

WRITING AS WEAVING: INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE *HUAINANZI*'S

SELF-FASHIONING AS AN EMBODIMENT OF THE WAY

By

Tobias Benedikt Zürn

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the final oral committee:

Mark Meulenbeld, Associate Professor, East Asian Languages and Literature

Mark Csikszentmihaly, Professor, East Asian Languages and Cultures, UC Berkeley

Anne Hansen, Professor, History

Rania Huntington, Professor, East Asian Languages and Literature

William H. Nienhauser Jr., Professor, East Asian Languages and Literature

Michael J. Puett, Professor, East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University



The University of Wisconsin-Madison  
The Graduate School

Candidate for the degree of PHD

Zuern, Tobias

9058178071 - 0004444261

Major: Chinese - G171

Subplan:

Minor: GMIN856 - Religious Studies

Second Minor:

We, the undersigned, report that as a committee we have examined **Tobias Zuern** on August 8, 2016, and upon the work done in the subjects named and upon the dissertation presented by the candidate we find that the candidate may properly be admitted to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

(By signing this warrant I am confirming that I have also approved this student's UMI abstract.)

Committee Member Names

Signatures of Committee Members

Meulenbeld, Mark R (advisor)

Mark Meulenbeld (RH)

Csikszentmihalyi, Mark

Mark Csikszentmihalyi (TN)

Huntington, Rania

Rania Huntington

Nienhauser, William

William H. Nienhauser (TN)

Hansen, Anne

Anne Hansen

Puett, Michael

Michael Puett (AH)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I dissent from the following report

Dissertation approved by the Graduate School on:

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### ABSTRACT

My dissertation “Writing as Weaving: Intertextuality and the *Huainanzi*’s Self-Fashioning as an Embodiment of the Way” re-evaluates the current treatment of the *Huainanzi*, a text that Liu An, the king of Huainan, presumably presented in 139 BCE at his inaugural visit to his nephew Emperor Wu, as a collection of philosophical treatises. It showcases how the authors of this highly intertextual scripture fashioned the text as a powerful manifestation of the Way (*dao*). In the first part of the dissertation, I demonstrate that the *Huainanzi* employs at least the three images of a tree’s root, a chariot wheel’s hub, and a weaving texture that are commonly associated with the cosmos and the power of the Dao to create a homology between the Liu clan’s scripture, the sage, and the Way. Hence, I propose that the authors of the *Huainanzi* apparently fashioned the text in image of the force that underlies the organization of the universe. In the second part of the dissertation, I demonstrate with the example of weaving that the *Huainanzi* does not only contain passages that depict the text in homological terms with the Way. Based on a perceived correlation of the practices of writing and weaving during the Han dynasty, I suggest that the producers of the *Huainanzi* in fact implemented the cosmic process of weaving in the scripture’s design and intertextual writing practice. In other words, by inserting and connecting various traces of the words of pre-Han writers in its texture, the Liu

clan's scripture presents itself both as being in image and as an embodiment of the Way and its powers—of the very force that connects and weaves together the celestial patterns and terrestrial forms into a cosmic texture. Consequently, I finally speculate that the authors of the *Huainanzi* might have created the Liu clan's scripture in image and as an embodiment of the Way in order to produce a textual artifact that belongs to the universally resonating category of the Dao, which underlies the order and orchestration of the universe.

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## SYNOPSIS

In her seminal essay “Against Interpretation” from 1964, Susan Sontag (1933 – 2004) tackled the dominant position of interpretation as the default mode of engagements with cultural objects. Since she sounded the call to defy the common hermeneutic strategy of emphasizing content over form more than fifty years ago, the phenomenon of privileging the production and deduction of meaning over the immediate presence of cultural objects persists in the Humanities. In my specific case, scholars in the field of Early China still read scriptures predominantly within an assumed philosophical context displaying a reductionist approach to writings that precludes from the outset the possibility of any non-discursive function(s) for texts. In other words, their interpretations rarely consider textual artifacts to be agents within contexts such as ritual or gift exchanges.

My dissertation “Writing as Weaving: Intertextuality and the *Huainanzi*’s Self-Fashioning as an Embodiment of the Way,” addresses this issue from the vantage point of the *Huainanzi*, a highly constructed and intertextual scripture from the second century BCE that scholars have traditionally read in philosophical terms. Contrary to its current interpretation as an encyclopedic collection of philosophical treatises, the dissertation shows that the *Huainanzi*,



which Liu An, the king of Huainan, presumably presented in 139 BCE at his inaugural visit to his nephew Emperor Wu, had been fashioned as a powerful manifestation of the Way (*dao*).

In the first part of the dissertation, I demonstrate that the *Huainanzi* employs at least the three images of a tree's root (*ben*), a chariot wheel's hub (*gu*) or axle (*zhu*), and a weaving (*jingwei*) or knotting (*jigang*) texture that are commonly associated with the cosmos and the power of the Dao to create a homology between the Liu clan's scripture, the sage, and the Way. Hence, I propose that the *Huainanzi* had been fashioned in image (*xiang*) of the force (*de*) that underlies the organization of the universe.

In the second part of the dissertation, I showcase through the example of weaving that the *Huainanzi* is not merely depicted in homological terms with the Way. Based on a perceived correlation of the practices of writing and weaving during the Han dynasty, I suggest that the *Huainanzi* in fact mimics and implements the cosmic process of weaving in its design and intertextual writing practice. By inserting and connecting various traces of the words of pre-Han writers and kings in its texture, Liu An and his workshop apparently fashioned the Liu clan's scripture both as being in image and as an embodiment (*ti*) of the Way and its powers (*daode*)—of the very force that connects and weaves together the celestial patterns (*tianwen*) and terrestrial forms (*dixing*) into a cosmic texture.

Consequently, I speculate in my conclusion that Liu An and his workshop might have created the Liu clan's scripture in image and as an embodiment of the Way in order to produce an object that belongs to the category (*lei*) of the Dao whose universally resonating power impacts the entire world. As a result, my dissertation claims that we should further explore the possibility of non-discursive functions for Liu An's miscellaneous and highly intertextual texture and potentially many other early Chinese texts. In other words, we should renegotiate the *Huainanzi's* current and almost naturally assumed categorization as a "mere" encyclopedia and/or miscellaneous collection of philosophical treatises that educates about rather than realizes sagely rulership and cosmic order.

**I. INTRODUCTION: INTERTEXTUALITY AS A MEANS TO CREATE THE *HUAINANZI*  
IN IMAGE OF THE WAY?**

*WELL I THINK THAT PROGRESS IS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT DEVIATION. AND I THINK THAT IT'S IMPORTANT THAT PEOPLE BE AWARE OF SOME OF THE CREATIVE WAYS IN WHICH SOME OF THEIR FELLOW MEN ARE DEVIATING FROM THE NORM, BECAUSE IN SOME INSTANCES THEY MIGHT FIND THESE DEVIATIONS INSPIRING AND MIGHT SUGGEST FURTHER DEVIATIONS WHICH MIGHT CAUSE PROGRESS, YOU NEVER KNOW—FRANK ZAPPA (1940-1993)<sup>1</sup>*

*I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE ARE FRIGHTENED OF NEW IDEAS. I'M FRIGHTENED OF THE OLD ONES—JOHN CAGE (1912-1992)<sup>2</sup>*

The *Huainanzi* 淮南子 is a highly intertextual and comprehensive scripture from the early Western Han dynasty (206 BCE-9 CE) that Liu An 劉安 (ca. 179-122 BCE, r. 164-122 BCE), the king of Huainan 淮南, presumably presented in 139 BCE at his inaugural visit to his nephew Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (born Liu Che 劉徹; 156-87 BCE, r. 141-87 BCE).<sup>3</sup> According to Charles Le Blanc, more than a third of the extant text consists of textual parallels to prior writings.<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Zappa, “Interview,” *Frank Zappa*, Roelof Kiers dir. (Hilversum: VPRO-TV, 1971), 40:50-41:10 min

<sup>2</sup> Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage* (New York: Routledge, 1987), p. 211

<sup>3</sup> In this dissertation, I mainly refer to a rather traditional understanding of intertextuality as a “mosaic of quotations”—i.e. as the incorporation of passages from prior writings in the structure of a later text.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Le Blanc has proven that large amounts of Liu An’s text had been “borrowed” from a wide range of pre-Han writings. As he claims, “a close study of the composition of the *HNT* reveals massive borrowing from earlier sources. Approximately one third of the text of the *HNT* [if one considers the *Wenzi* to be a later product] derives directly from more than twenty pre-Han works belonging to a wide variety of philosophical schools and literary genres.” (Charles Le Blanc, “The Idea of Resonance (*kan-ying*) in the

other words, the *Huainanzi* is a *bricolage*, a scripture that shares a plethora of passages with various distinct pre-Han texts.

Due to this intertextual design and its classification as belonging to the “Miscellaneous School” (*zajia* 雜家), a bibliographical category that Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE) developed in his “Record of the Literature [of Artistic Writings]” (“*Yiwenzhi*” 藝文志) in the *History of the Han* (*Hanshu* 漢書), Liu An’s text has long been dismissed as a mumbo-jumbo encyclopedia that does not develop a cohesive intellectual program.<sup>5</sup> The reformist intellectual Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭 (1895-1990), for example, classified the Liu clan’s scripture (*Liushi zhi shu* 劉氏之書) as consisting of miscellaneous writings lacking any coherent idea underneath the surface of the collection.<sup>6</sup> In his *History of Chinese Philosophy*, he writes, “The book called the *Huai-nan-tzū*

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*Huai-nan tzu*,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1978, p. 129)

In fact, the text might contain far more textual parallels to other pre-Han writings that unfortunately had been lost than considered, thus far. In that sense, the *Huainanzi* is indeed a prime example of an intertextual scripture.

<sup>5</sup> I alternatively call the *Huainanzi* Liu An’s text since we will see in chapter 1.2 that several early sources seem to attribute its production to the king of Huainan and his workshop that might have consisted of several court retainers and Masters of Methods (*fangshi* 方士). Unfortunately, this narrative is not verifiable so that it remains questionable whether the *Huainanzi*’s attribution to Liu An is correct. Nonetheless, I decided to follow the *Huainanzi* translation project and the early sources’ association of the text with the king of Huainan and his court throughout the dissertation.

<sup>6</sup> In this dissertation, I frequently refer to the *Huainanzi* with the title Liu clan’s scripture (*Liushi zhi shu* 劉氏之書). I derived this title from the *Huainanzi*’s last chapter “Summary of the Essentials” (“*Yaolüe*” 要略), which functions like an appended preface to the text. I decided to translate the Chinese expression as the Liu clan’s scripture and not as Mr. Liu’s scripture since Liu An according to Ban Gu’s 班固

[...] is a miscellaneous compilation of all schools of thought, and lacks unity.”<sup>7</sup> According to Fung, the *Huainanzi* supposedly misses some of the most important aspects of any philosophical text of value due to its eclectic and patchwork style; that is, in his view it lacks argumentative, textual, and conceptual coherence.<sup>8</sup> Thus, he considered the *Huainanzi* to be a text of little philosophical significance.

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(32-92 CE) *History of the Han* (*Hanshu* 漢書) submitted the *Huainanzi* to Emperor Wu and the imperial family. For my brief discussion of the *Huainanzi*'s textual history and titles, see chapter 1.2 For the *Huainanzi*'s classification as *za*, see pages 11-14.

<sup>7</sup> Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy Volume 1*, Derk Bodde trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 395

<sup>8</sup> Fung apparently deemed the *Huainanzi* so little that he presented only some of its passages on cosmology without any real discussion in his voluminous *History of Chinese Philosophy*. In addition, he provided neither the *Huainanzi* nor *Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn* (*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋) with a separate section in his *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*. However, his *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy* discusses to some extent the *Huainanzi*. Yet, the entire passage is full of prejudices towards what he called Han Taoists and Liu An's text since such writings would never reach the abstract level of pre-Han philosophers: “[...] with regards to those works which we can date as Han productions, those reveal one special feature. This feature is that the thought expressed in them is unable to “transcend shapes and features.” [...] the Han Taoists, in their theorizing, were restricted to the world of shapes and features.” This dismissal of Han Taoists as superficial “scientists” obsessed with “shapes and features” is mirrored in Fung's distaste of the *Huainanzi*'s eclectic design when he states regarding a passage from the “*Yaolüe*” that “one part at least of this book comes from the hands of Han era Taoists.” In other words, the *Huainanzi* only received a place in his *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy* to underline the shining greatness of the pre-Han period. For another passage that clearly reflects Fung's disregard of the Han, see footnote 81. For the quotations from Fung's *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, see Fung Yu-lan, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, E. R. Hughes trans. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1947), p. 112. For Fung Yu-lan's abbreviated history of Chinese philosophy, see Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, Derk Bodde ed. and trans. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1962). For the short section on the *Huainanzi*'s cosmology, see Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy Volume 1*, pp. 395-399.

Fung was not alone with his premature dismissal of the *Huainanzi*. In fact, several scholars of the twentieth century described Liu An's text as an unoriginal collection of passages from pre-Han sources unworthy of deeper intellectual engagement. As Wing-Tsit Chan (1901-1994), for example, characterizes the quality of the *Huainanzi* in his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Liu An's "ideas are no more than reiteration and elaboration of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, at least he kept the fire of Taoism burning and helped to make possible the emergence of Neo-Taoism."<sup>9</sup> As we can see in his depiction, the text itself supposedly only helped to preserve the *Laozi* 老子 and *Zhuangzi*'s 莊子 ideas over the period of a complete intellectual and political domination by Confucianism during the Han dynasty.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 305

<sup>10</sup> Until recently, scholars had accepted the narrative that Confucianism had won the struggle for power between the Hundred Schools (*bai jia* 百家) during the Han dynasty. See for example Homer H. Dubs, "The Victory of Han Confucianism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 58.3 (1938): 435-449. Some scholars, however, questioned this narrative of a Confucian dominance throughout the Han dynasty. Benjamin Wallacker (1926-2011), for example, argued that Han Confucianism incorporated Mohist and Legalist notions in their concepts (see Benjamin E. Wallacker, "Han Confucianism and Confucius in Han," *Ancient China: Studies in Early Civilization*, David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuei Tsien eds. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1978), p. 228). And Timoteus Pokora (1928-1985) argued for a continuous presence of Daoist ideas in the works of Yang Xiong 楊雄 (53 BCE-18 CE), Huan Tan 桓譚 (ca. 43 BCE-28 CE), and Wang Chong 王充 (27-100 CE): "Huan T'an's ideas played a large role in the development of Han thought. It was Huan T'an who, together with his follower Wang Ch'ung, started the critical trend of thought by attacking the New Text school and by viewing with skepticism the idealized past. Along with Yang Hsiung, all three philosophers were Confucian but had some penchant for Taoism. [...] Huan T'an was something of a self-styled

Such a skepticism towards and evaluation of the *Huainanzi* as an incoherent and uninspired mish-mash that only preserves important ideas of earlier writings clearly reverberated in scholars' treatment of the *Huainanzi* for the majority of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> Contrary to the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), which regularly had been discussed as a meaningful textual unit despite its more problematic textual history and rather diverse content,<sup>12</sup> Liu An's text had commonly been divided into distinct textual units until recently—i.e. into various philosophical treatises that discuss diverse themes and topics.<sup>13</sup>

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Confucian but, as Pan Ku tells in the *Hanshu*, he had an interest in Taoism. Pan Ku informs us that Huan T'an wished to acquaint himself with the texts of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu. Although these texts did not have a deep influence on him, he was very well informed and impressed with what H. G. Creel calls "Hsien Taoism" or Religious Taoism." (Timoteus Pokora trans., *Hsin-lun (New Treatise) and Other Writings by Huan T'an (43 B.C.-28 A.D.)* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1975), pp. xiii-xiv)

<sup>11</sup> In this assessment, I exclude the ongoing debate of philosophical school affiliation, which may be understood as attempts to interpret the *Huainanzi* as a whole. However, since these scholarly works often end with a mere bibliographical categorization of the text, they commonly avoid any large-scale interpretation of the *Huainanzi*'s meaning and purpose. For rather recent works that provide an interpretation of the *Huainanzi* and its function as a whole, see Judson B. Murray, "The Consummate Dao: The Way (*Dao*) and Human Affairs (*Shi*) in the *Huainanzi*," Ph.D. Dissertation, Brown University, 2007, Griet Vankeerberghen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), and Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 287-336.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Herbert Fingarette's influential reading of the *Analects* asserts, "after eliminating certain passages in this spirit [...] we are left with a text that has unity in terms of historical-social context, linguistic style and philosophical content," an optimistic treatment that scholars did not extend to texts like the *Huainanzi*. See Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. x.

<sup>13</sup> This sentiment is clearly reflected in Benjamin Wallacker's suggestion that the textual

Despite the scripture's self-reflective claim (*HNZ* 21.1) that “numerous are the words we [i.e. Liu An and his workshop] have composed and extensive are the illustrations we have provided” (多為之辭，博為之說) in order to avoid “that people will depart from [its] root and draw near to the branches” (人之離本就末也),<sup>14</sup> scholars dodged any large-scale interpretation of the *Huainanzi* and tended to engage in Liu An's text mostly chapter-wise. Or to stick with the text's imagery, they largely focused on individual branches of the *Huainanzi* due to their own specialized

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coherence of the *Huainanzi* as a whole may only “be attacked by one who has mastered the contents of all the essays in the book.” (Benjamin Wallacker, *The Huai-nan-tzu, Book Eleven: Behavior, Culture, and the Cosmos* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1962), p. 2) Interestingly, he proposes that coherence may only be found in the *Huainanzi*'s content, a claim I will directly question in this dissertation by focusing on the text's form and self-fashioning. In the last two decades, such a compartmentalized understanding of the *Huainanzi* slowly began to vein. In fact, *Huainanzi* studies received a significant boost with the first complete translation into English by the *Huainanzi* translation project around Sarah Queen, John Major, Andrew Meyer, and Harold Roth. However, the recent attempts in reading the *Huainanzi* as a whole aimed on reconciling the text as an important collection of philosophical treatises, assuming the same disciplinary framework that guided Graham, Fung, and Chan's dismissal. In chapter 1.1, I will elaborate on these recent interpretations of the *Huainanzi* in more detail.

<sup>14</sup> See Liu Wendian 劉文典 ed., *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解, *Xinbian zhuzi jicheng* 新編諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chuban fahang 中華書局出版發行, 2006), p. 700 and my discussions of this passage in chapters 2.3 and 5.2. In brackets, I refer to the specific chapter(s) in Harold D. Roth et al. trans., *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) on which I based my own translations. However, my renderings sometimes differ significantly from their interpretation due to my reading of the *Huainanzi* as a powerful textual artifact so that I decided to translate the majority of references by my own. I also chose to use the Zhonghua-edition over D. C. Lau's *Huainanzi zhuzi suoyin* 淮南子逐字索引 since the former text is more readily available. In most instances, however, I have consulted and compared the two editions and have mentioned in the footnotes whenever I followed Lau's reading.



interests.<sup>15</sup> Although parts of this translational and interpretive trend may be justified by the *Huainanzi's* sheer size of approximately 140,000 characters,<sup>16</sup> it is nonetheless telling that scholars produced (almost) complete translations and readings of comparably large and diverse texts such as the *Xunzi* 荀子, *Mozi* 墨子, or the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 much earlier.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For examples of partial translations and studies of the *Huainanzi*, see Frederic Henry Balfour, *Taoist Texts: Ethical, Political, and Speculative* (London: Trubner, 1884); Eduard Erkes, “Das Weltbild des *Huai-nan Tze*,” *Ostasiens Zeitschrift* 5 (1917): 27-80; Evan S. Morgan, *Tao, the Great Luminant – Essays from the *Huai Nan Tzu** (Charleston: Forgotten Books, 1933); Eva Kraft, “Zum *Huai-nan-Tzu*. Einführung, Übersetzung (Kapitel I und II) und Interpretation,” *Monumenta Serica* 16 (1957): 191-286; Eva Kraft, “Zum *Huai-nan-Tzu*. Einführung, Übersetzung (Kapitel I und II) und Interpretation,” *Monumenta Serica* 17 (1958): 128-207; Anne Birdwhistell, “A Translation of Chapter 17 (*Shuolin*) of the *Huainanzi*,” Master's Thesis, Stanford University, 1968; Jay Sailey, “An Annotated Translation of *Huai Nan Tzu* Chapter XVI,” Master's Thesis, Stanford University, 1971; John S. Major, “Topography and Cosmology in Early Han Thought: Chapter Four of the *Huai-nan Tzu*,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1973; Donald S. Harper, “*Huai-nan Tzu* Chapter 10: Translation and Prolegomena,” Master's Thesis, University of California-Berkeley, 1978; Edmund Ryden, *Philosophy of Peace in Han China: A Study of the *Huainanzi* ch. 15, on Military Strategy*, (Taipei: Ricci Institute, 1998); Benjamin Wallacker, *The *Huai-nan-tzu*, Book Eleven*; Andrew Seth Meyer, *The Dao of the Military: Liu An's Art of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Let me provide a brief comparison to illustrate the *Huainanzi's* magnitude. The *Laozi*, one of the most widely translated and read scriptures in the world, consists of about 5000 characters, i.e. it is a bit shorter than an average chapter of Liu An's text.

<sup>17</sup> The *Zhuangzi* had been translated very early. Herbert Giles (1845-1935), James Legge (1815-1897), and Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930) provided translations into English and German, respectively, already in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first translations of the *Xunzi* and *Mozi* are contemporaneous with Wilhelm's work. Out of thirty-two extant chapters, Homer Dubs (1892-1969) translated chapters 1-2, 4-11, and 15-23, which he considered to be the authentic parts of the entire *Xunzi*, into English in 1928. Alfred Forke translated the entire *Mozi* into German in 1922 while Mei Yibao (1900-1996) translated chapters 1-39 and 46-50 into English in 1929. For the translations, see Herbert Giles trans., *Chuang Tzŭ: Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1889), James Legge trans., “The Texts of Taoism,”

Moreover, those researchers who were interested in ancient Chinese myths (*shenhua* 神話) and classical texts treated the *Huainanzi* as a textual gold mine similar to the *Classics of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhaijing* 山海經) and texts of the “encyclopedic” genre of “writings [organized according to] categories” (*leishu* 類書) through which they could retrieve otherwise lost passages from ancient classics and mythological narratives.<sup>18</sup> In other words, they largely utilized Liu An’s text as a mere repository of textual fragments and ideas that could enrich our textual paucity and limited understanding of more “important” and earlier philosophical texts and myths due to its “syncretic” and collective character.<sup>19</sup>

Such a practice of cropping the *Huainanzi* into smaller semantic and textual units had

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*The Sacred Books of China* Volume 39 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891), pp. 127-392, James Legge trans., “The Texts of Taoism,” *The Sacred Books of China* Volume 40 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891), pp. 1-232, Homer Dubs trans., *The Works of Hsüntze* (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1928), Alfred Forke trans., *Me Ti: Des Sozialethikers und seiner Schüler philosophische Werke* (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag der Vereinigung wissenschaftlicher Verleger, 1922) and Mei Yibao trans., *The Ethical and Political Works of Motse* (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1929).

<sup>18</sup> See Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 21 and Harold D. Roth, *The Textual History of the Huai-nan Tzu* (Ann Arbor: Association of Asian Studies, 1992), p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> As with any reading of a text, it is absolutely justifiable and acceptable to consider, work, and focus on portions. That being said, the fact that scholars did not attempt an interpretation of the text and its potential meaning as a whole, however, rather reflects, in my opinion, the power of the narrative that Fung, Chan, and Graham perpetuated; namely that it would be impossible to find coherence behind the *Huainanzi*’s miscellaneous structure. For an example that uses the *Huainanzi* as a source for lost *Zhuangzi* passages, see Livia Knaul, “Lost Chuang-Tzu Passages,” *Journal of Chinese Religion* 10 (1982): 58.

conveniently been justified by the text's own intertextual design and its attribution to the Miscellaneous School that scholars such as Angus C. Graham (1919-1991) interpreted as a "catch-all" rubric. As Graham proposed, the bibliographical category of *zajia* describes all those texts "which he [i.e. Ban Gu] cannot fit elsewhere into his scheme"<sup>20</sup> of the Hundred Schools (*bai jia* 百家).<sup>21</sup> In other words, Graham's interpretation suggests that Liu An's text and its eclectic and multi-layered design inevitably forced Ban Gu to generate a new, catch-all category for textual hybrids such as the *Huainanzi* or *Mister Lü [Buwei's] Spring and Autumn (Lüshi*

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<sup>20</sup> Angus C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1989), p. 381

<sup>21</sup> The categorization into the Hundred Schools happened during Emperor Wu's reign and, thus, is in itself an anachronistic depiction of early Western Han and pre-Han Chinese intellectual life. Nonetheless, as Kidder Smith argues, this categorization remained quite influential: "Sima Tan [...] appropriated his competitors' ideas, recombining them in configurations he called "*jia*" 家. In Tan's time, *jia* meant "people (with expertise in something)"; *shujia* 數家, then, were "experts in number prognostication" and *Fajia* 法家 [sic!] would have meant "people (who rule by) *fa* or models" (Peterson 1995) [...] One hundred years later, Tan's six configurations had become the "schools" of Warring States political thought, with texts, authors, affiliations, and a history. Insofar as Tan had made order from a confusing multiplicity of views, he also provided a tool with which imperial bibliographers could rewrite an early story after their own considerably different interests. [...] Until recently, all students of this past accepted the theory of the Many Schools (*baijia*) – Six or ten main ones, plus many more smaller, family-owned ones. We have already seen how this concept was born at the moment of the *Hanshu* bibliography, and we know it does not represent conditions in the Warring States." (Kidder Smith, "Sima Tan and the Invention of Daoism," *Journal of Asian Studies* 62.1 (2003): 130-50)

For a discussion of the term *bai jia* and the idea that it refers to collections of didactic anecdotes on historical figures of the past and not philosophical schools, see Jens Østergård Petersen, "Which Books *Did* the First Emperor of Ch'in Burn? On the Meaning of *Pai Chia* in Early Chinese Sources," *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995): 17-43.

*Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋).

Interestingly, however, Ban Gu's definition of the *zajia* on which Graham based his dismissal of texts like the *Huainanzi* provides a very different picture.<sup>22</sup> In his “Yiwenzhi,” he writes:

The Miscellaneous School spread [and] because it came out of the office of court advisers (*yilang* 議郎), it brings together [ideas/texts/schools] of the Ru[ist] and Mo[hist] and harmonizes those of the Names (*ming*) and Laws (*fa*). It knows that [if] the body of the empire has this [then] it will manifest that there is nothing that is not pervaded by the kingly rulership. This is that by which it/he endures. If one roaming [the Four Directions] does this, then he will be far-reachingly admired and there is nobody to whom he [needs to] pay allegiance.

雜家者流，蓋出於議官。兼儒墨，合名法，知國體之有此，見王治之無不貫，此其所長也。及邊者為之，則漫羨而無所歸心。<sup>23</sup>

According to Ban Gu's explication, texts from the Miscellaneous School, which “came out of the office of court advisers,” were not incoherent, intertextual hodgepodes that had only little philosophical value as Graham, Fung, and Chan suggested.<sup>24</sup> Ban Gu rather claims that such

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<sup>22</sup> John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel similarly wonder about Fung, Graham, and other's reading of *za* as a miscellaneous mish-mash in their translation of the *Lüshi chunqiu*. See John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel trans., *The Annals of Lü Buwei* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 43-46.

<sup>23</sup> Ban Gu 班固, *Qian Hanshu* 前漢書, *Ershiwu shi* 二十五史 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she 上海古籍出版社, 1986): 1.30.166d

<sup>24</sup> This tracing back of textual genres to specific offices and officials at court is a special feature of the *Hanshu* “Yiwenzhi.” As Mark Edward Lewis remarks, “the structure of the [catalogue's] textual field is derived from the state apparatus. The canons are identified with the sage king and each category of texts traced back to a department or office.” (Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p. 327) In that sense, it seems as if the specific rank of the office in which a text apparently had been produced was thought to reflect, categorize, and preconfigure its importance, function/role, and power in the eyes of the “Yiwenzhi.”

texts would unite and harmonize the *Ru*-ists, Mohists, Legalists, and the School of Names (兼儒墨，合名法).<sup>25</sup> In so doing, the texts of the Miscellaneous School would “manifest that there is nothing that is not pervaded by the kingly rulership” (見王治之無不貫) while providing “that through which [a kingdom] endures” (此其所長也) and increasing her power and glory. In other words, and significantly, Ban Gu called these texts *zajia* since they unite the various strands of thought and, thereby, serve as political tools similar to the court advisers that may assist a ruler in her/his efforts of unifying the empire.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, we may summarize that Ban Gu attributed quite some power to the miscellaneous texts’ intertextual and harmonizing writing strategy, an aspect that apparently escaped Graham’s attention.

