rejecting the meeting is that Lao Zi's words as recorded in the *Book of Rites* and *Shiji* are inconsistent with those in the *Laozi*.

A. The argument of Liang and his followers

Liang's third argument was, in fact, a repetition of one offered by Wang Zhong 汪中 (1744-94) and Cui Shu 崔述 (1740-1816). Liang asserts that Lao Zi's words as recorded in Sima Qian's *Biography of Lao Zi* are inconsistent with those recorded in his *Biography of Confucius*.

Sima Qian says concerning the meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius in his *Biography of Lao zi*, (translation by the present work's author)

孔子适周，将问礼於老子，老子曰：“子所言者，其人与骨皆已朽矣，独其言在耳。且君子得其时则驾，不得其时，则篷累而行。吾闻之，良贾深藏若虚。君子盛德，容貌若愚。去子之骄气与多欲，态色与淫志，是皆无益於子之身，吾所以告子，若是而已。”孔子去，谓弟子曰：“鸟吾知其能飞。鱼吾知其能游。兽吾知其能走。走者可以为网。游者可以为纶。飞者可以为矰。至于龙，吾不能知其乘风云而上天，吾今日见老子，其犹龙邪。”

老子修道德，其学以自隐无名为务，居周之久，见周之衰，迺遂去。至关，关令尹喜曰：“子将隐矣，强为我著书。”於是老子迺著书上下篇，言道德之意，五千余言，而去，莫知其所终。⁵⁶⁶

Confucius went to Zhou to consult Lao Zi about rules of propriety. Lao Zi said, "Those whom you talk about are dead and their bones have decayed. Only their words have remained. When the time is proper, the superior man rides in a carriage, but when it is not, he covers himself up and staggers away.

I have heard that a good merchant stores away his treasures as if his store were empty and that a superior man with eminent virtue appears as if he were stupid. Get rid of your air of pride and many desires, your insinuating manners and lustful wishes. None of these is good for you. That is all I have to tell you."

Confucius left and told his pupils, "I know birds can fly, fish can swim, and animals can run. That which runs can be trapped, that which swims can be netted, and that which flies can be shot. As to the dragon, I don't know how it rides on the winds and clouds and ascends to heaven. Lao Zi, whom I saw today, is indeed like a dragon!"

⁵⁶⁵ See Chan 1963: p. 45, and Zhang Chengqiu 1977: pp. 80-81.

⁵⁶⁶ Guang Ling 關令 is the name of the office, Yin Xi 尹喜 was the name of person. See Gao Heng, 1973: pp. 165-167.

The meeting is related again in another place of the *Shiji: The Biography of Confucius*, but Lao Zi's discourse is different. The following is the translation of the records from the *Biography of Confucius* :

辭去，而老子送之曰：“吾聞富貴者送人以財，仁人者送人以言。吾不能富貴竊仁人之號，送子以言曰：聰明深察而近于死者，好議人者也。博辯而危其身者，發人之惡者也。為人子者，毋以有己。為人臣者，毋以有己。”

When he took his leave, Lao Tzu saw him off, saying, "I've heard it is said that the man of wealth and power makes parting gifts of money, and that the good man makes parting gifts of words. I could never be a man of wealth and power; but I sometimes dare to think myself a good man. So I will show you out with a few words, which are as follows: The man who is intelligent and clear-sighted will soon die, for his criticisms of others are just; the man who is learned and discerning risks his life, for he exposes others' faults. The man who is a son no longer belongs to himself; the man who is subject no longer belongs to himself."⁵⁶⁷

Wang Zhong has noted⁵⁶⁷ that Lao Zi's serious regard for rules of propriety is entirely out of tune with his attack on them in chapter 38 of the *Laozi*. Furthermore, Wang says,⁵⁶⁹ in the third passage Lao Zi eulogizes the Duke of Zhou (d. 1094 BC) and other wise men of the past, but in his writing he declares, "Unless sages are dead, great robbers will not stop."⁵⁷⁰

To Wang's argument Cui Shu has added several more. He argues that Lao Zi's lecture to Confucius during the visit is characterized by the literary style of the Warring States Period rather than that of the Spring and Autumn Period. He asks if Confucius was in fact a man of pride and many desires. And he wonders why the *Analects*⁵⁷¹ makes no mention of Lao Zi if Confucius had really praised him as dragon.⁵⁷¹

Liang Qichao here simply repeats the arguments of Wang and Cui. This same argument has been accepted by many Western scholars. Edward Chavannes, the translator of *Shiji*, points out, for example that this speech is a condemnation of the intelligence, filial piety, and royalism that are the essential principles of Confucius' teaching.⁵⁷³ And Kaltenmark says: "We continually come across accounts of (the lecture) in both Taoist

⁵⁶⁷ Translation by Edward Chavannes, quoted from Kaltenmark 1969: p. 8.

⁵⁶⁸ *Shu-xue*: Supplement, 27a.

⁵⁶⁹ Chan 1963: p. 42.

⁵⁷⁰ This is from the *Zhuangzi*, ch.10, SPTK, 4:20a. Cf. Giles (tr.), *Zhuangzi* p. 102. For a similar but less emphatic saying, see the *Laozi*, chapter 19.

⁵⁷¹ Some scholars argue that the *Analects* did mention some things which can be related to Lao Zi. For example, Zhang Dainian 張岱年 thinks that the *Analects* mentioned "responding to complaint with virtue" (報怨以德) and "governing with non-action" (無為而治) are evidences of commentary on Lao Zi; thus, Lao Zi and Confucius were contemporaries. Concerning this point, Cf. *Daojia wenhua yanjiu: Diyiji* 1992: p. 75. Cf. Zhang Chenqiu 1977: p. 85. Hu Shi says in this work: "Responding to complaint with virtue" was a criticism of Confucius, and "governing with non-action" was influenced by Lao Zi.

⁵⁷² *Zhuzi kaoxin lu*, 1:12b-13a.

⁵⁷³ Kaltenmark 1969: p. 9.

and Confucianist writings; unfortunately, the accounts give differing versions of the place, the date, the number of meetings that occurred, and what Lao Tzu said or did not say, with the result that it is hard to believe that the two great philosophers ever met at all."⁵⁷⁴

B. Response to Liang and his followers

The response to Liang Qichao and his followers has continued over the years.

Not long after Liang proffered his argument concerning the inconsistency between the records of Lao Zi in the *Shiji* and the *Liji: Zeng Zi wen*, Tang Lan 唐蘭 wrote an article "Lao Dan de xingming he shidai kao 老聃的姓名和時代考" answered him and his followers. Tang thinks that it was because of the different contexts of speech that Lao Zi's speech was different from the words of Lao Dan in *Liji: Zeng Zi wen*; Lao Zi changed his mind when he became old, thus, he attacked the propriety."⁵⁷⁵

Hu Shi wrote an article during the same period disagreeing with Feng Youlan: "To say the spirit of *Zeng Zi wen* is contrary to that of the *Laozi*, is not having understood the *Laozi*. It has proved that Lao Zi was a serious man when he valued no-competition and yielding way."⁵⁷⁶

Zhang Chengqiu, after an analysis of the issues of the debate that occurred during the *Gushi bian* (Discussion on the Ancient History) from the 1920s to the 1940s, said in 1977 that he found no inconsistencies between the speeches of Lao Zi as recorded in the *Shiji* and those recorded in *Liji: Zeng Zi Wen*. Lao Zi was an historian in Zhou for a long time, so he should have known the rites well; and Confucius could, therefore, reasonably consult him concerning the rites. The rites created by Zhou Gong 周公, had already been in use for several hundred years, and much of their original form had been lost. Clearly, therefore, if Lao Zi attacked the rites, he did so after he had retired from his position. Zhang also found no conflicts between the speech of Lao Zi in the *Shiji* and his words in the book of *Daodejing*. This speech, for example, is recorded in the *Shiji*:

子所言者，其人與骨，皆已朽斃，獨其言在耳。

Those whom you talk about are dead and their bones have decayed.

得時則駕，
不得時則蓬行

When the time is proper, the superior man rides in a carriage,
but when it is not, he covers himself up and staggers away.

盛德若愚

eminent virtue appears as if he were stupid.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ Zhang Chengqiu 1977: p. 83.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: p. 85.

去驕氣。

Get rid of your air of pride and many desires.

For these records, one can see also §2.4.2.1A in the present work. These records fit the spirit of Daoism, as is clearly seen through a comparison between them and chapters 10, 20, 24, 30 and 12 of the *Laozi*. The event of the meeting, therefore, cannot be denied by means this argument which attempts to find inconsistencies between the speeches of Lao Zi in different times and places; and certainly the argument itself cannot be taken as evidence for rejecting the notion of such a meeting.⁵⁷⁷

Zhang Dainian 張岱年,⁵⁷⁷ a contemporary Chinese philosopher, argues even today that no inconsistency emerges between the *Laozi* and the records in *Liji: Zengziwen*. His argument is aimed mainly at the opinions concerning whether Lao Zi knew the rites and at the same time chose to attack them. Some scholars, such as Liang Qichao, have raised the question concerning how the Daoist founder, who viciously attacks the rites and the official concept of righteousness, can be said to understand the rites so well as to be the teacher of Confucius? Zhang Dainian argues that, according to the *Liji*, Confucius consulted with Lao Dan concerning the rites; and the author of the *Laozi* (Lao Dan) knew the rites quite well. Zhang refers to chapter 31 of the *Laozi* to show that no contradiction exists between them. This chapter says:

夫(佳)(唯)兵者不祥之器，物或惡之，故有道者不處。君子居則貴左，用兵貴右。兵者不祥之器，非君子之器。不得已而用之，恬淡為上。勝而不美之者，是樂殺人。夫樂殺人者，則不可以得志於天下矣。吉事尚左；凶尚右。偏將軍居左；上將軍居右。言以喪禮處之。殺人眾，以哀悲泣之勝，以喪禮處之。

(a) It is because arms are instruments of ill omen and there are Things that detest them that one who has the way does not abide by their use. (b) The gentleman gives precedence to the left when at home, but to the right when he goes to war. Arms are instruments of ill omen, not the instruments of a gentleman. When one is compelled to use them, it is best to do so without relish. There is no glory in victory; and to glorify it despite this is to exult in the killing of men. One who exults in the killing of men will never have his way in the empire. (c) On occasions of rejoicing precedences is given to the left; on occasions of mourning precedence is given to the right. A lieutenant's place is on the left; the general's place is on the right. This means that it is mourning rites that are observed. When great numbers of people are killed, one should weep over them with sorrow. When victorious in war, one should observe the rites of mourning. (Chap. 31)⁵⁷⁹

This quotation of the text shows clearly that Lao Zi was quite familiar with the rites. This fact should be beyond question. Any argument which claims otherwise, then, should be rejected.

