

REVIEW ARTICLE

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Cosmology, Myth, and Philosophy in Ancient China: New Studies on the *Huainan zi*

CLAUDE LARRE, ISABELLE ROBINET, and ELISABETH ROCHAT DE LA VALLÉE

1993 *Les grands traités du Huainan zi*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf. 254 pages. Index, glossary of terms, Chinese characters. ISBN 2-204-04652-3.

CHARLES LE BLANC and RÉMI MATHIEU, eds.

1992 *Mythe et philosophie à l'aube de la Chine impériale: Études sur le Huainan zi*. Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal. Montreal. 240 pages. Index, Chinese characters. ISBN 2-7606-1585-5.

JOHN S. MAJOR

1993 *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought: Chapters Three, Four and Five of the Huainanzi*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 388 pages. Index, glossary, 32 diagrams. ISBN 0-7914-1586-4.

HAROLD DAVID ROTH

1992 *The Textual History of the Huainan Tzu*. Ann Arbor: Association of Asian Studies Monograph. 470 pages. Index, glossary, 37 plates, 16 tables. Hardcover US\$36.00; ISBN 0-924304-06-5. Paperback US\$20.00.

THE *Huainan zi* 淮南子 [Book of the master of Huainan] is a philosophical and narrative text of twenty-one chapters that dates back to the court of Liu An (劉安 179–122 B.C.E.), grandson of Liu Bang 劉邦 and prince of Huainan. A comprehensive volume, the work comprises treatises on the Tao, the skies, the earth, the seasons, statecraft, military strategy, and human affairs.

Written in the tradition of philosophical Taoism, the *Huainan zi* reflects the Han-dynasty synthesis of the ancient schools of Chinese philosophy, integrating a fundamentally Taoist viewpoint with contemporary cosmology, Confucian ethics, and Legalist doctrines of statecraft. In doing so, the text not only reflects a tendency that was typical of Han thought but also presents an outlook representative of Taoism at the time. This school of Taoism is usually called Huang-Lao 黄老 after the names of its two main figures, Huangdi 黄帝 (Yellow Emperor) and Laozi 老子 (Old Master, the alleged author of the much-revered *Daode jing* [Scripture of the Tao and the virtue]).

In Huang-Lao Taoism, the Yellow Emperor represents Legalist political doctrine, while Laozi stands for self-cultivation and political harmony. The doctrine of the school centers around the Tao as the highest and most fundamental force of creation underlying all existence, the human world, and the universe at large. The Tao pervades all, so that there is no significant qualitative difference between the different levels of cosmos, nature, state, and the human body. Cultivation of one plane reverberates on all others and influences the entire system. The cosmos is an integrated unity, in which the government of the state, the personal cultivation of the self, and the observation of natural and celestial cycles are simply different aspects of one and the same system (MAJOR 1993, 12).

The *Huainan zi*, which shares this basic outlook, formulates its premises and conclusions on the various levels of cosmology, philosophy, statecraft, and mythology. Straddling the borderline between philosophical Taoism and its more mythological and cosmological reli-

gious forms, the work is a classic of great importance for the understanding of Han thought. The views expressed in the *Huainan zi* became in many ways the dominant doctrine of later religious Taoist schools, especially with regard to cosmology and statecraft.

Despite this importance, and perhaps because of its in-between nature, the *Huainan zi* was long neglected by scholars. It is only in recent years that it has come to the foreground of academic attention; 1992 and 1993, in particular, saw the appearance of several important new publications, both studies and translations. The most important of these are the four works under review, by Harold D. ROTH (1992); John S. MAJOR (1993) Claude LARRE, Isabelle ROBINET, and Elisabeth ROCHAT DE LA VALLÉE (1993); and Charles LE BLANC and Remi MATHIEU (1992).

Taken together, these four works greatly improve our understanding and appreciation of the text, especially in the areas of textual history, cosmology, and mythology. The new translations not only add several chapters to the material previously available in Western languages but also represent a great improvement on the quality of earlier renditions. All four books are done by outstanding scholars in the field and excel in academic quality.