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<sup>25</sup> Within the system of the Hundred Schools, the *ru* 儒 refer to a *corpus* of people and texts related to Kongzi 孔子 (trad. 551-479 BCE) that expound the importance of ritual and self-cultivation for the governance of an empire. Nowadays we would summarize these writings under the category of Confucianism. The *mo* 墨, commonly translated as Mohists, refer to the texts and disciples of Mo Di 墨翟 (trad. ca. 470-391 BCE) who were emphasizing a communal, almost authoritarian understanding of governance based on (material) self-restraint and a harsh punishment and reward system. The *ming* 名 are often translated as the school of names. Its most famous member arguably is Gongsun Long 公孫龍 (ca. 325-250 BCE) whose writings on various linguistic aspects such as problems of denominations (*ming*) are only extant in fragments including the famous phrase that “a white horse is not a horse” (*baima feima* 白馬非馬). The *fa* 法 are commonly translated as the legalist school. Texts attributed to this category such as the writings of Han Fei 韓非 (ca. 280-233 BCE) commonly emphasize that governance only works if a ruler relies on punishments and rewards rather than advise from officials and moral education.

<sup>26</sup> In this sense, Mark Edward Lewis’ assessment of the *Huainanzi* as part of several distinct attempts to textually unify the empire that we will discuss in chapter 2 is closer to Ban Gu’s interpretation than Fung, Chan, and Graham.

This contrast raises some interesting questions. Why did eminent scholars such as Fung, Chan, and Graham who were masters of classical Chinese misinterpret the category of *zajia* in such a forceful way? To my knowledge, Ban Gu mentions nowhere in his “Yiwenzhi” a particularly condescending reading of the Miscellaneous School and its textual output. Moreover, why did the *Huainanzi*’s syncretic and intertextual design displease these scholars so much that they dismissed the text as an incoherent and uninspired conglomeration of quotations from prior texts?<sup>27</sup> In my opinion, their pejorative interpretation of the *Huainanzi* as a textual behemoth may be explained by what Stanley Fish has called an embeddedness in a field of practice, an institutionalized reading strategy that preconfigures questions and concerns of an audience according to its disciplinary training.<sup>28</sup> It seems as if the paradigm of reading Han and pre-Han texts within the disciplinary frameworks and horizon of philosophy shaped these scholars’ understanding of early China to such an extent that they refused to consider the

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<sup>27</sup> In fact, we find several instances in contemporary (pop) culture that reflect this attitude towards ingenuity in the arts as a measure of quality. Besides the legal institutionalization of this ideal in form of copyright laws and intellectual property rights, it appears also in receptions of Dj-ing and sampling in the 80’s and 90’s or in the controversy about Marcel Duchamp’s (1887-1968) readymades such as “Fountain” at the beginning of the twentieth century. For a brief recapitulation of the events around the rejection of Duchamp’s “Fountain” by The Society of Independent Artists, see Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, Ron Padgett trans. (New York: Viking Press, 1971), p. 55 and Louise Norton, “Buddha of the Bathroom,” *The Blindman 2* (1917): 5-6.

<sup>28</sup> See the more detailed discussion of Stanley Fish’s concept on pages 51-53.

possibility of appreciating the admittedly extraordinary form and myriad contents of Liu An's masterful project.<sup>29</sup> By observing the scripture through such a philosophically colored lens that assumes argumentative, conceptual, and textual coherence to be foundational traits of any text of value, they expected the *Huainanzi* to fulfill demands and standards that the text itself does not claim to be concerned with.<sup>30</sup> In the "Yaolüe," for example, the *Huainanzi* particularly speaks out against a one-sided reading and mutually exclusive understanding of the *bai jia*'s teachings, a categorical standard that Graham, Fung, and Chan seemingly demanded from any early Chinese text. *HNZ* 21.4 explicitly states that the Liu clan's scripture "does not follow the path of one trace and does not adhere to the aims of one side" (非循一跡之路，守一隅之指

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<sup>29</sup> In this study, I use the term philosophy as a category that scholars of early China constantly utilize to depict their objects of observation. In that sense, I am not criticizing the discipline of philosophy as a whole but what Wiebke Denecke has called a reductionist, late nineteenth and early twentieth century vision of philosophy that impacted the study of early China (see quote on page 50). Of course, there have been a variety of voices in the field of philosophy that challenged intellectualistic approaches and overemphases of the mind. For two examples, see Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning cannot Convey* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2004) pp. 1-50 or Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Donald A. Landes trans. (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 1-205. For a discussion of the *jia/jiao*-divide in early Chinese studies, see pages 42-53.

<sup>30</sup> In some sense, it is like watching a play and expecting it to fulfill the requirements of a tragedy without discerning whether the play is in fact a tragedy or perhaps a comedy. In communicative terms, I would say that these earlier engagements with Liu An's text didn't really listen to the *Huainanzi*'s voice and self-fashioning.

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In the following pages, my dissertation will, therefore, challenge their pejorative

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<sup>31</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 711

<sup>32</sup> We will see in chapter 1.1 that this assumption of a philosophical context for the *Huainanzi* still permeates more sympathetic and more recent approaches to Liu An’s text. Recent scholarship around the *Huainanzi* translation group, for example, argued for the text’s coherence and philosophical value. Although this group has spent significantly more time and space on discussing the *Huainanzi*’s extraordinary form, they have still consequently and seemingly naturally subordinated the text’s elaborate design to its content displaying what Susan Sontag called the hegemony of hermeneutics in the Humanities. For Susan Sontag’s critique of the Humanities’ obsession with content, see Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Delta Book, 1961), pp. 3-14.

<sup>33</sup> Vankeerberghen, Murray, and others have argued that the *Huainanzi* is a tool to increase Liu An’s prestige and standing. Contrary to them, I think that Ban Gu refers to the “prestige” or power of the person who possesses the text rather than the one who produced it or followed its advice.



compartmentalization of the *Huainanzi* and their belittling of its miscellaneous and intertextual form by uncovering a coherent vision behind the text's production AND design. In order to do so, I will consciously reject the assumption that early Chinese texts inherently belong to a philosophical tradition that consists of discourses and debates at the courts of early Chinese rulers.<sup>34</sup> In lieu of presuming such a preconceived, yet debatable cultural context, I choose to first listen carefully to the *Huainanzi's* self-illustrations that appear throughout the text.<sup>35</sup> For

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<sup>34</sup> One may understand my project as a counternarrative to Griet Vankeerberghen's interpretation of the *Huainanzi* based largely on a "historical" context derived from writings such as the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu* (see Griet Vankeerberghen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*, pp. 1-78). I follow here Martin Kern's critical stance towards contexts provided by the standard histories (*zhengshi* 正史) as laid out in his chapter "Between Ch'in History and Han Historiography." As a result, Kern first focuses on the textual analysis of the steles before he contextualizes these inscriptions with the help of Han historiography. I utilize a similar model by first focusing on the *Huainanzi's* self-fashioning as a texture of the Way. For Martin Kern's discussion of the *Shiji* and the Stele inscriptions as politically motivated texts, see Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2000), pp. 155-163.

<sup>35</sup> I agree here with Andrew Seth Meyer's evaluation that "in order to fully appreciate the *Huainanzi's* rhetorical and philosophical implications, however, one must inquire more deeply into the claims the text makes regarding its own organization." (Andrew Seth Meyer, "Root-Branches Structuralism in the *Huainanzi*," *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, Sarah A. Queen and Michael J. Puett eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 25) As we will see in this dissertation, Liu An's writings do indeed offer enough self-reflective passages to reconstruct some Han-dynastic understandings of texts and the purposes behind their organizations and styles. However, I disagree with some of the prerequisites Andrew Meyer displays in this short quotation. In my opinion, he unfortunately does not consequently follow through with his focus on the *Huainanzi's* self-depictions since he still assumes rhetorical and philosophical implications to be at the heart of the text's style and organization, something the text does not claim about itself. In that sense, he only allows the text to speak for itself in a pre-configured environment (i.e. early Chinese writings as philosophical texts). This

this purpose, the final chapter “Summary of the Essentials” (“Yaolüe” 要略) will prove to be of particular importance since it functions like an appended preface (*xu* 序) explaining the structure, style, and purpose of Liu An’s text in rather great detail.<sup>36</sup> By taking the *Huainanzi*’s self-reflective claims in the “Yaolüe” and throughout the entire text seriously and oftentimes literally, we will be able to see that Liu An and his workshop apparently fashioned the Liu clan’s scripture as a textual manifestation of the cosmic Way.

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circular reasoning about the apparently philosophical nature of early Chinese texts resembles in many ways the problem Christian Wedemeyer faced in his re-evaluation of Tantric Buddhism. He argues that over decades discourses on Tantric Buddhism constantly repeated the same truism that Tantric transgressions are irrational or arational impulses. This perception completely limited scholars’ approach to Tantric texts and situated them within a clearly defined, yet anachronistically constructed sociocultural context although the evidence for it remained rather vague. See Christian K. Wedemeyer, *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 1-13.

<sup>36</sup> Early Chinese texts rarely provide concise definitions of their terminology or elaborate explanations why they use which words in what kind of contexts. Fortunately, the *Huainanzi*’s last chapter “Yaolüe” is a rare exemption to this trend. It offers an opportunity to observe (early) Han reflections on literary techniques and styles. Although it remains unclear whether this part originally belonged to the “authentic” *Huainanzi*, the majority of scholars believes that the “Yaolüe” had at least been written not long after the text’s presumable production at the beginning of Han Wudi’s reign. As we will see in chapter 1.2, Ban Gu’s “Record of the Literature [of Artistic Writings]” mentions a *Huainan’s Inner Scripture* (*Huainan neishu* 淮南内书) in twenty-one chapters (*pian* 篇) suggesting that already in the Eastern Han (25-220 CE) the “Summary” was thought to be a part of Liu An’s text. Thus, the “Yiwenzhi” indicates that the “Yaolüe” likely offers an opportunity to engage in an interpretation of the purposes of the *Huainanzi*’s chapters from the Western Han dynasty that might have been part of the original text. For an elaborate discussion and translation of the *Huainanzi*’s last chapter and its vision of Liu An’s text, see Judson B. Murray, “The Consummate Dao.” For an argument that the “Yaolüe” is a text created after Liu An’s apparent suicide, see Zhang Hanmo, “Models of Authorship and Text-Making in Early China,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California-Los Angeles, 2012, pp. 242-326.

In order to illustrate this point, the dissertation introduces the concept of cosmicization, a term I define as the incorporation of cosmological ideas and schemes in a text, space, ritual, or object's content and design.<sup>37</sup> I argue that the *Huainanzi* incorporates a shared imagery of a tree's root, hub of a chariot wheel, and weaving as a means to create the Liu clan's scripture in image (*xiang* 象) and as an embodiment of the Way (*tidao* 體道).<sup>38</sup> Some scholars have

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<sup>37</sup> This idea is based on Mircea Eliade's famous claim that "man cosmicizes himself; [...] he reproduces on the human scale the system of rhythmic and reciprocal conditioning influences that characterizes and constitutes a world, that, in short, defines any universe." (Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, 1987), p. 173) In that sense, I understand the aesthetic strategy of cosmicization to be an attempt in incorporating elements of a person's lifeworld and *imaginaire* in a cultural object.

<sup>38</sup> In this dissertation, I define image (*xiang*) as a primordial shape that existed before the creation of beings. To use the *Huainanzi*'s (HNZ 7.1) own words, "In the past, at a time when there was no Heaven and Earth, there were only images and no forms" (古未有天地之時，惟像無形; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 218). In that sense, I understand the verbal form of *xiang* to mean "being in image of." However, these images were thought to manifest in the physical forms (*xing* 形) of the Myriad Beings. In so doing, the *xiang* and *xing* preconfigure a being's belonging to distinct resonating (*ying* 應) image or phenomenal categories (*xiang zhi lei* 像之類 or *wulei* 物類). Isabelle Robinet has succinctly summarized this concept in following words: "The term *xiang* may be rendered as "image," "figure," "symbol," or "configuration." The *xiang* are images that make things apparent; they are part of reality, and inherently contain and manifest the cosmic dimension of things and their structure. This is why the *xiang* are often considered to be the "real forms" (*zhenxing* 真形) of things, or the fundamental substance (*\*ti*) of beings. They are visible but lie before and beyond the world of forms. [...] In their role as mediators, images also indicate structural relationships. For instance, the Sun as an image represents the Great Yang (*taiyang* 太陽, or Yang containing Yin); the Sun exists in the same relation to the Moon as the day to the night, Heaven to Earth, East to West, and the alchemical Dragon to the Tiger (see *\*longhu*). As images relate different things on various levels to each other, and are movable and interchangeable, [...] [t]hey can express a pattern as well as a process, they operate in diverse registers of sense, and they function as terms that indicate relations and functions rather than of particular things.

already investigated elements of the *Huainanzi's* replication of cosmological schemes.<sup>39</sup>

However, little work has been done on uncovering evidence within the text itself for the reasons behind this aesthetic implementation and emulation of aspects of the world in the scripture. Because of this gap, the dissertation ventures out to observe how Liu An's text depicts and construes its cosmicized design and what its implementation might tell us about the potential purpose(s) of such a highly constructed and extraordinary text.

I will develop this project with the help of the following argumentative steps. After some preliminary remarks on the field of Early China and the *Huainanzi's* historical contextualization in scholarship, thus far, I begin in chapter 2, titled "Being in Image of the Way: Cosmicized Aspects of the *Huainanzi*," to excavate the text's imaginary world. I showcase that the Liu clan's scripture develops correlations between the Way, sagely rulers, and itself with the help of a shared imagery of the root of a tree, the hub of a chariot wheel, and weaving—images that early Chinese texts frequently employ to illustrate the universe, empire, and rulership. I

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This is why it is hardly possible to assign definitions to them: the sense of each of them is multiple and varies with the context." (Isabelle Robinet, "Xiang," *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Fabrizio Pregadio ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1086-1087)

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of the roots and branches structure of the *Huainanzi* beyond Andrew Meyer's assessment below, see Harold D. Roth et al. trans., *The Huainanzi*, pp. 14-20. For other discussions of the *Huainanzi's* cosmicized structure, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, pp. 302-308.

propose that the *Huainanzi* uses such a shared imagery in order to create homological relationships between a well-ordered cosmic, physical, and textual *corpus*.<sup>40</sup> In other words, I suggest that Liu An and his workshop consciously utilized such a shared imagery as a means to cosmicize and fashion the Liu clan's scripture and the sagely ruler in image of the cosmic Way.

In chapters 3 to 5, I then venture out to show that the Liu clan's scripture had not only been produced in image of the Dao. By closely analyzing the image of weaving, I highlight that the text's intertextual design might in fact enshrine Liu An and his workshop's literary attempt to cosmicize and fashion the *Huainanzi* as an embodiment of the Way. As Edward H. Schafer observed,

The traditional Chinese vocabulary of basic features of the cosmos (and also of the political and social order of this world, which derives from it), is full of images from the language of threads, textiles, weaving, cords, and nets. Too little attention has been paid to this subject by philologists.<sup>41</sup>

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Homologies refer to the structural correlations between two seemingly distinct phenomena. A classical example would be the Daoist vision of the body as a microcosm (see Kristoffer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, Karen C. Duval trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 32-43 and 100-112). In that sense, homology, metaphor, and analogy seemingly stand in close relationship with each other. However, there is an important difference between these concepts: while metaphors and analogy are classically understood as a likening, as an as-if mode with the purpose of illustration, homologies emphasize an equality and sameness between two or more phenomena. For a discussion of homologies between man and the cosmos, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 162-215. For a very brief discussion of the reading of images as likeness in European intellectual history, see W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 31-36.

<sup>41</sup>

Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 262

In this part of the dissertation, I want to respond to Schafer's complaint that "Too little attention has been paid to this subject by philologists" by exploring the intersections of the cosmos, textiles, writings, and sagely rulership in the early imperial period. I propose that the intertextual design of the Liu clan's scripture, which at least partially triggered earlier scholars' discontent with the *Huainanzi*, is in fact an attempt to replicate the process of weaving in writing. In other words, the Liu clan's scripture would not only be in image of the Way but also incorporate her actions.

In order to substantiate this proposition, I first reconstruct in chapter 3 "The Image Fields of Weaving" and in chapter 4 "The Image Fields of Writing" during the late Warring States (475-222 BCE) and early imperial period. Harald Weinrich developed the conceptualization of image fields (*Bildfelder*) with the help and in concert with Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) famous concepts of *langue* and *parole*.<sup>42</sup> Weinrich claims that specific forms of images<sup>43</sup> stand

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<sup>42</sup> "In order to explain what comprises an image field, it is essential to first explain what it is not. It is not an allegory in a rhetorical sense since the rhetorical figure of an allegory—defined as a continuous metaphor—only exists in a text. An allegory is singular and actual. An image field, however, belongs to the objective and virtual social framework of language. It relates to allegory like Saussure's *langue* to a sequence of *parole*. An allegory requires an image field and not the other way around. [...] Similar to a single word that does not exist in isolation in language, a single metaphor [inherently] belongs to the context of its image fields. It is a position within the image field."

"Zur Erklärung dessen, was ein Bildfeld ist, muß zuvor gesagt werden, was ein Bildfeld nicht ist. Es ist keine Allegorie im rhetorischen Sinne des Wortes. Denn die rhetorische Figur der Allegorie, definiert als fortgesetzte

in relationship to image fields like individual speeches (*parole*) are linked to language as an objective and structured linguistic system (*langue*).<sup>44</sup> In other words, he construes an image field as the iconological equivalent to the linguistic model of a lexical field (*sprachliches Feld* or *Wort-/Begriffsfeld*).<sup>45</sup> Like words that are interrelated within a field of lexical relationships,

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Metapher, gibt es nur in einem Text. Sie ist also individuell und aktual. Das Bildfeld gehört demgegenüber zum objektiven, virtuellen Sozialgebilde der Sprache und verhält sich zur Allegorie wie Saussures Sprachgebilde zu einer Folge von Sprechakten. Die Allegorie setzt das Bildfeld voraus, nicht umgekehrt. [...] Im Maße, wie das Einzelwort in der Sprache keine isolierte Existenz hat, gehört auch die Einzelmetapher in den Zusammenhang ihres Bildfeldes. Sie ist eine Stelle im Bildfeld.” (Harald Weinrich, “Münze und Wort. Untersuchungen an einem Bildfeld,” *Sprache in Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett Verlag, 1976), p. 283)

<sup>43</sup> In this dissertation, I consequently replace Weinrich’s Eurocentric focus on metaphors with the more general term of an image. In my opinion, this replacement does not demolish the value and functionality of Weinrich’s model.

<sup>44</sup> Ernst Gombrich asserts a parallel between linguistics and iconology similar to Harald Weinrich by claiming, “The emerging discipline of iconology [...] must ultimately do for the image what linguistics has done for the word.” (Ernst Gombrich, “Signs Language and Behaviour,” *Reflections on the History of Art: Views and Reviews*, Richard Woodfield ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 246)

<sup>45</sup> Jost Trier proposes in his seminal habilitation *The German Lexicon within the Conceptual Area of the Mind: The History of a Linguistic Field (Der deutsche Wortschatz im Sinnbezirk des Verstandes. Die Geschichte eines sprachlichen Feldes)* from 1931 that the meaning of a word is not only determined by its direct textual context in form of the concrete sentence in which it is used but also by what he termed a lexical field. He defines the lexical field as an extratextual and objective linguistic horizon to an enunciated word, which allows us to understand a concrete utterance’s meaning within its specific textual context. Trier describes this linguistic horizon as a constantly changing fabric, a totality whose interwoven texture regularly changes since terms continually build new connections and relationships with each other. He provides the convincing example of a grading system in which great, good, average, poor, and unsatisfactory only gain real meaning if these terms are considered in relationship to each other as may clearly be seen in the context of grade inflation. That is, none of these terms has an inherent meaning. Only if we know the texture of the lexical field, we may effectively

Weinrich claims that images are built within an objective system of image relations that he calls image fields.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, he suggests that there is a communal, imaginary world understood to be an objective, material stock of images at the hand of a community that informs the specific creations of images.<sup>47</sup>

Hence, I attempt to reconstruct in chapters 3 and 4 some of the image fields related to the processes of writing and weaving, a culturally and historically specific stock of images that informed writers of the late Warring States period and Han dynasty. According to my analysis,

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evaluate and understand what great, good, average, poor, or unsatisfactory is. In other words, Jost Trier claims that although words and concepts become isolated in specific utterances they need to be understood and recontextualized not only in their direct textual contexts but also in the unexpressed totality of the lexical field from which an utterance emerged. See Jost Trier, "Über Wort- und Begriffsfelder," *Wortfeldforschung: Zur Geschichte und Theorie des sprachlichen Feldes*, Lothar Schmidt ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), pp. 1-39.

<sup>46</sup> In the dissertation, I take the liberty to interpret Weinrich's model of image field in a looser way. For Weinrich, image fields always consist of "two areas of signification [that] become interlinked via a mental act caused by an analogy" (my translation of Harald Weinrich, "Münze und Wort," p. 284). In my reading, image fields are not necessarily based on the literary figure of analogy but may also include experiences or material aspects that may not be neatly summarized in an analogical expression such as weaving world (*Webwelt*) or other titles that Weinrich would construe for his analyses.

<sup>47</sup> Albeit Alfred Schütz focuses less on images than on knowledge, he nonetheless develops a similar, phenomenological model in his conceptualization of a stock of knowledge at hand for his social scientific reading of the lifeworld: "it is the stock of knowledge at hand that serves as the scheme of interpretation for the actually emergent experience. This reference to already experienced acts presupposes memory and all of its functions, such as retention, recollection, recognition." (Alfred Schütz, "The Lifeworld," *On Phenomenology and Social Relations: Selected Writings*, Helmut R. Wagner ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 75)



texts from this period construed at least four parallels between weaving and writing: both technologies were thought to be revealed by the cosmos to the sages; both created their meaningful patterns (*wen* 文) on a vertical axis; both were perceived to have an ordering impact; and finally both had been implemented in *realpolitik* and rituals during the Han dynasty.<sup>48</sup>

Because of these parallels between the image fields of weaving and writing, I propose in chapter 5, titled “The *Imaginaire* of Writing as Weaving and Intertextual Practice in the *Huainanzi*,” that writers during the Han dynasty not only likened the practice of writing with weaving.<sup>49</sup> They apparently experienced and envisioned it to be a process of weaving. I argue

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<sup>48</sup> In my dissertation, I define ritual as a highly formalized activity or performance conducted by agents such as human beings and/or objects with the goal of achieving impact on the surroundings. In my specific case, we will deal with a text that performs activities equal to the sagely rulers who exert *wuwei* as a means to effectuate harmony in all under Heaven. In that sense, my definition of ritual as a highly constructed act that leads to effects in the surrounding areas opposes a tendency in ritual studies to read rituals first and foremost as communicative and/or symbolical procedures. For two representative proponents of such a symbolic or communicative reading of ritual, see Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) and Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 87-169. For a genealogy of the definition of ritual as a symbolic act, see Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 55-79. For Catherine Bell’s critical evaluation of the term ritual and her introduction of the concept of a ritualization, see Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>49</sup> *Imaginaire* and image fields are two concepts that in fact describe more or less the same phenomenon: the backdrop or horizon of a lifeworld based on images and imagination. With the help of the

that this *imaginaire* and practice of writing as weaving, which became later verbalized in Liu Xi's 劉熙 (second or third century CE) famous definition of written patterns (*wen* 文) as embroidered warp-faced brocades (*jinxiu* 錦繡), already emerged in the late Warring States or early imperial period. For example, it crystallized in the coining of important literary genres such as classics (*jing* 經), weft-writings (*weishu* 緯書), or historical records (*ji* 記 or 紀) during the Han dynasty.<sup>50</sup> Instead of contextualizing the *Huainanzi* within a presumed philosophical context, I suggest that situating Liu An's text and its intertextual writing practice

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concept of an *imaginaire*, I intend to reconnect Weinrich's concept of image fields with the lifeworld of concrete agents at a specific time. Harald Weinrich considers texts and their metaphors and narratives as the most important sources of *Bildfelder*. In fact, he prefers to stay within an intellectualistic world of texts in his analysis of metaphors, in general. With the help of the concept of an *imaginaire*, I want to further leave the world of texts and describe the intellectual, material, and experiential environment through which image fields impact lifeworlds and their inhabitants. I propose that an *imaginaire* is a vision that is the result out of a perceived parallel between seemingly distinct image fields and that materially manifests in a concrete practice. In my specific context, I will utilize the concept of an *imaginaire* to depict the vision and practice of writing as weaving during the Han since this intertextual writing practice is thought through and experienced, as well as materializes and actualizes a perceived parallel between several image fields related to the acts of writing and weaving. For three studies that effectively utilize the concept of an *imaginaire* within a religious studies context, see Robert Ford Campany, *Making Transcendents: Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Bernard Faure, *Visions of Power: Imagining Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, Phyllis Brooks trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>50</sup> With the term genre, I refer to early Chinese terminologies for specific textual formats whose ramifications are often unclear today. Unfortunately, it is not always evident, either, when exactly these terms developed and what they comprised. That being said, it is striking that the majority of terminology related to specific textual or writing formats employ terms derived from weaving. For references to the canonization of early Chinese texts, see footnote 548.

within this *imaginaire* of writing as weaving will yield more telling insights about the text's extraordinary design. In my reading, the Liu clan's scripture had been created in such an intertextual way as a means to mimic the process of weaving in order to textually actualize the Way's connective powers. In other words, I interpret its current intertextual form as the result of Liu An and his workshop's literary attempt to implement and embody the (cosmic) act of weaving in the scripture's texture.

In the conclusion, I will then bring together these ideas about the *Huainanzi* as a textual object that is in image and embodies aspects of the Way by speculating about the possible purpose of such a cosmicization. As Charles Le Blanc wrote regarding the sage and her/his replication of cosmic processes,

Among the various distinguishing characters of Man as compared to the Ten Thousand Things, the most important is his capacity to reproduce within himself the process of cosmic origination, 'to return to his origin as if he had not yet begun to distinguish himself from the Great Unity' and thereby become a True Man. In this spiritual transformation and reenactment of the cosmic process resides the fulfillment of Man and the perfection of the universe, for its uncreated and created aspects are here unified. Man stands at the end of the cosmic process and at the same time brings us back to the very beginning of the universe. Having blended with the original oneness of the uncreated universe, the True Man is in a state of total resonance (*kan-ying*) with all things and, without taking any deliberate action (*wu-wei*), leads all things to their ultimate perfection, the perfect beginning (*kuai ken* 歸根). Only the True Man can be the perfect ruler. For the ruler can only bring order to society, which in its essence is a natural outcome of the cosmic process, by being in a state of mutual resonance (*kan-ying*) with the society and the cosmic environment, leading the people through self-transformation (*tzu-hua* 自化) and without external imposition (*wu-wei*) to the

Great Peace (*t'ai-p'ing* 太平) and the Great Merging (*ta-t'ung* 大通).<sup>51</sup>

According to Le Blanc's depiction, the ritualistic replication of cosmic processes transforms the sage's body into a physical hub of "total resonance with all things" effecting that the world will be ordered in a peaceful and harmonious way. If Le Blanc's assessment about the Way and the sage as universally resonating powers within an interlinked world structure of resonating categories (*lei* 類) in the *Huainanzi* is correct, the Liu clan's scripture gains an enticing, new meaning. Since Liu An and his workshop apparently fashioned the *Huainanzi* in image and as an embodiment of the Dao, it would suggest that the text might have been created to effect resonating correspondences with the world similar to the *wuwei*-performing Way and her human manifestation, the sagely ruler. Such a vision of the *Huainanzi* as an efficacious, textual artifact does not only align with the text's concept of *ganying*. In fact, it is also more in line with the Han reception of Liu An as a connoisseur of the practices of Masters of Methods (*fangshi* 方士) and of the Way's techniques (*daoshu* 道術) as we will see in chapter 1.2 than the current intellectualistic interpretation of the king of Huainan's masterpiece.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, such a

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<sup>51</sup> Charles Le Blanc, *Huai Nan Tzu: Philosophical Synthesis in Early Han Thought* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1985), p. 206

<sup>52</sup> The *Zhuangzi*'s "All under Heaven" ("Tianxia" 天下) chapter provides a brief depiction of the Way's arts: "[The one asks:] "The methods and arts of ruling all under Heaven are manifold, [yet] all think of what they have as [something] that cannot be added to. But where is that which those in the past called the arts of the Way?" [The other] says: "there is nothing where it is not." [The one] says: "From where descends the spirit?"

reading provides some evidence that the *Huainanzi* might have been produced to have some non-discursive or even ritualistic function in addition to the discursive properties on which current scholarship has focused, thus far. In other words, my dissertation questions scholars' default move to exclusively situate the *Huainanzi* within an assumed context of textual reasoning and debates, a reading strategy that permeates the field of early China and that will be the focus of the next subsection.