Some, however, view the attacks on the rites found in chapter 38 of the *Laozi* as

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: p. 97.

⁵⁷⁸ See Zhang Dainian "Lun Lao Zi zai zhexueshi shang de diwei 論老子在哲學史上的地位" in *Daojia wenhua yanjiu*. Diyiji 1992: p. 75.

⁵⁷⁹ Quoted from D. C. Lau 1963 and 1982: pp. 46-49.

evidence of inconsistency⁵⁸⁰ between the records in the *Liji* and that of the *Laozi*. This chapter reads:

夫禮者，忠信之薄而亂之首；前識者，道之華而愚之始。
是以大丈夫處其厚不居其薄，處其實不居其華。
故去彼取此。

The rites are the wearing thin of loyalty and good faith
And the beginning of disorder;
Foreknowledge is the flowery embellishment of the way
And the beginning of folly.
Hence the man of large mind abides in the thick not in the thin,
in the fruit not in the flower.
Therefore he discards the one and takes the other. (Chap. 38)

This passage, however, does not provide a strong proof of inconsistency either, because Lao Zi, who was once an archivist of Zhou and as such was very familiar with the rites, may well have attacked the rites at a later time. Sima Qian clearly established this point over two thousand years ago. He says:

居周之久，見周之衰，迺遂去。至關，關令尹喜曰：“予將隱矣，強為我著書。”於是老子迺著書上下篇，言道德之意，五千余言，而去，莫知其所終。⁵⁸¹

Having lived in Zhou for a long time, he realized that it was in decline and left. As he reached the pass, the pass-keeper, Yin Xi, said, "You are about to retire. Please try your best to write a book for me." Thereupon Lao Zi wrote a book in two parts, expounding the ideas of Way and its virtue in over five thousand words and then departed. None knew how he ended.⁵⁸²

Lao Zi had lived in Zhou for a long time as an archivist, an officer charged with taking care of important books and various rites. A reasonable assumption, then, is that he was quite familiar with the rites.⁵⁸³ But precisely because he knew these rites for a long time, he also can be understood to have grown old enough to have seen the decline of Zhou. And that is why he left his position. Thus, having left his position with an attitude of disenchantment concerning the rites, we can easily see why he attacks them after his retirement.

No inconsistency obtains, then, between Lao Zi's knowledge of the rites and his willingness to attack them. Liang's argument, then, does not succeed in supplying the evidence by which we can reject the notion a meeting took place between Lao Zi and Confucius. This study, then, maintains the traditional opinion that the meeting took place essentially as reported.

⁵⁸⁰ See Liang Qichao's words "老子是一位拘謹守禮的人，和五千言精神相反", quoted in Zhang Cheng-qiu 1977: p. 81.

⁵⁸¹ *The Shiji: Laozi Hanfei liezhuan*.

⁵⁸² Chan 1963: p. 36.

⁵⁸³ Chapter 31 of the *Laozi* and the records of Confucius concerning his consultation with Lao Zi about the rites are the proofs.

2.4.2.2 The reliability of the sources concerning the meeting

Another argument for rejecting that the meeting ever took place is that the majority of the material in the biography comes from the *Zhuangzi*, which is an unreliable source. This argument has been employed by Liang (his fourth) and many others. Most scholars who deny that the meeting took place or who reject the notion that Lao Zi was even a real historical figure rely on this argument.⁵⁸⁴

A. The problem of the *Zhuangzi's Wai pian* 外篇 (Outer chapters) and *Za pian* 雜篇 (Complex chapters)

The *Zhuangzi* is held to be unreliable mainly because its *Wai pian* (Out chapters) and *Za pian* (Complex chapters) are accepted generally as later works. The *Zhuangzi* speaks, for example, of Confucius going west to deposit books in the imperial library,⁵⁸⁴ a story which suggests, as Yao Nai has said, a Han Dynasty fabrication attempting to attribute to Confucius the foreknowledge of the Burning of Books in 213 BC.⁵⁸⁵ Furthermore, it mentions the "twelve classics" at a time when no book was known as a classic, much less a set of twelve.

As Gao Heng and Chan Wing-Tsit have pointed out, however, Sima Qian did not refer at all to this material from the *Zhuangzi*.⁵⁸⁶

Chan Wing-Tsit also says: "The material about Lao Zi's age and descendants did not come from the *Chuang Tzu*. One wonders if Ssu-ma Ch'ien did not purposely avoid the *Chuang Tzu* as the source. It is more probable that he derived his material from a long and general tradition about Lao Tzu and Confucius' visit to him."⁵⁸⁷ The *Zhuangzi*, for instance, says that at fifty-one years of age Confucius went to Pei 沛 (in present Gansu 甘肅) to see Lao Zi in order to learn the Way.⁵⁸⁸ But Sima Qian says he went before the age of thirty to Zhou in order to ask Lao Zi about the rules of propriety.⁵⁸⁹ Sima Qian ignored two other records in the *Zhuangzi* as well: One was in the *Zhuangzi Tianyun*, and the other was in the *Zhuangzi: Waiwu*.⁵⁹⁰

Gao Heng has a similar opinion. After he compares the records concerning the meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius in the biography of Lao Zi and that of Confucius in the *Shiji* and the chapter called *Tianyun* 天運 in the *Zhuangzi*, Gao says: "When the

⁵⁸⁴ Ch. 13, SPTK, 5:29b. Giles: pp. 136-137.

⁵⁸⁵ *Laozi zhangyi*: preface, 2b. Cf. Wang Xianqian (1842-1917), *Zhuangzi jijie*: p. 77.

⁵⁸⁶ Gao Heng 1973: pp 162-161. Chan 1963: pp. 45-46.

⁵⁸⁷ Chan 1963: p. 46.

⁵⁸⁸ Ch.14, SPTK, 5:43b. Giles p. 147.

⁵⁸⁹ *Shiji: Kong Zi shijia*.

⁵⁹⁰ The *Zhuangzi: Waiwu* says: "孔子見老聃歸，三日不談，弟子問曰：「夫子見老聃，亦將何規哉？」孔子曰：「吾乃今於是乎見籠。籠合而成體，散而臣章，乘云氣而養乎陰陽。予口張而不能嚼。予又何規老聃哉！」"

The *Zhuangzi: Waiwu* (外物) also says: "老萊子之弟子出薪，遇仲尼，反以告，老萊子曰：「召而來！」「仲尼至，曰：「丘！去汝躬矜與汝容知，斯為君子。」「"

Shiji employed classics, it was checked by the classics which had been seen (by the author); therefore, they were in general similar. The present biography of Lao Zi (in the *Shiji*) is different from the *Tianyun* with few exceptions. As to the records in the biography of Confucius, they cannot be compared with each other. Thus, it is clear that the *Shiji* had another basis.⁵⁹¹

Thus, the unreliability of the *Zhuangzi's Outer and Complex chapters* cannot change the reliability of Sima Qian's record, because they come from two different traditions.

B. The sources from the *Zhuangzi's nei pian* 內篇 (Inner chapters)

There are seven chapters in the *Zhuangzi's Inner chapters*: the *Xiaoyaoyou* 逍遙遊, the *Qiwulun* 齊物論, the *Yangshengzhu* 養生主, the *Renjianshi* 人間世, the *Dechongfu* 得充符, the *Dazongshi* 大宗師 and the *Yingdiwanng* 應帝王, and they are usually accepted as the work of Zhuang Zi himself; and this part also contains much of what is said about Lao Zi, or, Lao Dan. Unreasonable is the claim, then, that the records of the *Zhuangzi* are on the whole unreliable.

A. C. Graham says: "We admit that the earliest authority which mentions Lao Tan is Taoist, the *Inner chapters* of *Chuang-tzu*. There remains one more reference to Lao Tan, at the end of the *Yang sheng chu* 養生主 chapter:

老聃死，秦失弔之三號而出。弟子曰，非夫子之友耶？曰，然。弔焉若此可乎。曰，然。始吾以為其人也，而今非也。

When Lao Tan died, Ch'in Yi went to mourn him, wailed three times and came out. A disciple said "Were you not the Master's friend?"

"I was"

"Then is it allowable to mourn him like this?"

"It is. Previously I thought he was the man, but now he is not..."⁵⁹²

After this quotation concerning Lao Dan's funeral, A.C. Graham says: "Who is this Lao Tan? Surely only the man who instructed Confucius in funeral rites."⁵⁹³

Another place in the *Zhuangzi's Inner chapters*, *Dechongfu*, records:

魯有兀者，叔山無趾，踵見仲尼。仲尼曰：“子不謹，前既犯患若是矣。雖今來，何及矣？”無趾出。無趾語老聃曰：“孔丘之于聖人，其未邪？彼何賓賓以學子為？彼且以淑詭幻怪之名聞，不知至人之以為己桎梏邪？”老聃曰：“胡不直使彼以死生為一條，以可不可為一貫者，解其桎梏，其可乎？”無趾曰：“天刑之，安可解！”

There was a towering person called Wu Zhi in Lu's Shushan. He followed Zhong Ni's heels and saw him. Zhong Ni said, "You were not careful, you had already made mistakes like this. Although you come today, what good will it do?" Wu Zhi left. Wu Zhi said to Lao Dan: "Compared to the sage, is Kong Qiu not one of them? Why does he so seriously take himself as an intellectual? And he ... is also famous for the names of the gentle, deceitful, magical, and strange; why does he

⁵⁹¹ Gao Heng 1973: p. 163.

⁵⁹² *Zhuangzi*: 3/14. The translation is quoted from A.C. Graham 1986: p. 117.

⁵⁹³ A.C. Graham 1986b: p. 118.

not know that the sages take them as their own shackles?" Lao Dan said: "Why did you not make him to take life and death as one, and take possibility and impossibility as one, so as to leave his shackles, when it was possible?" Wu Zhi said: "Heaven wants to punish him, how can it be learned?"

This record shows that Confucius and Lao Dan were contemporaries, since Wu Zhi spoke with both of them at the same time. This record is included in the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi* and should be accepted as reliable, since it represents a common opinion of scholars that the author of the Inner Chapters was Zhuang Zi, who lived from the middle of the 4th to the beginning of the 3rd century BC.

Sima Qian, therefore, did not rely alone on the materials of these chapters of the *Zhuangzi* when he wrote the biography of Lao Zi. And this point implies that the unreliability of the *Zhuangzi*'s Outer and Complex Chapters cannot prove Sima Qian wrong. Moreover, the *Zhuangzi*'s Inner Chapters support the position of Sima Qian.