TEXTUAL HISTORY

Questions regarding the compilation, editions, and transmission of the text are discussed at great length and with admirable scholarly expertise by Harold Roth. A short summary of the basic development of the *Huainan zi* is also found in Charles Le Blanc's article "Histoire du texte et philologie" in LE BLANC and MATHIEU (1992, 161–76). Both works describe how the *Huainan zi* in twenty-one chapters—the format it has today—was only one among many works compiled by Liu An or under his supervision. It was, indeed, only one of three books of the same major compendium. Our *Huainan zi* was then known as the *Neishu* 內書 [Inner work] as opposed to the *Zhongshu* 中書 [Middle work] of eight chapters and the *Waishu* 外書 [Outer work] of thirty-three chapters. The *Neishu* dealt with the Tao, the *Zhongshu* with alchemy, and the *Waishu* with other philosophical schools.

Liu An was indicted for treason and committed suicide, as a result of which his works were neglected. The *Zhongshu* and *Waishu* were lost early, but the *Neishu*—the present *Huainan zi*—survived. It was first edited by Liu Xiang 劉向 in 79–78 B.C.E. on the basis of two versions, one from the imperial library, the other either a version from Liu An's court or a separate, corrupt imperial copy. Liu Xiang gave it the title *Huainan zi* after its original compiler; his edition made it ac-

cessible to a wider audience.

The work was frequently cited by Wang Chong 王充 in the first century C.E., when the first commentaries were also written. The major ones, those of Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58–148) and Gao You 高誘 (fl. 205–12), gave rise to the two editions of the text that remained dominant until the Song. These were subsequently integrated into a single work that has remained the main version of both text and commentary ever since. It is attributed sometimes to one, sometimes to the other main commentator. Even after this unification, however, many different editions and commentaries continued to circulate, over eighty of which Roth examines in his exemplary study.

The earliest of the editions extant today dates from the Northern Song and was probably owned by Wang Keming 王克明 (1112–78), an infirm scholar from Jiangxi who trained himself in medicine and eventually succeeded in curing his ailment (ROTH 1992, 127). From the taboo characters it uses, Roth concludes that the text was copied, at least in part, at the time of Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 (1163–89). This edition disappeared from view until acquired by Huang Peilie 黃丕烈 in 1801. Only then did scholars realize that a pre-Ming version of the text was still extant.

The next important redaction is contained in the Taoist canon, dated 1445, which includes a total of twelve distinct editions. After that come the Liu Ji 劉基 redaction of 1501, the *Zhongli sizi ji* 中立四子集 redaction of 1579, the Mao Yigui 茅一桂 edition of 1580, and the Zhuang Kuiji 莊達吉 redaction of 1788. In a thorough filiation analysis of these various redactions, Roth paints a vivid and complex picture of the transmission and reorganization of books in imperial China. The major problems he faces are the lack of dates in prefaces and colophons, the loss of the pre-Ming ancestors of later editions, the obscuration of textual characteristics by zealous editors, and their unindicated conflation of different readings in both text and commentary.

Evidence for determining the roots and transmission history of any given edition includes historical, formal, and textual factors. Historical evidence is mainly found in the prefaces and signatures editors included with their work. Even knowing the name of the actual editor, however, does not clarify the sources he used or the changes he might have made. Formal determinants are mainly the physical format of a given edition, its layout, printing technique, and the kind of wood-blocks used. Also important are the arrangement of text and commentary, the attribution of the latter to either Xu Shen or Gao You, and certain characteristic abridgments. Textual evidence, finally, relies heavily on the taboo characters of any given reign period as well

as on certain outstanding textual variants (ROTH 1992, 118–21).

Using these different kinds of evidence, Roth details the transmission and development of the *Huainan zi* over a period of two thousand years. His work is meticulous and full of surprising pieces of information, such as the case of the unreturned book that saved an entire textual lineage (ROTH 1992, 132; also 1991). He begins with the origins of the text at the court of Liu An and pursues it to the editions most commonly used today. His work is thorough and well-organized, but with information so dense and rich that it is often difficult to access a specific fact. Three separate indices—names, titles, and subjects—complicate rather than facilitate the search. In addition, his bibliography is first divided into two main parts (one of works cited and the other of textual studies of the *Huainan zi*), then further subdivided into sections on textual history, bibliographical sources, and general works. It thus comprises a sixfold division of books and articles that can be a hard nut to crack for anyone seeking basic information.