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From where emerges illumination?" [The other says:] "That through which the sages give birth and that through which the kings complete all originates from one [source]. [...] How complete were the ancients. They were made up of spirit illumination, pure [as] Heaven and Earth. They nourished the Myriad Beings and harmonized all under Heaven. [Their] beneficence reached the Hundred Surnames. They were illuminated by the root and calculations and involved in the immeasurable. In the Six [Directions] they were connected and the Four [Quarters] were tilled. Small and big, fine and coarse, there was no place where their actions/turnings were not present."

天下之治方術者多矣，皆以其有為不可加矣。古之所謂道術者，果惡乎在？曰：「无乎不在。」曰：「神何由降？明何由出？」「聖有所生，王有所成，皆原於一。」[...]古之人其備乎！配神明，醇天地，育萬物，和天下，澤及百姓，明於本數，係於末度，六通四辟，小大精粗，其運无乎不在。(Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 ed., *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954), 3.461-462)

Although the *Zhuangzi* does not provide any concrete explanation what these arts were, it claims that these techniques were the very means through which the ancients achieved complete harmony throughout all under Heaven. For a discussion of the meaning of the techniques of the Way in the late Warring States and early imperial period, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Chia I's 'Techniques of the Tao' and the Han Confucian Appropriation of Technical Discourse," *Asia Major*, Third Series 10.1/2 (1997): 49-67. For a brief description of the *fangshi*, see Donald S. Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Manuscripts* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1998), pp. 50-52.

### 1.1 Situating the Project within *Huainanzi* Studies: Religion vs. Philosophy?

My dissertation on the *Huainanzi* as a scripture that is in image and embodies the Way elaborates on the recently developed observation by several scholars related to the *Huainanzi* translation project that there is in fact a coherent vision behind the king of Huainan and his workshop's production.<sup>53</sup> For example, Judson Murray reconstructed in his dissertation, titled "The Consummate Dao: The Way (*Dao*) and Human Affairs (*Shi*) in the *Huainanzi*," an argument for the text's coherence based on a careful reading of the "Yaolüe" chapter. He states:

I [...] uncovered [...] that according to the author of "Yao Lüe" as well as several other contributors, the unity and coherence of this argument and the *Huainanzi* as a whole derives, paradoxically, from its inclusiveness, diversity, and comprehensiveness. That is to say, the proper cosmological, cultural, political, and intellectual world envisioned by the authors is one that accommodates, encompasses, and ultimately integrates these diverse, competing, and often contradictory philosophical viewpoints, cultural forms, and political techniques. Furthermore, the foundation upon which this argument is developed throughout the work is the cosmology of the original, generative, and singular, yet all-encompassing, *dao* or "Way." This is the source from which all things emerged and through which they are sustained, interrelated, and most importantly, viewed as equal to one another. In other words, I demonstrated that this cosmology of the "myriad things" all deriving their origins, natures, attributes, and propensities from the "One" of *dao* is the most suitable conceptual means of accounting for and celebrating the diversity in the interrelated natural and social worlds, and it proves the model for comprehensiveness, inclusivity, equality, non-assertiveness, and unity

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Although my reading of the Liu clan's scripture as an efficacious, textual embodiment of the Way drastically differs from their treatment of the *Huainanzi* as a collection of philosophical treatises, it nonetheless joins their concerted effort and zealous work on debunking its previous dismissal as a hodgepodge of anecdotes and philosophical thoughts as displayed in the "Introduction." Moreover, my dissertation owes a lot of debt to Charles Le Blanc's pioneering work on intertextuality in the *Huainanzi*. See Charles Le Blanc, "The Idea of Resonance (*kan-ying*) in the *Huai-nan tzu*," pp. 129-168.

that the authors seek to promote.<sup>54</sup>

Murray concluded that the scripture's purportedly miscellaneous style was not the outcome of its authors' poor writing skills and lack of ingenuity, an evaluation that we encountered in Fung and Chan's admittedly dated statements on the *Huainanzi* at the beginning of this dissertation.<sup>55</sup> Instead, the "Yaolüe" rather suggests that the Liu clan's scripture was a conscious attempt to explain the original unity that underlies the diversity of the Myriad Beings while extrapolating and promoting practical and ideological implications for imperial rulership from this cosmological scheme. Murray powerfully shows in his dissertation how the *Huainanzi* is a text that argues "for an alternative inclusive, pluralistic, and anti-authoritarian vision of the unified Han empire as a means of criticizing both the totalitarianism of the previous Qin dynasty and the measures that were being implemented by the current emperor and his officials [...]."<sup>56</sup> In other words, he interprets the *Huainanzi*'s miscellaneous style, which the previous scholars mentioned in the "Introduction" had dismissed, as the central aspect that lends coherence to

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<sup>54</sup> Judson B. Murray, "The Consummate Dao," pp. 352-353

<sup>55</sup> Considering that the kingdom of Huainan presumably was a center of literary production during the Western Han and that, according to the *Hanshu* "Yiwenzhi," Liu An and his court account for a large corpus of rhapsodies ("Rhapsodies of the Kings of Huainan in eighty-two chapters" 淮南王賦八十二篇 and "Rhapsodies of the Kings of Huainan's Assembled Ministers in forty-four chapters" 淮南王群臣賦四十四篇) it is rather unlikely that the *Huainanzi*'s miscellaneous style is a mere result of a failed textual project due to the authors' lack of skills. For a discussion of the kingdom of Huainan's literary output housed in the imperial library during Ban Gu's time and the *Huainanzi* passage, see chapter 1.2.

<sup>56</sup> Judson B. Murray, "The Consummate Dao," p. 351

Liu An's political agenda.

Andrew Seth Meyer further specified Judson Murray's claim of a coherence governing the text's miscellaneous style. In his article "Root-Branches Structuralism in the *Huainanzi*," he illustrated how the normative metaphors of root and branches (*benmo* 本末) served as conceptual templates that determine the text's doctrines and composition:

On the one hand, the *Huainanzi* seems to possess an overarching scheme and unifying perspective; on the other, its content is stylistically and thematically so variable as to make it appear incoherent. [...] In order to fully appreciate the *Huainanzi*'s rhetorical and philosophical implications, however, one must inquire more deeply into the claims the text makes regarding its own organization. Doing so, one finds that the central role given by the *Huainanzi* to the concept of root and branches is key to understanding both its structure and its content. [...] In the *Huainanzi*, 'root and branches' became a conceptual template overdetermining the text's total doctrinal perspective and, indeed, structuring the composition of the *Huainanzi* itself.<sup>57</sup>

Meyer develops in his article some invaluable insights for my dissertation project. He points out that the principle of a unitary and potent root developing in a variety of segregated and "limited" branches not only informs the *Huainanzi*'s textual organization, but through the *benmo*-structure, which we will discuss in more detail in chapter 2, reverberates in such diverse areas as the *Huainanzi*'s depictions of the cosmos, body, consciousness, social structures, political institutions, or history. In other words, he connects the *Huainanzi*'s form with its content by arguing that the chapter's organization according to the *benmo*-structure also

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Andrew Seth Meyer, "Root-Branches Structuralism in the *Huainanzi*," pp. 24-25



underlies several doctrinal stances. Accordingly, we may summarize that both Judson Murray and Andrew Meyer clearly ventured to reconcile the validity and significance of Liu An's text for the study of early China by proving its intellectual coherence behind its diverse form. Both effectively challenged Fung, Chan, and Graham's dismissal of Liu An's text by showcasing that there is an underlying unity underneath the *Huainanzi's* flabbergasting diversity.

Although they oppose writers such as Fung and Chan by convincingly arguing for a comprehensive vision behind the Liu clan's scripture with the help of statements and images retrieved from within the *Huainanzi* itself, Meyer and Murray's interpretations surprisingly share an interpretive concern quite similar to these earlier, dismissive readings of Liu An's text: they also surmise a *philosophical* impetus and *discursive* function for the text without proving these premises via the *Huainanzi's* self-reflective passages.<sup>58</sup> In fact, they are not alone with such a contextualization of the *Huainanzi* as a discursive text that contains Liu An's philosophy. The majority of scholars that work on early Chinese scriptures seem to share this reading strategy of interpreting early texts as philosophical writings. In the following, I will use Meyer and Murray's outstanding work as a catalyzer that allows me to highlight how the presupposition that the *Huainanzi* is a philosophical text infuses their reading.

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For my comments on how I use the term "philosophy" as a self-ascribed category in the study of early China rather than a reference to the discipline as a whole, see footnote 29.

I deem such an analysis to be important since their “philosophical” reading of the *Huainanzi* does not easily align with Ban Gu’s categorization of the *zajia* as texts that “manifest that there is nothing that is not pervaded by the kingly rulership” or Gao You’s preface that we will encounter in chapter 1.2.<sup>59</sup> In fact, there has been no academic appraisal of the reasons why the Liu clan’s scripture should belong to the category of philosophy and should be read through this lens to my knowledge. Hence, it is necessary in my opinion to further uncover how this assumption, which is probably rooted in the specific history of the field of Early China in the twentieth century, sneakily manifests in careful scholarship such as Murray and Meyer’s work and how it informs and shapes their interpretations.

For example, let us observe how Murray and Meyer interpret the *Huainanzi*’s imagery and design. By explaining texts and their specific forms within a presumed discursive context in which rulers and officials were thought to advertise and justify their policies and ideologies at the court via texts, we will see that they consider stylistic “peculiarities” such as the *Huainanzi*’s intertextual design or its elaborate organization informed by cosmogonic schemes to be

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<sup>59</sup> In fact, Graham and Fung’s misreading of Ban Gu’s terminology and Meyer, Murray, and other scholars’ almost silence on a passage in Gao You’s preface, which illustrates Liu An’s text in *dao*-terms as we will see in chapter 1.2, suggest in my opinion that such Han readings of the *Huainanzi* transcend the disciplinary framework of philosophy and at the same time reveal the currently dominant reading strategy’s explanatory limits.

inherently secondary to the text's "message."<sup>60</sup> In other words, they presuppose that the style and design of early Chinese scriptures naturally has only rhetorical or ornamental properties that help a text to persuasively advertise its ideas and concepts.<sup>61</sup> In the first example, Andrew

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<sup>60</sup> Michael Nylan provides a good example of such a reading. In her "Note on Logical Connectives in the *Huainanzi*," she assumes that the *Huainanzi*'s particular textual formation and utilization of initial particles inherently points towards a rhetorical setting. In my opinion, the *Huainanzi*'s lack of markings for quotations may also be understood as a literary means to eradicate traces, a practice that Liu An's text construes as the *sine qua non* of sagehood. For Michael Nylan's rhetorical reading of the "Jingshen" chapter, see Michael Nylan, "Note on Logical Connectives in the *Huainanzi*," *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, Sarah A. Queen and Michael J. Puett eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 225-265. For a discussion of the practice of eradicating traces in the *Huainanzi*, see Tobias Benedikt Zürn, "Agricultural Imagery, Governance, and (De-)Cultivation in the *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*," forthcoming.

<sup>61</sup> Scholars' treatment of intertextuality may serve here as a succinct example. It is common practice in the field of Early China to presume either an argumentative or ornamental role for textual parallels reflecting the traditional, Eurocentric bifurcation into philosophy and rhetorics. In most cases, however, such literary figures had been interpreted as mere rhetorical devices. For example, Andrea Schmözl interprets intertextuality amongst others as a method to borrow authority and to generate legitimization for an author's voice in her dissertation on the practice of reciting songs (*fushi* 賦詩). See Andrea Schmözl, *Vom Lied in der Gemeinschaft zum Liedzitat im Text: Liedzitate in den Texten der Gelehrten-tradition der späten Chou-Zeit* (Egelsbach, Germany: Verlag Dr. Markus Hänsel-Hohenhausen, 1993), p. 7. In regards to the *Huainanzi*'s intertextuality, Charles Le Blanc divides the functionality of "full quotations" in Liu An's text in two groups: while quoting the *Laozi* supposedly served an argumentative purpose, incorporating passages from the *Shijing* 詩經, *Yijing* 易經 and *Shujing* 書經 had only a stylistic and ornamental function. See Charles Le Blanc, "The Idea of Resonance (*Kan-Ying*) in the *Huai-nan Tzu*," pp. 138-140. In Paul van Els' recent discussion of the excavated *Wenzi* 文子 and its relationship to the *Laozi* 老子, the same bifurcated understanding of quotations reappears. He argues, as well, that direct and indirect citations enable an author to borrow authority from canonical texts and lure readers on the author(s)' side. See Paul van Els, "Persuasion through Definition: Argumentative Features of the Ancient *Wenzi*," *Oriens Extremus* 45 (2005/06): 223. For an example of a scholar who considers an argumentative role for intertextual references, see Paul Fischer, "Intertextuality in Early Chinese Master-Texts: Shared Narratives in *Shi Zi*," *Asia Major*, Third Series 22.2 (2009): 1-34.

Seth Meyer explicitly attributes a rhetorical function to the root-branches structuralism in the *Huainanzi*. He suggests that the *benmo*-structure is the very tool that creates a holistic and unified vision of the Han intellectual world for an ideological argumentation:

In historical terms, I would argue that root-branches structuralism is key to understanding the *Huainanzi*'s polemical and rhetorical impact at the time of its production. The *Huainanzi* was composed and presented to the court when the Han was still in the process of negotiating its political identity. The elegance with which the *Huainanzi* was able, through the versatile mechanism of root-branches structuralism, to posit how all the multifarious aspects of an intricate cosmos and all the multivalent organs of a complex political empire could work as an organic unity would have had real persuasive power in the social and cultural climate of the late second century BCE. [...] Through this root-branches mechanism, the *Huainanzi* thus presents the Han intellectual world with a model of how all knowledge may be integrated and applied in the service of the Han state [...]. Those who objected to the ideological stance of the *Huainanzi* would feel threatened by the rhetorical elegance with which it forwarded its case [...].<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, Meyer understands the *Huainanzi*'s modeling and design according to the *benmo*-structure as a conceptual and rhetorical tool whose comprehensive elegance would generate a persuasive power in its audience. In fact, he goes so far as to claim that the brilliance of the *Huainanzi* would instill a feeling of threat or anxiety in all those who oppose Liu An's ideological stance. Although it is indeed possible that the *Huainanzi*'s elegance "would have had real persuasive power in the social and cultural climate of the late second century BCE," as Meyer claims, it is a proposition less evident than one might think. As a result, he unfortunately does not see any necessity to further elaborate on the ways in which the *benmo*-structure

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<sup>62</sup>

Andrew Seth Meyer, "Root-Branches Structuralism in the *Huainanzi*," p. 39

would in fact generate argumentative leverage. At the end, Meyer plainly assumes that the text's style and structure would inherently generate rhetorical beauty and persuasive power<sup>63</sup>

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The history of figurative speech prior to the rise of what Ivar Armstrong Richards called “the modern theory of metaphors” was dominated by the idea of metaphors as ornamental replacements of plain discourses. Metaphors had been interpreted as a form of linguistic “visualization” functioning as a symbolical or allegorical substitution of pure meaning while reducing figurative speech to mere embellishment. Such substitutive theories generally postulated that metaphors work due to a perceived resemblance between two subjects. In this understanding, the two elements of metaphors were thought to share some sort of commonality, which becomes actualized in the moment of metaphorical approximation. In the case of the metaphorical expression “Richard the lion” the resemblance would lie in their shared bravery. Consequently, within such a substitutive view the metaphorical expression of “Richard is a lion” could always be translated back into a plain expression: “Richard is brave.” As Max Black humorously summarized this substitutive view of metaphors: “In the somewhat unfortunate example, “Richard is a lion,” which modern writers have discussed with boring insistence, the literal meaning is taken to be the same as that of the sentence, “Richard is brave.” Here, the metaphor is not supposed to enrich the vocabulary. When *catachresis* [i.e. “the use of a word in some new sense in order to remedy a gap in the vocabulary”] cannot be invoked, the reasons for substituting an indirect, metaphorical, expression are taken to be stylistic. We are told that the metaphorical expression may (in its literal use) refer to a more concrete object than would its literal equivalent; and this is supposed to give pleasure to the reader (the pleasure of having one's thoughts diverted from Richard to the irrelevant lion). Again, the reader is taken to enjoy problem-solving—or to delight in the author's skill at half-concealing, half-revealing his meaning. Or metaphors provide a shock of “agreeable surprise” and so on. The principle behind these “explanations” seems to be: When in doubt about some peculiarity of language, attribute its existence to the pleasure it gives a reader. A principle that has the merit of working well in default of any evidence. Whatever the merits of such speculations about reader's response, they agree in making metaphor a *decoration*.” (Max Black, “Metaphor,” *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp. 33-34)

According to Black's interpretation of the substitutive view, whenever a metaphor does not create a new vocabulary—i.e. becomes a lexicalized metaphor—scholars that subscribed to this vision “attributed its existence to the pleasure it gives a reader.” Accordingly, we may summarize that traditional interpretations of metaphors tended to read them as an embellishing and pleasing rhetorical figure that consists of two resembling elements of which one merely serves as a non-conventional expression of an otherwise plain statement.

reflecting in this evaluation a classical understanding of the relationship between the fields of philosophy and rhetorics and its manifestation in the contrast between terms/concepts and imagery.<sup>64</sup>

In the second example, I refer to an article that Judson Murray has recently published in Sarah Queen and Michael Puett's edited volume on *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*. He associates in this piece the *Huainanzi's* use of the image of flesh and bone (*grou* 骨肉) with Liu An's promotion of family ties and kinship relations for ordering the Han-Empire:

This study outlines the particular model of empire envisioned and proposed by King Liu An 劉安 (179?-122 BCE) of Huainan and his scholar-retainers in response to Western Han 西漢 dynasty (202 BCE-9 CE) imperial unification, and it analyzes one of the rhetorical strategies they use to promote their vision in several chapters of the work. Specifically, one compelling image they employ in attempting to sway the imperial throne to their view is 'flesh and bone' (*grou* 骨肉, literally 'bone and flesh'), signifying the 'kinship' or 'blood ties' between the Han emperors and their royal kinsmen enfeoffed in kingdoms throughout the empire. [...] The *Huainanzi's* authors uphold enfeoffment as a vital component of the *Huainanzi's* sociopolitical vision of a unified empire, and they integrate it with other centralized structures and practices. They employ the term *grou* and invoke related persuasive means in use at the time—such as 'the empire as one family' (*tianxia yi jia* 天下一家), 'clan' or 'kinship relation' (*shi* 氏), 'lineage' (*zu* 族), and 'filial devotion' (*xiao* 孝)—to argue for the

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In many ways, one may understand Paul Ricœur and Hans Blumenberg's conceptualizations of vivid metaphors (*la métaphore vive*) and absolute metaphors (*absolute Metapher*) as responses to such a reduced understanding of imagery/metaphors in the field of philosophy—as an attempt to reintegrate the poetic into philosophy. See Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, Robert Savage trans. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010) and Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, Robert Czerny et al. trans. (New York: Routledge, 2003). For a description of the classical definition of metaphor as substitutions, see footnote 63.

importance of the emperor's kinsmen in stabilizing and governing the Han realm.<sup>65</sup>

Again, we find the same assumption at work. A text's imagery and style inherently point towards a persuasion or a rhetorical context,<sup>66</sup> an idea deeply rooted in the long history of philosophy's arduous relationship with the discipline of rhetoric in the "West." In Murray's vision, implementations of images such as flesh and bone may only be explained within an argumentative framework that "invoke[s] related persuasive means." Therefore, Murray considers the image of *grou* to be in a subservient or substitutional position to the conveyed meaning of "the importance of the emperor's kinsmen in stabilizing and governing the Han realm." In other words, he inevitably understands the image of flesh and bone as a rhetorical or heuristic device within a discursive or argumentative context that merely substitutes for a

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<sup>65</sup> Judson B. Murray, "The Liu Clan's 'Flesh and Bone': The Foundation of Liu An's Vision of Empire," *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, Sarah A. Queen and Michael J. Puett eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 291 and 293

<sup>66</sup> "The linguistic institution of metaphors traditionally belonged to rhetoric. The relationship between rhetoric and truth—in other words, to one of the indisputable values of this tradition—is more than contested; it is ambiguous, questionable not in its positive connotation. It has never been surprising when a philosopher like Locke perceived metaphors to be elementary misguidances of the human spirit whose eradication is one of the goals of philosophy. Rhetoric is the institutionalized antipode of philosophy." "Die Zuständigkeit für die sprachliche Institution der Metapher liegt in unserer Tradition bei der Rhetorik. Das Verhältnis der Rhetorik zur Wahrheit—also zu einem der unbestrittenen Werte dieser Tradition—ist mehr als umstritten; es ist zweideutig, fragwürdig nicht im guten Sinne. Es ist niemals überraschend gewesen, wenn ein philosophischer Autor wie Locke in der Metapher eine der elementaren Irreführungen des menschlichen Geistes erblickt, deren Beseitigung zu den Aufgaben der Philosophie gehört. Die Rhetorik ist der institutionalisierte Gegentypus der Philosophie." (Hans Blumenberg, *Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit*, Anselm Haverkamp ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2007), p. 83)

concept or idea (i.e. proper rulership based on kinship).<sup>67</sup>

Thus, by presuming such a discursive context for the Liu clan's scripture within which imagery only plays a subservient role to the text's concepts, Meyer and Murray who solely serve here as two representative examples of a much larger community of interpreters again display the assumption that scriptures like the *Huainanzi* should be read as philosophical texts. As we can see in these two examples, however, this assumption does not only inform their general categorization of Liu An's text but also infuses their specific treatment of textual microstructures such as the role of images. Hence, it seems as if they follow a long lineage of scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who tended to read early Chinese texts as philosophical masterpieces by assuming a politico-philosophical and discursive context for scriptures such as the *Huainanzi* in which style, design, and imagery would inherently adopt rhetorical functions.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, Murray who carefully works out the various layers of the *grou* image does not provide any discussion of his understanding of image or metaphor as if his understanding of such "figurative speech" is not central and only subservient to the concepts they illustrate.

<sup>68</sup> Andrew Meyer's case is thereby very interesting. Although he admits that the *Huainanzi*'s utilization of homologies transcends mere models of metaphors, at the end he still just attributes a rhetorical function to the text's elaborate style. For a diverging interpretation that addresses sagely properties to the *Huainanzi*, see Michael J. Puett, "Sages, Creation, and the End of History in the *Huainanzi*," *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, Sarah A. Queen and Michael J. Puett eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 269-290.



### The *Jia-/Jiao*-Divide in the Study of Early China

The problematic nature of such a presupposition becomes clearer once we consider the history of Chinese studies in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. The presumption that Warring States and early imperial writers who later became categorized as *zi* 子 are philosophers<sup>69</sup> is rooted in a historical understanding that divides early Chinese, and especially Daoist intellectual history, into two phases distinguished by the rise and decline of the Han 漢 dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE).<sup>70</sup> This model that equated and compared early Chinese “masters” to Greek

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<sup>69</sup> The category of master (literature) *zi* 子 is in itself already an anachronistic concept. According to Robert Gassmann’s analysis of the *Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳), *zi* in names and titles only refers to a sire or a noble person that is in service at the court and not a “master.” For a discussion of the meaning of *zi* in mainly the *Zuozhuan*, see Robert Gassmann, *Verwandschaft und Gesellschaft im alten China: Begriffe, Strukturen und Prozesse* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 495-513 and 525-529. For a discussion of the interpretation of *zi* as philosophers, see John Makeham, “The Role of Masters Studies in the Early Formation of Chinese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline,” *Learning to Emulate the Wise: The Genesis of Chinese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China*, John Makeham ed. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012), pp. 73-101.

<sup>70</sup> Angus Graham, for example, clearly followed this historical model. He states, “The great creative period of Chinese philosophy lasted from the time of Confucius (551-479 BCE) to the reunification of the empire by the Ch'in dynasty in 221 BC.” (Angus C. Graham ed. and trans., *Chuang-tzŭ: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzŭ* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1981), p. 4) At the same time, we find it repeatedly appearing in contemporary scholarship such as Paul Fischer’s article on intertextuality in early Chinese master-texts, which he begins with following words: “Prior to Chinese unification in 221 BC and the beginning of imperial history, there was a “golden age” of philosophical debate among various scholars about the best way to live life, construct a social contract, and act in harmony with Heaven and Earth. The most influential of these scholars, collectively called the “various masters,” or *zhu zi* 諸子, attracted disciples who recorded the teachings of their “masters” and passed these teachings on. These texts,

philosophers gained importance during the installation of Chinese philosophy as an academic discipline in China at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>71</sup> As John Makeham remarks,

It is well known that Chinese intellectuals introduced a new “language” or “grammar” – academic philosophy – into China soon after the turn of the twentieth century, subsequently leading to the institutional incorporation of the discipline “Chinese philosophy” (*Zhongguo zhexue* 中國哲學) alongside Western philosophy. This was one of many responses to an “epistemological crisis” in which China found itself in the closing decades of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Western philosophy provided key conceptual paradigms, vocabulary, and technical terms, bibliographic categories, and even histories and periodization schemes essential to the demarcation, definition, and narration of the discipline Chinese philosophy. This was not, however, a simple case of the blanket inscription of Western philosophy upon a Chinese *tabula rasa*. Nor was the process by which Western models of knowledge categorization were introduced into China a passive one in which the “foreign” was imposed on the “native.” Rather, it was an ongoing process of negotiation and appropriation initiated and conducted by Chinese protagonists, in which traditional categories of Chinese knowledge were “translated” into the new academic category of *zhexue*.<sup>72</sup>

Although we don’t need to condemn this process as a sole result of a colonialist influence on the nascent Chinese nation state by European and US powers, as Makeham suggests, it is rather safe to claim that the creation of the academic discipline of Chinese philosophy should be

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collectively called “masters-texts” (*zi shu* 子書), became the bedrock of Chinese intellectual history.” (Paul Fischer, “Intertextuality in Early Chinese Master-Texts,” p. 1)

<sup>71</sup> The history of reading *zi* as philosophers began in Europe with the Jesuits and their manufacturing of Confucius in the sixteenth century. However, the impact of this construction on the discipline of Chinese studies exploded in the twentieth century with the creation of the academic discipline of Chinese philosophy. For a discussion of the Jesuits’ early manufacturing of Kongzi as a philosopher and its reverberation in later scholarship, see Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>72</sup> John Makeham, “Introduction,” *Learning to Emulate the Wise: The Genesis of Chinese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China*, John Makeham ed. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012), pp. 2-3

understood within the contemporaneous anti-religious sentiments and secularizing policies in China at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>73</sup> If we consider the May-Fourth-movement and early Republican's opposition towards China's own traditions, it is rather little surprising that various scholars intended to destroy, neglect, or rewrite China's history in rather secular terms during the nascency of the Chinese nation state.<sup>74</sup> For example, the movement to destroy temples to build schools (*huimiao banxue* 毀廟辦學) in 1898 and the introduction of anti-superstition policies between 1911 and 1937 are clear signs of an institutionalized skepticism towards China's own religious past.<sup>75</sup> As Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer

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<sup>73</sup> For a discussion of the various anti-superstition policies during the Republican revolution, see Prasenjit Duara, "Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity: the Campaigns against Popular Religion in Early Twentieth-Century China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 50 (1991): 67-83 and Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 19-198.

<sup>74</sup> Max Weber has famously argued in his book *The Sociology of Religion* that the Enlightenment movement had led to a scientific revolution, a rationalization of the state, and various other processes of secularization throughout the globe. In his understanding, the rise of modernity resulted in a disenchantment of the world that increasingly diminished the role of religion outside of the private sphere. See Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Ephraim Fischhoff trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 270. For a literary manifestation of such skepticism about China's religious past, see Lu Xun's 魯迅 (1881-1936) short stories "Medicine" ("Yao" 藥) and "Raising the Dead" ("Qisi" 起死) in Lu Xun 魯迅, *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe 人民文學出版社, 1973): 1.298-310 and 2.593-608. For a discussion of Lu Xun's re-interpretation of *xiaoshuo* 小說 as secularized fiction, see Mark Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare: Daoism, Territorial Networks, and the History of a Ming Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), pp. 27-59.

<sup>75</sup> In my understanding of religion, I follow J. Z. Smith's definition from his article "Religion,

mention in their book *The Religious Question in Modern China*, the early twentieth century witnessed various secularization processes that turned Chinese traditions such as meditation, martial arts, and medicine into mere cultural, a-religious phenomena that were thought to preserve China's national essence (*guocui* 國粹).<sup>76</sup> Hence, an increasing desire to read the young republic's long, imperial past through a secular lens apparently arose in Chinese intellectual circles at the beginning of the twentieth century, which finally had a profound and lasting impact on sinological scholarship.<sup>77</sup> As a result, not only "categories of Chinese knowledge," as Makeham proposes, but entire texts and traditions "were "translated" into the new academic category of *zhexue*."<sup>78</sup>

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Religions, Religious." In his reading, religion is not a phenomenon but a category, a heuristic lens that defines and establishes the disciplinary horizon of religious studies. In that sense, the term religion is inherently embedded in the academic and Eurocentric production of knowledge and its neighboring disciplines. In other words, I understand religion to be an idealtypical category that historically developed in concert with the disciplines of philosophy and theology amongst others and whose parameters therefore need to be constantly renegotiated. For J. Z. Smith's discussion of the history of the category "religion," see J. Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Mark C. Taylor ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 269-284.