C. The sources from the Confucian tradition

That Confucius consulted Lao Dan concerning the rites is recorded not only in the Daoist classics but in the Confucian classics as well. The *Liji: Zengzi wen* 禮記曾子問 (Questions of Zeng Zi) has recorded this event four times. In one case it reads:

孔子曰：昔者吾從老聃助葬于巷党，及恒，日有食之。老聃曰，丘！止柩就道右，止哭以聽變。

Confucius says, "once I followed Lao Dan to bury someone in Xiangdang, at the time of Heng. There was a solar eclipse, and Lao Dan said, Qiu! Stop the hearse on the right side of the road; stop crying to follow the change."

Confucius quotes Lao Dan four times in this book as a teacher from whom he learned about funeral rites. No historical or biographical details can be found in this source, but one notices with interest that, as in the *Zhuangzi*, Lao Dan is treated as an elder who addresses Confucius by his personal name Qiu 丘.

The customary opinion was that the Confucianists were fighting with the Daoists for thousands of years. Sima Qian says: "The people who follow Lao Zi attack Confucianism, and the Confucianist also attack Lao Zi, since their Ways are different thus they do not consult with each other. 世之學老子者則絀儒學，儒學亦絀老子，道不同不相為謀。⁵⁹⁴

But if Zhuang Zi is simply spinning fiction about how Confucius learned from Lao Dan in order to praise the founder of his Daoism, why does the *Liji*, as a Confucian classic, engage in such fictions? Since both the Daoist and the Confucian classics record the same story, the more reasonable position is that a meeting between the two philosophers has an historical basis.

Therefore, neither the arguments concerning the inconsistency between different records nor those concerning the reliability of the *Zhuangzi* can reject that the meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius took place. The meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius

⁵⁹⁴ Sima Qian: *Shiji: Lao Zi Hanfei liezhuan*.

in the *Shiji* and *Liji* should be accepted as fundamentally historically correct.

2.4.3 The date of the meeting

Concerning the date of the meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius four hypotheses are current.

2.4.3.1 Setting the date at the time when Confucius was 17 years old

In the biography of Confucius, the *Shiji* reports that Jingshu 敬叔 asked the ruler of Lu 魯 to permit him to visit the capital of Zhou with Confucius. The ruler gave them a carriage with two horses and a page, and they proceeded to visit the capital for the purpose of consulting Lao Zi on rules of propriety.⁵⁹⁵ The *Shiji* widely places this visit somewhere between the 17th and the 30th year of Confucius. Some people have asserted that it took place when Confucius was seventeen, in 535 BC (Duke Zhao's 7th year).⁵⁹⁶ But doubt had already arisen concerning this date as early as the eighth century. Sima Zhen 司馬貞, commenting on the story, says that Confucius could not have visited Lao Zi at that time, because Confucius remarks in the story to Lao Zi, "It is difficult for the Way to prevail."⁵⁹⁷ This way of speaking, he says, is not a likely expression for a seventeen-year-old boy. It would be more appropriate of a Confucius who was older and had served in the government.⁵⁹⁸ In any case, some have argued that Sima Zhen's argument is based on a quotation from a spurious source and is therefore not dependable.⁵⁹⁹ The position of Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩 (1745-1819) is more convincing, however, when he says that when Jingshu had not yet been born when Confucius was seventeen.⁶⁰⁰ Therefore, the theory that Confucius saw Lao Dan at the age of seventeen, then, seems properly criticized.

2.4.3.2 Setting the date at the time when Confucius was 30 years old

Also suggested the story from the *Biography of Confucius* is that Confucius visited Lao Zi at the age of thirty, in 522 BC (Duke Zhao's 20th year).⁶⁰¹

But, as Yan Ruoju 閻若璩 (1636-1704) has pointed out, no eclipse of the sun occurred in that year. He has therefore theorized that the visit took place in 518 BC (Duke Zhao's 24th year), when Confucius was thirty-four, a year in which an eclipse

⁵⁹⁵ Sima Qina's *Shiji*, 47:3a-b. See Chavannes (tr.), See also Lin Yutang (ed. and tr.), *The Wisdom of Confucius* pp. 57-58.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. 'Laozi ming 老子銘', *Shuijing zhu: Weishui pian 水經註渭水篇* in Gao Heng 1973: p. 163.

⁵⁹⁷ According to the *Kong Zi jiyu*, ch. 11, SPTK, 3:4b. See C. de Harlez (tr.) "Familiar Sayings of Kong Fu Tze," *The Babylonian and Oriental Record* VII (1893), 69.

⁵⁹⁸ In Sima Zhen's *Siji suoyin*. See *Shiji*: 47:3b.

⁵⁹⁹ Chan 1963: p. 43.

⁶⁰⁰ Liang Yusheng 1920: *Shiji zhiyi 史記志異*: 25:6a.

⁶⁰¹ Yan Ruoju s.a.: *Sishu shidi: Supplement*, section on Confucius visiting Zhou.

did occur.⁶⁰²

One defect of Yan's theory, as Cui Shu has brought out, is that in 518 BC Jingshu was only thirteen and was, furthermore, in mourning. Unlikely, then, is that he accompanied Confucius on the journey.⁶⁰³ Moreover, during the reign of Duke Zhao eclipses took place in 520, 521, and 528 BC. Thus, 518 BC is not the only date on which we can settle for the journey.

2.4.3.3 Setting the date at the time when Confucius was 51 years old

One story in the *Zhuangzi* says that Confucius visited Lao Zi when the former was 51 years old in 501 BC.⁶⁰⁴ Many modern scholars have preferred this date.⁶⁰⁴ As Ma Xulun sees it, this date gives the fit to many factors. Jingshu was then thirty-one. Confucius had served in the government. And Lao Zi was old and retired, as the story in the *Zhuangzi* reports. Huang Fanggang (1901-45) has also pointed out⁶⁰⁶ that a Confucian pupil, Zigong 子貢 (520-c.450 BC), was then thirty-one, which was why Lao Zi called him a young fellow, according to the story in the *Zhuangzi*. To the objection that Confucius was a magistrate at that time and was not well able to travel, Ma replies that research has established that he did not become a magistrate until the following year.⁶⁰⁷ Nevertheless, one great difficulty remains: as Yan Ruoju has noted, no eclipse occurred in that year, a fact which contradicts the records of *Liji*.⁶⁰⁸

2.4.3.4 Setting the date at the time when Confucius was 57 years old

To overcome this objection, some have suggested that perhaps Confucius again met Lao Zi in a later year when there was an eclipse. Huang Fanggang, e.g., says that, according to the *Chunqiu* 春秋, when Confucius was 57 years old in Duke Ding's 15th year, an eclipse did occur, and Confucius visited Song; according to the *Zhuangzi*, Lao Zi lived in Pei 沛, and Pei was located in Song.⁶⁰⁹

But Gao Heng thinks that visiting Pei is one thing, and visiting Song is another. The two places are different.⁶¹⁰ Chan also says: "The suggestion that perhaps Confucius saw Lao Tzu again in another year when there was an eclipse seems to be assuming too much."⁶¹¹

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

⁶⁰³ Cui Shu: *Zhuzi kaixin lu*: 1:13b.

⁶⁰⁴ Ch.14, SPTK, 5:43b (Giles p. 147).

⁶⁰⁵ Including Liang Yusheng (*Shiji zhiyi* 25:6b), Ma Xulun (*Laozi jiaogu*: p. 29) and Mao Rulong 馬如龍 *Laozi kao*, which can be seen in Gao Heng 1973: p. 166.

⁶⁰⁶ Huang's article can be found in Gu Jiegang 1933: IV p. 380.

⁶⁰⁷ Ma Xulun 1956 (revision of 1924): p. 29.

⁶⁰⁸ See Yan Ruoju: *Ssu-shu shih-ti*, Supplement. Cf. Chan 1963: p. 44 and p. 56 note 60.

⁶⁰⁹ Huang's article can be found in Gu Jiegang: IV, 380-1; Cf. Gao Heng 1973: p. 166.

⁶¹⁰ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 166-167.

• Conclusion: Concerning the date of meeting, this work agrees with that this is a question which cannot now be settled.⁶¹²

2.4.4 The place(s) of the meeting(s)

Similarly, the place of the meeting between Confucius and Lao Zi is an unsolved question. Gao Heng has mentioned three hypotheses in his notes to the biography of Lao Zi according to the *Shiji*.⁶¹³

First, the meeting place was thought to be in Zhou 周. The *Zhuangzi. Tiandao*⁶¹⁴ and the *Shiji*⁶¹⁴ support this theory.

Second, one can suppose that the meeting was in Pei 沛. The *Zhuangzi. Tianyun* supports this theory.⁶¹⁶

Third, the meeting place might have been in Lu 魯. The *Zhuangzi. Dechongfu* 莊子德充符 supports this theory.⁶¹⁷

The *Outer chapters* and *Complex chapters* of the *Zhuangzi* are generally thought to be fiction; thus, conclusions based on them are not reliable. Lacking evidence to the contrary, this study accepts the traditional opinion, *i.e.*, that the meeting place was in Zhou.

2.4.5 The meeting not yet being discredited

Significantly, in spite of uncertainties concerning the date and the nature of the meeting and conversation between Lao Zi and Confucius, even those who oppose the tradition have not entirely discarded the story of the visit. Wang Zhong does not think any lecture by Lao Zi took place during the meeting, but he does not discredit the notion of a visit itself.⁶¹⁸ Cui Shu rejects the theory that the meeting took place partly because of the issue of the lecture, but he is willing to grant with some lingering skepticism that Lao Zi was an expert on the ceremonies.⁶¹⁹ Examples of this position can be found in both the Western world and in China.

A. C. Graham in the West, *e.g.*, accepts the meeting between Lao Dan and Confucius took place but argues that this Lao Dan was a Confucian rather than a Daoist and that he

⁶¹¹ Chan 1963: p. 44.

⁶¹² Gao Heng 1973: pp. 166-7. Chan 1963: p. 44.

⁶¹³ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 163-165.

⁶¹⁴ The *Zhuangzi:Tiandao* 莊子 天道 reads: 孔子藏書於周室。子路謀曰：“由闢之微藏史有老者，免而歸居，夫子欲藏書，則試往因焉。”孔子曰：“善！”往見老聃，而老聃不許。

⁶¹⁵ See *Shiji:Lao Zi Hanfei liezhuang*.

⁶¹⁶ The *Zhuangzi:Tianyun* reads: “孔子行年五十有一，而不聞道，南之沛，見老聃。”(When Confucius was 51 years old, he had not heard about the Way; he went to south to Pei to visit Lao Dan.)

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Gao Heng 1973: p. 164.