To complicate matters even further, Roth's bibliography of works cited is by no means complete, but includes only "those works that were most important in the writing of this volume" (ROTH 1992, 416). Many Western studies of the *Huainan zi*, as well as works on various other matters, are thus hidden away in a dense forest of footnotes, which, furthermore, are not placed at the bottom of the page but appended to the end of the book. This makes it difficult for the uninitiated reader to refer back to Roth's sources in order to see where the information came from or find more on any given subject. It also makes shortcomings harder to spot. As far as I was able to determine, for instance, Roth does not make use of Barbara KANDEL's detailed study on Liu An and his life (1973).

Nevertheless, the book is invaluable not only for our understanding of the *Huainan zi* but also as an illustrative description of book production and transmission in traditional China. Also, readers do not need to go without a comprehensive list of publications on the *Huainan zi*, which can be found in Charles Le Blanc's "Editions, traductions, et études du *Huainan zi*" (LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992, 177–208).

TRANSLATIONS

The *Huainan zi* has not, to date, been translated in its entirety (see table 1), although Roger Ames and D. C. Lau are close to completing the task. Because the twenty-one chapters are rather long, the complete work would have, as Charles Le Blanc points out, approximately one thousand pages if translated into a Western language. The first major translation of the *Huainan zi*, containing eight chapters (1, 2, 7, 8, 12,

13, 18, and 19) was done by Evan MORGAN (1934). Although never actually incorrect, this rendition suffers from stylistic shortcomings and minor inconsistencies; fortunately, these points are redressed in the

TABLE 1
Huainan zi chapters and their Western renditions*

No.	Title	Translation, analysis
1	<i>Yuandao</i> 原道, Original way	MORGAN 1934, LARRE et al. 1993, KRAFT 1957
2	<i>Chuzhen</i> 俶真, Primeval Reality	MORGAN 1934, Kraft 1957, Roy in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992
3	<i>Tianwen</i> 天文, Patterns of Heaven	MAJOR 1993, Mathieu in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992
4	<i>Dixing</i> 地形, Forms of Earth	MAJOR 1993, MORGAN 1934, LARRE et al. 1993, KRAFT 1957 in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992
5	<i>Shize</i> 時則, Seasonal Rules	MAJOR 1993
6	<i>Lanming</i> 覽冥, Seeing the Mystery	LE BLANC 1985
7	<i>Jingshen</i> 精神, On Spirit	MORGAN 1934, LARRE 1985, LARRE et al. 1993
8	<i>Benjing</i> 本經, Basic Standard	MORGAN 1934
9	<i>Zhushu</i> 主術, Arts of Rulership	AMES 1983
10	<i>Miucheng</i> 繆稱, Erroneous Names	
11	<i>Qisu</i> 齊俗, Equalizing Customs	WALLACKER 1962, LARRE et al. 1993, Robinet in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992
12	<i>Daoying</i> 道應, Tao Responding	MORGAN 1934
13	<i>Fanlun</i> 汜論, Wide Discussion	MORGAN 1934, LARRE et al. 1993, Robinet in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992
14	<i>Quanyan</i> 詮言, Inquiring Words	
15	<i>Binglue</i> 兵略, On the Military	MORGAN 1934
16	<i>Shuoshan</i> 說山, On Mountains	
17	<i>Shuolin</i> 說林, On Forests	
18	<i>Renjian</i> 人間, People	LARRE et al. 1993, Robinet in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992
19	<i>Xiwu</i> 修務, Duty	MORGAN 1934, Cheng in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992
20	<i>Taisu</i> 泰族, Great Categories	Cheng in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992
21	<i>Yaolue</i> 要略, Summary	LARRE et al. 1993

* This only lists published works. For more information on unpublished renderings, see ROTH 1992, 14. Works in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992 refer to studies of a given chapter, not translations.

retranslation of several chapters by LARRE, ROBINET, and ROCHAT DE LA VALLEE (1992).