<sup>76</sup> For their discussion of the secularization of meditation, martial arts, and medicine in modern China, see Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China*, pp. 108-123.

<sup>77</sup> See Wiebke Denecke, *The Dynamics of Masters Literature: Early Chinese Thought from Confucius to Han Feizi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 1-31.

<sup>78</sup> The impact of philosophy on Chinese studies may clearly be seen in the secularization of Confucianism under the Jesuits and in scholarship of the twentieth century. For a discussion of the secularization of Confucianism, see Thomas A. Wilson, "Introduction: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Cult of Confucius,"

In this vision of early “master” texts as philosophical writings as expressed in the myriad of histories of Chinese philosophy (*zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史) that had been published in the first half of the twentieth century, the Han often marked the departure from a glorious philosophical past, in which the Hundred Schools engaged in vivid and pure discussions on the nature of (an ethical) life.<sup>79</sup> This golden age of reasoning supposedly turned into a religiously desacralized period of decadence in which vulgar bastardizations of these former shining examples of Chinese thought emerged (*daojiao* 道教, *rujiao* 儒教). In so doing, this bifurcated discourse on early Chinese cultural history clearly replicates the model of the disappearance of Greek reasoning in the late classical and early medieval period as often construed in European

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*On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius*, Thomas A. Wilson ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 3-13. For research on the cult of Confucius, see Thomas A. Wilson, “Ritualizing Confucius/Kongzi: The Family and State Cults of the Sage of Culture in Imperial China,” *On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius*, Thomas A. Wilson ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 43-94 and Julia K. Murray, ““Idols” in the Temple: Icons and the Cult of Confucius,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 68.2 (2009): 371-411.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Demiéville (1894-1979), for example, construes such a “decline of philosophy during later Han” in his entry for the *Cambridge History of China*. In fact, he proposes that the Warring States’ philosophical outlook altered into a pragmatic worldview, “somewhat like that of imperial Rome,” during the Han, “when action took precedence over thought.” In other words, he compares the early Chinese case with the classical period in the Mediterranean area, which classical scholars often construed as a transformation from the Greek’s *vita contemplativa* to the Roman Empire’s *vita activa*. See Paul Demiéville, “Philosophy and Religion from Han to Sui,” *The Cambridge History of China Volume I: The Ch’in and Han Empires, 221 B.C. – A. D. 220*, Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank eds. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 808-815.

intellectual history.<sup>80</sup> Thus, philosophical Daoism (*daojia* 道家), for example, was said to reflect the pure thought of the early “masters” that had only been perverted by superstitious, religious, and practical elements during the Han dynasty and China’s own “medieval” times.<sup>81</sup>

Many contemporary scholars have recently argued against this bifurcation into an age of philosophy and religion as an anachronistic depiction of Han and pre-Han China.<sup>82</sup> Robert

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<sup>80</sup> In fact, this teleological paralleling of early cultures and their “developmental” stages is probably based on Hegelian visions of history such as Karl Jaspers’ concept of the axial age that had a strong impact on A. C. Graham and other scholars of early China. Jaspers argued, “In the years centering around 500 b.c. – from 800 to 200 – the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid, simultaneously and independently in China, India, Persia, Palestine, and Greece. And these are the foundations upon which humanity still subsists today. [...] The new element in this age is that man everywhere became aware of being as a whole, of himself and his limits. [...] He experienced the absolute in the depth of selfhood and in the clarity of transcendence. [...] The mythical age with its peace of mind and self-evident truths was ended. This was the beginning of the struggle—based on rationality and empirical experience—against the myth; of the battle against the demons for the transcendence of the one God; ethical indignation waged war on false gods. [...] For the first time there were philosophers.” (Karl Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, Ralph Manheim trans. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 98-101)

We find this concept, for example, re-appearing in Heiner Roetz, *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age: A Reconstruction under Aspect of the Breakthrough Toward Postconventional Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) or Angus C. Graham’s *Disputers of the Tao*. For a critique of Heiner Roetz’ use of the axial age to discuss early Chinese texts, see Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 18-20.

<sup>81</sup> See Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy Volume 2*, Derk Bodde trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 425.

<sup>82</sup> One of the earliest critiques of the arbitrary and ahistorical divisions between Confucians and Taoists and philosophical and religious Taoism is Nathan Sivin. In his article “On the Term “Taoism” as a Source of Perplexity with a Special Reference to Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China,” Sivin humorously summarizes the outcome of such strict divisions between social groups: “The issue is not whether

Shepherd, for example, criticized this distinction as the result of an obsession with logocentrism in the “West.”<sup>83</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi, moreover, suggested on a more general level that the division between philosophy and religion is in many ways arbitrary regarding the context of early China. He argued that the category of superstition (*mixin* 迷信), which unfortunately still plays a prominent role in scholarship on Chinese (religious) cultures,

reflects a particular twentieth-century view of religion—as potentially polluting a purer philosophy—that has been widely called into question. [...] the distinction between religion and philosophy is not only one that developed long after the Han dynasty, but it is one that developed in a completely different cultural milieu. [...] In sum, this is not to say that the words “religion” and “philosophy” cannot be applied to these texts, but rather that it would be a mistake to look for some writers who are “religious” and others who are “philosophers,” since they all shared elements of both.<sup>84</sup>

In other words, Csikszentmihalyi dismisses the idea that early Chinese texts may be clearly

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*hsien* immortality or breath disciplines had Taoist connotations in the minds of certain Chinese, whether such beliefs and practices reliably signal Taoist influence. [...] When Taoist initiates performed certain techniques (for instance, physical and breathing disciplines) which do not pass any of the above tests, it is worth asking whether they were doing them as Taoists per se or simply as Chinese in a certain time and place. We do not, after all, assume that rice was Taoist because Taoists ate it.” (Nathan Sivin, *Medicine, Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China: Researches and Reflections* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1995), p. 319)

For emphatic dismissals of the idea of *daoia* as the true form of Daoism, see Steve Bradbury, “The American Conquest of Philosophical Taoism,” *Translation East and West: A Cross-Cultural Approach*, Cornelia N. Moore and Lucy Lower eds. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1992), pp. 29-41 and Russell Kirkland, “The Taoism of the Western Imagination and the Taoism of China: De-Colonializing the Exotic Teachings of the East,” paper presented at the University of Tennessee, October 20<sup>th</sup> 1997.

<sup>83</sup> See Robert J. Shepherd, “Perpetual Unease or Being at Ease? Derrida, Daoism, and the Metaphysics of Presence,” *Philosophy East & West* 57.2 (2007): 239.

<sup>84</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Readings in Han Chinese Thought* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), pp. xxii-xxiii

attributed to a disciplinary category according to the arbitrary division into philosophy and religion, a Eurocentric and post-enlightenment discourse that in his interpretation does not fit the historical and cultural framework of early China.<sup>85</sup> Despite these voices of critique and their widespread acceptance over the last two decades, the bifurcation into a philosophical golden age and a religious decline of Chinese culture, however, had already left its marks on the discipline of early Chinese studies and the works of a vast group of scholars. In fact, I propose that it may still be felt in their default treatment of early Chinese writings as argumentative texts that develop some sort of philosophical vision despite the fact that contemporary scholars rarely refer to this bifurcation in an explicit manner, anymore.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> For a discussion of a similarly arbitrary division and its colonialist implications as articulated in the contrast between religion and politics, see Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, pp. 27-54.

<sup>86</sup> Angus C. Graham's edition and evaluation of the *Zhuangzi*, which is still widely accepted in sinological circles, may serve here as an example of a severe outcome based on the assumption that early Chinese texts had been written by philosophers. He devalued and sometimes excluded passages from the *Zhuangzi* that display an interest in politics since such parts of the text did not fit into his vision of Zhuang Zhou, the philosopher, as following statement shows: "In the last of the *Inner chapters*, centered on a theme in which Chuang-tzū was hardly interested, the government of the empire, one has an especially strong impression, not of an author approaching his topic from different directions, but of an editor going to great pains to find even remotely relevant passages." (Angus C. Graham ed. and trans., *Chuang-tzū*, p. 29) As this segment suggests, the character of a multifaceted text like the *Zhuangzi* was so disturbing to Graham and his preconceived notion of Zhuang Zhou as a pure philosopher unspoiled by dirty politics that he proposed not to consider these seemingly unessential parts, an understanding not shared by early texts such as the *Shiji*, *Lüshi chunqiu*, and the *Huainanzi*. For a powerful critique of Graham's assessment that the "Inner Chapters" ("Neipian" 內篇) are the oldest and most authentic layer of the *Zhuangzi*, see Esther Klein, "Were there "Inner Chapters" in the Warring States: A



Wiebke Denecke, for example, has provided two very good examples that succinctly illustrate how this bifurcated vision reverberates in contemporary readings of early Chinese texts. She writes in *The Dynamics of Masters Literature: Early Chinese Thought from Confucius to Han Feizi* that a

Reductive notion of what a “Chinese philosophy” could entail leads Western and Chinese scholars alike to suppress a significant part of the Chinese texts and the early Chinese worlds of thought. The text attributed to Xunzi is most often read for its critique of previous notions of “human nature,” a theme that seems to resonate with Western discourses about human psychology since Aristotle. However, its two poetry chapters—the “Rhapsodies” (*fu* 賦) and “Working Songs” (*chengxiang* 成相)—are not only not discussed by historians of “Chinese philosophy,” but they are almost never mentioned as part and parcel of the *Xunzi*, which I will try to show them to be. From the *Han Feizi* 韓非子, the most prominent text of the presumable “Legalist School” represented by Han Feizi, only the chapters that portray authoritarian governance are taken into account as echoing questions of political philosophy, and the voluminous chapters of rhetorical case studies and anecdotes that would not belong in a philosophical project focused on scientific method are ignored. Furthermore, the singular quest for a “Chinese philosophy” means that even those portions of the Chinese texts that are streamlined to fit its construction are pushed into a narrow corner of self-defense. From there they are marshaled to testify for a question that was asked only out of the historical coincidence that China’s modernization and its desperate opening to Western knowledge happened just around the time when analytical philosophy came to the fore in the West.<sup>87</sup>

As Denecke proves with the examples of the *Xunzi* and the *Han Feizi*, scholars’ “reductive notion of Chinese philosophy” shaped by “the historical coincidence that China’s modernization and its desperate opening to Western knowledge happened just around the time when analytical philosophy came to the fore in the West” *de facto* led to a streamlining and

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New Examination of Evidence about the *Zhuangzi*,” *T’oung Pao* 96 (2011): 299-369.

<sup>87</sup>

Wiebke Denecke, *The Dynamics of Masters Literature*, p. 18

retrenchment of the received texts. According to her analysis, concerns that we would nowadays attribute to the fields of literature and rhetoric—and I would add ritual and religious studies—became largely ignored in our interpretations of what we scholars categorized as the philosophical writings of early China.

Stanley Fish has called this phenomenon an embeddedness in a field of practice. As Fish argues, individuals do not approach texts with interests that are solely generated between a text and themselves. In fact, the institutions and the theoretical models (in our case the *jia/jiao* divide) in which they have (often unintentionally) been trained directly impact their interpretations:

When I use words like “institution” or “community” I refer not to a collection of independent individuals who, in a moment of deliberation, choose to employ certain interpretative strategies, but rather to a set of practices that are defining of an enterprise and fill the consciousness of the enterprise's members. [...] Both readers and interpreters [...] go about their business not in order to discover its point, but already in possession of and possessed by its point. They ask questions and give answers—not, however, any old questions and answers, but questions and answers of the kind they know in advance to be relevant. In a sense, they could not even ask the questions if they did not already know the answers to questions deeper than the ones they are explicitly asking. [...] Where does that knowledge [...] come from? Surely not from the text, which acquires its generic shape and particular details only in the light of that knowledge. It comes, if it “comes” from anywhere, from the fact of my embeddedness (almost embodiment) in a field of practice that marks its members with signs that are immediately perspicuous to one another.<sup>88</sup>

In Fish’s conceptualization, an embeddedness in a field of practice functions like a dispositive,

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Stanley Fish, “Yet Once More,” *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein eds. (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 36-38

an institutionalized discourse that limits and organizes the production of knowledge.<sup>89</sup>

According to his framework, it is impossible for readers to approach a text innocently. Similar to Hans Georg Gadamer's conceptualizations of the horizon and tradition, Fish suggests "both readers and interpreters [...] go about their business not in order to discover its point, but already in possession of and possessed by its point."<sup>90</sup> Projected on our situation, one may,

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<sup>89</sup> Michel Foucault defines in an interview the term *dispositif* as follows: *dispositif* is "a thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions [...]. The nature of an apparatus [i.e. *dispositif*] is essentially strategic, which means that we are speaking about a certain manipulation of relations of forces, or a rational and concrete intervention in the relations of forces, either so as to develop them in a particular direction, or to block them, to stabilize them, and to utilize them. The apparatus is thus always inscribed into a play of power, but it is also linked to certain limits of knowledge that arise from it and, to an equal degree, condition it. The apparatus is precisely this: a set of strategies of the relations of forces supporting, and supported by, certain types of knowledge." (Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, C. Gordon ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 194-196)

For an example of Foucault's discussion and employment of the methodological tool of *dispositif*, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, Robert Hurley trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 75-132. For a further discussion and analysis of the concept, see Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?: And Other Essays*, David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 1-24.

<sup>90</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer argues in his monumental piece *Truth and Method* that the socio-cultural horizon of an audience, the thrownness (*Geworfensein*) of the recipient in his own words, necessarily informs their readings so that their receptions inevitably reflect the historical and intellectual context that underlies their responses:

"Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose content interests the age and in which it seeks to understand itself. The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always co-determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by

therefore, argue that Meyer and Murray found in the *Huainanzi* a collection of philosophical treatises because they already expected the text to fulfill the requirements of and belong to the category of “philosophical” texts. In other words, their reading of the *Huainanzi* basically reaffirmed their presumptions about early Chinese texts creating a circular argumentation based on an arbitrary “historical” division into an age of philosophy and religion that implicitly and oftentimes unknowingly seems to operate as the backdrop of their interpretations and that, for example, sneakily appears in their treatment of imagery.

### **Early Chinese Court Culture: Debates or Rites?**

Seen within this historical context of the rise of Chinese philosophy in the twentieth century, the default-move to presuppose a discursive or didactic function for early Chinese texts raises suspicions. It seems as if at least some of these unchallenged assumptions regarding the purpose of early Chinese texts and their imagery are based on the specific disciplinary history and horizon of early Chinese studies rather than on a careful consideration of highly

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the totality of the objective course of history.” (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall trans. (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 296)

For a discussion of the importance of understanding the historicity of interpretation, see for example Hans Robert Jauss, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Timothy Bahti trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 18-45.

constructed texts like the *Huainanzi*, their sometimes extraordinary, stylistic properties, historical contexts, and receptions during the early imperial period.<sup>91</sup> If we consider this fact about the disciplinary history of early Chinese studies, as well as the tension between Ban Gu's categorization, Gao You's late Han reception of the *Huainanzi* as a texture of the Way that we will encounter in chapter 1.2, and scholars' current tendency to read texts like the *Huainanzi* within an intellectual historical framework, it is indeed in my opinion a rather questionable move to presuppose a discursive framework for early Chinese texts.

In fact, such an intellectualistic interpretation inherently reduces not only scriptures but also early Chinese court culture to debates excluding from the outset the possibility that rituals and ceremonial interactions between the various members of the ruling elite amongst other things might have been the very context in and for which some of the extant texts had been produced and used.<sup>92</sup> And indeed, such assumptions about the discursive nature of early

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<sup>91</sup> In his article "Creating a Book and Performing It: The "Yaolüe" Chapter of the *Huainanzi* as a Western Han *Fu*," Martin Kern clearly addresses this tendency in academic interpretations of the *Huainanzi* to ignore stylistic elements of the text. As he mentions, Liu An's scripture "remains primarily discussed in terms of intellectual history while only limited attention is given to its language and rhetorical force [and I would add cosmicized style]." (Martin Kern, "Creating a Book and Performing It: The "Yaolüe" Chapter of the *Huainanzi* as a Western Han *Fu*," *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, Sarah A. Queen and Michael Puett eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 126)

<sup>92</sup> According to Marcel Gauchet, the secularization of the nationstate gave rise to a very specific problem for our modern interpretation of the role of elements in past societies that we would nowadays

Chinese texts and their argumentative function stand on rather shaky legs once we consider that the interaction between rulers and officials probably consisted as much of ceremonial and ritualistic (inter-)actions (*li* 禮) and exchanges of objects as of debates.<sup>93</sup> As Michael Loewe for example has claimed, rituals played a significant role at the court of the Han emperors. He wrote regarding the imperially sponsored performance of ancestral rituals that

by the start of Yüan-ti's reign there were no less than 167 such shrines [to Kao-ti and Wen-ti] [...] in those commanderies and kingdoms which they had personally visited; when those at the capital were included, the total reached 176. It was estimated that the total annual cost of maintaining the services amounted to 24,455 offerings, under the guardianship of 45,129 servicemen, and with the assistance or participation of 12,147 prayer-reciters, cooks and musicians; servicemen deputed to rear the sacrificial animals were not included in these figures.<sup>94</sup>

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categorize under the field of religion. Since religiosity plays a less prominent role in the contemporary, public sphere, we are not used to read the world through the eyes of a person whose lifeworld is thoroughly informed, construed, and infused by religious acts, beliefs, texts, and objects. Hence, Gauchet paints a situation in which any contemporary audience whose horizon, he proposes, is strongly impacted by what he calls the disenchantment of the world constantly threatens to assimilate and colonialize the (religious) past. Accordingly, he proposes that we need to permanently consider the fact that what seems to be insignificant for us now might have been highly significant in the past. Only if we accept and address that our psychological and sociological projections are in fact the result of our disenchanted, post-enlightenment lifeworld, we may be able to see the gap between past and present societies (see Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, Oscar Burge trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 1-22).

<sup>93</sup> For a summary of the practice of governance during the Han dynasty, see Michael Loewe, *The Government of the Qin and Han Empires 221 BCE – 220 CE* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006), pp. 1-55 and 71-118. For a discussion of ceremonies and rituals performed at the courts during the Tang dynasty, see Howard J. Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>94</sup> Michael Loewe, *Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 285

As the large numbers in Loewe's estimation show, ritual was a daily activity for which the imperial family and the court were responsible during the Han dynasty. Considering the vast amount of money that the preservation of these shrines and the performance of nearly 25,000 offerings per year would cost, it is in my opinion surprising how little scholars of early China are willing to consider ritualistic purposes and contexts for scriptures. While scholars excavating material cultural objects often are readily assuming a ritualistic context, early Chinese textual studies seems to be rather immune to such an idea. In fact, we seem to be hesitant to consider the materiality and design of scriptures beyond matters of textual history. Although ornamentations themselves obviously do not justify the conclusion that a textual object had been used within a ritualistic context, its high constructedness and stylistic embellishments should still make us wonder whether a text might have had more than just a discursive function.<sup>95</sup>

If we consider the centrality of ritual in pre-modern China, this trend becomes more

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<sup>95</sup> Roy Rappaport denominates what I call a highly constructed and embellished design with the word formalization since he focuses on ritualistic acts rather than objects. He claims "formality, i.e. adherence to form, is an obvious aspect of all rituals. It is often, but not always, through the perception of their formal qualities that we recognize events as rituals, or designate them to be such. Behaviour in ritual tends to be punctilious and repetitive. Ritual sequences are composed of conventional, even stereotyped elements, for instance stylized and often decorous gestures and postures and the arrangements of these elements in time and space are usually more or less fixed." (Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 33)

surprising. According to Joseph P. McDermott, ritual

Prompted the earliest known uses of Chinese writing, as well as the making and use of virtually all the earliest examples of what we now call Chinese art. A self-defining activity of rulers and families alike, it was also a dominant issue for all the important schools of Chinese thought. [...] Its impact on the organized activities of the Chinese state and court was probably far greater than in the polities and bureaucracies of other states. This ritual of the Chinese court and state, however, has received little scholarly attention over the past century. The canonical books on ritual as well as the dynastic ritual codes and treatises have struck many Western sinologists as boring pieces of exotica irrelevant to a modern understanding of Chinese imperial history.<sup>96</sup>

As McDermott points out, almost any cultural activity including writing and the arts were developed within the context of ritual.<sup>97</sup> For example, we will see in chapters 3 and 4 that both weaving and writing were utilized in ritualistic contexts at the early imperial courts. Moreover, ritual plays a significant role in almost any early Chinese text, yet the ritualistic aspect of the

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<sup>96</sup> Joseph P. McDermott, "Introduction," *State and Court Ritual in China*, Joseph P. McDermott ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 1

<sup>97</sup> One may understand Michael Puett's work as such a corrective that strongly emphasizes the role of ritual in early China. For his recent publications on ritual, see Michael J. Puett, "Ritual and Ritual Obligation: Perspectives on Normativity from Classical China," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 49.4 (2015): 543-550, Michael J. Puett, "Constructions of Reality: Metaphysics in the Ritual Traditions of Classical China," *Chinese Metaphysics and its Problems*, Li Chenyang and Franklin Perkins eds. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 120-129, Michael J. Puett, "Ritualization as Domestication: Ritual Theory from Classical China," *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual, Volume I: Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia*, Axel Michaels et al. eds. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), pp. 365-376, Michael J. Puett, "The Haunted World of Humanity: Ritual Theory from Early China," *Rethinking the Human*, J. Michelle Molina and Donald K. Swearer eds. (Cambridge, MA: Center for the Study of World Religions, 2010), pp. 95-111, and Michael J. Puett, "Centering the Realm: Wang Mang, the *Zhouli*, and Early Chinese Statecraft," *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History*, Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 129-154.



Chinese court and state as reflected in the canonical texts on ritual has surprisingly received very little attention, thus far.<sup>98</sup> In addition to McDermott's observation that texts about rituals such as the *Zhouli* or the *Liji* need to receive more attention, our relationship to texts as discursive rather than ritualistic objects also needs further revision.<sup>99</sup> Texts do not only talk or inform about ritual; they might in fact take on active and central roles in ritual, as well.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Despite its title, the majority of Martin Kern's edited volume on text and ritual unfortunately does not provide much discussion of texts as ritualistic objects and/or texts that talk about ritual. See Martin Kern ed., *Text and Ritual in Early China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005). For an attempt to understand early *ru*-ist theory through the lens and practice of ritual, see Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 30-63. For a monograph on failures in ritual activity, see Michael David Kaulana Ing, *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>99</sup> By raising concerns about the seemingly natural categorization of early Chinese texts as inherently philosophical in the study of early China, I do not want to join the many voices of the past that pejoratively discredited early Chinese texts as lacking logic and therefore any philosophical value (see John Makeham, "The Role of Master Studies," pp. 80-101). On the contrary, I think that early Chinese texts contain plenty of passages that present argumentative units and explanations of concepts in varying complexity that are very illuminating and inspiring for current debates in the fields of ethics, epistemology, etc. However, I would like to challenge the assumption that early Chinese texts are *per definitionem* philosophical, an idea both anachronistic and non-native to Han and pre-Han China. In fact, such a presupposition only closes our eyes for some of the non-discursive purposes these scriptures might have had leading to a narrow perspective on early China that finally proves to be problematic when we consider the *Huainanzi*'s elaborate style and production as I will show in this dissertation.

<sup>100</sup> Jan Assmann provides a brief description of the different attitude towards texts as containers of knowledge in Christianity and as a sacred object in Judaism and Islam: "The sacred realm with which the priest is concerned and for whose sake he must purify himself exists within this world; it is attached to a particular location or is vividly present to the senses, and it is separated from the profane world of everyday by very high barriers. This contrasts starkly with the situation of the interpreter or preacher. The sacred realm with

Hence, I have been developing my dissertation with the following questions in mind: why did scholars choose to situate highly constructed texts like the *Huainanzi* within the context of court-debates rather than rituals and imperial ceremonies? And may we find remnants of ritualistic functions and of attempts to produce a powerful, textual object in the design and content of early Chinese texts such as the *Huainanzi*? Since the “historical” data surrounding the production of the *Huainanzi* does not provide any clear evidence that justifies the conclusion that Liu An’s text mainly had a didactic or discursive function as I will show in the next subsection, I claim that we should refrain from ruling out non-discursive purposes such as a ritualistic function for such a highly constructed text. As a result, I decided to write a counter-narrative to the discursive reading of the *Huainanzi* and its concepts in order to explore whether the text contains enough evidence in form of its constructions of homologies based on

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which the latter is concerned is radically separated from this world. Within this world it is present exclusively in written form. For this reason both in Judaism and Islam, writing is invested with ideas and regulations that have manifestly been imported from the world of ritual. Thus a Jew may not put a Bible on the floor, and a Muslim is forbidden to destroy any piece of writing in the Arabic script or language. He may not even take it to read in unsuitable places, even if it is only the newspaper. Christianity, and especially Protestantism, has done away with even this vestige of ritual. The interpreter or preacher becomes qualified for his office through his knowledge of the scriptures. He knows how to read them and to read them aloud, he knows them by heart and is able to make them relevant to particular situations in the present. Here, there is no direct interaction with nature. The success of his calling is measured by the degree to which his sermon is taken by heart, that is, by the translation from text to practical life.” (Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, Rudney Livingstone trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 127)

shared imageries to suggest an undocumented, but possible ritualistic function for the Liu clan's scripture.<sup>101</sup>

### Intellectual Affiliation of the Dissertation

Fortunately, my project may build on the work of other scholars who had become increasingly aware of Chinese studies' own cultural heritage and disciplinary background in recent years and who had begun to push against intellectualistic and secularized readings of early Chinese texts.

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In my opinion, scholarship on early Chinese texts requires a conscious effort in counterchecking seemingly natural presuppositions and disciplinary boundaries as presented in the assumption that writings first and foremost preserve and transmit knowledge. According to Anne Blackburn, writing has always been more than just a medium that transfers information. In recent centuries, we only have reduced the purposes of texts and language to mere vessels of communication abstracting the written word to a mere representation of meaning. She writes, "Moderns tend to read texts silently. We often take for granted that one's relationship to a text is a matter of eye and mind, forgetting the long history of reading aloud alone or in groups that was often central to devotional textuality. We rarely smell our texts, run our fingers over the distinctive texture of manuscript leaves and papers, examine critically calligraphic style, or look for the marks and emendations of former readers and scribes. [...] Scholars of religion [and I suggest that this is true much more so in other disciplines] do not generally honor or revere the texts we are trained to read critically, or handle them as precious objects, although many others who inhabit modern religious worlds continue to engage religious texts with such devotion. We scholars meet these texts mostly with our mental faculties, and those too are distinctive to our own milieu as scholars in a modern (or postmodern) university setting." (Anne M. Blackburn, "The Text and the World," *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*, Robert A. Orsi ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 153)

Due to this modern tendency to reduce and experience texts as mere carriers of information—an educative reading strategy that most academics share since their childhood—I set out to further explore the *Huainanzi*'s self-fashioning as a *dao*-text and to listen carefully to its claims and reasoning behind its construction of homologies.

Anna Seidel (1938-1991), for example, was an academic pioneer that bridged the arbitrary gap of Han *daoja* and Six Dynasties' *daojiao*. She observed the form and function of Daoist talismans (*fu* 符), charts (*tu* 圖), registers (*lu* 籙) and tallies (*qi* 契) from the Six dynasties and compared them with Han imperial treasure objects.<sup>102</sup> In fact, she situated these objects within the context of revealed texts such as the *River Chart* (*Hetu* 河圖) and *Luo Scripture* (*Luoshu* 洛書) that were thought to be cosmic manifestations of a dynasty's mandate to rule during the Han dynasty. In so doing, she reveals a continuity between Heavenly Master (Tianshi 天師) Daoist practices and cultural objects from Sichuan and the Han religio-political lifeworld whose interpretation, as we have seen, is still dominated by intellectualistic concerns.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> For her article, see Anna Seidel, "Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha," *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of Rolf A. Stein II*, Michel Strickmann ed. (Bruxelles, Institut belge des hautes études chinoises, 1983), pp. 291-371. For another insightful discussion of "Talismans and the Power of Inscription," see Gil Raz, *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 127-176.