⁶¹⁸ Cui Shu's *Shuxue*: Supplement, 28b.

⁶¹⁹ Cui Shu: *Zhuji kaixin lu*: 1:4a.

was not the author of the *Laozi*. He concludes his "The origin of legend of Lao Tan", by saying:

We may now propose a scheme of five stages in the evolution of the story. (1) A Confucian tale of the Master inquiring about the rites from a certain Lao Tan, very probably already known as an archivist of Chou. This tale, already current in the 4th century B.C., may be a historical reminiscence, or simply an exemplary story about the Master's humility in seeking learning wherever it is to be found. (2) The adoption of Lao Tan in the *Inner chapters* of Chuang-tzu, towards 300 B.C., as one of the characters in the life of Confucius exploitable as spokesmen of "Chuangism". (3) The appearance of *Lao-tzu* under the name of Lao Tan, taking advantage of his authority as a teacher of Confucius. From this point he represents a philosophical trend ("Laoism"). (4) The identification of Lao Tan with the Grand Historiographer Tan of Chou who in 374 B.C. predicted the rise of Ch'in, and the invention of the story of the journey to the West and of the writing of the book for Kuan-yin. The purpose was to win favor for *Lao-tzu* from the Ch'in. It may be guessed that the medium for this propaganda was the lost *Kuan-yin-tzu*. Stages 3 and 4 were completed by 240 B.C. (5) The graphic adaptation of the name of the Grand Historiographer to that of Lao Tan after 206 B.C., by the descendants of the former. The purpose was to make their ancestor welcome to the Han instead of the Ch'in. The personal details about the Grand Historiographer thus became available as stiffening for the biography of Lao Tzu by Ssu-ma Ch'ien. At the same period the classification of the Six Schools put 'Laoism' and 'Chuangism' under the common heading of 'Taoism'. Since Lao Tan was earlier than Chuang-tzu, he was established retrospectively as founder of the Taoist school.⁶²⁰

In modern China, professor Xu Kangsheng 許抗生 accepts that the meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius took place, but he thinks that the author of the *Laozi* was a later person. Xu concludes his analysis of the records in many classics concerning the meeting by saying, "Thus, we have no evidence to deny the existence of this Lao Zi at the end of the Spring and Autumn Period."⁶²¹

The arguments of Liang Qichao and his disciples, therefore, have been proved ineffective for rejecting the theory of a meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius. And many other scholars who doubt the traditional position have not themselves totally rejected this meeting as an historical event no matter what skepticism may linger concerning it. At least the bare fact of the meeting as recorded by Sima Qian in the *Shiji* should be accepted.

2.5 Lao Zi's Book

Concerning the book of Lao Zi, Sima Qian said in his biography of the philosopher:

老子修道德，其學以自隱無名為務，居周之久，見周之衰，迺遂去。至關，關令尹喜曰：“子將隱矣，強為我著書。”於是老子迺著書上下篇，言道德之意，五千余言，而去，莫知其所終。⁶²²

Lao Zi practiced the Way and its virtue. His learning aims at self-effacement and possessing no fame. Having lived in Zhou for a long time, he realized that it was in decline and left. As he reached the pass, the pass-keeper, Yin Xi, said, "You are about to retire. Please try your best to write a book for me." Thereupon Lao Zi wrote a book in two parts, expounding the ideas of Way

⁶²⁰ A. C. Graham 1986b: p. 124.

⁶²¹ Xu Kangsheng 1985: p. 144.

⁶²² Sima Qian: *The Shiji: Laozi zhuang*.

and its virtue in over five thousand words and then departed. None knew how he ended.⁶²³

This record is in accordance with the traditional version of the *Laozi*. The details concerning this issue have been discussed in the previous chapter.

2.6 Lao Zi's 老子 identifications with Lao Dan 老聃, Lao Lai Zi 老萊子, Lao Peng 老彭, and the Grand historian DAN 太史儋

Except for the problem of the identifications of Lao Zi, with Lao Lai Zi, Lao Peng, and the Grand historian DAN, no certain evidence at this time contradicts the theory that Lao Zi was a contemporary of Confucius. Concerning the identification between Lao Zi and other figures, this study will focus on whether Lao Zi, Lao Lai Zi 老萊子, Lao Peng 老彭 and Taishi DAN 太史儋 were same or different people, and whether Zong 宗 was the son of another Lao Zi or that of Lao Dan.

2.6.1 Lao Zi and Lao Dan

Was Lao Dan 老聃 and Lao Zi 老子 the same person, whom Confucius visited? If so, when did Lao Dan begin to be called Lao Zi? While this latter issue, *i.e.*, when Lao Dan 老聃 began to be called Lao Zi 老子, is difficult to resolve, the former question is amenable to analysis in the classics.

In other Chinese classics, both Lao Dan and Lao Zi were names already long in use. For example, *Liji* 禮記, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, the parts of *Guigong* 貴公, *Dangran* 當染 and *Quyong* 去尤 in *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, all use the name Lao Dan 老聃. And sections of *Bu'er* 不二 and *Chongyan* 重言 in *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, use the name Lao Dan 老聃.⁶²⁴ However, the *Mozi* 墨子, *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 and the *Xunzi* 荀子 use only the name Lao Zi.

The *Laozi* was quoted even in the time of Confucius as the words of Lao Dan, which implies that Lao Dan was the author of the *Laozi*. Shu Xiang 叔向, who lived in the period of Jin Pinggong 晉平公 and was a contemporary of Confucius (551 to 479 BC), had this opinion. *Shuoyuan* 說苑 reads:

叔向曰：“老聃有言曰：天下之至柔，馳騁乎天下之至堅。又曰：人之生也柔若，其死也剛強。萬物草木生也柔脆，其死也枯槁。”

Shu Xiang says: "Lao Dan has words to say: 'The softest, most pliable thing in the world runs rough out over the firmest thing in the world.' And he (Lao Dan) says again: 'When people are born, they are supple and soft; when they die, they end up stretched out firm and rigid. When the ten thousand things and grasses and trees are alive, they are supple and pliant; when they are dead, they are withered and died out.'" ⁶²⁵

The two passages quoted above can be found in chapters 43 and 76 of the traditional

⁶²³ Chan 1963: p. 36.

⁶²⁴ Gao Heng 1973: p. 159.

⁶²⁵ *Shuoyuan*, *juan shi* 卷十.

version of the *Laozi*. They show that, according to Shu Xiang, a contemporary of Confucius, Lao Dan was the author of the book called the *Laozi*.

2.6.1.1 The use of both names Lao Dan and Lao Zi

A. The *Zhuangzi* uses both names, Lao Dan and Lao Zi

Tianxia 天下 reads: "老聃曰，知其雄，守其雌" (Lao Dan says: Know the male but keep to the role of the female. .). This passage can be found in chapter 28 of the traditional version of the *Laozi*. It indicates that Lao Dan was the author the *Laozi*. *Yuyan* 寓言 reads: "老子曰：'大白若辱，盛德若不足!'" (Lao Zi says: The sheerest whiteness seems sullied; ample virtue seems defective.) This can be found in the *Laozi*, chapter 41. It indicates that Lao Zi was the author of the *Laozi*.

According to the *Zhuangzi*, both Lao Dan and Lao Zi were the author of the *Laozi*. Thus they were the same person.

B. The *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 also uses both names, Lao Dan and Lao Zi

Its author Han Fei is dated c. 233 BC and includes two sections of commentary on the *Laozi*, *Jielao* 解老 and *Yulao* 喻老, the chapter called *Liufan* 六反, for example, quotes the *Laozi* as saying:

老聃有言曰：知足不辱，知止不殆。夫以殆辱之故而不求於足之外者，老聃也。

Lao Dan has words to say: "Know contentment and you will suffer no disgrace; Know when to stop and you will meet with no danger." The one, who does not seek anything beyond contentment for the sake of disgrace and danger, was Lao Dan.⁶²⁶

Here the *Hanfeizi* says directly and clearly "Lao Dan has words to say", and the quotation can be found in the traditional version of the *Laozi*, chapter 44.

Neichushuo xia: *Liuwei* 內儲說下: 六微 says:

權勢不可以借人，.....其說在老聃之言失魚也。.....勢重者，人主之淵也，古之人難正言，故託之於魚。

Power and influence can not be borrowed from others, ... this kind of theory is reflected in the speech 'losing fish' of Lao Dan. ... Strong influence is the power of the ruler. In ancient time it was difficult for people to say anything directly, thus 'fish' was employed.⁶²⁷

What Hanfei Zi quotes is from chapter 36 of the *Laozi*, which reads: "魚不可脫於淵" "The fish must not be allowed to leave the deep." And Hanfei Zi says directly that these are the words of Lao Dan.

⁶²⁶ See the *Hanfeizi Liufan* 六反 and the *Laozi*'s chapter 44.

⁶²⁷ See *Neichushuo xia*: *Liuwei* 內儲說下: 六微.

Nan san 難三 reads:

老子曰：以智治國國之賊。

Lao Zi says: To rule a state by cleverness will be a boon to the state.⁶²⁸

This can be found in chapter 65 of the *Laozi*. Lao Zi is here identified as the author of the *Laozi*.

Nansan 難三 reads: "老子曰，'以智治國，國之賊。'" (Hence to rule a state by cleverness will be to the detriment of the state.) This passage can be found in the *Laozi*, chapter 65. It indicates that Lao Zi was the author of the *Laozi*.

These mentions, commentaries, and quotations have indicated that both Lao Dan and Lao Zi were the same person and the author of the *Laozi*. According to the *Hanfeizi*, then, both Lao Dan and Lao Zi were the same person and the author of the *Laozi*.

2.6.1.2 The single use of the name Lao Dan 聃 (耽)

A. The *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 uses only the name Lao Dan, which can indicate that Lao Dan was the same person as Lao Zi, who was the author of the *Laozi*

The *Lüshi chunqiu* quotes many passages from the *Laozi*. But Gu Jiegang 顧頤剛 views these quotations from the *Lüshi chunqiu* as unreliable. The reason for this judgment is that he maintains that a "rule" in that book is that, whenever a quotation occurs, its source or author is always mentioned. No such mention is made of Lao Zi, however, even though "two-thirds" of the *Laozi* has been incorporated into it.⁶²⁹ And, on the contrary, Hu Shi has shown no such "rule" of any kind determines the *Lüshi chunqiu* in respect to quotations. It mentions the Book of Filial Piety in connection with one quotation from it, but it fails to mention it in connection with another. Of the 53 passages which Gu Jiegang claims are identical with or similar to Lao Zi's sayings, only three are actually quotations from the *Laozi*.⁶³⁰ Gao Heng also criticizes Gu in respect to the following sayings in the *Lüshi chunqiu*:⁶³¹

老聃貴柔

Lao Dan valued yielding. (*Lüshi Chunqiu* 17/7 *Bu er* 不二)

孔子學於老聃

Confucius learned from Lao Dan. (*Lüshi chunqiu*: *Dangran* 當然)

⁶²⁸ See *Nan san* 難三.