Morgan commences with a general introduction on Taoist thought and history as far as it was known in his time. In contrast, the new volume first outlines the problems posed by translating the *Huainan zi*, then briefly discusses the court of Liu An and the text of the *Huainan zi* itself, not spending more than two pages on each topic. It then delves wholeheartedly into the translation, beginning with the preface of the commentator Gao You (dated later than the text and showing early Buddhist influence) and moving on to the last chapter (*Yaolue* 要略 [Summary]), which provides an overview of the contents of chapters 1–11 and 20. The translations of selected chapters follows: chapter 1 by Claude Larre and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée, chapter 7 by Larre (based on his earlier translation in LARRE 1985), chapter 11 by Rochat de la Vallée, and chapters 13 and 18 by Isabelle Robinet.

The volume thus contains six translated chapters of the *Huainan zi*—chapters 1, 7, 11, 13, 18, and the summary—covering the major topics of the work: the Tao as the origin of all existence, the essence and spirit that represent the Tao in human beings, the ongoing transformation of human customs and behavior in relation to the Tao, the development of culture and the importance of statecraft on earth, and finally the day-to-day realities of what it means to be human in this world.

The first three chapters are rendered in verse; the last two, translated by Isabelle Robinet, are in prose (Robinet discusses these two chapters in her “De changements et de l’invariable” in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992, 3–14). In all cases, the translation is much improved in comparison to Morgan’s earlier work. To give an example from the first chapter, MORGAN has:

Without (apparent) doing, things came into existence under the inspiration of the Tao. There is no sound or speech to indicate activity: the successive evolutions proceed with energies penetrating all. Without love or hate, impartially, and in no boastful spirit, the perfect harmony is attained (1934, 3).

Compare the new French version:

Non agir opère: la réunion est au Tao;
 Non agir exprime: la communication est avec le Vertu.
 Le cœur content et joyeux, sans prétention,
 On l’obtient de l’Harmonie. (LARRE et al. 1992, 41)

Not only is the verse much more expressive of the contents' power, but it closely follows the original in diction and phrasing and takes into account every little particle of the Chinese. The parallelism between Tao and Virtue is clearly brought out, where it is hardly visible earlier. It is evident that the passage deals with the individual, showing the role of cosmic nonaction in the heart and mind—there is no apparent non sequitur from cosmic creation to the personal mind, nor are there jumps in tense or structural breaks.

The *Huainan zi* is indeed, as Larre et al. say, “un chant ample et souverain.” The authors do their best to bring out these qualities in the translation, which is outstanding in quality and contributes greatly to our understanding of the original. The new French edition also provides ample footnotes—placed at the bottom of the page, with Chinese characters—that help the reader glimpse the complexity behind the simple words. The notes exemplify in a discreet and persuasive manner the necessity of textual analysis and philology, as shown also in Roth's last chapter, a textual analysis of chapter 7, and Le Blanc's brief but pertinent analysis of the creation myth in chapter 3.

The book is rounded off by a map of the Warring States (257), a brief glossary that explains the main terms and names used, and a short bibliography. It has an index regrettably kept in traditional European style, i.e., it names an item and then lists page numbers without further specifications. The index in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992 is of the same type, a feature that sometimes results in such absurdities as a list of about sixty numbers under the entry “*Huainan zi*,” which is, after all, the topic of the entire book. Still, where the analytical portion would have profited from a more sophisticated index, the translations are not much affected by this shortcoming. They are well done, annotated, and as true as possible to the original text. A joy to read and wonderful as research tools—give us more of the same!

COSMOLOGY

Three more chapters of the *Huainan zi* are newly translated by John S. MAJOR (1993): chapters 3 (Patterns of Heaven), 4 (Forms of Earth), and 5 (Seasonal Rules). Major, a former professor at Dartmouth College, has spent many years writing on the *Huainan zi* and exploring Chinese cosmology as it is reflected in this text and in other early documents. He presented the first translation and analysis of chapter 4 in his dissertation at Harvard University (MAJOR 1973), and has written on various aspects of *Huainan zi* cosmology ever since, situating it within the overall context of Chinese cosmology and science (e.g., 1978, 1980) and utilizing it to reach a more detailed understanding of the *Huainan*

zi vision (most recently, 1990, 1991).