<sup>103</sup> The concept of a lifeworld became prominent in Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) writings. Setting a world that precedes any scientific knowledge, a primordial sphere of human experience, he introduced the term in his critique of the crisis of European sciences. See Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die Transzendente Phänomenologie: eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologische Philosophie* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1996). The term lifeworld consists of two seemingly contradictory aspects: the idea of a singular 'life' and the concept of a communal 'world.' The combination of these two notions, singular life and communal world, foreshadows already an understanding of the world as consisting of two levels—of a shared social world and of singular subjective lives. Alfred Schütz (1899-1959) transferred the idea of shared and personal experiences of living from the phenomenological concept and incorporated it in his sociological analysis. He defined the lifeworld as a 'world of daily life', which "is the scene and also the object

Another scholar who opposed such secularized visions of the Han is Michael Nylan. She interpreted the *Shiji*, which is commonly read as a historical appraisal of the Han dynasty and its predecessors, as a religious and filial deed of Sima Qian to his father Sima Tan. In her interpretation, the *Shiji* functions in four ways:

1. As a continuation of the Sima family lineage—i.e. as a textual proxy for the biological son that Sima Qian could never produce since he had been castrated by Emperor Wu as the result of his involvement with the Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 BCE) affair in 99 BCE.
2. As a textually expressed, ritualistic taxonomy of the universe at the beginning of a new celestial cycle.
3. As a veneration of the Middle Kingdoms (*zhongguo* 中國).
4. As a textual practice that would achieve an effect similar to other techniques of longevity prevalent in the Western Han dynasty.

In other words, she refutes the seemingly natural contextualization of the *Shiji* as a historiography as proposed by the majority of current scholarship on China's first standard

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of our actions and interactions.” (Alfred Schütz, “The Lifeworld,” p. 73)

Consequently, Schütz describes the twofold structure of a lifeworld, as we may find it in Husserl's writings, in sociological terms as both the unarticulated structural backdrop (the world) and the instrument of our actions (the life). I follow here Schütz' understanding of the lifeworld as both the defining horizon behind and the scene/object of our human actions.

“historical” work and situates it within a framework provided by Sima Qian himself; namely the practice of archival work as a form of divination and invocation.

Another researcher that breaks with some of these disciplinarily informed presuppositions underlying large portions of scholarship in early China while still being firmly grounded in intellectual history is Michael Puett. In his article “Sages, Creation, and the End of History in the *Huainanzi*,” he partially questions such intellectualistic assumptions by concluding that Liu An’s text construes itself as a sagely scripture that embodies the divine being and star constellation called the Great One (Taiyi 太一), the divine ruler of the sky that played a significant role in the imperial sacrificial rituals (*jiao* 醮) during the Western Han.<sup>104</sup> According to his analysis, “the text itself serves as the Great One, unifying all previous knowledge into a single harmonious whole. [...] In a sense, the text serves as a final sage. Even if later rulers are not sages, they will

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For a discussion of the importance of the cult of Taiyi during the Western Han, see Marianne Bujard, *Le Sacrifice au Ciel dans la Chine Ancienne: Théorie et Pratique sous le Han Occidentaux* (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 2000), pp. 142-149. For a description of Taiyi and its various identities, see Qian Baocong 錢寶琮, “Taiyi kao 太一考,” *Qian Baocong kexue shi lunwen xuanji* 錢寶琮科學史論文選集 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe 科學出版社, 1983), pp. 207-234. For a discussion and critique of Qian Baocong’s classic study of Taiyi with the help of recently excavated objects and manuscripts, especially his artificial separation of Taiyi as a philosophical concept in the Warring States period and as a divine being in its aftermath, see Li Ling, “An Archeological Study of Taiyi (Grand One) Worship,” Donald S. Harper trans. *Early Medieval China* 2 (1995-1996): 1-39.

be able, by following this text, to perfectly harmonize the world.”<sup>105</sup> As we can see here, Michael Puett suggests that the *Huainanzi* might have functioned as a sagely presence at the imperial court. Since the appearance of human sages was thought to be a rare and fortunate occasion for a dynasty, he argues that Liu An’s scripture might have been meant to mark an end to the history of dynastic change while operating as a textual replacement that could enable the rulers to permanently rely on sages’ auspicious powers and heaven-sent advise. In other words, he creates a parallel between the function of a human and a textual sage arguing that the *Huainanzi* was intended to work as a harmonizing force capable of permanently assisting the rulers from the Liu clan in their pursuit of social and cosmic order.

Michael Puett’s reading offers a radically new avenue to the study of Liu An’s text that emphasizes its religio-political implications and its close ties to divine beings. It raises an important question: what if not only human beings but also scriptures themselves could be divinized? As Michael Puett had already presented in his book *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China*, texts like the *Huainanzi* and the *Guanzi*’s 管子 “Inner Workings” (“Neiye” 內業) proposed the idea that human beings may divinize

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Michael J. Puett, “Sages, Creation, and the End of History in the *Huainanzi*,” p. 287

themselves and thereby gain power over the universe.<sup>106</sup> It seems to me as if he suggests in his newest article on the *Huainanzi's* understanding of history that self-divinization is not only possible for human beings and their physical body but also for a textual *corpus*.<sup>107</sup>

My dissertation follows this lead and further specifies Puett's assertion about the *Huainanzi* as a textual sage. It explicates one of the ways through which the Liu clan's scripture

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<sup>106</sup> Michael Puett discusses such a divinization of the human body in his book *To Become a God*. His chapter on the *Huainanzi* shows how Liu An's text develops a picture of humanity that may rise far beyond the dusty world with the help of self-cultivational exercises:

“A passage that we looked at briefly in the Introduction from the “Dixing” chapter of the *Huainanzi* describes the process of self-cultivation in terms of a metaphor of climbing high mountain peaks [...]. The cosmology presented here is similar to that which dominated the Han court: Di presides over spirits, who possess powers over natural phenomena. Humans try to gain these powers by approaching ever closer to Di, first by achieving immortality, then by gaining control over the winds and rain, and ultimately by becoming a spirit. But the hierarchy of stages here implies that the goals of this process are quite different from those of masters of formulas. Spirits are immortal and control natural phenomena, and humans can gain these powers. But immortality and control over nature are (literally) lower stages of cultivation. The goal of becoming a spirit is higher than both of these goals. Moreover, theomorphic powers are obtained through techniques of self-cultivation, rather than formulas of control. One does not seek to control the spirits who control natural phenomena; rather, one practices self-cultivation in order to become a spirit oneself.” (Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God*, pp. 259-260)

For his discussion of the idea that human beings may divinize themselves in early Chinese texts, see Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God*, pp. 80-121 and 259-286.

<sup>107</sup> I think it is important to realize that human beings belonged to the same basic category as any other being (*wu*) in the universe. In this vision, everything is created by the Way and loaded with a form so that it would not be surprising if people had thought that objects could be divinized, as well. In a private conversation with Professor Puett on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2016, he confirmed that such a reading of his article is in fact in line with his ideas despite the fact that he does not explicitly verbalize an understanding of the *Huainanzi* in such divinization terms.



divinizes and fashions itself as a textual object that is in image of and embodies the Dao, the cosmic power that early Chinese texts frequently equated with Taiyi.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, it argues that Liu An's text intentionally employs a shared imagery of a tree's root, chariot wheel's hub, and weaving in order to construe the scripture in unison with the Dao and the sages. Or simply put in Puett's terms, Liu An and his workshop cosmicized the *Huainanzi* in order to divinize it into a texture of the Way (*dao zhi wen* 道之文).<sup>109</sup>

Any such argumentation about the ritualistic function and construction of a text that due to a lack of information is not based on historical evidence of a concrete utilization within a performative context runs obviously the risk of imposing a "foreign" purpose onto the text. The same, however, may be said about the current interpretation of the *Huainanzi* as an encyclopedic collection of (philosophical) treatises. Both are attempts in reconstructing possible purposes for a text whose historical context and concrete function during the Western Han dynasty are unfortunately rather undiscernible. As Michael Nylan summarized this situation in

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<sup>108</sup> For a brief discussion and references regarding Taiyi, see footnote 104.

<sup>109</sup> Such an interpretation of the *Huainanzi* as an embodiment of the Way, however, does not exclude the possibility that the text contains argumentative or didactic passages. It just opposes the current monocausal readings of the *Huainanzi* as a philosophical text that unfortunately rather ignore its form and design and thereby exclude the possibility of ritualistic or any other non-discursive functions for the text. For more information on the simultaneous existence of discursive and non-discursive properties in texts, see my concluding remarks on pages 354-357.

regards to the *Shiji*,

There is no way to “prove” the superiority of this [religious] reading of Sima Qian’s *Shiji* [over more secular readings]. Nor am I happy with talk of “proof” anyway, since extraordinary works of art are unamenable to reductionism; their greatness lies in their very ability to prompt multiple readings.<sup>110</sup>

Whether or not we agree with her idealized vision of great works of arts and the concept’s applicability to early China, she nonetheless mentions an important aspect that is often overlooked: our readings are only reconstructions of possible purposes and functions of texts. I understand my project exactly in this vein as an attempt to flesh out some of the evidence from within the text itself for a reading of the *Huainanzi* as a texture of the Dao that might have had a ritualistic function within the religio-political environment of the Western Han dynasty.<sup>111</sup> In other words, I construe an idealtypical (*idealtypisch*) counter-narrative to the scripture’s highly secularized and often mono-causal interpretation as an encyclopedic collection of philosophical treatises for young Emperor Wu while showcasing how my reading is able to explain the *Huainanzi*’s extraordinary design with the help of the text’s own terminology and concepts. In so doing, I question current scholarship’s assumption that the *Huainanzi* has to be read within a politico-philosophical context as a discursive textual object proposing that the academic discourse on the function(s) of the Liu clan’s scripture is less settled than we often assume. By

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<sup>110</sup> Michael Nylan, “Sima Qian: A True Historian?,” *Early China* 23/24 (1998-1999): 216

<sup>111</sup> For a reference regarding the term *dao zhi wen*, see footnote 184.

construing a reading of the *Huainanzi* as a performative text that might have had a ritualistic function, we will be able to renegotiate where in between the two idealtypical poles of a ritualistic and discursive function we would situate the *Huainanzi*. In addition, it allows us to reconsider the contexts in which and the methodological lenses through which we observe scriptures like the *Huainanzi* and their assumed purposes.

## **1.2 Historical Background of the *Huainanzi***

Since much has already been written on Liu An's biography and the *Huainanzi's* textual history, only the important points of the king of Huainan's life and the production of the Liu clan's scripture will be summarized in this chapter, stressing the earliest comments on Liu An and the *Huainanzi* to provide some Han visions regarding the text, its form, and purported production.<sup>112</sup> A large *corpus* of secondary literature on Liu An and the kingdom of Huainan has accumulated over the last century, which I will leave rather untouched. Instead of arguing for the rightness or wrongness of a specific reading, I try to show that the early extant materials on both Liu An's life and the production of the *Huainanzi* are not precise and trustworthy enough

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<sup>112</sup> For other works that discuss the *Huainanzi's* textual history, see Harold D. Roth, *The Textual History of the Huainanzi*, Judson B. Murray, "The Consummate Dao," pp. 42-57, and Zhang Hanmo, "Models of Authorship," pp. 242-326.

to be used as a defining and preconfiguring context for our readings. Instead of interpreting the *Huainanzi* through the lens provided by the historiographical writings as Griet Vankeerbergen and Benjamin Wallacker (1926-2011) did, I will first read and focus on the self-depictions of the Liu clan's scripture and then consider the historiographical writings for our understanding of the *Huainanzi*.

### Contested Lifestories of Liu An

Depending on whether we base our reconstruction of Liu An's life on the standard [imperial] histories (*zhengshi* 正史) or local traditions, we receive quite contrary visions of the king of Huainan. While the standard histories paint an image of a rebellious political leader who had been forced by Emperor Wu to commit suicide in 122 BCE as Griet Vankeerberghen and Benjamin Wallacker have shown, texts like Wang Chong's 王充 (27-100 CE) *Balanced Discourses* (*Lunheng* 論衡) or Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283-343 CE) *Biographies of Divine Ascendants* (*Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳) are testimony to an Eastern Han vision of Liu An as an ascended being (*xianren* 仙人).<sup>113</sup> In that sense, we find in Liu An's case a situation quite similar to the

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<sup>113</sup> Although Benjamin Wallacker and Griet Vankeerberghen both claim that the *Shiji* depicts Liu An as a rebel, their evaluation of the text is exactly the opposite. While Wallacker takes the *Shiji*'s vision at face value, Vankeerberghen questions the political intentions behind Sima Qian's text as we will see below. For

received stories about Kongzi. In both cases it is hard to discern which parts of their transmitted tales contain historical information on their lives since they all function as purposive narratives rather than factual accounts.

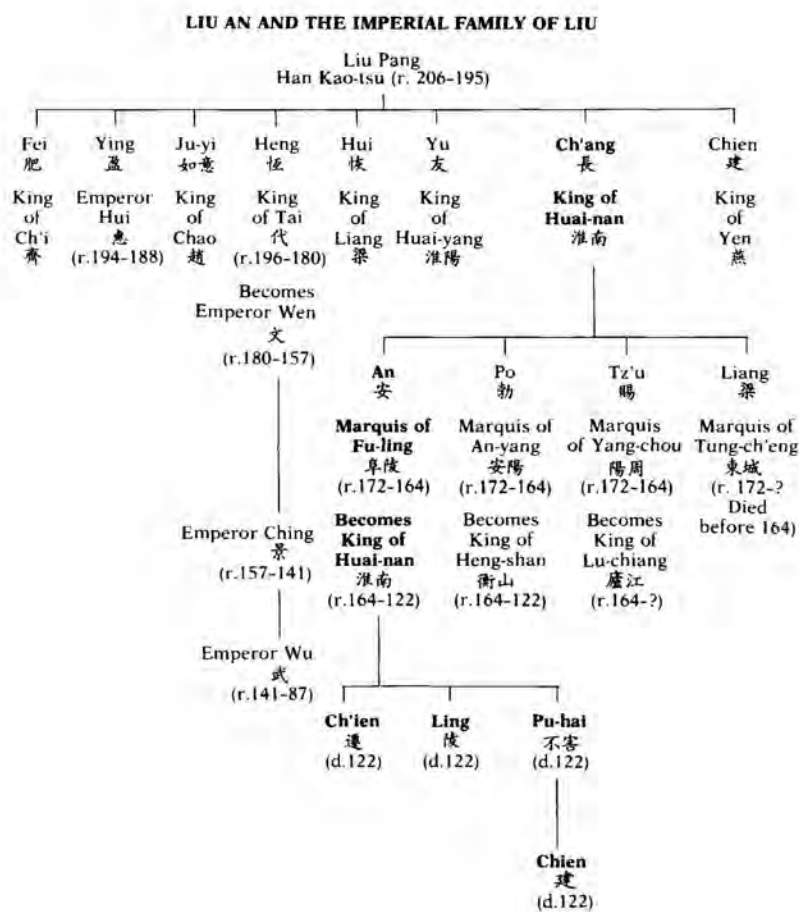


Figure 1: Genealogical Tree of the Imperial Family at the Beginning of the Western Han<sup>114</sup>

Benjamin Wallacker's discussion of Liu An's life story in relationship to the *Huainanzi*, see Benjamin Wallacker, "Liu An, Second King of Huainan (180?-122 B.C.)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 92.1 (1972): 36-51.

According to Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145-86 BCE) *Grand Scribe's Records* (*Shiji* 史記), China's earliest writing of the standard histories, Liu An had been born around 179 BCE into the imperial Liu 劉 family. His father was Liu Chang 劉長 (d. 174 BCE, r. 196-174 BCE), 7<sup>th</sup> son of the Han dynasty's founder Emperor Gaozu 漢高祖 (born Liu Bang 劉邦; ca. 256-195 BCE, r. 206-195 BCE) and king of Huainan. The fiefdom of Huainan had been bestowed upon Chang after its first king Ying Bu 英布 (d. 195 BCE) had failed in his attempt to overthrow the emperor.<sup>115</sup> The *Shiji* clearly depicts Liu Chang in a very unflattering way as an arrogant, presumptuous, vengeful, and insatiable member of the imperial family.<sup>116</sup> This pejorative

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<sup>115</sup> “In the fall of Emperor Gao's eleventh regal year [i.e. 195 BCE] Ying Bu, the king of Huainan, rebelled.”

高帝十一年秋，淮南王英布反。(Sima Qian 司馬遷 ed., *Shiji* 史記, *Ershiwu shi* 二十五史 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1986): 1.106.313a)

<sup>116</sup> The *Shiji* implicitly explains Chang's rage with the unjust death of his mother, one of Gaozu's concubines from the Zhao 趙 clan. Since members of the Zhao plotted a revolt against the emperor, Liu Chang's mother had been seized with the rest of her family. In order to protest her treatment and the emperor's inaction to release her from this shameful and painful situation, she committed suicide right after she had given birth to Liu Chang. As a result, Liu Chang was raised by Empress Lü, the first wife of the emperor who had been jealous of and had been one of the reasons why the emperor didn't exempt Liu Chang's mother. As we will see below, the *Shiji* narrates Liu An's early life in similar terms and therewith construes the story of the kings of Huainan as a narrative of attempted revenges for the early deaths of Liu Chang's mother and Liu An's father, respectively. In other words, it fabricates a kind of genealogy of Huainan's unruliness, a chain reaction that started with emperor Gaozu's misbehavior and inevitably ended with the gradual disintegration of the kingdom. For the passage on Liu Chang's birth, see William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume X: The Memoirs of Han China, Part III*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), pp. 161-163 and Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.118.336b-336c.

illustration of Liu Chang as a brute culminates in his leading role during a rebellion against Emperor Wen 漢文帝 (born Liu Heng 劉恆; 202-157 BCE, r. 180-157 BCE) in 174 BCE that finally resulted in Liu Chang's death in exile when Liu An was just five years old.<sup>117</sup>

In 172 BCE, Emperor Wen partially reinstated Liu Chang's family and conferred smaller fiefs to Chang's four sons.<sup>118</sup> Eight years later, Emperor Wen's trust had been so reaffirmed in his nephews that in 164 BCE he reestablished their kingdom of Huainan. However, in order to limit their power and probably also to avoid further family feuds, he divided the formerly powerful fiefdom into three parts each of which he handed over to one of Liu Chang's remaining sons.<sup>119</sup> Liu An received Huainan, Liu Bo received Hengshan 衡山, and Liu Ci

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<sup>117</sup> “Your servants request to have him stay at Ch’iung 邛 Postal Station in Yen 嚴 Shire in the Shu 蜀 commandery, and send his mothers [who bore him] children to follow him and reside [there] [...]. Only after did he sent off the King of Huai-nan.” (William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume X*, pp. 174-175)

臣請處蜀郡嚴道邛郵，遣其子母從居[...]於是乃遣淮南王。(Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.118.336d)

<sup>118</sup> “In the eighth year of Hsiao Wen[-ti] (172 BC), the Sovereign felt pity for the king of Huai-nan. The King of Huai-nan had four sons, all of them being seven or eight years old. Only then did he enfeoff the son [Liu] An [劉]安 (179-122 BC) as Marquis of Fu-ling 阜陵, the son [Liu] Po [劉]勃 (d. 152 BC) as Marquis of An-yang 安陽, the son [Liu] Tz'u [劉]賜 (178-122 BC) as Marquis of Yang-chou 陽周, and the son [Liu] Liang [劉]良 (d. 165 BC) as Marquis of Tung-ch'eng 東成.” (William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume X*, p. 178)

孝文八年，上憐淮南王，淮南王有子四人，皆七八歲，乃封子安為阜陵侯，子勃為安陽侯，子賜為陽周侯，子良為東成侯。(Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.118.336d-337a)

<sup>119</sup> As Marc Nürnberger mentions, “Only in 164 BC, did the Emperor enthrone the three still living sons as kings, elegantly splitting up former Huai-nan—as if to ensure that they would never have a real

received Lujiang 廬江.<sup>120</sup>

In 154 BCE, another rebellion arose. The rulers of seven kingdoms grouped together to revolt against the imperial court and Wen's successor Emperor Jing 漢景帝 (188-141 BCE; r. 157-141 BCE). According to the *Shiji*, Liu An displayed in this case a vengeful attitude similar to his father and was eager to join the rebellion. Yet, the prime minister of Huainan (*Huainan xiang* 淮南相) apparently disobeyed his orders and did not join the rebel troupes so that the kingdom by proxy remained loyal to the imperial family.<sup>121</sup>

This situation, however, changed a bit more than a decade later after Emperor Jing's death. About two years after the inauguration of young Emperor Wu, Liu An paid in 139 BCE an official visit to his nephew who would become one of the most influential rulers during the Han dynasty. According to the *Shiji*, Liu An mainly used this visit to begin plotting an uprising against the young emperor. But after more than ten years of preparations, the imperial court

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base of power again.” (William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume X*, p. 221)

<sup>120</sup> “In the sixteenth year of Hsiao Wen[-ti] (164 BC), [...] [Liu] An, the Marquis of Fu-ling, became the King of Huai-nan, [Liu] Po, the Marquis of An-yang, became King of Heng-shan 衡山, and [Liu] Tz'u, the Marquis of Yang-chou, became the King of Lu-chiang 廬江.” (William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume X*, p. 181)

孝文十六年，[...]阜陵侯安為淮南王，安陽侯勃為衡山王，陽周侯賜為廬江王。(Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.118.337a)

<sup>121</sup> See William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume X*, pp. 181-182 and Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.118.337a.



apparently discovered Liu An's schemes and intrigues and finally forced him to commit suicide in 122 BCE.<sup>122</sup>

As we can see in the entire setup of the *Shiji's* narrative, Sima Qian apparently intended to depict Liu An and the entire kingdom of Huainan as troublemakers. He presented a genealogy of rebellions and connected these events of uproar (*luan* 亂) with the martial and vengeful characters of the three main protagonists Ying Bu, Liu Chang, and Liu An. Despite the fact that Sima Qian mentions, “[Liu] An [劉]安, the King of Huai-nan 淮南, as a man was fond of reading books and playing the zither, he did not enjoy shooting and hunting, dogs and horses, or racing” (淮南王安為人好讀書鼓琴，不喜弋獵狗馬馳騁), he possibly downplayed these cultural (*wen* 文) characteristics in Liu An's bibliography in order to characterize the king of Huainan as a rebellious ruler similar to his predecessors.<sup>123</sup>

In my opinion, the account raises some questions regarding its veracity and the political motivation and intentions behind Sima Qian's biography of the kings of Huainan out of two reasons: first, Sima Qian constructs such a strong parallelism between the three kings of Huainan and their characters formed by a kingdom-, father-, or mother-less upbringing that the

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<sup>122</sup> See William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume X*, p. 210 and Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.118.338b

<sup>123</sup> See William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume X*, p. 183 and Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.118.337a.

entire sequence of narrative units seems to be idealized. Second, the *Shiji* creates a tension or even a contradiction between its short illustration of Liu An's non-martial personality and his vengeful character and rebellious actions. This contradiction might, in fact, point towards a conscious alteration of Liu An's lifestory on behalf of the imperial family. As Griet Vankeerberghen has written,

The capture of a unicorn, reported in 122 B.C., was used [by the imperial court] as a warning to the other enfeoffed aristocrats and was regarded as the start of a new cycle in Emperor Wu's reign. In the same year, an imperial edict was issued denouncing the king of Huainan's activities as evil and signaling a fresh start for the empire. Furthermore, at some point after 122 B.C., Liu An's biography, the received versions of which are in *Shiji* 史記 and *Hanshu* 漢書, was rewritten to depict Liu An in the most evil lights, congruent with the prosecutors' version of the king's character and actions. The revisions fatally damaged the king's posthumous reputation.<sup>124</sup>

If Vankeerberghen's analysis and historical contextualization of the *Shiji's* accounts on Liu An and the kings of Huainan is correct, we should probably be careful in drawing too many firm conclusions from this very stylized and seemingly teleological narrative beyond its basic aspects. In other words, we should be skeptical towards Sima Qian's genealogical and psychological reading of the kingdom of Huainan and her kingdom-, father-, and mother-less rulers.

As we will see, the *Hanshu*, which had been written less than two hundred years after the *Shiji* during the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 CE), displays a much more positive illustration of

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<sup>124</sup>

Griet Vankeerberghen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*, p. 8

Liu An and his court substantiating the suspicion that portions of the *Shiji* might be purposive historiographies. In my brief discussion of the *Hanshu* account on Liu An, I will mainly focus on its depictions of Liu An's activities in relationship to the production of the *Huainanzi* at the court of Shouchun 壽春. Although the *Hanshu* also illustrates Liu An as a rebel that dies by his own hands in 122 BCE, it elaborates on the king of Huainan's passion for literature and music. Hence, in contrast to the *Shiji*'s account, Ban Gu's text emphasizes much more Liu An's "cultural" (*wen*) than his "martial" (*wu* 武) side.<sup>125</sup>

According to the *Hanshu*, the court at Shouchun had apparently developed into a significant cultural center sometime between Liu An's coronation in 164 BCE and the inaugurate visit of his nephew Emperor Wu in 139 BCE:

An, the king of Huainan, as a man was fond of writings and strumming the *qin*. He did not like shooting and hunting, dogs and horses or racing. He also desired to comfort the people and spread his name by secretly performing good deeds (*yinde*). He summoned to his court several thousand retainers and guests [as well as] masters of methods and techniques. He/they wrote an *Inner Scripture* of twenty-one chapters and an *Outer Scripture* that was much larger. There were also eight scrolls of *Middle Chapters* that expound the techniques of spirits and ascendants and of the yellow and white. They numbered more than two hundred thousand words.<sup>126</sup>

淮南王安為人好書，鼓琴，不喜弋獵狗馬馳騁，亦欲以行陰德拊循百姓，流名譽。招致賓客方術之士數千人，作為內書二十一篇，外書甚眾，又有中篇八卷，言神仙黃白之術，亦二十餘萬

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<sup>125</sup> For a discussion of the *Hanshu* and *Shiji*'s different evaluation of Liu An, see Griet Vankeerberghen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*, pp. 67-78.

<sup>126</sup> This translation is loosely based on Harold D. Roth, *The Textual History of the Huai-nan Tzu*, p. 20.

言。<sup>127</sup>

In this passage, the *Hanshu* envisions Liu An's court as a bustling center at which various visitors including masters of methods and techniques (*fangshu zhi shi* 方術之士) flocked together.<sup>128</sup>

Similar to the passage from the *Shiji* above, he mentions that Liu An was interested in comforting the people (*fluxun baixing* 拊循百姓) with the help of secretly performing good deeds (*xing yinde* 行陰德) as a means to spread his fame (*liu mingyu* 流名譽).<sup>129</sup> In addition,

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<sup>127</sup> Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.44.203b

<sup>128</sup> According to Anna Seidel, *fangshi*, “often translated as “magician” or, equally inadequately as “technician,” “expert in a craft,” does not refer to a specific occupational group or school of thought, but to all those literate members of Han society, who did not fit the Confucian ideal of an all-round cultivated but unspecialized scholar-official, an educator in the Confucian classics and proponent of official ideology. In contrast to these scholar-officials, the *fang-shih* were socially outsiders, sometimes accepting official positions in their capacity as experts, often living close to the people, spreading their ideas and sometimes supporting themselves by their crafts. Some tended to the Confucian New Text school, others were I-ching experts, astrologers, diviners, alchemists, pharmacologists or healers. Better than the official Han sources their writings reflect the atmosphere of a literate milieu closer to the antique traditions of mythology and magic than the high officials [...]” (Anna Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” pp. 294-295)

<sup>129</sup> According to Marc Nürnberger, the term *yinde* seems to mean something akin of “secretly [practicing/practiced] good deeds.” The *Huainanzi*'s “Renjian” chapter, for example, states, “Now those who practice *yinde*, are determined to openly receive awards [for them]; those who act secretly are determined to have bright names. In antiquity there were no canals and dikes; floods harmed the people. Yu dug out Longmen and walled Yinqu. Leveling and ordering the water and soil, he gave the people dry land to inhabit. The common people did not hold [one another] close; the five grades [of relatedness] were not respected. Qi taught them the rightness of ruler and minister, the closeness of father and son, the distinction between husband and wife, the order of elder and younger. The fiefs were left wild and not cultivated; the people did not have enough to eat. Lord Millet thus taught them how to break the earth and clear the plants, fertilize the soil, and plant the grain, [thereby] giving each household among the common people sufficiency. After the Three Dynasties everybody who served as king had *yinde*.” (*HNZ* 18.6)

Ban Gu also mentions that Liu An was eager on writings and music rather than hunting. However, in contrast to Sima Qian's account, the *Hanshu* substantiates Liu An's inclination to cultural activities by elaborating on his court's textual productions that apparently included an *Inner Scripture* (*Neishu* 內書), an *Outer Scripture* (*Waishu* 外書), and *Middle Chapters* (*Zhongpian* 中篇).

The same vision of a productive court in Huainan is reflected in the *Hanshu's* "Yiwenzhi," which mentions six titles attributed to the kingdom of Huainan and one directly related to her kings that had been stored in the imperial library:

- 1) "Huainan's Teachings of the Way in two chapters" (淮南道訓二篇).<sup>130</sup>
- 2) "Huainan's Inner [Scripture] in twenty-one chapters" (淮南內二十一篇).<sup>131</sup>
- 3) "Huainan's Outer [Scripture] in thirty-three chapters" (淮南外三十三篇).<sup>132</sup>

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夫有陰德者，必有陽報；有陰行者，必有昭名。古者，溝防不修，水為民害。禹鑿龍門，辟伊闕，平治水土，使民得陸處。百姓不親，五品不慎，契教以君臣之義，父子之親，夫妻之辨，長幼之序。田野不修，民食不足，後稷乃教之辟地墾草，糞土種穀，令百姓家給人足。故三后之後，無不王者，有陰德也。  
。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 596)

Accordingly, the performance of *yinde* should be understood as a sagely act that was meant to benefit the larger community, an idea that was still alive in the way Daoist masters construed their own powers in later periods. In other words, the *Hanshu* depicts here Liu An as a (powerful) benefactor of his community. For Marc Nürnberger's very helpful and elaborate footnote on *yinde*, parts of which I included in my translation of the *Huainanzi* passage, see William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume X*, pp. 183-185.