⁶²⁹ *Gushi bian* IV: p. 481.

⁶³⁰ Hu Shi: "A Criticism of Some Recent Methods Used in Dating Lao Tzu," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, II (1937), 387-97. Cf. Zhang Chengqiu 1977: p. 89.

⁶³¹ Gao Heng 1973: p. 173.

These sources do prove that Lao Dan held a theory of government based on a strategy of yielding in order to conquer, which can be found in the book of *Laozi*. Therefore, contrary to Gu's argument, the *Lüshi chunqiu* has not only quoted from the *Laozi* but has also said clearly that Lao Dan's thought is that of the *Laozi*. This seems clear proof that Lao Dan is the author of the *Laozi*.

B. *Liji* 禮記 uses only the name Lao Dan

The *Zeng Zi Wen* 曾子問 reads: "孔子曰，昔吾從老聃助葬於巷黨。" (Confucius says, once I was with Lao Dan assisting at a funeral in Xiangdang.)

This passage does not clarify whether Lao Dan was the author of the *Laozi*, but it fits in with the record by Sima Qian that Lao Dan was the person from whom Confucius consulted concerning the rites; for here Confucius is with Lao Dan assisting at a funeral in Xiangdang. This event has been recorded by many other classics besides its record in the history of Sima Qian. The *Lüshi chunqiu*, for example, says: "孔子學於老聃。Confucius learned from Lao Dan."⁶³²

C. The *Xunzi* 荀子 uses only the name Lao Dan

The *Xunzi* 荀子, whose author Xun Zi lived in latter half of fourth to middle of third century BC,⁶³³ used only the name Lao Dan. Clearly, according to Xun Zi, the majority of thought in the book *Laozi* is that of Lao Dan. The *Xunzi* reads:

老聃有見於詘，無見於信。

Lao Zi had some insight into bowing down, none into stretching out. (*Xunzi* 17/51)

莊子蔽於天而不知人。

Zhuang Zi had a vision limited to Heaven and was ignorant of man. (*Xunzi* 21/22)

"有見於詘，無見於信" can be seen in *Zhoulaoji* 籀老籍.⁶³⁴ This passage indicates that Xun Zi must have seen the book called the *Laozi*. On the other hand, "Lao Zi had some insight into bowing down, none into stretching out", is said to be just the main thought of the book. These points indicate that, according to Xun Zi, Lao Dan's thought is at least close to that of the *Laozi*.

2.6.1.3 Instances in which only the name Lao Zi is used

The following classics use only the name Lao Zi, indicating that, according to them, Lao Zi was the author of the book *Laozi*.

⁶³² See the *Lüshi chunqiu*: *Dangran* 當然.

⁶³³ D. C. Lau 1982: p. 143.

⁶³⁴ Gao Heng 1973: p. 172.

A. The *Mozi* 墨子

The *Mozi* 墨子 uses only the name Lao Zi, but whether it refers to Lao Zi the person or to *Laozi* the book is difficult to determine. It reads, for example: "老子曰: "道沖而用之弗有盈", this is based on the quotation 53 of *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 *juan* 卷 *bingbu* 322 兵部.

B. The *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策

The *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 uses only the name Lao Zi. For example, *Qi Ce* 齊策 reads: "顏觸曰: 老子曰雖貴必以賤為本, 雖高必以下為基, 是以侯王稱孤寡不穀". This can be found in the *Laozi*, chapter 39.

- Summary: Considering all of these quotations and analyses of the classics, a clear understanding emerges that even as long ago as the period of Confucius and Mo Zi quotations from the *Laozi* have been said to belong to both Lao Dan and Lao Zi. And since the same quotations are attributed to both names, Lao Dan and Lao Zi must be the same person, the author of the *Laozi*.

2.6.2 Lao Zi and Lao Lai Zi

2.6.2.1 Lao Zi (Lao Dan) and Lao Lai Zi were two different persons

Zhang Shoujie says: "Taishi Gong doubted that Lao Zi was Lao Lai Zi; therefore, he wrote this."⁶³⁵ Gao Heng asserts that Zhang was wrong, and argues that Lao Zi and Lao Lai Zi were two different persons.⁶³⁶ Gao provides two pieces of evidence from the *Shiji* itself.

First, the *Shiji: Zhongni dizi liezhuan xu* 史記仲尼弟子列傳序 reads: "孔子之所嚴事, 於周則老子, 於楚老萊子。" (Whom Confucius followed were Lao Zi in Zhou and Lao Lai Zi in Chu.) This passage indicates that Lao Dan and Lao Lai Zi were two different persons.

Second, in the biography of Lao Zi, Sima Qian says: "老萊子著書十五篇, 言道家之用。" (Lao Lai Zi wrote a book in fifteen parts expounding the application of Daoist doctrines".) Concerning Lao Zi, however, Sima Qian says: "老子迺著書上下篇, 言道德之意, 五千余言。" ("Lao Zi thus wrote a book in two parts expounding the Way and its virtue in over five thousand words".)⁶³⁷ Aside from these two items, Gao provides four more items of evidence.

Third, two different people emerge, Lao Dan and Lao Lai Zi, in the *Daishi liji* 戴氏禮記, which was a later work but surely from the hands of Confucian disciples, *i.e.*, *qishizi* 七十子 (seventy pupils). The *Da daili weijiangjun wenzi* 大戴禮衛將軍文子 reads:

⁶³⁵ Zhang Shoujie: *Shiji zhengyi*.

⁶³⁶ Gao Heng 1973: p. 174.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

孔子曰，德恭而行信，終日言不在尤之內，貧而樂也，蓋老萊子之行也。

Confucius says, virtue is respectful and deeds are trustworthy; speeches are not at all times wrong. He who is poor but happy is probably the deed of Lao Lai Zi.⁶³⁸

Here Lao Lai Zi is mentioned, but Lao Dan can be found in another place of the book, i.e., *Liji: Zeng Zi wen* 禮記·曾子問. Cf. above.

Fourth, both Lao Dan and Lao Lai Zi appear in the *Zhuangzi*. For instance, the *Waiwu* 外物 reads:

老萊子弟子出薪遇仲尼，反以告曰：“有人於彼，修上而趨下，末僂而后耳，視若營四海，不知誰之子。”老萊子曰：“是丘也，召而來。”仲尼至。

Disciples of Lao Lai Zi go out to gather wood and meet Zhongni. They come back to tell (Lao Lai Zi), "There is a man there, who looks up but goes down, whose back is crooked and ears bend behind, and whose eyes seem to cover the Four Seas. I do not know who it is. Lao Lai Zi says, "That is Qiu, call him in." Zhongni arrives.⁶³⁹

Here Lao Lai Zi is mentioned, but Lao Dan appears many times in other parts of the *Zhuangzi*, cf. above.

Fifth, both Lao Dan and Lao Lai Zi appear in the *Zhanguoce*. Lao Dan appears many times in *Qi Ce* 齊策 and *Wei Ce* 魏策. But Lao Lai Zi appears in the *Chu Ce* 楚策. The *Chu Ce* reads:

或謂黃齊曰：“公不聞老萊子之教孔子之事君乎，...”

Someone says to Huang Qi, "Have you not heard that Lao Lai Zi teaches Confucius to serve kings? ..."⁶⁴⁰

Sixth, the *Hanshu: Yiwenzhi* 漢書·藝文志 has clearly distinguished Lao Zi from Lao Lai Zi. It says: "老子鄰氏經傳，四篇。Laozi linshi jingzhuan, four pian (sections)." Ban Gu 班固 himself comments on it saying: "姓李，名耳，鄰氏傳其學。" "Surname is Li, private name is Er, Linshi transmits his study." *Hanshu: Yiwenzhi* also says: "老萊子，十六篇。Laolaizi, sixteen pian (sections)." Ban Gu 班固 makes comments on it, saying: "楚人，與孔子同時。(He is) a native of Chu, a contemporary of Confucius."

Besides the above six items of evidence, both Lao Dan and Lao Lai Zi appear in other classics such as *Shizi* 尸子 and *Lienüzhuan* 列女傳.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁸ See *Da daili: weijiangjun wenzi* 大戴禮·衛將軍文子.

⁶³⁹ See the *Zhuangzi: Waiwu* 外物.

⁶⁴⁰ See *Zhanguoce: Chu Ce* 楚策.

2.6.2.2 The name of Lao Lai Zi

Who was Lao Lai Zi? Little is known of him. Bi Yuan 畢沅 asserted that his surname was Lai, which was the surname of a number of people in ancient times. And he asserted as well that the name Lao was given because of his old age.⁶⁴² But this latter statement is not correct. Bi Yuan's theory cannot answer why other elderly people were not called "Lao". The above analysis of Lao Zi's names indicates that "Lao" was a surname before the Warring States Period. The "Lao" of Lao Lai Zi should also be understood as a surname.⁶⁴³ Whether this is true or not, most authoritative Chinese scholars have been satisfied that Lao Lai Zi and Lao Zi were two different people.⁶⁴⁴

Gao Heng thinks that Lao Lai Zi's surname was Lao in the same sense in which Lao Dan was known by this name. His private name was Lai, and Zi was an honorary name. Concerning this issue, one can refer to Gao Heng's "Shiji Laozi zhuang jianzheng" in *Laozi zhenggu*.⁶⁴⁵

One question, however, remains: if Lao Dan and Lao Lai Zi both have the same surname "Lao", why was Lao Dan simply called Lao Zi when the honorary name "Zi" was added to his name? Lao Zi seems to lack any private name just as do others, such as Kong Zi, Zhuang Zi, Xun Zi, etc. But Lao Lai was called Lao *Lai* Zi, his private name being included between his surname and "Zi". Lao Lai Zi's name seems to be a special case.

This problem is difficult to solve without exact historical evidence. The opinion of this study is that, because both Lao Dan and Lao Lai Zi were contemporaries of Confucius and both famous, they were both called "Zi". But Lao Dan was more famous than Lao Lai Zi, so Lao Dan got the benefit of being called "Lao Zi" (Surname and "Zi") in the same manner as Kong Zi, Mo Zi, etc. And Lao Lai Zi was called by his private name, which is inserted between his surname and "Zi", in order to distinguish him from Lao Dan. But without good historical evidence, this theory is just an assumption. Of course, neither has any historical evidence been available up to now which can prove this assumption wrong. The *Mozi*, *Xunzi* and *Zhanguo*, for example, all call Lao Dan "Lao Zi". The *Zhuangzi* and *Hanfeizi* use both names Lao Dan and Lao Zi, but *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Liji* use just the name Lao Dan.⁶⁴⁶ The hypothesis of this work, therefore, remains to

⁶⁴¹ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 175-176.