The present work, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought*, begins with a general outline of the history and textual structure of the *Huainan zi*, explaining the basic facts one needs to know about the text and placing it firmly within the context of the Huang-Lao school (8–14; see above). Major then describes Chinese cosmology under the Han (23–53), a cosmology that is crucial to understanding the *Huainan zi* and that finds its foremost representation in the three chapters he translates. He emphasizes the importance of the *Huainan zi*'s position at the turning point between the division and multiplicity of the Warring States and the systematic integration of the Han dynasty.

Though Chinese cosmology is extremely ancient, it was only systematized during the Han (see HENDERSEN 1984). This cosmogony appears clearly in the origin myth in chapter 3 of the *Huainan zi* (23–38; see below). It is expressed in correlative thinking, which links the various phenomena of heaven, earth, society, and humanity with the five phases (*wuxing* 五行: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) in a coherent and integrated system. The five phases represent the various forms that cosmic energy (*qi* 氣) takes as it circulates through the world. They are not “elements,” as they are occasionally called in LE BLANC and MATHIEU (1992), because this term indicates the Greek notion of minute discreet particles, into which existing matter can be analyzed. Such a theory is alien to the Chinese, who have never sought the constituents of the world beyond defining them as *qi*.

According to Chinese cosmology, all things are grouped together in numerical categories. Things belonging to the same categories resonate strongly with each other, allowing connections to be established and predictions to be made (30–32). Predictions are formalized by the use of the diviner's compass (*shi* 武, here fittingly called “cosmograph” [39]), an instrument that replicates heaven and earth in miniature and is inscribed with the various coordinates of the skies and directions. It has been studied in detail by HARPER (1978) and KALINOWSKI (1983).

Cosmography—the basic layout of heaven and earth—is another part of cosmology. To the ancient Chinese, heaven and earth were parallel flat planes: a round heaven above a square earth (*gaitian* 蓋天 theory). This notion, which goes back as far as the Shang dynasty (see ALLAN 1991), was responsible for the layout of comic mirrors, magical squares, and town maps. The heavenly bodies rotated around the celestial north pole, appearing to rise and set (38). Exact measurements of the distance between heaven and earth were attempted with the gnomon, but were doomed to failure because of the flat-plane theory

(unlike similar attempts by the Greek Eratosthenes, described in comparison by Christopher Cullen in Appendix A [MAJOR 1993, 269–90]).

As an integrated system, the Chinese cosmology of the Han can be described as a reduction of Taoist cosmic speculation to a descriptive and practical world-order, in outlook and tendency not unlike the new scientific theories of the twentieth century. Indeed, when looked at in greater detail, a number of similarities emerge, as shown by Réal Roy in “La cosmologie du *Huainan zi*” (LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992, 49–67). Comparing Han cosmology with the thinking of Whitehead, Ayer, and Heidegger, Roy finds that both outlooks accept the notion of an underlying energy of which the world is a manifestation. Both also prefer an observational naturalistic viewpoint, explain the universe in terms of continuous processes, accept one major principle of development (causation in the West, resonance in China), and see the human body in its development as parallel to the world at large.

Major’s translations of chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the *Huainan zi* do much to increase our understanding of the exact nature and content of Han cosmology. Each chapter is prefaced by a short introduction and detailed synopsis, then divided into translation sections, each with a thorough commentary by the author. The commentary is exemplary indeed, including not only variant readings and interpretations in secondary literature but also maps and charts of the various cosmic phenomena described.

Chapter 3 (Patterns of Heaven, 55–139) begins with the origins of the cosmos and proceeds to the divisions of heaven, the movements of the planets, and chronograms of the twelve-year Jupiter cycle, the seasonal changes, and the calculations of portents. Omen lore being essential to the running of the Chinese state, most heavenly phenomena were analyzed and interpreted in direct relation to current events on earth. The chapter details the basic assumptions and underlying mathematical calculations that made such analysis possible. The heavens and their planets emerge as an integral part of a moralistic universe, in which the ruler bears the responsibility for cosmic harmony.

Chapter 4 (Forms of Earth, 141–216) speaks first of the overall shape of the earth and the paradise of Kunlun 崑崙, then details the various regions and their products, typical human physiognomies, and varieties of living creatures. A large part of the chapter is dedicated to descriptions of fringe-country barbarians and mythical monsters, many of which, as pointed out also by Mathieu in “L’inquiétante étrangeté” (LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992, 15–26), match those in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 [Classic of mountains and seas; translation in MATHIEU 1983], although some can be identified as tribes of South Asia

or Siberia. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the major rivers of China, the evolution of animals and plants, and the natural alchemy of the earth—a classical passage that has been cited frequently in alchemical literature.