<sup>130</sup> Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.30.163c

<sup>131</sup> Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.30.166c

- 4) “*Rhapsodies of the Kings of Huainan* in eighty-two chapters” (淮南王賦八十二篇).<sup>133</sup>
- 5) “*Rhapsodies of the Kings of Huainan’s Assembled Ministers* in forty-four chapters” (淮南王群臣賦四十四篇).<sup>134</sup>
- 6) “*Huainan’s Songs and Poems* in four chapters” (淮南歌詩四篇).<sup>135</sup>
- 7) “*Huainan’s Varied Stars* in nineteen silk scrolls” (淮南雜子星十九卷).<sup>136</sup>

Therefore, if we follow the *Hanshu’s* illustration of Liu An and the court at Shouchun, it seems as if the kingdom of Huainan had been a rather lively and productive cultural center during Liu An’s reign.

When we turn to Liu An’s visit of young emperor Wu, we find a similar emphasis on the cultural achievements of the court at Huainan. According to the *Hanshu*, Liu An did not only begin to plan an uprising against Chang’an during his inaugural visit in 139 BCE as the *Shiji* had claimed. He apparently also provided his nephew with a copy of a text titled *Inner Chapters*, a gift that the young emperor seemingly appreciated so much that he directly hid it in the imperial library: “At the beginning when An entered the court, he offered the *Inner Chapters*

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<sup>132</sup> Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.30.166c

<sup>133</sup> Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.30.167a

<sup>134</sup> Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.30.167a

<sup>135</sup> Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.30.167d

<sup>136</sup> Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.30.168c

that he/they had produced [to the emperor]. When he had just brought it out, the one above was pleased with it and hid it [right away in his imperial library]" (初，安入朝，獻所作內篇，新出，上愛祕之).<sup>137</sup> Considering the "Yiwenzhi's" claim that the *Inner Scripture* consisted of twenty-one chapters as we have seen above, it is therefore indeed likely that the *Inner Chapters*, potentially an alternative title for the *Inner Scripture*, had been a version similar to the extant *Huainanzi*. Accordingly, the Liu clan's scripture indeed might have been produced as a ceremonial gift to the imperial family.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>

Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.44.203b

Thus far, scholars interpreted the term "to hide" (*mi* 祕) as an expression that the emperor included the *Huainanzi* in the personal section of the imperial library either because he appreciated the gift or because he considered the text to be dangerous (see footnote 30 in Griet Vankeerbergen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*, p. 174). However, the latter interpretation is in my opinion rather questionable since the *Hanshu* mentions that the emperor liked (*ai* 愛) the *Huainanzi*. In fact, I suggest that there is a third possibility for the term *mi*; namely that Emperor Wu hid the text at the center of the empire in accordance with the *Huainanzi's* vision of the Way and sagely rulership, in which "forces" (*de*) should remain hidden at the center of the universe/empire. No matter how we interpret the term *mi*, it is very possible that the Liu clan's scripture had specifically been produced as a tribute or ceremonial gift to the imperial family.

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In that sense, I follow the *Huainanzi* translation project's evaluation of Liu An's text as a scripture that had been submitted to Emperor Wu. In so doing, I disagree with Michael Loewe's claim that portions of the *Huainanzi* had been written after Liu An's death in 122 BCE. However, since according to Zhang Hanmo "it is in the "Jingji zhi" 經籍志 chapter of the *Suishu* 隋書 [...] that the *Huainanzi* is for the first time listed as the title of the text in twenty-one juan" (Zhang Hanmo, "Models of Authorship and Text-Making in Early China," p. 255) and since the earliest mentioning of the book title "*Huainanzi*" appears in the *Mixed Records on the Western Capital* (*Xijing zaji* 西京雜記) from around the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, it is indeed possible that the *Inner Chapters* and *Inner Scripture* do refer to a different text. In other words, it is in my opinion impossible to conclusively prove the *Huainanzi* translation project's proposition. For Michael Loewe's comments, see

If the kingdom of Huainan's production of texts and the *Huainanzi's* submission to the imperial court had really happened in accordance with my reading of the *Hanshu's* depiction, we may derive some rather significant consequences from it. First of all, we should probably dismiss the term book as a translation for the term *shu* 書 and for the *Huainanzi's* self-titling.<sup>139</sup> As the "Yiwenzhi's" entry suggests the *Inner Scripture* apparently consisted of twenty-one bamboo scrolls or tablets (*ershiji pian* 二十一篇) so that the translation of *shu* as book would evoke a wrong impression of the text's materiality. Rather than a book in the modern sense of one bound, comparatively small object, the comprehensive *Huainanzi* would have been a text of significant size, weight, and matter. For mathematical conveniences, I calculate in the following the bamboo slips with idealized values and without curvature. I think the slight fuzziness of my calculation is pardonable for I only intend to point out that a scripture like the *Huainanzi* would have been a grandiose product. If we accept the standard length of twenty-two or twenty-five characters per bamboo slip as proposed by the *Hanshu* "Yiwenzhi," the *Huainanzi* with its ca. 140,000 characters would have consisted of approximately 5,600

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footnote 78 in Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 112 and Michael Loewe, "Huang-Lao Thought and the *Huainanzi*: A Review Article," *Journal of the Royal Asian Society* 4.3 (1995): 377 and 387-388.

<sup>139</sup> The *Huainanzi* translation project, for example, uses the term "book" to translate *shu*. See Harold D. Roth et al. trans., *The Huainanzi*, p. 867).



bamboo slips.<sup>140</sup> According to Édouard Chavannes (1865-1918), the most common length for slips were twenty-two and twenty-four Chinese inches (*cun* 寸) suggesting that each character probably took up about one square-*cun* of space.<sup>141</sup> If we calculate a thickness of 5mm per slip (ca. 1/5 of an inch), then the 5,600 slips would have been made out of approximately 0.735 m<sup>3</sup> (about 26 ft<sup>3</sup> or 2.95 x 2.95 x 2.95 feet) of bamboo, which equals ca. 250 kg (ca. 550 pounds) for the entire text or about 12 kg (26 pounds) per chapter if we calculate with an average density of dried bamboo of about 21 lb/ft<sup>3</sup>. Hence, Liu An would have probably needed as many servants as there are chapters to elegantly present his gift to the young emperor. Accordingly, we should probably envision Liu An's inaugural visit as depicted in the *Hanshu* as a ceremonial procession in which twenty-one individual or otherwise grouped scrolls had been handed over

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<sup>140</sup> William Boltz suggests that the standard length of a bamboo slip were twenty-two and twenty-four characters according to the *Hanshu* "Yiwenzhi." See William G. Boltz, "The Composite Nature of Early Chinese Texts," *Text and Ritual in Early China*, Martin Kern ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), pp. 65-66. For the *Hanshu* passage, see Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.30.163d.

<sup>141</sup> For Chavannes' analysis of the materiality of early Chinese bamboo slips, see Édouard Chavannes, "Les livres chinois avant l'invention du papier," *Journal Asiatique* 10.5 (1905): 18-47. According to John C. Ferguson, a Chinese foot (*chi* 尺) equaled 0.23809 cm in the Han dynasty. If we consider that during the same period one *chi* equaled ten Chinese inches (*cun* 寸), a *cun* would have been about 2.3809 cm. See Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China Volume 3: Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 84 and John C. Ferguson, "Chinese Foot Measure," *Monumenta Serica* 6 (1941): 360.

to the young emperor in an elaborate performance as Martin Kern has recently argued.<sup>142</sup>

Such an understanding of the *Huainanzi* within a performative or even ritualistic context opens up a very different vision of the text “as a whole.” If the *Hanshu*’s account is true, then we could think of the *Huainanzi* as a set of twenty scriptures plus an added postface; that is, twenty textual units that might have been organized in an unknown spatial distribution—perhaps in eight and twelve bamboo scrolls as the *Huainanzi* translation project suggests regarding the text’s chapter organization based on the *benmo*-structure—while Liu An and his entourage performed the postface at the court of Liu An.<sup>143</sup> However, there is unfortunately no way to affirm these preliminary thoughts unless some hitherto unexcavated text appears that illustrates in more detail the interactions between Liu An and the imperial court during the presentation of the text in 139 BCE.

As we can see in these accounts, the *Shiji* more so than the *Hanshu* construed

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<sup>142</sup> “From this evidence [i.e. that the “Overview talks about the *Huainanzi* as consisting of twenty chapters], but also from the fact that the “Overview” displays the quintessential characteristics of the Western Han *fu*, I conclude that the “Overview” was initially external to the text of the *Huainanzi* proper, and that its literary form suggests that it was performed before Emperor Wu when “the book of the Liu clan” was presented to him in 139 BCE.” (Martin Kern, “Creating a Book and Performing It,” pp. 147-148)

<sup>143</sup> Although this is only a speculation, it is indeed alluring to see the *Huainanzi*’s organization in relationship to texts like the *Chu Silk Manuscript* (*Chuboshu* 楚帛書), the “Hongfan” 洪範 chapter, the “Youguantu” 幼官圖, or Qinshi Huangdi’s stone steles that should also be understood as a set of individual, yet, related textual units that are organized spatially according to various visions of cosmic order. For a discussion of the *benmo*-structure, see the beginning of chapter 2.

Huainan as a rebellious kingdom that repeatedly opposed centralized governance. While the *Shiji* mainly focused on the martiality and vengefulness of her kings, the *Hanshu* put more emphasis on the cultural productions of Liu An and his court. In that sense, they present two visions of Liu An that almost replicate a *wen/wu*-type of dichotomy. In the *Shiji*, Liu An is the last in a sequence of rebellious rulers of Huainan that contested the central authority of Chang'an and the Han empire. Although the *Hanshu* still depicted Liu An as a rebel who opposes Emperor Wu, it provides a much more sympathetic and complex outlook on the king of Huainan in which the relationship between the two family members started out to be very positive and apparently just turned sour quickly. At the end, however, neither the *Hanshu* nor the *Shiji* provide in my opinion enough evidence for a solid reconstruction of Liu An's lifestory and the historical events that took place in Huainan at the beginning of the early imperial period.

As soon as we turn to texts containing narratives about Liu An that are excluded from the standard histories, we encounter a very different evaluation of the king of Huainan during the Han that further complicates our understanding of his biography. In the *Lunheng's* chapter "Daoist Empty [Talks]" ("Daoxu" 道虛), Wang Chong, for example, criticizes Daoist narratives about realized people (*zhenren* 真人), their longevity, and ascendancy to Heaven. Wang Chong

provides two sequences of people in this piece: the first one includes the legendary Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝), Liu An, Lu Ao 盧敖 (late third century BCE), Xiang Mandu 項曼都 (date unknown) and Wen Zhi 文摯 (fourth or third century BCE) around whom apparently garnered hearsay of their ascendancy in the Eastern Han.<sup>144</sup> The second sequence includes Li Shaojun 李少君 (fl. ca. 133 BCE), Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (ca. 160-93 BCE), Laozi, and Wangzi

144

The Yellow Emperor is the mystical patron of the *fangshi* and medical practitioners. According to Ute Engelhardt, the Yellow Emperor served as an ideal ruler of the ancient times in the eastern provinces of the Middle Kingdoms. In addition he functioned as the central deity of the Five Thearchs (*wu di* 五帝) in the kingdom of Qin. For more information on the Yellow Emperor, see Ute Engelhardt, “Huangdi,” *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Fabrizio Pregadio ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 504-506 and Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Emulating the Yellow Emperor: The Theory and Practice of Huanglao 180-141 BCE,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1994, pp. 58-95. The *Huainanzi* contains a story about Lu Ao, a contemporary of Qinshi Huangdi. According to the “Daoying” chapter (*HNZ* 12.42), Ao intended to roam beyond the Six Coordinates (*liu he* 六合) and reached the Northern Sea (*beihai* 北海) during his travels. See Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 406-410. Wang Chong’s *Lunheng* depicts Xiang Mandu as a student of the Way and of practices to reach ascendancy. Apparently he ascended to the moon and spent three years there with ascended beings who fed him with liquid rosy clouds (*liuxia* 流霞). For the story of Xiang Mandu, see Alfred Forke trans., *Lun-Heng Part 1: Philosophical Essays of Wang Ch’ung* (New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962), pp. 340-341. For the original text, see Wang Chong 王充, *Lunheng* 論衡, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954), 7.70. The *Lüshi chunqiu* and Wang Chong’s *Lunheng* contain a story about Wen Zhi who had been called to court to heal the King of Qi. Wen Zhi healed the king by stirring his royal wrath. As a result, the king tried to boil Wen Zhi alive; however, for three days Wen Zhi did not die. Only after the king had put a lid on the cauldron while cutting off the flow of *yin* and *yang* did Wen Zhi die and was apparently thought to have reached ascendancy. For Wen Zhi’s story, see Wang Chong, *Lunheng*, 7.70-71 and Alfred Forke trans., *Lun-Heng Part 1*, pp. 341-343. For a brief discussion of Wen Zhi’s story, see Tobias Benedikt Zürn, “Die Metapher der Krankheit in der antiken chinesischen Philosophie,” Master’s Thesis, University of Munich, 2008, pp. 42-44.

Qiao 王子喬 (trad. sixth century BCE) who were thought to have achieved longevity.<sup>145</sup> Wang Chong apparently had been dissatisfied with these narratives and therefore ventured out to rebut such Daoist empty talks (*xuyan* 虛言).

After having made his case for the Yellow Emperor, Wang Chong turns his attention to Liu An and utilizes some of the stories about his court and deification that apparently circulated at Wang's time to refute the idea that human beings can actually become ascended beings:

The *Writings of the Ru* say: "the king of Huainan studied the Way and assembled the people who have the Way from all under Heaven. He overthrew the venerables of an entire kingdom and lowered himself to the masters of the Way's techniques. Therefore, masters of the Way's techniques also flocked to Huainan. Marvellous methods and extraordinary techniques were performed in competition. When the king finally attained the Way, his whole household ascended to Heaven. His domestic animals all ascended. His dogs barked up in the sky, and the cocks crowed in the clouds. That means that there was such a plenitude of the drug of immortality that dogs and cocks could eat of it and all follow the king and rise to Heaven. All those that are keen of the Way and study ascended beings say that it was so, [but] that is empty talk.<sup>146</sup>

《儒書》言：「淮南王學道，招會天下有道之人。傾一國之尊，下道術之士，是以道術之士，並會淮南，奇方異術，莫不爭出。王遂得道，舉家升天。畜產皆仙，犬吠於天上，雞鳴於雲中

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<sup>145</sup> Li Shaojun is often depicted as a practitioner of outer alchemy (*waidan* 外丹) mentioned in the standard histories. For a brief entry on Li Shaojun, see Fabrizio Pregadio, "Li Shaojun," *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Fabrizio Pregadio ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 643-644. Dongfang Shuo is commonly construed as one of Emperor Wu's favorites who was thought to have achieved ascendancy. For a brief entry on Dongfang Shuo, see Grégoire Espeset, "Dongfang Shuo," *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Fabrizio Pregadio ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 366-367. Wangzi Qiao apparently was the heir to King Ling of Zhou 周靈王 (r. 571-545 BCE). It is said that Qiao ascended to Heaven while riding on the back of a white crane. For a discussion of Wangzi Qiao and the cults that emerged around him, see Gil Raz, *The Emergence of Daoism*, pp. 80-86. For references regarding Laozi, see footnote 173.

<sup>146</sup> This translation is loosely based on Alfred Forke trans., *Lun-Heng Part 1*, p. 335.

。』此言仙藥有餘，犬雞食之，皆隨王而升天也。好道學仙之人，皆謂之然。此虛言也。<sup>147</sup>

Wang Chong recapitulates in this short passage some local narratives that apparently flourished around the figure of Liu An during the Eastern Han. We know from later works such as the *Shenxian zhuan* that in contrast to the accounts in the standard histories mentioned above, which claim that the king of Huainan had been forced into suicide in 122 BCE, Liu An was also thought to have ascended the Daoist Heaven. These “local” narratives clearly reassess the standard histories’ image of Liu An’s court as a breeding ground for masters of the Way’s techniques (*daoshu zhi shi* 道術之士) and revolts. As we have seen above, the *Hanshu* clearly used Liu An’s interest in such masters of methods and techniques as a sign for his rebellious character and (problematic) desire to secretly perform good deeds (*yinde* 陰德) in order to spread his influence. Apparently, the local narratives, which Wang criticizes by preambing that “Liu An overthrew the venerables of an entire kingdom and lowered himself to the masters of the Way’s techniques” (傾一國之尊，下道術之士), reevaluated Liu An’s desire to secretly perform good deeds as a sign for his potency and later ascendancy.

Unfortunately, Wang’s biased illustration of the local narratives around the king of Huainan in the Eastern Han does not provide much more information regarding the court at Shouchun and its production and form of the *Huainanzi* during the Han dynasty than the

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<sup>147</sup>

Wang Chong, *Lunheng*, 7.68

*Hanshu*.<sup>148</sup> Although he is a bit more specific about the activities of the masters of the Way's techniques that Liu An apparently indulged in at his court, Wang's sarcastic tone and talk about the ascendancy of Liu An's domestic animals makes it impossible to take his comments as an accurate recapitulation of local narratives about Liu An. In my opinion we may, therefore, only deduce three aspects from Wang's discussion of Liu An:

1. According to Wang Chong, some people in the Eastern Han were convinced that the court at Huainan was a bustling cultural center during Liu An's time at which masters of the Way's techniques had performed marvellous methods and extraordinary techniques (*qifang yishu* 奇方異術).
2. Contrary to the standard histories' narrative, some people were apparently convinced that Liu An had achieved ascendancy relatively quickly after his disappearance.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> "Liu An, who succeeded him [i.e. his father] as king, bore a grudge [against the emperor] for his father's dying in exile and harbored the intention to rebel. He assembled all sorts of schemers, and intended great things." (Translation is based on Alfred Forke trans., *Lun-Heng Part 1*, pp. 337-338)

安嗣為王，恨父徙死，懷叛逆之心，招會術人，欲為大事。(Wang Chong, *Lunheng*, 7.69)

<sup>149</sup> Such a reading should not surprise us since throughout Chinese history rebels had often been deified and incorporated in Daoist pantheons. One of the most famous examples in which bandits became deified and incorporated into the Daoist pantheon are the 108 outlaws from Shi Nai'an's 施耐庵 (1296-1372) *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳). As Mark Meulenbeld claims regarding such "novels" (*xiaoshuo* 小說), "the specific reference to divine investitures [...] are devices shared by many [...] late Ming narratives that are commonly designated literary novels: *Journey to the West*, *Watermargin*, and perhaps the most popular of all, the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*), to mention only a few of the more famous examples. Yet

3. In the Eastern Han, some people like Wang Chong associated Liu An with techniques and practices of the Way (*daoshu* 道術).<sup>150</sup>

That being said, however, it is hard to draw any further conclusions from Wang Chong's judgmental and purposive evaluation of Liu An's perception during the Eastern Han. Hence, Wang Chong's illustration only provides a very limited and tinted perspective on Eastern Han receptions of Liu An and his scripture. Nonetheless, the mere vision of Liu An as an ascended being during the first century CE that clearly crystallized in An's inclusion in Ge Hong's *Shenxian zhuan* in the third century CE raises interesting questions regarding the reasons why the king of Huainan became demonized in the standard histories and deified in later hagiographies, questions that I will address in my conclusion.

As we have seen in these brief examples, there existed a wide range of narratives about

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these “great masterworks of the Ming novel” are not qualitatively different from other books that are commonly designated as hagiography, such as the hagiography of Princess Miaoshan (the life of the bodhisattva Guanyin, *Nanhai Guanyin quanzhuan*), the hagiography of the Dark Emperor (*Journey to the North, Beiyou ji*), and the many saints' lives that are included in Yuan and Ming collections of hagiographies. [...] they all share a similar narrative pattern whereby a mortal figure (presented as the embodiment of a god or spirit) engages in often violent practices that lead to premature death and that qualify him or her for canonization as a divine officeholder (usually by the Jade Emperor).” (Mark Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare*, p. 16)

For a description of the Song Jiang Battalion, “a ritual “militia” that enacts the fighting prowess of the *haohan* rebels of the *Water Margin*,” see Avron Boretz, *Gods, Ghosts, and Gangsters: Ritual Violence, Martial Arts, and Masculinity on the Margins of Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), pp. 52-56.

<sup>150</sup>

For references regarding the Way's techniques (*daoshu*), see footnote 52.



Liu An, the king of Huainan, during the Han dynasty of which some sound more fantastic to our modern ears than others. However, our seemingly natural inclination to accept those narratives that sound less fantastic as more truthful or factual accounts of Liu An's life and the court at Shouchun is in fact quite problematic since many of the standard histories were commissioned works by the imperial court that probably pursued agenda instrumental to the contemporaneous ruling elite. As Martin Kern has so succinctly written regarding the standard historical treatment of the Qin,<sup>151</sup>

With Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *Shih-chi*, probably more than with later dynastic histories, one cannot evade the question to what extent the historical narrative accounts for "how it really was." [...] Western Han historical writing on the Ch'in looks too suspicious in perfectly matching the new dynasty's need for political legitimation—and it looks increasingly suspicious with every new archeological find. [...] According to the growing archeological evidence, even the very late pre-imperial Qin state, despite its administrative and legal reforms since the mid-fourth century, was a highly traditional political entity—certainly much more traditional—and much less violent—than the transmitted Han sources would have us believe. [...] The simple fact that the *Shih-chi*, accompanied by a few Western Han texts of philosophical discourse, is in many instances our only transmitted source and therefore our single master-key to the history of pre-imperial and early imperial China does not turn historiography into history, although we time and again have to accept the *Shih-chi* version of history simply because of the lack of alternatives.<sup>152</sup>

Martin Kern reminds us in this passage that historiography is not history or to use Hayden

White's expression: "historical work [...] is [...] a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose

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<sup>151</sup> For a re-evaluation of the various illustrations of the Qin empire and its first ruler, see Yuri Pines, Lothar von Falkenhausen, Gideon Shelach, and Robin D. S. Yates eds., *Birth of an Empire: The State of Qin Revisited* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), pp. 227-300.

<sup>152</sup> Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang*, pp. 155-157

discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing them.*"<sup>153</sup> That means in our case: despite their less supernatural flavor, the standard historiographical biographies in the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*—which by the way often include supernatural events, as well—display only a vision of Liu An, a narrative prose discourse of which we should be as skeptical as of later Daoist hagiographical writings since any of these texts were probably written with concrete (political) goals in mind.<sup>154</sup> In fact, despite their references to magic and transcendence, the Daoist narratives might be more accurate in their depiction of Liu An's preoccupation with techniques of the Way and his concerns with an embodiment of the Dao than the standard histories.

Hence, we may summarize that we apparently find in Liu An a case quite similar to Kongzi who also developed a wide range of biographies. Depending on the specific group that told the narrative, Kongzi had been illustrated as a teacher, a prophet, an uncrowned king (*suwang* 素王), or a god.<sup>155</sup> In other words, if we ask the question of who Kongzi really was, we receive a

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<sup>153</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 2

<sup>154</sup> The *Shiji*'s biography of Kongzi, for example, depicts the capturing of a unicorn (*qilin* 麒麟) as a portent of Kongzi's immanent death, a story that hardly would be accepted as a historical fact within contemporary understandings of history. For the passage in the *Shiji*, see Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.47.228a-228b. For a translation of it, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Readings in Han Chinese Thought*, pp. 89-93.

<sup>155</sup> For discussions of the various manifestations of Kongzi's lifestory, see Mark

portfolio of various tendentious visions rather than a clear historical account. I propose that the same may be said about Liu An who suffered a painful, self-inflicted death as a rebellious and vengeful traitor in the *Shiji*, had been a highly cultured rebel in the *Hanshu*, and has ascended the Daoist Heaven according to local narratives recorded in Wang Chong's *Lunheng* or Ge Hong's *Shenxian zhuan*. Therefore, besides some major events such as his birth, his likely visit of Emperor Wu in 139 BCE, his death or ascendancy in 122 BCE, his apparent interest in master of methods and the techniques of the Way, as well as the production of various texts, it is unfortunately impossible for us to fully pin down a "truthful" account of Liu An's life, the historical events in the second half of the second century BCE, or the concrete reasons behind Liu An's death and later deification.

### **The Problematic Textual History of the *Huainanzi***

In the following pages we will now focus on the Han stories that developed around the production of Liu An's masterpiece parts of which we have already encountered in the discussion of Liu An's life. Although it seems as if the *Huainanzi* is repeatedly mentioned in

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Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucius," *Rivers of Paradise: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad as Religious Founders*, David Noel Freedman and Michael J. McClymond eds. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), pp. 233-308 and Michael Nylan and Thomas Wilson, *Lives of Confucius: Civilization's Greatest Sage through the Ages* (New York: Doubleday, 2010).

these early accounts by the name *Huainan's Inner Scripture* or *Inner Chapters*, we unfortunately do not have any excavated versions or textual redactions of Liu An's text from prior to the Song 宋 dynasty (960-1279) that could substantiate this situation. According to Harold Roth,

The textual history of the *Huai-nan Tzu* falls naturally into two periods. In the first, which spans roughly 1,500 years—from the inception of this work in 139 B.C. until the beginning of the Ming dynasty—our information comes almost exclusively from sources outside the direct transmission of the text. These include the biographies of the major figures in its creation and transmission, bibliographical listings, comments and commentaries, and quotations and paraphrasings of the text, both attested and unattested. As a result of this diverse and fragmentary evidence, the principal questions that dominate this period are concerned with the creation of the work, its continued survival and transmission, and the content and history of its two major commentaries, which after the Han were the vehicles by which it was transmitted. [...] In the second period, [...] due to the considerable number of [...] extant editions, the principal focus shifts to the determination of their filiation, that is their genealogical relationships.<sup>156</sup>

As Roth clearly states in this passage, the early history of the *Huainanzi* is mainly based on sources outside of the text's direct transmission and, therefore, inherently problematic. Since there is no excavated text or any other version of the *Huainanzi* prior to the Song, we have only circumstantial evidence and knowledge of its early form and production.<sup>157</sup> In other words, any engagement with the *Huainanzi* runs the risk that the extant version of the text might in fact differ quite drastically from the "original" text that, as we will see below, early historiographical

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<sup>156</sup> Harold D. Roth, *The Textual History of the Huai-nan Tzu*, p. 3

<sup>157</sup> For a discussion of the Northern Song 宋 (960-1127) small character redaction of the *Huainanzi*, see Harold D. Roth, *The Textual History of the Huai-nan Tzu*, pp. 125-141. All other full versions of the text that are extant today are from the Ming dynasty or later.

writings such as the *Hanshu* rather clearly attribute to Liu An and his court.<sup>158</sup>

In the *Hanshu*'s "Yiwenzhi," the earliest bibliographical work in China, Ban Gu lists two scriptures under the name of Huainan in the subsection on the Miscellaneous School, a categorization we have already discussed at the beginning of the "Introduction." As we have seen above, Ban Gu claimed that at the time of the early Eastern Han there existed a "Huainan's Inner [Scripture] in twenty-one chapters" (淮南内二十一篇) and a "Huainan's Outer [Scripture] in thirty-three chapters" (淮南外三十三篇) in the imperial library.<sup>159</sup> The "Yiwenzhi's" mentioning of twenty-one chapters (*pian* 篇) suggests in my opinion three things:

1. The "Huainan's Inner [Scripture] in twenty-one chapters" might refer to the *Huainanzi*'s extant version.
2. This text might have followed the extant *Huainanzi*'s organization and might have already included the last chapter "Summary of the Essential [Points]."
3. The text housed in the imperial library at Ban Gu's time might have been written on bamboo scrolls or tablets (*pian*) rather than silk scrolls (*juan* 卷).

In this evaluation, I largely follow the *Huainanzi* translation project's interpretation. That being

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<sup>158</sup> The *Shiji* offers rather little information on the *Huainanzi*'s production and the cultural activity at the court of Shouchun so that I will largely base my discussion of the *Huainanzi*'s textual history in the Han on the *Hanshu* and Gao You's preface.