⁶⁴² Bi Yuan: *Laozi Daodejing kaoyi*: preface, 1b.

⁶⁴³ Cf. Gao Heng 1973: p. 175.

⁶⁴⁴ Gao Heng 1973: p. 175. These include Bi Yuan's 畢沅 preface to his *Daodejing kaoyi* 道德經考異, Wang Zhong's 汪中 *Lao Zi kaoyi* 老子考異, Liang Yusheng's 梁玉繩 *Shiji zhiyi* 史記志疑, Shen Qinhan's 沈欽韓 *Hanshu shuzheng* 漢書疏証, Hong Liangji's 洪亮吉 *Xiao dushu zai er lu* 曉讀書齋二錄, Hong Yixuan's 洪頤樞 *Dushu conglu* 讀書從業錄 and Ma Rulong's 馬如龍 *Laozikao* 老子考. Ma Xulun's 馬敘倫 *Laozi jiaogu* 老子校詁 pp. 10-11. Cf. Chan 1963: p. 47.

⁶⁴⁵ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 176-177.

be proved by historical evidence. But such evidence is still lacking today.

2.6.2.3 The reason why Sima Qian mentions Lao Lai Zi in the biography of Lao Zi (Lao Dan)

Concerning the reason why Sima Qian added Lao Lai Zi to the biography of Lao Zi, Chan Wing-Tsit says: "Why Ssu-ma Ch'ien included it in the biography is a mystery. Perhaps he meant to suggest that there was, at his time, some confusion about the two men. But certainly there was no confusion in his own mind, for not only does he speak of one as the author of a book in two parts dealing with the ideas of the Way and its virtue and the other as the author of a book in fifteen parts dealing with applications of Taoist doctrines; he also clearly distinguishes them in his own *Records of the Historian*."⁶⁴⁷

Qian Mu, however, contends that Lao Lai Zi was the one whom Confucius visited. He based his contention on the account in the *Zhuangzi* where Lao Lai Zi is quoted as teaching Confucius to get rid of his pride and his air of wisdom.⁶⁴⁸ But, as previously discussed, the *Zhuangzi* often told imaginary tales. While this particular injunction is consonant with what Lao Zi told Confucius, the rest of Lao Lai Zi's words are not. As Chan Wing-Tsit says,⁶⁴⁹ Qian himself is puzzled as to why, of the eleven worthies Confucius praised,⁶⁵⁰ Lao Lai Zi alone was not mentioned either in the *Analects* or in the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳. Indeed, his story appears for the first time in the *Zhuangzi*. Thus, Qian's assertion is on shaky grounds. Qian also identifies Lao Lai Zi with the old man, carrying a basket of weed on a staff laid across his shoulder, who advised Confucius to retire.⁶⁵¹ This identification is made on the flimsy ground that *lai* meant "weeding",⁶⁵² Chan says,⁶⁵² and this is hardly enough evidence to be convincing.

I think, however, that Sima Qian's writing often included other people in the biographies he wrote. He added Shen Dao 慎到, Tian Pian 田駢, Jie Zi 接子, Huan Yuan 環淵, Gongsun Long 公孫龍 and Mo Di 墨翟 to the *Biographies of Meng Zi* and *Xun Qing* (孟子荀卿列傳).⁶⁵⁴ He also employs the uncertain words "some say" (*Huo yue*) before records concerning Lao Lai Zi, indicating that he was not sure about whether Lao Lai Zi was a contemporary of Confucius and from Chu. Thus, Sima Qian simply adds Lao Lai Zi in what he supposes might be the appropriate place. Gao Heng

⁶⁴⁶ See the section on Lao Zi's names in the same chapter of this dissertation.

⁶⁴⁷ Chan 1963: p. 46. Cf. *Shiji*: 63:2b.

⁶⁴⁸ The *Zhuangzi*, ch. 26, SPTK, 9:5b. Cf. Giles: p. 261.

⁶⁴⁹ Chan 1963: p. 47.

⁶⁵⁰ In *Dadai liji*: ch. 60, SPTK, 6:8a-9b.

⁶⁵¹ Confucius: *Analects*, 18:7.

⁶⁵² Qian Mu 1956: p. 213.

⁶⁵³ Chan 1963: p. 47.

⁶⁵⁴ See Sima Qian's *Shiji: Mengzi xunqing liezhuan*. See also Gao Heng 1973: p. 174.

supports this interpretation.⁶⁵⁵ Clearly, Lao Zi and Lao Lai Zi were two different people.

• Summary: Lao Lai Zi's surname was Lao 老, his private name was Lai 萊, and Zi 子 was an honorary name. He was a native of Chu 楚 and a contemporary of Confucius. These are the traditional opinions which are by no means certain but neither have they been proved incorrect. His book *Laolaizi* included sixteen *pian* 篇 (sections) according to the *Hanshu: Yiwenzhi* 漢書: 藝文志, but they have been lost.⁶⁵⁶ Ma Guohan 馬國翰 has at present a collector's edition of the *Laolaizi*, which includes just four *jie* 節 (verses).⁶⁵⁷

2.6.3 Lao Zi and Lao Peng

Lao Zi has also been identified with the Lao referred to by Confucius when he compared himself with Lao Peng. Confucius says: "述而不作，信而好古，竊比於我老彭。In transmitting and refusing to innovate, and faithfully caring for antiquity, I venture to compare myself with our Lao Peng." (Analects 7/I).⁶⁵⁸ Zhang Xuan 鄭玄⁶⁵⁸ and 王弼 (226-49)⁶⁵⁸ thought "Lao Peng" was two persons instead of one, identifying "Lao" with Lao Dan 老聃 and "Peng" with a much earlier Peng Zu 彭祖. Zhang Xu 張煦 believes as well that this "Lao" was Lao Dan.⁶⁶¹ But Chan Wing-Tsit says: "These identifications are not supported by facts."⁶⁶²

A. C. Graham thinks this Lao Peng was a person in Confucian legend revered as a guardian of ancient tradition.⁶⁶³ This is just one of the traditional hypotheses for which no compelling evidence has emerged; but neither has any compelling evidence proved them incorrect.

Ma Xulun 馬敘倫 takes the position that Lao Peng was one man rather than two. But instead of identifying him with Peng Zu, the legendary Methuselah of China, as often understood, he believes Lao Peng was Lao Zi. For, he says, the pronunciation of "Peng" and "Dan" was similar, so the same person was called Lao Dan and Lao Peng in different dialects. In addition, he offers the argument that just as Lao Peng is described by Confucius as a transmitter and not a creator, so Lao Dan, in quoting proverbs and ancient sayings, was not a creator.⁶⁶⁴ Whether or not this theory is true, no one knows!

⁶⁵⁵ Gao Heng 1973: p. 174.

⁶⁵⁶ Sima Qian's *Shiji: Laozizhuan* says, Lao Lai Zi has written a book in fifteen chapters.

⁶⁵⁷ See Gao Heng 1973: p. 174.

⁶⁵⁸ Quoted from A. C. Graham 1986: p. 116.

⁶⁵⁹ Quoted by Lu Deming (556-627) in his *Jingdian shiwen*, ch. 24, explaining Analects, 7:1.

⁶⁶⁰ Quoted by Xing Bing 邢昺 (932-1010) in his commentary on Analects, 7:1.

⁶⁶¹ Quoted in Zhang Chengqiu 1977: p. 81.

⁶⁶² Chan 1963: p. 47.

⁶⁶³ A. C. Graham 1986: p. 116.

But Chan Wing-Tsit disagrees with Ma Xulun, saying: "Ma has to make a considerable effort in trying to establish that *p'eng* and *tan* were in fact similar in pronunciation. He has given some examples but has not identified the dialects. As to Lao tzu being a transmitter, by Ma's standard, anyone who quotes several ancient sayings becomes a transmitter and not a creator."⁶⁶⁵

No authoritative conclusion emerges, therefore, concerning the identification between Lao Zi and Lao Peng.

2.6.4 Lao Zi and the Grand historian DAN 太史儋

This issue of a similarity of pronunciation has also played a great role in the discussions concerning the third account in the biography of Lao Zi. This account deals with the Grand Historian DAN and Lao Zi's son, Zong 宗. Sima Qian states that DAN had an interview with Duke Xian of Qin in 374 BC,⁶⁶⁶ and his prediction of the victory of the state seemed so important to Sima Qian that he recorded it no less than four times.⁶⁶⁷ But some people were unsure whether DAN was the same person as Lao Zi, and scholars were of mixed opinions concerning this issue.⁶⁶⁸ And Chan Wing-Tsit says that, even two thousand years after Sima Qian, we are just as uncertain concerning this matter as he was.⁶⁶⁹ The opinions concerning it follow two main lines: one is to argue that DAN and Dan were the same person, while the other argues that they were not.

2.6.4.1 The hypothesis that DAN and Lao Dan were the same person

Some say DAN and Lao Dan were the same person, because the words DAN 儋 and Dan 聃, according to Bi Yuan, were all identical in pronunciation as well as in meaning and were interchangeable.⁶⁷⁰

Wang Zhong 汪中 has maintained that Lao Zi was none other than DAN. He says that, according to the *Liezi* 列子, three conversations took place between Lie Zi (450-375 BC) and Guan Yin 關尹, the keeper of the pass.⁶⁷¹ Lao Zi is quoted in the *Wenzi* 文子 as referring to the alliance between the states of Wei, Chu, and others.⁶⁷² Since Lie Zi lived in the fourth century BC, and the alliance also took place in that period, Wang argues, Lao Zi must have been the Dan who interviewed Duke Xian of Qin and could

⁶⁶⁴ Ma Xulun 1956 (revision of 1924): pp. 13-18.

⁶⁶⁵ Chan 1963: pp. 47-48.

⁶⁶⁶ According to Ga Heng, DAN met Duke Xian of Qin in 374 B.C., which was 105 years after the death of Confucius. For details see Gao Heng 1973: pp. 177-178. Cf. Chan 1963: p. 48.

⁶⁶⁷ Sima Qian's *Shiji*: ch.4,5,28,63, etc.

⁶⁶⁸ Sima Qian's *Shiji: the biography of Lao Zi*.

⁶⁶⁹ Chan 1963: p. 48.

⁶⁷⁰ Bi Yuan: *Laozi Daodejing kaoyi*, preface, 1a.