Chapter 5 (Seasonal Rules, 217–68), translated here for the first time, is the *Huainan zi* version of the “Yueling” 月令 (Monthly Ordinances) chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 [Book of rites]. The same structure also forms the basis of the first twelve chapters of the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 [Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei 呂不韋], written by the prime minister of Qin in 239 B.C.E. The chapter follows the pattern of the twelve months, beginning with the first. In each case it details the position of the sun and the lunar lodge; the cyclical characters and relevant deities; the corresponding class of creature, musical note, number, taste, smell; and so on. Omens, portents, and recommendations for the emperor’s conduct follow, along with prohibitions and warnings against inappropriate acts. The chapter concludes with a moralistic summary of Chinese cosmology at large, describing the various forms of proper behavior in terms of the five phases, six coordinates, and six standards.

Overall, Major’s translation is meticulous and of outstanding quality. His commentary contains an inexhaustible wealth of information, rendered easily accessible by a long and sophisticated index. The volume is a veritable treasure trove of ancient Chinese cosmic lore and proto-scientific calculation.

MYTH

Among the many myths in the *Huainan zi*, the cosmogony in chapter 3 receives the most attention in these recent publications. The myth runs:

When Heaven and Earth were yet unformed,
 All was ascending and flying, diving and delving.
 Thus it was called the Great Inception.
 The Dao began in the Nebulous Void.
 The Nebulous Void produced spacetime;
 Spacetime produced the primordial qi.
 A shoreline divided the primordial qi.
 That which was pure and bright spread out to form Heaven;
 The heavy and turbid congealed to form Earth. . . .
 The conjoined essences of Heaven and Earth first produced yin
 and yang.
 The supercessive essences of yin and yang caused the four seasons.

The scattered essence of the four seasons created all things . . .
 To Heaven belong the sun, moon, stars, and planets;
 To Earth belong waters and floods, dust and soil.
 Anciently Gong Gong and Zhuang Xu fought, each seeking to
 become Thearch.
 Enraged, they crashed against Mt. Buzhou;
 Heaven's pillars broke, the cords of Earth snapped.
 Heaven tilted to the northwest, and thus
 The sun and moon, stars and planets shifted in that direction.
 Earth became unfull in the southeast, and thus
 The watery floods and mounding soils subsided in that direction.
 (MAJOR 1993, 62)

This myth, which is also found in the “Tianwen” 天文 [Heavenly Questions] section of the *Chuci* 楚辭 [Songs of Chu], describes how heaven and earth were in confused chaos when the Tao first arose.¹ The creation began with the Tao. From it arose the primordial energy (*qi*), a yet undifferentiated mixture of yin and yang. Yin and yang developed, then divided into Heaven and Earth. They established the four seasons, from which all beings were born (MAJOR 1993, 25). The world thus created remained in a state of primordial harmony or timelessness, the perfect golden age. This was radically disrupted by the fight between Gong Gong 共工 and Zhuan Xu 顛頊, which caused the world to “fall” into time and history. The myth explains why the world is as it is, why the elliptic does not coincide with the celestial equator, and why there are seasonal changes throughout the year (64). It also documents the interruption of intercosmic communication, an event that is described in chapter 4 of the *Huainan zi* as the breaking of the central pillar—either Kunlun or Jianmu (MAJOR 1993, 26).

Other versions of the cosmogony are found in the first two chapters of the *Huainan zi*. In all cases, like the classical account in *Daode jing* 42 (“The Tao produced the One, the One produced the Two . . .”), the cosmos is founded on shapeless chaos, which develops into the world through a process of differentiation guided by inherent cosmic principles (MAJOR 1993, 23). In some cases, as Mathieu points out in his “Une Création du Monde” (LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992, 69–88), the differentiation takes the form of production, as in the *Daode jing*, in others it comes about through division, such as when yin and yang separate to form Heaven and Earth (LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992, 72). The *Huainan zi* version of the creation is closely related to those in earlier documents (MAJOR 1993, 24–25) and has had a strong influence on later views, as demonstrated in Mathieu’s work, which

goes over the text term by term and documents similar usages in other works.