<sup>159</sup> Ban Gu, *Qian Hanshu*, 1.30.166c

said, however, it is, in my opinion, impossible to verify these three points with utter confidence since they are solely based on a parallel between the extant version's number of chapters and Ban Gu's short bibliographical note. Moreover, we don't know whether Ban Gu's version of the *Inner Scripture* are in fact the (bamboo) scrolls that Liu An might have submitted to Emperor Wu in 139 BCE.<sup>160</sup> In addition, there is no textual evidence for a "Huainan's Outer [Scripture] in thirty-three chapters" outside of the *Hanshu's* accounts so that it is also impossible to really negotiate the concrete relationship between the *Inner* and *Outer Scriptures* of Huainan based on this account from the *Hanshu*. In other words, the "Yiwenzhi" of itself provides only limited information regarding the *Huainanzi's* early textual history.

However, as we have seen in the "Biography of Liu An" in the *Hanshu*, these two texts apparently belonged to a triad of writings associated with Liu An and his court at Shouchun. According to the biography, An had produced an "*Inner Scripture* with twenty-one chapters" (內書二十一篇) that again resonates with the extant version, as well as "a much larger *Outer Scripture*" (*waishu shenzhong* 外書甚眾) and eight scrolls of *Middle Chapters* in more than

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<sup>160</sup> According to Zhang Hanmo's reading of Gao You's commentary, Liu An submitted his *Rhapsody on the Lisao* (*Lisao fu* 離騷賦) to the young emperor. See Zhang Hanmo, "Models of Authorship," pp. 256-260.

200,000 words (*ershi yu wan yan* 二十餘萬言).<sup>161</sup> Of these three texts, the *Middle Chapters* like the *Outer Scripture* mentioned earlier is lost in its entirety and only extant in form of some quotations in *leishu* and other writings. Because of the numerical parallel in regards to chapters, the *Inner Scripture* apparently refers again to the extant *Huainanzi* although we still do not know this for sure. However, it seems as if the *Hanshu* grouped the Liu clan's scripture within a set of texts organized by the titles inner (*nei* 內), middle (*zhong* 中), and outer (*wai* 外) if we accept that the *Inner Scripture* does indeed refer to the extant *Huainanzi*.

Regarding the content of these scriptures, the *Hanshu* only provides some clues for the *Middle Chapters*, which according to Ban Gu “expounded the techniques of spirits and transcendents and of the yellow and white” (中篇八卷言神仙黃白之術). This curious fact might be related to the situation that the imperial library seemingly had no copy of this text anymore as the “Yiwenzhi” suggests so that a brief summary of the text was needed. Both the term “spirits and transcendents” (*shenxian* 神仙) and “yellow and white” (*huangbai* 黃白), thereby, refer to practices aimed on achieving ascendancy, one of the interests that Wang Chong explicitly and the *Hanshu* implicitly attributed to Liu An and his courtiers. The synecdoche *huangbai* in particular refers to gold and silver and, therefore, depicts alchemical

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<sup>161</sup>

Ban Gu ed., *Qian Hanshu*, 1.44.203b

practices in early Chinese texts so that we may draw the tentative conclusion that this scripture might have contained some materials on what would later be termed practices of outer alchemy (*waidan* 外丹).<sup>162</sup>

The case is a bit more complicated regarding the *Inner* and *Outer Scriptures*. Harold Roth assumes based on Yan Shigu's 顏師古 (581-645) commentary that "the term "inner" presumably refers to the Taoist philosophical outlook embraced by An and his court, in contrast to the term "outer," which must refer to the doctrines of other schools."<sup>163</sup> Although such an interpretation of the two terms is possible, it finally seems to be grounded in a speculation regarding Liu An's school affiliation, a discussion that has recently lost its fervor.<sup>164</sup> Contrary to Roth's suggestion, the terms *nei/wai* may in fact acquire an incredibly wide range of meanings

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<sup>162</sup> According to Ge Hong's *Master who Embraces Simplicity* (*Baopuzi* 抱朴子), a slightly later scripture than the *Hanshu*, the term *huangbai* refers to the two alchemical ingredients gold and silver. In its chapter "Yellow and White" ("Huangbai" 黃白), the *Baopuzi* says right at the beginning: "The recipes of yellow and white [i.e. alchemy] in the *Classic of Spirits and Ascendants* consist of twenty-five scrolls with more than a thousand entries. Yellow is gold and white is silver."

神仙經黃白之方二十五卷，千有餘首。黃者，金也。白者，銀也。(Ge Hong 葛洪, *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇, *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshu guan 藝文印書館, 1962): 1185.16.1a)

For an introduction to *waidan* practices, see Fabrizio Pregadio, *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

<sup>163</sup> Harold D. Roth, *The Textual History of the Huai-nan Tzu*, p. 16

<sup>164</sup> For a brief survey of "The Debate over the Intellectual Affiliation of the *Huainanzi*" in the twentieth century, see Harold D. Roth et al. trans., *The Huainanzi*, pp. 27-32.



in the context of scripture titles.<sup>165</sup> Yan Shigu and Roth's reading of *nei/wai*, for example, hardly fits the "Inner" and "Outer Chapters" of the *Zhuangzi*, the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic* (*Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經) and *Outer Classic* (*Huangdi waijing* 黃帝外經), the latter of which is lost today, or the *Outer Tradition to Mr. Han [Ying's Classic of] Songs* (*Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳). It is apparent that the *nei/wai* structure marks some kind of classification; however, the concrete framework for such a contrastive taxonomy seems to change according to the specific contexts in which it is used. As a result, I am quite skeptical regarding the veracity of Yan Shigu and Harold Roth's claim. Instead, it seems as if their conclusion should be read as the result of an interested and purposive speculation with the larger goal of proving that the *Huainanzi* is in fact a Daoist text.<sup>166</sup>

In addition to mentioning the titles of three scriptures attributed to Liu An's court, the *Hanshu* account and the title *Huainan's Inner Scripture* (*Huainan neishu* 淮南內書) both seem to suggest that the text had not been produced by a single author but by a collective if we

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<sup>165</sup> For a very brief discussion of the editorial categories of *nei* and *wai*, see Zhang Hanmo, "Models of Authorship and Text-Making in Early China," p. 257.

<sup>166</sup> For Harold Roth's argumentation for an early (Daoist) inner cultivation tradition that is enshrined in texts such as the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Guanzi*, and *Huainanzi*, see Harold D. Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training (Nei-yeh) and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 125-204 and Harold D. Roth, "Daoist Inner Cultivation Thought and the Textual Structure of the *Huainanzi*," *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, Sarah A. Queen and Michael J. Puett eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 40-82.

accept that the *Huainan neishu* and the extant *Huainanzi* are indeed the same text. According to Ban Gu, Liu An summoned at his court visitors and guests including masters of methods and techniques that might have been involved in the production of the Liu clan's scripture. Although the *Hanshu* remains vague about the case whether these visitors and guests were directly involved in the production of the scripture, other early sources such as Gao You's 高誘 (fl. late second century CE) commentary explicitly state that the Liu clan's scripture is the result of a large scale collaboration.

In the preface to his commentary on the *Huainanzi*, Gao You presents another Han reception of Liu An's text and its purported production. After recapitulating the early history of Liu An's father and his mother, Gao You relatively quickly focuses on An's literary output. First, Gao's preface makes a reference to the famous story about Liu An's overnight production of a *Rhapsody on the Lisao* (*Lisao fu* 離騷賦) emphasizing the king of Huainan's literary skills. Afterwards, it presents a vision of the production of the *Huainanzi* in the following words:

Many of the masters in all under Heaven that [practiced] techniques and methods went and gave their allegiance to him. Hence, he [i.e. Liu An] with the eight people Su Fei, Liu Shang, Zuo Wu, Tian You, Lei Bei, Mao Bei, Wu Bei, and Jin Chang and with various erudite followers from the Great Mountain and Small Mountain together discussed the Way and its Powers (*daode*), collected and united benevolence and righteousness (*renyi*), and composed this scripture.

天下方術之士，多往歸焉。於是遂與蘇飛，李尚，左吳，田由，雷被，毛被，伍被，晉昌等八

人，及諸儒大山小山之徒，共講倫道德，總統仁義，而著此書。<sup>167</sup>

Gao You's preface construes an interesting and quite explicit outlook on the *Huainanzi* as we will see in the continuation of this passage below. In contrast to the earlier accounts, he describes in more detail the production of the *Huainanzi*. First, he reiterates explicitly the *Hanshu* and Wang Chong's implication that a diverse collective of people—including the eight masters of techniques and methods who had later been associated with the eight elders (*bagong* 八公) and the erudites from the Great and Small Mountain—had produced the *Huainanzi* under the tutelage of Liu An after they had discussed the powers of the Way (*jianglun daode* 講倫道德) and had collected and united benevolence and righteousness (*zongtong renyi* 總統仁義).<sup>168</sup> Gao You apparently assumes, as well, that the *Inner Scripture* is the *Huainanzi* to which he wrote his commentary since he explicates and elaborates on the *Hanshu*'s earlier narrative in his "Preface" ("Xumu" 敘目) to the extant *Huainanzi*.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Gao You 高誘, "Xumu" 敘目, *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解, Liu Wendian 劉文典 ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chubanshan 中華書局出版發行, 2006), pp. 1-2

<sup>168</sup> At this point, it is obviously hard to say what the latter reference of collecting and uniting benevolence and righteousness means beyond being a reference to the juxtaposition of *dao* and *ru* that also seems to have organized the two groups of contributors to the text (eight elders of the Way and the *ru*-ist Small and Large Mountain schools). For a brief discussion of the eight elders, see Zhang Hanmo, "Models of Authorship," pp. 268-274.

<sup>169</sup> Interestingly, Gao You does indeed claim that Liu An wrote and submitted the *Rhapsody on the Lisao* during a visit of emperor Wen who hid it directly in his library seemingly contradicting Ban Gu's account of this story (see Gao You, "Xumu," p. 1). At the end, however, Gao You's commentary does not solve

Many scholars who refer to Gao You's commentary unfortunately stop at this point since this passage provides the clearest information regarding the historical context of the *Huainanzi's* production and therewith answers to the specific questions of an audience concerned with the reconstruction of its textual history. However, this means that a large number of scholars has rather ignored the rest of Gao You's illustration, which displays some very interesting observations about the purpose(s) that he attributed to Liu An's text.<sup>170</sup> The continuation of the passage above goes as follows:

Its [i.e. the *Huainanzi's*] main purpose is close to the *Laozi*. Light, mild, and non-active (*wuwei*), stepping into emptiness and maintaining tranquility, it leaves and enters the weaving Way. Putting in words its greatness, then it envelops Heaven and carries Earth. Expressing its smallness, then it sinks down into the rootless. When it comes to past and present, order and chaos, life and death, good and bad fortune, as well as the extraordinary, unusual, fabulous, and remarkable deeds in this age, [all] its meanings/proper regulations (*yi*) are written down [and] its patterns are abundant. Of all the beings and deeds' [resonating] categories, there is none that is not written [into it]. [Since] it is so, its great point is to return/its clarity returns to the Way. Its literary name (*hao*) is Honglie. *Hong* means great, and *lie* means illuminating, [so] it is (regarded as) the words of the greatly illuminating Way.

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the problem, either, since it does not offer any concrete statement regarding the matter whether or not Liu An submitted the *Huainanzi* to young Emperor Wu. It only states in a very similar fashion to Ban Gu's account that An wrote and submitted a *Rhapsody on the Lisao* to Wu's predecessor. In my opinion, it is very likely that the king of Huainan had produced and given several texts to the Han emperors and that Gao You and Ban Gu might refer to different events using the same sentence structure. That being said, Gao You's commentary reminds us again in this case that the "historical" context around the *Huainanzi* is in fact quite vague. For a reference to Zhang Hanmo's discussion of this situation, see footnote 160.

<sup>170</sup>

For a few examples that do not mention this portion in their brief discussion of Gao You's preface, see Harold D. Roth, *The Textual History of the Huai-nan Tzu*, p. 21, Harold D. Roth et al. trans., *The Huainanzi*, p. 8, and Judson B. Murray, "The Consummate Dao," pp. 47.

其旨近老子。淡泊無為，蹈虛守靜，出入經道。言其大也，則燾天載地。說其細也，則淪於無根。及古今治亂，存亡禍福，世間詭異瓌奇之事，其義也著，其文也富。物事之類。無所不載。然其大較，歸之於道。號曰《鴻烈》。鴻，大也；烈，明也，以為大明道之言也。<sup>171</sup>

As Gao You's reception suggests, he reads the *Huainanzi* as a text whose "purpose is close to the *Laozi*" (*qi zhi jin Laozi* 其旨近老子). Interestingly, although Benjamin Wallacker is one of the few who presents this portion of the preface in his article on the life of Liu An, he does neither discuss nor wonder about such attributions or the *dao*-terminology that Gao You utilizes to depict the Liu clan's scripture.<sup>172</sup> It seems as if he considered such *dao*-terminology to solely reflect the "fact" that the *Huainanzi* is closely affiliated to the *Laozi* and Daoist ideas, a fact that would not be worth further discussion. Although this is a viable interpretation of this passage, I would like to present a different reading. I suggest that Gao You might have understood the *Huainanzi* as a scripture "close to the *Laozi*" in the sense that both are textual manifestations of the Way in the human realm.

As is widely known, the *Laozi* had been read by the almost contemporaneous "Xiang'er" 想爾 commentary (probably early third century CE) as the initial revelation of the Way through the deified, *dao*-body of Laozi.<sup>173</sup> By saying that the *Huainanzi* is regarded as "the words of the

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<sup>171</sup> Gao You, "Xumu," pp. 1-2

<sup>172</sup> See Benjamin Wallacker, "Liu An, Second King of Huainan (180?-122 B.C.)," p. 39.

<sup>173</sup> "The Xiang'er regards a deified Laozi, or Lord Lao, as the hypostasis of the Dao and his book as "the teachings of the Dao" (*daojiao*—the phrase that, in later texts, came to designate the religion as a

greatly illuminating Way” (*daming dao zhi yan* 大明道之言), Gao You seems to reflect a vision of the *Huainanzi* as a text comparable to contemporaneous receptions of the *Laozi*. Such an interpretation of Gao You’s preface is not only based on the mere statement that the *Huainanzi* contains “the words of the greatly illuminating Way” that speaks (*dao* 道) to us through such texts and the workings of the universe. In fact, Gao You’s illustration of the *Huainanzi*’s functions and properties in his preface is interspersed with phrases and images from Liu An’s text that delineate the actions of the Way and the sage.

In the following, I discuss only a small, representative sample of the phrases that Gao You utilizes in his preface to depict the *Huainanzi*. But I am confident that these examples already display a clear pattern. First Gao You claims that the *Huainanzi* is “light, mild, and non-active (*wuwei*)” (*danbo wuwei* 淡泊無為). In so doing, he evokes associations to the Way with the help of water imagery as expressed in the compound *danbo* because of their utilization of the radical for water (*shui* 水) and the mentioning of the important practice of *wuwei*.<sup>174</sup>

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whole). Indeed, the two cannot be separated. Lord Lao is the Dao and the Dao is Lord Lao. Through the *Laozi*, the book of the deified Lord Lao, the Dao thus speaks directly to humans.” (Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 39)

For a discussion of the deification of Laozi in the Han, see Anna Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao Tseu dans le Taoisme des Han* (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1992) and Livia Kohn, *God of the Dao: Lord Lao in History and Myth* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, 1998).

<sup>174</sup>

Particularly, the term *dan* appears often in the *Zhuangzi* as an illustration of *wuwei* and the

According to the *Huainanzi*, *wuwei* in most cases refers to the superior or good action of the sage. The “Quintessential Spirit” (“Jingshen” 精神) chapter, for example, claims:

Those whom we call realized people are the ones whose inborn nature merges with the Way. Therefore, they exist, yet are as if they are nonexistent. They are full, yet are as if they are empty. They reside in their oneness not knowing of any duality. They order their inside not recognizing their outside. They illuminate and shine on Grand Simplicity and by doing *wuwei* return to the unhewn block.<sup>175</sup> They embody the root and keep the spirits in their bosom. In so doing, they roam freely within the constraints of Heaven and Earth. (HNZ 7.7)

所謂真人者，性合于道也。故有而若無，實而若虛；處其一不知其二，治其內不識其外。明白太素，無為複樸，體本抱神，以游于天地之樊。<sup>176</sup>

In this passage the realized person, a term that the *Huainanzi* seems to interchangeably use with the sage (*shengren* 聖人),<sup>177</sup> is able to merge with the Way (*he yu dao* 合於道), reside in

Way. See Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.165 and 3.204-205. In addition, the beginning of the *Huainanzi* that also depicts the “Origin in the Way” (“Yuandao” 原道) relies heavily on water imagery. For the importance of water imagery in depictions of the Way and *wuwei*, see Sarah Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 29-92.

<sup>175</sup> Grand Simplicity (*taisu* 太素) and the unhewn block (*pu* 樸) are two terms that refer to the great beginning and root of the universe when existence had not yet been formed out of the primal energy into a duality of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 and subsequently into the diversity of the Myriad Beings (*wanwu* 萬物). For a passage that uses the terms simple (*su*) and unhewn (*pu*) to describe the beginning (*shi* 始) or reign (*zhi* 治) of Grand Purity, a term the *Zhuangzi* relates in the “Lie Yukou” 列御寇 chapter to concepts such as ultimate beginning (*taichu* 太初), the beginningless (*wushi* 無始), or the formless (*wuxing* 無形) that all point towards the Way, see HNZ 8.1 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 244.

<sup>176</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 227

<sup>177</sup> The beginning of chapter nine, titled “The Arts of Rulership” (“Zhushu” 主術), uses similar images to depict the sagely rulership: “The arts of human rulership [i.e. sagely rulership] establishes the service of nonaction (*wuwei*) and acts out the teachings that [cannot be put in] words. Quiet and tranquil it does not act; by [even] one degree it does not waver; adaptive and compliant, it relies on underlings; dutiful and accomplished, it does not labor.” (HNZ 9.1)

oneness (*chu qi yi* 處其一), and return to the unhewn block because (s)he performs nonaction (*wuwei fupu* 無為復樸).<sup>178</sup> In other words, the *Huainanzi* depicts the performance of nonaction as one central practice that enables the realized person to embody the root (*tiben* 體本) of the universe.<sup>179</sup> The *Huainanzi*, however, also uses the expression *wuwei* to illustrate the actions of the Way. In the “Arts of Rulership” (“Zhushu” 主術) chapter (HNZ 9.10), the text remarks, “*Wuwei* is the ancestor/main point of the Way” (無為者，道之宗).<sup>180</sup> Accordingly, it seems as if Gao You intends to illustrate the *Huainanzi* in terms of the Dao and the sage.

And indeed, we find the same strategy to depict the Liu clan’s scripture in terms of the Way and the sage in many of the other characteristics Gao You attributes to the Way. The *Huainanzi* apparently “steps into emptiness and maintains tranquility” (*daoxu shoujing* 蹈虛守

人主之術，處無為之事，而行不言之教。清靜而不動，一度而不搖，因循而任下，責成而不勞。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 269)

According to Charles Le Blanc, “the Sage is described as combining within himself the art of the perfect ruler and the mystical consciousness of the unnamed but implied True Man” in the *Huainanzi*. See Charles Le Blanc, *Huai Nan Tzu*, pp. 194-197.

<sup>178</sup> “Therefore, those who break through to the Way return to clarity and tranquility. Those who look deeply into things end up not acting (*wuwei*) on them. If you use calmness to nourish your nature, and use quietude to transfix your spirit, then you will enter the heavenly gateway.” (HNZ 1.8)  
是故達於道者，反於清淨；究於物者，終於無為。以恬養性，以漠處神，則入于天門。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 20)

<sup>179</sup> A passage in the “Quanyan” chapter (HNZ 14.56), for example, states, “*Wuwei* is the body of the Way” (無為者，道之體也; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 482-482) so that a sage’s performance of *wuwei* literally leads to a nesting of the Dao’s body in her/his physique.

<sup>180</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 278



靜). By using these terms Gao You evokes further associations to the *Huainanzi's* discourse of sagehood and the performance of *wuwei* as expressed in phrases such as “[If the ruler is] pure, tranquil, and performs nonaction (*wuwei*), the Heaven will give him [timely] seasons” (清靜無為，則天與之時; *HNZ* 9.14).<sup>181</sup> The depiction of the Liu clan’s scripture as that which “envelops Heaven and carries Earth” (*daotian zaidi* 燾天載地) alludes to the beginning of the *Huainanzi*, which claims, “As for the Way: it covers Heaven and carries Earth” (夫道者，覆天載地; *HNZ* 1.1).<sup>182</sup> And finally, Gao You proposes that the *Huainanzi* “leaves and enters the weaving Way” (*churu jingdao* 出入經道) and “returns to the Dao” (*gui zhi yu dao* 歸之於道), a sign that Liu An’s text normally uses to depict the sage’s ability to reunite and merge (*he* 合) with the cosmic origin after which (s)he may return to the phenomenal world.<sup>183</sup>

This short sample of characteristics that Gao You attributes to the *Huainanzi* raises an interesting question: Why does Gao You use such terminology reminiscent of the *Huainanzi's* discourses on the Way and the sage to introduce his commentary to the Liu clan’s scripture? As a commentator, Gao You obviously knew Liu An’s text and its vocabulary very well so that his

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<sup>181</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 282

<sup>182</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 1

<sup>183</sup> For example, the “Activating the Genuine” (“Chuzhen” 俶真) chapter mentions, “The sage entrusts his spirits to the Numinous Storehouse and returns to the beginning of the Myriad Beings [i.e. the Way].” (*HNZ* 2.8)

聖人託其神於靈府，而歸於萬物之初。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 58)

choice of wording may not be interpreted as a coincidental parallel in my opinion. At this point, it is unfortunately impossible to explain the concrete purpose and function that he ascribes to the *Huainanzi* since it would necessitate a close analysis of his entire commentary and its relationship to the preface. However, the preface and its phrasing at least suggest that Gao You might have truly perceived the Liu clan's scripture as a manifestation of the "words of the greatly illuminating Way," as a scripture in many ways similar to the "Xiang'er" commentary's reading of the *Laozi* or the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), which both the *Xici Commentary* (*Xici zhuan* 繫詞傳) and Liu Xie's 劉勰 (fl. late fifth century CE) preface to the *Patterned Hearts and Carved Out Dragons* (*Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龍) construe as a texture of the Way (*dao zhi wen* 道之文).<sup>184</sup> In other words, I preliminarily propose that Gao You's preface

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In my opinion, both the *Wenxin Diaolong* and the *Huainanzi* display an attempt to incorporate cosmic structures in their textual designs. The *Wenxin Diaolong*, for example, sees itself in close proximity to the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) and therefore as a continuation of the sagely writings "from the Feng clan down to Kongzi." It employs 49 chapters and an extra chapter similar to the use of yarrow stalks in divination as expressed in the *Yijing*. Therewith, the text's organization closely relates to the *Yijing*'s trigrams (*bagua* 八卦), which were thought to be directly derived from the cosmos and yarrow stalks. For further information, see footnote 16 in Vincent Yu-Chung Shih trans., *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons: A Study of Thought and Pattern in Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 7. For a depiction of Liu Xie's conceptualization of *dao*-textures such as the *Yijing* or, as I argue, the *Huainanzi*, see the first chapter "Originating in the Way" ("Yuandao" 原道) in Liu Xie 劉勰, *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, *Sibu congkan chubian jibu* 四部叢刊初編集部 (Shanghai: Shanghai shangwu yinshu guan 上海商務印書館, 1919-1922): 109.3a-3b. For a translation of the "Yuandao" chapter and its explication of how the textual productions of a patterned heart "are rooted in the Dao" (*ben hu dao* 本乎道), see Vincent Yu-Chung Shih trans.,

apparently presents the *Huainanzi* as a cosmicized scripture that replicates in an up to this point undisclosed way some of the actions and properties of the Way and the sages.<sup>185</sup>

Gao You's cosmic understanding of the *Huainanzi* is not surprising once we consider the intellectual and cultural context of the Han dynasty. As Grant Hardy accurately mentioned for the case of the Western Han dynasty,

the ideal of microcosms, textual and otherwise, was one of the main intellectual interests of the Qin and Former Han dynasties. The fact that the world could be unified politically suggested that it might be consolidated in other ways, and scholars of the time labored in a variety of fields to produce representations of the world that were both comprehensive and compact. In each case, these were not just verbal descriptions of the cosmos but concrete objects whose form reflected the structure of the universe.<sup>186</sup>

In this portion of his book *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian's Conquest of History*, Grant Hardy claims that representations of the world in their comprehensive, yet compact form were a common phenomenon during the Western Han dynasty. Texts such as the *Shiji*, the *Yijing*, or, as I would argue, the *Huainanzi* were microcosms of the world at large. As Gao You's commentary suggests, such an interpretation is therefore not only a (post-)modern fancy of scholars of religious studies. Instead, it seems to be more closely related to early Han receptions of the *Huainanzi*, Ban Gu's evaluation of the Miscellaneous School, and the

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*The Literary Mind*, pp. 8-13.

<sup>185</sup> For Michael Puett's reading of the *Huainanzi* as a sagely text, see pages 63-66.

<sup>186</sup> Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian's Conquest of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 52

historiographical narrative of Liu An's court as a center for the techniques of the Way and "esoteric" practices than its current evaluation as a manual and diverse collection of philosophical essays.

As we have seen in this survey of the *Huainanzi's* early textual and reception history, it is indeed possible that a textual version similar to the extant scripture, which also consists of twenty-one chapters, might have already existed in the first century CE. It is also possible that this version was in fact the very text that according to the *Hanshu* Liu An had submitted to Emperor Wu in 139 BCE—despite the fact that Gao You's commentary suggests that Liu An rather submitted his *Rhapsody of the Lisao*. Moreover, it seems as if the *Huainanzi* had been produced under the guidance of Liu An at the court of Huainan by a diverse group of people, which may have included masters of the Way's techniques and methods, as well as *ru*-ist scholars. In addition, Liu An and his court might have produced the *Huainanzi* to be submitted to the imperial Liu clan, either specifically for Emperor Wu or for his predecessor Emperor Jing. If we accept the narrative that the *Huainanzi* had been submitted to Emperor Wu and if we at the same time consider its largess both as a project and as a material object, we should probably assume, as well, that the twenty-one chapters had not only been produced by a group of people but also had been ceremonially presented to the emperor by an entourage of

officials, servants, and performances. That being said, however, it is in my opinion impossible to draw any firm conclusions from Ban Gu's bibliographical list and Han biographical accounts since these early sources do not provide much concrete information beyond a title, amount of chapters, and some purposive illustrations of the *Huainanzi's* production not unsimilar to the situation with Liu An's biography.

Beyond these aspects derived from early Han sources, I have also shown that Gao You might have understood the *Huainanzi* to be a text that contains the words of the greatly illuminating Way, i.e. a scripture that displays characteristics the *Huainanzi* commonly attributes to the sage and the Dao. Obviously Gao You's preface is no proof that Liu An intended the *Huainanzi* to be a textual embodiment of the Way. However, his construction of a homology between the Dao and the text will resonate very well with the *Huainanzi's* self-fashioning as an embodiment of the Way as I will showcase in this dissertation and, therefore, seems to substantiate the idea that the vision of creating a cosmicized text in image of the Way might have informed the production of the Liu clan's scripture. Accordingly, I will present in the next chapter a closer analysis of the *Huainanzi* in order to unearth that Liu An's text uses at least three images to construe itself in image of the Way: that is, the root of a tree, the hub of a chariot wheel, and weaving.

## 2. BEING IN IMAGE OF THE WAY: COSMICIZED ASPECTS OF THE *HUAINANZI*

*MAN CONCEIVES OF HIMSELF AS A MICROCOSM. [...] IN OTHER WORDS, HE FINDS IN HIMSELF THE SAME SANCTITY THAT HE RECOGNIZES IN THE COSMOS. IT FOLLOWS THAT HIS LIFE IS HOMOLOGIZED TO COSMIC LIFE; AS A DIVINE WORK, THE COSMOS BECOMES THE PARADIGMATIC IMAGE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE. [...] MAN COSMICIZES HIMSELF; [...] HE REPRODUCES ON THE HUMAN SCALE THE SYSTEM OF RHYTHMIC AND RECIPROCAL CONDITIONING INFLUENCES THAT CHARACTERIZES AND CONSTITUTES A WORLD, THAT, IN SHORT, DEFINES ANY UNIVERSE—MIRCEA ELIADE (1907-1986)<sup>187</sup>*

Mircea Eliade once proposed the idea that we human beings intend to replicate the universe on a human scale. According to his *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, man cosmicizes himself by creating homological relationships between the cosmos, the human body, and our surroundings. Eliade displays this correlating strategy via the body-cosmos-house homology that he develops in his discussion of rites of passages:

Indian religious thought made ample use of this traditional homology, house-cosmos-human body. [...] The spinal column is assimilated to the cosmic pillar (*skambha*) or to Mount Meru, the breaths are identified with the Winds; the navel or heart with the Center of the World, and so on. The human body, ritually homologized to the cosmos or the Vedic altar (which is an *imago mundi*), is also assimilated to a house. A hatha-yogic text refers to the human body as “a house with a pillar and nine doors” (*Goraksha Shataka*, 14). [...] The “eye” of the dome is a term that occurs in several architectural traditions. A fact to be emphasized is that each of these equivalent images—cosmos, house, human body—displays, or is capable of receiving, an upper opening that makes passage to another world possible. The upper opening of an Indian tower bears, among other names, that of *brahmarandhra*. This term designates the opening at the top of the skull, which plays a role in yogico-tantric techniques and through which the soul takes flight at the moment of death. In this

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Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 165 and 173

connection we may mention the custom of breaking the skulls of dead yogins, to facilitate the departure of the soul.<sup>188</sup>

As a preparation for his discussion of rites of passages, Eliade provides here an ahistorical, yet illuminating example from various Hindu traditions. According to his analysis, these communities explicitly correlated the body's constitution with the organization of the cosmos. He claims that they perceived the spine as a cosmic pillar, the breath as wind, and the navel/heart as the center of the universe. In addition, they paralleled this cosmic understanding of the body with the Vedic altar and other architectural structures as reflected in their utilization of shared terminologies. Hence, these Hindu communities apparently construed various homological relationships between the human body, architectural structures, and the universe.