⁶⁷¹ See the *Liezi*: chapters. 2:2b and 8:1a-b. Cf. Graham: *The Book of Lieh Tzu*: pp. 37, 158-161.

⁶⁷² *Wenzi*, ch.2, SPPY pt. I. 13b.

not have been the Dan whom Confucius visited.⁶⁷³

Luo Genze 羅根澤 also thinks that Lao Zi was the Grand Historian DAN, who lived over one hundred years after Confucius. Luo provides four items of evidence: 1) Dan 聃 and DAN 儋 had a similar pronunciation. 2) Dan was Zhuxia shi 柱下史 in Zhou, and DAN was a historian of Zhou. 3) There was the story of Lao Zi going the West, the Grand Historian DAN saw Duke Xian of Qin, which was in the West, so the Grand DAN must also have gone to the West. 4) If this theory is true, Lao Zi's eighth generational descendents could be the contemporaries of the thirteenth generational descendents of Confucius. And these lines of descentance fit the records concerning Lao Zi's descendents in the biography of Lai Zi in the *Shiji*.⁶⁷⁴

2.6.4.2 The hypothesis that DAN and Lao Dan were two persons

Others, however, have contended that Lao Dan and Taishi DAN were two different people. The similarity of their names and the fact that both were officials and both traveled west caused them to become misidentified as the same person.⁶⁷⁵

Concerning Wang Zhong's argument, Chan Wing-Tsit says: "Unfortunately for the argument, both the *Lieh Tzu* and the *Wen Tzu* are spurious works and untrustworthy as evidence."⁶⁷⁶ Recent research on the reliability of the *Liezi*, however, has tried to prove that this book is not spurious.⁶⁷⁷ And similar research has also been done to try to show that the *Wenzi* is reliable.⁶⁷⁸ However, these research have not provided strong evidences to support their hypotheses yet, thus, these points do not provide strong evidence that Lao Dan and DAN were the same person.

A.C. Graham says that the identification of Lao Dan with the Grand Historiographer DAN of Zhou, who in 374 BC predicted the rise of Qin, and the invention of the story about the journey to the west and about writing the book for Guan Yin had as its purpose to win favor for the *Laozi* from the Qin. One can suppose that the medium for this propaganda was the lost *Guanyinzi*, which were completed by 240 BC.⁶⁷⁹

Gao Heng argues, however, that either of two conditions must obtain if DAN and Lao Dan were really same person and the author of the *Laozi*. The first condition is that no Lao Dan lived during the time of Confucius but only in the time of Duke Xian of

⁶⁷³ See Chan 1963: p. 48.

⁶⁷⁴ "Laozi ji laozishu wenti 老子及老子書問題", quoted in Zhang Chengqiu 1977: p. 87.

⁶⁷⁵ For this viewpoint, see Gao Hen 1973: pp. 186-187.

⁶⁷⁶ Chan 1963: p. 48.

⁶⁷⁷ The *Liezi* is not a spurious book. Concerning its reliability, Cf. Chen Guying's "Lun laozhi wanchu shuo zai kaozheng fangfa shang changjian de cuowu-jianlun liezi fei weishu 論老子晚出說在考証方法上常見的謬誤兼論列子非偽書" in *Daojia wenhua yanjiu*. *Disiji* 1994: pp. 411-418. Cf. Xu Kangsheng's 許抗生 "Liezi kaobian 列子考辨" *Daojia wenhua yanjiu*. *Diyiji* 1992: pp. 344-358.

⁶⁷⁸ Concerning this issue, Cf. Li Dingsheng's 李定生 "Wen Zi qi ren kao" in *Daojia wenhua yanjiu*. *Disiji* 1994: p. 438-449.

⁶⁷⁹ A. C. Graham 1986: p. 124.

Qin, when he was authored the *Laozi*, i.e. *Daodejing*. The second condition is that a Lao Dan did live during the time of Confucius, but he did not write a book; rather, another Lao Dan, living in the time of Duke Xian of Qin, wrote a book expounding the Way and its virtue.⁶⁸⁰ These two conditions, however, cannot be correct, since we have already shown in this chapter that a Lao Dan did live during the time of Confucius and that he wrote a book in two parts expounding the Way and its virtue. DAN and Lao Dan, therefore, cannot be the same person.

Concerning Luo Genze's four items of evidence that DAN is the same person as Lao Dan, Gao Heng says that the first three are weak, because similar names and occupations can belong to different people. Even the storied journey to the west might have been a story about more than one person. Only the fourth item of evidence, i.e. the son of Lao Zi, is strong evidence.⁶⁸¹ This issue will be discussed in the section on "Lao Zi and his son".

- Summary: Lao Dan and DAN were two different people. DAN was a historian of Zhou, and he had a meeting with Duke Xian of Qin during 384-362 BC.

2.6.5 Lao Zi and his son

Whether the Grand Historian DAN was Lao Zi depends very much on whose son Zong 宗 was. Sima Qian merely says that he was the son of Lao Zi, which can be taken to mean either Dan or DAN. From the context of the biography, however, and according to most scholars,⁶⁸² he meant that Zong was the son of the former, if the two men were different. But in this case a number of difficulties arise. Liang Qichao's first argument against the biography of Lao Zi in the *Shiji* is that Lao Zi's son lived too long after Confucius for Confucius and Lao Zi to be considered contemporaries. He says that, since Lao Zi's eighth-generation descendant Jia 假 was an official c. 160 BC, only eight generations had passed compared with the thirteen generations of Confucius' family during the same period.⁶⁸³

Chan Wing-Tsit says: "This means an average of about half a century for each generation in the Lao family line, a most unlikely event."⁶⁸⁴ Gao Heng says that doubt such as Liang's is based on general knowledge rather than on the facts of the ancient Chinese classics. Thus, this theory may or may not be correct.⁶⁸⁵

Those who oppose Liang's opinion argue that Lao Zi's eighth-generation might have lived during the same period as the thirteenth generation of Confucius. Taking this

⁶⁸⁰ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 178-179.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸² Chan 1963: pp. 48-49.

⁶⁸³ Quoted in Zhang Chengqiu 1977: pp. 80-81.

⁶⁸⁴ Chan 1963: p. 49.

⁶⁸⁵ Gao Heng 1973: p. 179.

position, Hu Shi says, for example, five to six generations were existing in his own family and in Liang's family.⁶⁸⁶ Chan also says: "Actually, in many Chinese clans, generations overlap by as many as five generations. This is the case in my own clan..."⁶⁸⁷ Ye Qing 葉青 argues, in his article "Cong fangfa shang ping Laozi kao 從方法上評老子考", that Lao Zi might have lived to be over 160 or even 200 years old. He gives many examples of old age. Secondly, Ye says, if Zong was born when Lao Zi was 90 years old, Lao Zi's eighth-generation descendants may well have lived during the same period as the thirteenth generational descendants of Confucius. Ye notes that science has proved a man can produce children even in old age, for which he gives many examples.⁶⁸⁸

The issue of age, then, does not provide in itself enough evidence to prove that Zong was not the son of Lao Dan, the contemporary of Confucius. The situation by which we could judge that Zong was his son occurs rarely, but is not impossible. This statement, of course, does not mean that it is evidence that Zong is the son of Lao Dan, the contemporary of Confucius. It means rather that the age issue cannot settle this question. One has to find other evidence to prove this point, but until now no other compelling evidence has surfaced.

Gao Heng thinks that Zong was not the son of Lao Dan but that of the Grand Historian DAN, but for different reasons than thus far discussed. Gao argues that Lao Dan's son could not have been a general of Wei.⁶⁸⁹

It is generally accepted that Zong 宗 was none other than Chong 崇, whose clan name was Duangan 段干. According to the *Shiji: Weishijia* 史記:魏世家, Duangan Zi 段干子 was sent as a general of Wei to make peace with Qin a year after his state, Wei, had been defeated by Qin in 273 BC. This identification has been made by Yao Fan (1702-71)⁶⁹⁰ and has been accepted by Gao Heng, Luo Genze, *et alia.* According to the *Zhanguoce: Weice* 戰國策:魏策, Duangan Chong 段干崇 was the general of Wei during the War of Huayang 華陽.⁶⁹¹ Gao Heng says that Duangan Zi was called "Duangan chong" in the *Zhanguoce: Weice*, because "zong 宗" and "chong 崇" were similar in pronunciation.⁶⁹² This point also arises in Yao Fan's explanation. Yao says that "zong" and "chong" were pronounced alike and were interchangeable. He quotes as evidence a passage from the *Book of History* in which the word "chong" occurs and is replaced by "Zong" in the same passage as it appears in the *History of the Former Han Dynasty*. Thus, both Duangan Zi and Dangan Chong refer to Duangan Zong, who was said to be

⁶⁸⁶ See quotations in Zhang Chengqiu 1977: p. 85.

⁶⁸⁷ Chan 1963: p. 49.

⁶⁸⁸ See quotations in Zhang Chengqiu 1977: pp. 90-91.

⁶⁸⁹ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 179-187.

⁶⁹⁰ Yao Fan: 16:7b.

⁶⁹¹ See Sima Qian's *Shiji: Weishijia* 史記:魏世家, and *Zhanguoce: Weice* 戰國策:魏策.

⁶⁹² Gao Heng 1973: p. 186.

the son of Lao Zi in the biography in *Shiji*. Gao Heng argues also that, according to the *Liuguobiao* 六國表, the War of Huayang occurred in the fourth year of King Nan of Zhou 周赧王 (i.e. the 34th year of King Zhao of Qin 秦昭王 and the fourth year of King Anli of Wei 魏安釐王), which was in 273 BC, 206 years after Confucius' death.⁶⁹³ This late date proves that Zong could not be the son of Lao Zi.⁶⁹³ For Lao Zi was a contemporary of Confucius, and Confucius was born in 551 and died in 479 BC. Tradition says that he was older than Confucius, but even if Lao Zi was born in the same year as Confucius, we would still have to account for how 278 years pass before his so-called son Zong became a general. If Zong was from 50 to 90 years old when he achieved this rank, Lao Zi would have had to have been anywhere from 188 to 228 years old! Clearly, if the theory requires this assumption, it is best to discard it. Therefore, any argument based on such an improbability is very weak indeed.⁶⁹⁵

If Zong was not the son of Lao Dan, was he the son of the Grand Historian DAN? The answer of Wang Zhong,⁶⁹⁶ Dubs,⁶⁹⁶ Luo Genze,⁶⁹⁶ Gao Heng,⁶⁹⁶ and many others is affirmative.⁶⁹⁶ Gao Heng supposes that the Grand Historian DAN was Lao Dan's descendant, and Zong was the Grand Historian DAN's son. Because of the first three reasons listed by Luo Genze above, the two people Lao Dan and the Grand Historian DAN have been confused as the same person.⁷⁰¹

Chan Wing-Tsit says: "Kao Heng's calculation is not too unreasonable. However, even if this calculation is accepted, another difficulty still remains."⁷⁰² As Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (1868-1936) has pointed out, the *Shiji* mentions one Duangan Mu as the teacher of Duke Wen (reigned 410-387 BC) as well as one Duangan Peng.⁷⁰³ Since Duangan was a clan name given when one was enfeoffed, and since Zong was enfeoffed as Duangan, he must have been the first person to be so named. He must have lived,

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, Qian Mu, e.g., also argues that the peace conference was not in 273 B.C. and DAN's interview with Duke Xian in 374 B.C.. This period involves a lapse of 101 years, and Zong would have been too old to be a general. But Gao Heng has figured out that if the interview took place when DAN was thirty, and his son Zong was born when DAN was sixty, Zong would have been seventy-one when he sued for peace. And this is not too old for a highly responsible general. See Chan 1963: p. 50 and *Chongding Laozi zhenggu*: p. 187.