The elaborate and detailed cosmogony of the *Huainan zi*, with its tendency to integrate different visions into one system, is a typical Han phenomenon. There are no similar myths recorded in the documents of the Spring and Autumn period, where “the birth of the Earth was nothing in comparison with that of the ancestors descending from the gods, who legitimized the feudal and royal lineages’ place and their rank in history” (LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992, 79).

Another myth that occurs in altogether twelve of the twenty-one chapters of the *Huainan zi* is the story of Archer Yi 羿 shooting down nine of an original ten suns when they rise together and cause a universal drought. As Chantal Zhang points out in her “Le Mythe de l’archer et des Soleils,” the myth is known in different variants from all over South and Southeast Asia (LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992, 27–48). She describes its form among the Thai, Shan, Wa, Hmong, Mien, Paiwan, and many others, lists and evaluates the Chinese sources, and gives an analysis according to motive.

Archer Yi emerges as a hero who regulates the world. He is both a stellar divinity and an ordinary person, helpless without his elixir of immortality and his bow. His shooting down of the suns is a symbolic sacrifice that relives an archaic hierophany of the sun. It is related not only to drought myths but also to the mythological importance of birds (the suns’ representatives) and trees (the suns roost on the eastern tree of Fusang 扶桑 before they rise, and rest on the Western Ruomu 若木 after they set). The discussion is well organized, well informed, and analytical. It reviews earlier studies, but uses neither Sarah ALLAN’s recent work (1991) nor Otto MÄNCHEN-HELFEN’s old analysis of the myth (1936).

PHILOSOPHY

Four contributions in LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992 discuss some of the philosophical issues raised in the *Huainan zi*. Charles Le Blanc himself describes the concept of resonance (*ganying* 感應) as the Chinese equivalent of causality in the West (“Résonance: Une interprétation chinoise de la réalité,” 91–111). He places his argument within the larger question of why the Chinese never developed a scientific tradition comparable to that of the West—a question he criticizes as laden with subjective presuppositions. One cannot expect to find an identical type of development in a culture so fundamentally different even in its basic linguistic expression, with no syllables, no alphabet, no cases, no capitalization, and no tenses. The very language of ancient China

demonstrates that her thinkers thought of the world as a harmony of multiple forces coming together like a complex symphony (96)—a thought also expressed by Chung-ying CHENG in a discussion of Chinese linguistics (1987), and by myself in regard to the Taoist understanding of the cosmos (KOHN 1991, 104–15).

Le Blanc goes beyond these earlier works. Summarizing chapter 6 of the *Huainan zi*, he contrasts Chinese process thinking with Western substantiality, thus raising the level of the discussion to a more theoretical, hermeneutical plane and establishing a creative comparison with the Western concept of causality.

A second philosophical contribution by Natalie Pham (“Réflexions autour d’un miroir,” 113–25) discusses the mirror as a symbol for the mind and action of the sage. Drawing mostly on the first two chapters of the *Huainan zi*, but also using chapters 9, 13, 17, and 19, she finds the mirror to represent the text’s radical negation of individual subjectivity and strong emphasis on action rather than actor. Without a subject to think and decide, without an actor to act, she asks pertinently, who is there left to live and do things in the world? The utter paradox of the personless person and the actorless act is expressed in the image of the mirror, which (like the serene mind of the sage) is vacant as long as nothing occurs but (like the sage responding to the world in perfect spontaneity) reflects whatever may come into its range as ripples on its undisturbed surface. The image of the mirror is like that of the clear pool of standing water, another metaphor for the sage’s mind and his way of being in the world. Drawing on previous studies, especially the work of DEMIÉVILLE (1987), the article gives a thorough and insightful discussion of the subject as it relates to the *Huainan zi*.