⁶⁹⁴ Gao Heng 1973: p. 186.

⁶⁹⁵ See also Chan 1963: p. 49.

⁶⁹⁶ Wang Zhong: in the Supplement to his *Shuxue*: p. 28b.

⁶⁹⁷ Dubs 1941: pp. 215-221.

⁶⁹⁸ Luo Genze 1958: p. 225.

⁶⁹⁹ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 186-187.

⁷⁰⁰ Chan 1963: p. 49.

⁷⁰¹ Gao Heng 1973: pp. 186-187.

⁷⁰² Chan 1963: p. 50.

⁷⁰³ *Shiji*: 44:3b and 46:11b.

therefore, before Duke Wen's time.⁷⁰⁴ According to Qian Mu, Duangan Mu lived c. 465-395 BC.⁷⁰⁴ This means that Zong lived in the fifth or sixth century BC and was, therefore, the son of Lao Dan instead of DAN. This will mean that Sima Qian was correct when he said, Zong was the son of Lao Zi (Lao Dan). But whether or not Qian Mu's study concerning Duangan Mu is reliable is still an open question. His position is a mere hypothesis. On the other hand, as Bodde has pointed out, the first Duangan line might have died off, thus permitting Zong's enfeoffment with the same name for an entirely new family line.⁷⁰⁶ However, as Bodde has added, until further proof can be advanced, this idea remains only an hypothesis.

All things considered, this study would like to assert that Zong was a son of the Historian DAN rather than Lao Dan (Lao Zi), the contemporary of Confucius. Clarifying in this instance is the argument of A.C. Graham.

Graham says that Sima Qian's claim that Zong was the son of Lao Zi, must have been derived from "the tradition of a family which in Sima Qian's own time claimed descent from Lao Zi. If so, one would expect the ancestor to be, not a teacher without a surname on the margin of the Confucius legend, but someone with an official existence,"⁷⁰⁷ such as the Grand Historian DAN. Thus, the Lao Zi of Sima Qian's biography is a blend of the Lao Dan who taught Confucius and the Grand Historian DAN. As Graham continues to say, "At first sight there seems to be an obvious weakness in the hypothesis that Sima Qian took his information from the family of the Grand Historiographer DAN. It surely assumes that he confidently accepted the identification with Lao Dan, which he did not."⁷⁰⁸ Graham suggests that we try to put ourselves in the position of the Grand Historian DAN's descendants under the Han Dynasty. He says, "In the time of the Qin they had been proud of the ancestor who prophesied its victory. This ancestor is also identified by many with the author of a book which is increasingly influential. But since the fall of the Qin the Grand Historiographer DAN has become a liability while Lao Dan is a growing asset. In these circumstances it might be politic to discover that ancestor DAN lived in Pei, where the Han Dynasty ruling family came from, and to change the conversation for writing his name, replacing the graph 儋 by the graph 聃. Sima Qian might have been deceived by the family's claim to descend from Lao Dan, ignorant that such a claim depended on the questionable identification known to him from other sources."⁷⁰⁹

Lao Dan and the Grand Historian DAN, therefore, were two different persons; and

⁷⁰⁴ Zhang Binglin: 29b-30a.

⁷⁰⁵ Qian Mu 1956: p. 616.

⁷⁰⁶ "The New Identification of Lao Tzu Proposed by Professor Dubs," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXII (1942), 11.

⁷⁰⁷ A. C. Graham 1986: p. 123.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Zong was the son of another man, and very possibly the son of the Grand Historian DAN.

2.7 The issue of Lao Zi as a legendary figure

Some scholars have also dismissed the notion that Lao Zi ever existed as an historical figure at all. The first one to do so was the Japanese scholar Itō Rangu (1693-1778),⁷¹⁰ who regarded the biography of Lao Zi in the *Shiji* as fiction on the grounds that neither Confucius nor Mencius mentioned him and that the Lao Zi mentioned in the *Xunzi*⁷¹¹ is a confusion with someone else. Concerning this opinion of Itō, Chan Wing-Tsit says: "The latter statement is purely an arbitrary assertion, and the former argument is inconclusive."⁷¹² The present work's above discussion has also proved Itō wrong.

Arthur Waley in the 1930s also took Lao Zi as a legendary figure. He called Lao Zi "a legendary Worthy".⁷¹³ After noting the information which Sima Qian wrote concerning Lao Zi, without any further analysis, Waley said: "In short, Ssu-ma Ch'ien's 'biography' of Lao Tzu consists simply of a confession that for the writing of such a biography no materials existed at all."⁷¹⁴ Waley's conclusion was, in fact, just an assumption, for he never offered any concrete evidence to prove Sima Qian's records wrong.

In the 1960s and 1980s, D. C. Lau said: "The tentative conclusion we have arrived at concerning Lao Tzu the man is this. There is no certain evidence that he was a historical figure."⁷¹⁵ Does Lau have any evidence to draw the above conclusion? No, he does not. Therefore, at the end of his argument, he says: "All this, and indeed my whole account of Lao Tzu, is speculative, but when there is so little that is certain there is not only room but need for speculation."⁷¹⁶ Is Lau's speculation really reliable? The following analysis of the method of Lau's speculation, will show that Lau's conclusion is not at all reliable.

One of his methods is that he draws conclusions without any certain evidence based on a general principle. Lau drew the conclusion, for example, that different records concerning the meeting between Lao Zi and Confucius in the *Zhuangzi*, *Liji*: *Zeng Zi wen* and *Shiji* are examples of the Chinese historical propensity to collect stories of the same kind together, including variants of the same story.⁷¹⁷ This conclusion is just an

⁷¹⁰ Itō's manuscript on Lao Zi, seen by Takeuchi and quoted in his *Roshi no 1 kenkyū* (Study of the Lao Zi), I. 150-51.

⁷¹¹ The *Xunzi*: ch.17, SPTK, 11:25a. See Dubs (tr.), *The Works of Xunzi*: p. 184.

⁷¹² Chan 1963: p. 51.

⁷¹³ Waley 1934, 1942 and 1949: p. 105.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*: pp. 106-108.

⁷¹⁵ D. C. Lau 1963 and 1982: p. 131.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*: p. 132.

assumption based on a general historical principle without any compelling evidence.

Another unfortunate method is his tendency to draw conclusions without proof. Lau often says in his writings: "It is far safer to assume that...", "If that is so," "we cannot assume..."⁷¹⁸ Based on the principle that spurious books can be found among the Chinese classics, he freely denies any record which can be used to prove the historical existence of Lao Zi. He says, for example, "There are some reasons for thinking that this chapter may be late as well."⁷¹⁹ And when he sees a passage which tends to support his own case concerning Lao Zi, he says, "It is true that, most scholars agree that...is a late compilation, but much of the material in it is early and there is no reason to think that this story was an invention by the compiler."⁷²⁰

Therefore, Lau's conclusion is mere speculation and does not prove that Sima Qian was wrong about Lao Zi. The biography of Lao Zi by Sima Qian, however, as the above statement has shown, was not "speculation" but an historical record which can be proved by many other Chinese classics.

2.8 Summary and conclusion

The names: Lao Zi's surname was Lao 老, later changed to Li 李; this fact has been proved by four items of evidence with supporting arguments. His private names were Dan 聃 and Er 耳. He was called as 'Zi 子' as an honorary name meaning gentleman, scholar, or master.

His native place: Lao Zi was a native of Chu 楚, formerly belonging to Chen 陳.

Occupation: He was an archivist of Zhou 周, a contemporary of Confucius.

The meeting with Confucius: Lao Zi did meet Confucius. Concerning this meeting, scholars hold different opinions. Liang Qichao and his followers deny that this meeting took place, presenting mainly two arguments: one is based on the inconsistencies among the speeches of Lao Zi in different records; the other is based on the reliability of the source concerning the record of the meeting.

Concerning the first issue, I have argued that these differences in the speeches in different records do not show that the essential content of these speeches are inconsistent. These speeches in fact are not essentially inconsistent with the *Laozi*.

Concerning the second issue, I have argued that Sima Qian relies on a different source of tradition than that of the *Zhuangzi*; thus, the unreliability of the *Zhuangzi* cannot erase the reliability of the *Shiji*. Moreover, the *Inner chapters* of the *Zhuangzi*,

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*: pp. 123, 126.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*: p. 126.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*: p. 131.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*

which are generally accepted as reliable, do record Lao Dan's death and that Lao Dan lived in the same time as Confucius did; thus, Lao Dan must have lived before the *Zhuangzi's Inner chapters* were written. Aside from these, records may be found of the meeting in the *Liji: Zengziwen*, *Lushi chungiu* and the *Xunzi*. We find no compelling reasons to deny the historical validity of these records. Thus, many of the arguments of recent scholars have been shown to rely on assumption rather than fact.

The identification with Lao Lai Zi: Lao Zi and Lao Lai Zi 老萊子 were two different people.

The identification with Lao Peng: No certain conclusion emerges concerning the identification between Lao Zi and Lao Peng 老彭.

The identification with Taishi DAN: Lao Zi 老子 and Taishi DAN 太史儋 were two different people. Lao Dan 老聃, *i.e.*, Lao Zi was a contemporary of Confucius, while Taishi DAN was the historian of Zhou who met Duke Xian of Qin 秦獻公 sometime between 384-362 BC.

The son of Lao Zi, Zong: Zong 宗 was the son of another man whose family name was also "Lao". We can reasonably suppose that the Grand Historian DAN 儋 was an historical figure and was Zong's father. But, because of his similarity Lao Dan in more than one respect, he was confused with him.