Anne Cheng’s “Taoïsme, confucianisme et légisme” (127–42) analyzes the synthesis between philosophical schools seen in the *Huainan zi*. She focuses on chapters 19 and 20, where Confucian and Legalist doctrines are reinterpreted to fit into a basically Taoist framework. To begin with, the Confucian sage is reinterpreted as both a political figure and a being perfected in nonaction—here indicating a state of neutrality and responsiveness. This is only one of many reinterpretations of the term, as LIU Xiaogan has pointed out (1991). Nonaction, a specific method of government in the *Daode jing*, later becomes a concrete form of behavior and is linked with the preservation of life, ecstatic journeys around the universe, aesthetic perception and creation, and political control. The meaning dominant in later thought is first found in the *Huainan zi*, where nonaction implies that one takes appropriate action in accordance with the natural flux of things—never imposing one’s will upon circumstances yet never remaining entirely

impassive toward them either.

Similarly reinterpreted are the concepts of nature and culture, integrating the Confucian emphasis on education, learning, order, and principle and using the Confucian doctrine of *li* 禮 (ritual order) in a more cosmological context. In the end, the ultimate order of the social and political world is seen cosmically, socially, and legally, thereby joining the three main traditions into the political vision of Huang-Lao.

Chapter 10, another Confucian-Taoist synthesis, is the subject of the last philosophical contribution in the volume, Natalie Pham's "Quand les extrêmes se rencontrent" (143-57). The title of the chapter, *Miuzheng*, means "Erroneous Designations" or "Fallacious Evaluations." It is a polemical exposition, presenting certain propositions and systematically refuting them, using both Confucian and Taoist models as a basis. On the Confucian side, it makes use of such terms as "gentleman," "righteousness," and "sincerity," refers frequently to the Confucian classics, praises the model of the Confucian sage-rulers, and emphasizes the need for personal discipline and cultivation through learning. On the Taoist side, it insists on the ineffability of the Tao, on the secondary nature of the Confucian virtues, and on the importance of nonaction and responsiveness. The volume concludes with two contributions by Le Blanc that discuss the textual history of the *Huainan zi* and review the literature on the text.

Mythe et philosophie à l'aube de la Chine impériale represents an impressive compendium of recent research, highly analytical in its outlook and most thought-provoking in its diversity. The challenge of understanding the structure of Chinese myths stands side by side with the complex task of analyzing the Han-dynasty synthesis of the different philosophies under a joint cosmology. The most fascinating aspect, however, is the relation between ancient Chinese thought and modern Western forms of thinking. Here the study of the *Huainan zi* becomes more than a mere academic exercise in the history of religions or philosophy. It takes on a relevance in relation to our own assumptions about the universe and holds up, as it were, a spiritual mirror to contemporary Western thinking.

CONCLUSION

Taken together, the four recently published books on the *Huainan-zi* greatly enhance our understanding and appreciation of the text. They advance textual studies of traditional Chinese texts, improve standards of translation, and open the way for a deeper inquiry into the mythology, cosmology, and philosophy of ancient China. The *Huainan-zi* is a multifaceted and complex document that has been disregarded far too

long. Its integrative worldview is representative not only of Han thought but also of Chinese synchronic and alinear thinking in general. In many ways, the text establishes patterns valid over many centuries of Chinese intellectual history. The advances in the study of this text should thus prove fruitful far beyond what they contribute to the understanding of a single ancient document.

The four works reviewed here do just that. Roth's work on textual history establishes methodologies and sets parameters to measure and clarify the editorial quality and transmission history of ancient Chinese texts. Larre, Robinet, and Rochat de la Vallée achieve new levels of excellence in the translation of Classical Chinese prose and poetry, retaining the flavor of the original yet clearly bringing out the text's philosophical and literary quality. Major explores new dimensions of ancient cosmology, linking it with traditional mythology and philosophy on the one hand, and with Western and contemporary science on the other. His outstanding translation and commentary on the three cosmological chapters of the *Huainan-zi* render the ancient Chinese vision of the cosmos accessible in its full intricate complexity. Finally, Le Blanc and Mathieu integrate many of the recent efforts toward a better understanding of the text into one coherent volume. Their work provides easy access to both the earlier research and the newer visions, and opens the forum to a discussion of ancient Chinese cosmology, myth, and philosophy as they were originally joined.

NOTE

1. The myth is also discussed by GIRARDOT (1983, 134–56), LE BLANC (1987), and Rémi Mathieu (LE BLANC and MATHIEU 1992, 69–88).

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