This cosmicizing aesthetics that Eliade proposed to be central for Vedic Hinduism, however, is not limited to the Indian subcontinent. Any person familiar with East Asian Buddhist and Daoist practices has encountered similar homologies and correlations before.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 173-174

<sup>189</sup> With this parallel, I do neither intend to make a structuralist nor an evolutionary argument regarding a parallel between India and China. I simply consider Eliade's concept of cosmicization as a heuristic device whose basic traits fit the context of early China. In other words, I do not intend to make any larger and nostalgic claims on the human condition as Eliade clearly intended to do. The comparison solely serves the introduction of a helpful idea that allows us to discuss the aesthetic replication of the universe in various forms of cultural objects in the early imperial period. For a depiction of Mircea Eliade's project on the *homo religiosus*

In Buddhism, Eliade's body-house-cosmos homology, for example, materializes most famously in the image of the burning house and the Buddha's leaving of the palace as a pre-requisite for his enlightenment.<sup>190</sup> In a Daoist context, one may refer to the correlation between the body and the cosmos,<sup>191</sup> which for example manifests in the design of the Daoist master's robe and the architecture of Daoist temples as microcosms.<sup>192</sup> In that sense, it seems as if such

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and his "mental universe," see Robert Ellwood, *The Politics of Myth: A Study of C. G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 79-126. For an important critique of Eliade's scholarly program and how it is suffused by his political ideology and anti-semitism, see Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). For a defense of Eliade's work and its further usefulness for the study of religion despite its ideological underpinnings and gross overgeneralizations, see Bryan Rennie, "The Meaning and End of Mircea Eliade," *Changing Religious Worlds: The Meaning and End of Mircea Eliade*, Bryan Rennie ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), pp. 263-282.

<sup>190</sup> For the burning house image, see the *Lotus Sūtra's* (chn. *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經; jpn. *Myōhō Renge Kyō*; skt. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*) third chapter "Simile and Parable" ("Piyu" 譬喻) in Burton Watson trans., *The Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 56-79. For the Buddha's lifestory and the palace episode, see Aśvaghoṣa, *Life of the Buddha*, Patrick Olivelle trans. (New York: New York University Press and JJC Foundation, 2008), pp. 1-122.

<sup>191</sup> For a discussion of cosmic understandings of the body in early China and Daoism, see Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, pp. 32-43 and 100-112, Nathan Sivin, "State, Cosmos, and Body in the Last Three Centuries B.C.," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55.1 (1995): 5-37, Jean Lévi, "The Body: The Daoists' Coat of Arms," *Fragments for a History of the Human Body: Part One*, Michel Feher with Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi eds. (New York: Zone, 1989), pp. 104-127, Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp. 13-76, and Susan Shih-Shan Huang, *Picturing the True Form: Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 25-86.

<sup>192</sup> "Above all, the temples are made in the cosmological image of the worlds. They are laid out so that the principal door opens towards the south, on either side of the doors, one often finds the images of the



cosmicizations—i.e. correlative understandings and constructions of homologies between the human body, aspects of our lifeworlds, and the cosmos—are rather common phenomena as Mircea Eliade claimed.

And indeed, we find a plethora of such attempts to replicate the cosmos in various cultural forms and objects in the context of the late Warring States and early imperial period. Architectural structures such as the Hall of Bright (*mingtang* 明堂),<sup>193</sup> the Altar of Taiyi at Ganquan (*Ganquan Taiyi tan* 甘泉太一壇),<sup>194</sup> or Qinshi Huangdi's mausoleum,<sup>195</sup> for

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Green Dragon and the White Tiger, emblems of the east and west. Inside, under the roof, a central dome is sometimes setup in the image of the celestial vault, while the base is squared in the image of the Earth. Outside, the roof imitates a sacred mountain, the paradise of the Immortals whose summit reaches up to Heaven. The figurines that decorate the roof depict legendary figures and heroes of sacred myths. At the top of the roof, two earthenware dragons confront each other over a flaming pearl located in the center. This pearl represents the radiant energy (*ch'i*) that emanates from the incense burner placed in the temple.” (Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, p. 24)

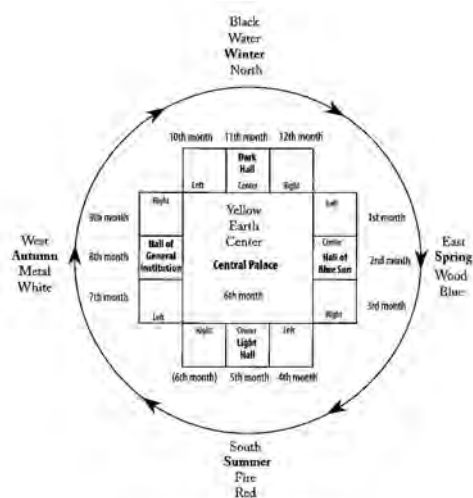
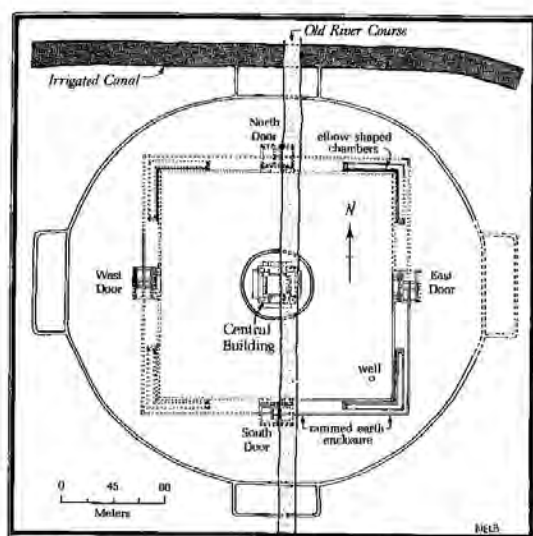
For a brief discussion of the Daoist master's body and the formation of a flaming pearl on top of her/his head, see Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, pp. 95-99.

<sup>193</sup> For a discussion of the *mingtang*'s cosmic design during the Han, see Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 17-88, Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, pp. 260-273, and Henri Maspero, “Le Ming-T'ang et la crise religieuse chinoise avant les Han,” *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques Vol. IX* (Brussel: Institut belge des hautes études chinoises, 1948-51), pp. 1-71.

<sup>194</sup> For a discussion of the Altar of Taiyi at Ganquan, see Li Ling, “An Archeological Study of Taiyi (Grand One) Worship,” pp. 1-39.

<sup>195</sup> “When the First Emperor had just ascended the throne, he started to dig out and construct the Mount Li [Mausoleum]. After he had united all under Heaven, more than 700,000 convict laborers from the world were sent there. They dug through three [strata of] springs, poured in liquid bronze, and secured the

example, replicated in their design cosmological schemes including the square- and roundness of Heaven and Earth (see figure 2 and 3), the tripartite, vertical structure of the universe into a terrestrial, human, and celestial realm, the Five Quarters (*wu fang* 五方), or the Eight Pillars (*ba ji* 八極), to name just a few.



1.40. Monthly observances in the Bright Hall.

Figure 2 (left): Floor Plan of the Hall of Bright Complex in Chang'an<sup>196</sup>

Figure 3 (right): Monthly Observances in the Hall of Bright<sup>197</sup>

sarcophagus. Palaces and towers, the Hundred Officials, unusual and valuable things were moved in to fill it. He ordered artisans to make crossbows triggered by mechanisms. Anyone passing before them would be shot immediately. They used mercury to create the Hundred Rivers, the Chiang, the Ho, and the great seas, wherein the mercury was circulated mechanically. On the ceiling were celestial patterns and on the ground terrestrial structures. The candles were made of oil of dugong, which was not supposed to burn out for a long time.”

始皇初即位，穿治鄠山，及并天下，天下徒送詣七十餘萬人，穿三泉，下銅而致槨，宮觀百官奇器珍怪徒臧滿之。令匠作機弩矢，有所穿近者輒射之。以水銀為百川江河大海，機相灌輸，上具天文，下具地理。以人魚膏為燭，度不滅者久之。(Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.6.31d)

My translation is based on William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records Volume I: The Memoirs of Pre-Han China* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 155.

<sup>196</sup>

Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, p. 39

The same may be said about material objects such as the Nine Tripods (*jiu ding* 九鼎) that according to the *Shiji* were produced out of bronzes from the Nine Provinces (*jiu zhou* 九州) or TLV mirrors (see figure 4) that implemented in their circular shape the cosmic design of the square *liu bo* 六博 boardgame (see figure 5), an early Chinese divinatory tool.<sup>198</sup>

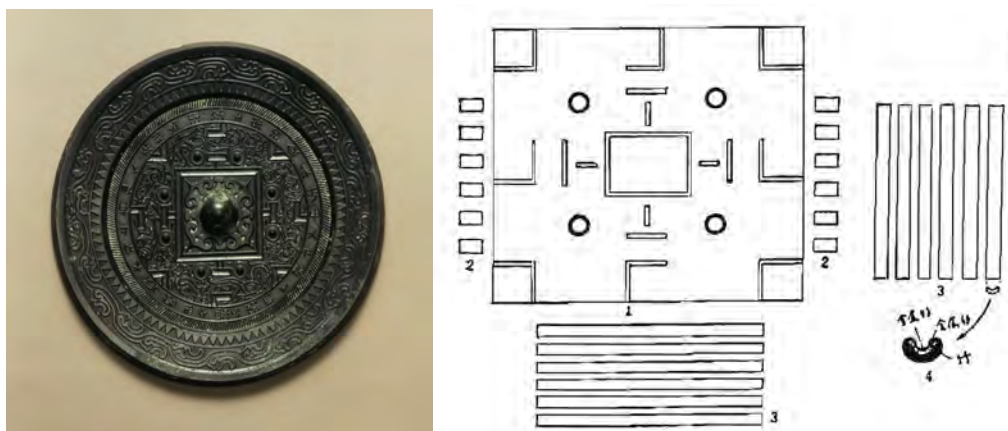


Figure 4: Inscribed TLV Mirror with Mythical Animals, Cotsen Study Collection<sup>199</sup>

Figure 5: Layout of *liu bo* Gameboard Excavated in 1975-1976 at Shuihudi, Yunmeng, Hubei<sup>200</sup>

<sup>197</sup> Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, p. 79

<sup>198</sup> During the Han dynasty, the TLV design became increasingly popular, a cosmologically informed pattern that seems to be a projection of the square *liu bo* 六博 gameboard (*boju* 博局) on a round surface. For a fantastic discussion of the cosmological design of TLV Mirrors, see Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, "Representation and Appropriation: Rethinking the TLV Mirror in Han China," *Early China* 29 (2004): 163-215. For another brief discussion of the cosmological significance of mirrors, see Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, pp. 273-284. For the *Shiji*'s depiction of the *jiu ding*'s production and utilization in politics, see Sima Qian ed., *Shiji*, 1.51d and 1.173d.

<sup>199</sup> "Inscribed TLV Mirror with Mythical Animals" ("Ming boju niaoshou wenjing" 銘博局鳥獸紋鏡), Han dynasty, 13.8 cm diameter, 0.45 cm (rim) and 1.1 cm (knob) height; 320 g weight. Lloyd Cotsen Study Collection of Chinese Bronze Mirrors, Shanghai Museum (*Shanghai bowuguan* 上海博物館), Shanghai. For the photograph of the mirror, see plate 63 in Suzanne E. Cahill ed., *The Lloyd Cotsen Study Collection of Chinese Bronze Mirrors Volume I: Catalogue* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Occasional Press, 2009), p. 159.

<sup>200</sup> Schematic drawing of wooden *liu bo* boardgame, Qin Dynasty (around 217 BCE), 32x29x2

The cosmicization of cultural objects was so commonplace that it is not surprising we also find scriptures and image-texts from the Warring States period and the Western Han dynasty that likewise implemented cosmological schemes in their design.<sup>201</sup> Similar to the legendary *River Charts* (*Hetu* 河圖) and the *Luo [River] Scripture* (*Luoshu* 洛書),<sup>202</sup> texts such as the *Yijing*,<sup>203</sup> Yang Xiong's 楊雄 (53 BCE-18 CE) *Classic of Supreme Mystery* (*Taixuanjing* 太玄經),<sup>204</sup> the "Great Plan" ("Hongfan" 洪範) chapter of the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書 or *Shujing* 書經),<sup>205</sup> the *Chu Silk Manuscript* (*Chu boshu* 楚帛書),<sup>206</sup> or the "Chart of the Office of Youth" ("Youguantu" 幼官圖) from the *Guanzi* (see figure 6), clearly incorporated cosmological

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cm, with twelve bone tiles (*qizi* 棋子) and six bamboo sticks (*bozhu* 博箸). For the drawing, see Fu Juyou 傅舉有, "Lun Qin Han shiqi de boju, boxi jian ji boju wenjing" 論秦漢時期的博具·博戲兼及博局紋鏡, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 84 (1986): 22.

<sup>201</sup> The term image-text refers to a cultural object that consists of a mixture of visual and verbal signs. See W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 83-110.

<sup>202</sup> For a brief history of the *Hetu* in Han and pre-Han China and its relationship to Daoist charts and apocrypha, see Anna Seidel, "Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments," pp. 297-325.

<sup>203</sup> For a discussion of the *Yijing* as a cosmic text and the scripture's early reception, see Richard J. Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World: The Yijing (I-Ching, or Classic of Changes) and its Evolution in China* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), pp. 1-82.

<sup>204</sup> For a discussion of the spatio-temporal organization of Yang Xiong's *Taixuanjing*, see Michael Nylan, *The Elemental Changes: The Ancient Chinese Companion to the I Ching* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 1-19 and Brook Ziporyn, "Spatio-Temporal Order in Yang Xiong's 楊雄 *Taixuan jing* 太玄經," *Early Medieval China* 2 (1995-96): 40-85.

<sup>205</sup> For a discussion of the "Hongfan" chapter, see Michael Nylan, *The Shifting Center: The Original "Great Plan" and Later Readings* (Nettetal: Steyner Verlag, 1992).

<sup>206</sup> For my brief discussion of the *Chu Silk Manuscript*, see pages 287-289.

schemes in their content and design.<sup>207</sup>



Figure 6: Reproduction of the “Youguantu” by Wang Tingfang 王廷芳 and Guo Moruo 郭沫若<sup>208</sup>

Despite their vastly distinct designs, utilizations, and media, all of these projects share two important commonalities. First, these objects have apparently been used in ritualistic or at least practical contexts such as sacrifices, ordering of the cosmos, ceremonial gift exchanges,

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According to W. Allyn Rickett, the *Guanzi*’s “Youguantu” is “basically a Five Phases calendar supplemented by an essay on political and military strategy that has been cut up and rearranged under the seasonal divisions of the calendar. The five divisions have been correlated with the Four Directions and the center, so that when the different sections of the text are laid out geographically on paper they form a pattern reminiscent of a Yin-Yang and Five Phases numerology chart.” (W. Allyn Rickett trans., *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China Volume I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 148)

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Guo Moruo 郭沫若, Wen Yiduo 聞一多, and Xu Weiyu 許維遇 eds., *Guanzi jijiao* 管子集校 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe 科學出版社, 1956), p. 140

I would like to thank Professor Dennis Schilling for his mentioning of the “Youguantu” in a private conversation in Munich in the summer of 2013.

calendrical ordinances, or burials. And secondly, they are comprehensive material objects that construe homologies between an object and the cosmos by incorporating in their aesthetic program oftentimes distinct cosmological models such as the dual structure of square (*fang* 方) and round (*yuan* 圓), the tripartite world of celestial, terrestrial, and human realms (*tian di ren* 天地人), the Four Seasons (*si shi* 四時), Five Quarters, Eight Pillars, Nine Provinces, or Twelve Earthly Branches (*shier dizhi* 十二地支) in form of the twelve month cycle.<sup>209</sup> Thus the producers of such objects, which apparently had practical rather than discursive functions, attributed a significant importance to the artistic reproduction of cosmological models. In that sense, it seems as if the aesthetic phenomenon I have called cosmicization had been quite prevalent during the period in which Liu An and his workshop were thought to have produced the *Huainanzi*.

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This list is of course incomplete and contains only those cosmological models that we have encountered in the examples above. In fact, this dissertation discusses such models based on images (*xiang* 象), an aspect that is less often considered in the context of cosmological schemes.

### Cosmicized Textual Scriptures: The Case of the *Huainanzi*

Such a cosmicized aesthetic is not only typical for things such as the aforementioned architectural structures, material objects, or textual-visual scriptures from the late Warring States and early imperial period but also for “plain” texts.<sup>210</sup> According to Mark Edward Lewis, the unification of all under Heaven under the Qin and the Han at the end of the third century BCE also triggered the production of new, larger textual forms that employed cosmological schemes in their style.<sup>211</sup> Regarding the meaningfulness of cosmicized texts such as the

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In his book *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian's Conquest of History*, Grant Hardy, for example, asserted about Sima Qian's massive project that it works like a bamboo world, “a model of the cosmos, which includes a comprehensive representation of the heavens, China's waterways and geographical regions, and the empire's various officials. Like the First Emperor's tomb, it also preserves treasures, this time literary and philosophical, from throughout Chinese history, and it was similarly intended as a monument, where it will “await the sages and gentlemen of later generations. [...] The First Emperor's tomb was an image of a world created and maintained by bronze—the force of arms—whereas Sima Qian's *Shiji* offered an alternative depiction of the world, inscribed on bamboo slips and regulated by scholarship and morality (themselves often the product of books written on bamboo).” (Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo*, pp. 49-50)

Thus, he claims “that the *Shiji* is a “reconstruction of the past” much more literal than that usually denoted by the phrase. It is, in fact, a textual microcosm. When we hold the *Shiji* in our hands, we are holding a model of the past itself, which intentionally replicates, though to a lesser degree, the confusing inconsistencies, the lack of interpretive closure, and the bewildering details of raw historical data.” (Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo*, pp. 47-48)

For an explanation of the micro-cosmic aspects of the *Classic of Changes*, the *Spring and Autumn of Mister Lü*, the *Luxuriant Dewdrops of the Spring and Autumn*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in general, see Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo*, pp. 53-59.

<sup>211</sup>

For a discussion of the intricate link between politics and cosmology and their transformations during the late Warring States period and the Han dynasty, see Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and*

*Huainanzi* or the *Lüshi Chunqiu* (which he calls encyclopedic) he mentions that<sup>212</sup>

Developments within the textual traditions and the political realm coincided to produce new forms of writing intended to encompass the world in writing. [...] These works were part of a general trend proclaiming completeness or totality as the highest form of textual authority. This dream of writing the world in a single text prefigured, in turn, the enterprise of uniting the world in a single state. [...] They all sought to create a sense of completeness through appeals to schemata of recurrent patterns, ultimate origins, numerical categories implying totality, [...] or related models.<sup>213</sup>

According to his interpretation, cosmicized texts played a significant role in the formation of China's first unified empires. Lewis argued that intellectuals of the Qin and Han dynasty produced scriptures such as the *Huainanzi* within the context of state unifications. It apparently was not enough to solely conquer and unite the Middle Kingdoms politically. In Lewis' vision, the elite of the Qin and Han utilized texts like the *Huainanzi* to "doctrinally encompass" the world "claiming authority through their text-based wisdom" to rule and control all under Heaven (*tianxia* 天下).<sup>214</sup> Whether or not we follow his suggestion that these texts were part

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*Political Culture in Early China*, pp. 75-209.

<sup>212</sup> I changed Mark Edward Lewis' denomination of these works as encyclopedic to cosmicized since the former, as its etymological root suggests, inevitably emphasizes the idea of a collection of information, a purpose that to my knowledge is not mentioned within the *Huainanzi* itself. On the contrary, the term cosmicization only describes the implementation of cosmological schemes in an object's design and, therefore, does not *a priori* evoke a specific purpose. Moreover, its emphasis on design also allows to situate the *Huainanzi* not only within other texts, but also any other cultural object that emulates cosmological schemes (transmedia approach). In that sense, I deem the term cosmicized to be more precise and inclusive than Mark Edward Lewis' coinage of the encyclopedic epoch.

<sup>213</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p. 287

<sup>214</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p. 287



of larger projects to unify the knowledge of the Middle Kingdoms is rather irrelevant at this point. However, it is important to realize that these cosmicized texts were construed as “microcosms of the world” similar to Grant Hardy’s statement in the “Introduction.”<sup>215</sup>

Such a construction of textual microcosms raises questions regarding the techniques the producers utilized in order to create what I have termed cosmicized objects. In the previous examples, we have seen that cosmological models had been transformed into various visuo-spatial patterns that are hard to realize in a purely textual object. Mark Edward Lewis, however, mentions in his *Writing and Authority in Early China* at least four methods that texts like the *Huainanzi* used to cosmicize themselves. Apparently, the inclusion of “recurrent patterns, ultimate origins, numerical categories implying totality [...], or related models” served as such a literary means to construe textual microcosms of the world.<sup>216</sup> And indeed we find these methods in Liu An’s text. Recurrent patterns clearly appear in the *Huainanzi*’s repeated construction of homological sequences as we will see throughout the dissertation. Moreover, Liu An’s text explicitly begins with the ultimate origin in its first chapter “Originating in the Way” (“Yuandao” 原道) and slowly moves to the present of the Liu clan in its twentieth

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<sup>215</sup> For a discussion of the importance of universal text projects during what Mark Edward Lewis calls the encyclopedic epoch and the establishment of the canon, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, pp. 287-362.

<sup>216</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p. 287

chapter “Exalted Lineage” (“Taizu” 泰族) as we will see below. In addition, the *Huainanzi* repeatedly utilizes numerical categories to construe universal homological relationships between the Myriad Beings.<sup>217</sup> In that sense it seems as if Liu An and his workshop employed

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Consider following example from the “Heavenly Patterns” (“Tianwen” 天文) chapter that illustrates such a list of homological “objects” based on numerical categories:

“What are the Five Planets? The East is Wood. Its god is Tai Hao. His assistant is Gou Mang. He grasps the compass and governs spring. His spirit is Year Star [Jupiter]. His animal is the Blue-green Dragon. His musical note is *jue*; his days are *jia* and *yi*. The South is Fire. Its god is Yan Di. His assistant is Zhu Ming. He grasps the balance beam and governs summer. His spirit is Sparkling Deluder [Mars]. His animal is the Vermilion Bird. His musical note is *zhi*; his days are *bing* and *ding*. The Center is Earth. Its god is the Yellow Emperor. His assistant is Hou Tu. He grasps the marking cord and governs the Four Quarters. His spirit is Quelling Star [Saturn]. His animal is the Yellow Dragon. His musical note is *gong*; his days are *wu* and *ji*. The West is Metal. Its god is Shao Hao. His assistant is Ru Shou. He grasps the T-square and governs autumn. His spirit is Great White [Venus]. His animal is the White Tiger. His musical note is *shang*; his days are *geng* and *xin*. The North is the Water. Its god is Zhuan Xu. His assistant is Xuan Ming. He grasps the weight and governs winter. His spirit is chronograph Star [Mercury]. His animal is the Dark Warrior. His musical note is *yu*; his days are *ren* and *gui*.” (HNZ 3.6)

何謂五星？東方，木也，其帝太皞，其佐句芒，執規而治春；其神為歲星，其獸蒼龍，其音角，其日甲乙。南方，火也，其帝炎帝，其佐朱明，執衡而治夏；其神為熒惑，其獸朱鳥，其音徵，其日丙丁。中央，土也，其帝黃帝，其佐后土，執繩而制四方；其神為鎮星，其獸黃龍，其音宮，其日戊己。西方，金也，其帝少昊，其佐蓐收，執矩而治秋；其神為太白，其獸白虎，其音商，其日庚辛。北方，水也，其帝顓頊，其佐玄冥，執權而治冬；其神為辰星，其獸玄武，其音羽，其日壬癸。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 88-89)

This example from the “Heavenly Pattern” is constructed as a question and answer scheme. It provides an elaborate response to one simple question: What are the Five Planets (*wu xing* 五星)? The answer, as we can see in the organization of the response, does not just explain what the Five Planets are. Instead it situates them within a Five-Phases-scheme (*wu xing* 五行) and creates homological relationships between the Five Planets and the Five Directions (*wufang* 五方), the Five Thearchs (*wu di* 五帝), the Five Assistants (*wu zuo* 五佐), the Four Seasons (*si shi* 四時) plus the intermediary month, the Four [celestial animal] Images (*si xiang* 四象) plus the central Yellow Dragon, the Five Musical Notes (*wu yin* 五音), and the Five Double Days making up the Ten Heavenly Stems (*tiangan* 天干).

literary strategies such as recurrent patterns, ultimate origins, and numerical categories to create the Liu clan's scripture as such a textual microcosm as Mark Edward Lewis proposed.

In the following sections, however, I want to substantiate his claim about the cosmic and comprehensive nature of the *Huainanzi* by demonstrating one of the related models to numerical categories that Liu An and his workshop employed to cosmicize the *Huainanzi*; that is, I will analyze the text's application of shared imagery to construe the Liu clan's scripture in image of the Way and the sage. However, before we continue with the *Huainanzi*'s self-fashioning as a texture of the Way, let's briefly discuss an example that illuminates what it means to be in image (*xiang*) in Liu An's text.

### **Being in Image of the Cosmos: The Case of the Human Body**

Let us consider an example to flesh out how the text creates homological relationships by using a shared imagery for distinct entities. The *Huainanzi* commonly depicts Heaven as round and Earth as square.<sup>218</sup> The chapter "Heavenly Patterns" ("Tianwen" 天文), for example states, "Heaven is round, Earth is square, and the Way is at the center" (天圓地方，道在中央; HNZ

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<sup>218</sup>

For my discussion of the parallel depictions of Heaven/Earth and canopy/wheel/chassis, see pages 161-170.

3.24).<sup>219</sup> In other words, the *Huainanzi* attributes a specific form (*xing* 形)—squareness and roundness—to Heaven and Earth so that they belong to two distinct, yet related image categories (*xiang zhi lei* 像之類).

A passage from the “Jingshen” chapter contains a very interesting and elaborate homological sequence that utilizes the images of square and round forms to parallel the human body and its gestation with the celestial realm and its motions (*xing* 行).<sup>220</sup> It states:

Now refined spirit (*jingshen*) is that which we receive from Heaven and form and body is that which we sustain with Earth. There it is said: “one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, three gives birth to the Myriad Beings. The Myriad Beings bear *yin* on their backs and embrace *yang* in their bosoms. The soaring vapors thereby achieve harmony.” (*Laozi* 42) Therefore it says: “One month and [it is] a greasy mass; two months and [it has] a stern; three months and [it is] a fetus; four months and [it has] muscles; five months and [it has] joints; six months and [it has] bones; seven months and [it is] completed; eight months and [it is] moving; nine months and [it is] excitedly active; ten months and it is getting born. Form and body are therewith completed and the Five Storehouse Organs have then taken form. Because of this [i.e. the formation of the Five Storehouse Organs] the lungs rule the eye, the kidneys rule the nose, the gall bladder rules the mouth, and the liver rules the ears. To the outside they do have expressions and to the inside they do disrupt. Opening and closing, stretching

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<sup>219</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 107

<sup>220</sup> The “Tianwen” chapter contains a passage in addition to the example from the “Jingshen” chapter that also parallels the human body to the structure of the celestial realm:

“[Of all the creatures that] crawl, move, and breathe, none is more noble than humans. Orifices, limbs, and trunk are all connected with Heaven. Heaven has nine layers; man also has nine orifices. Heaven has four seasons to regulate the twelve months; Man also has four limbs to control the twelve joints. Heaven has twelve months to regulate 360 days; Man also has twelve joints to regulate the 360 nodes.” (*HNZ* 3.41)

蚘行喙息，莫貴于人，孔竅肢體，皆通於天。天有九重，人亦有九竅；天有四時以制十二月，人亦有四肢以使十二節；天有十二月以制三百六十日，人亦有十二肢以使三百六十節。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 126)

out and folding together, each has a warp and weft. Therefore, the roundness of the head is in image of Heaven, the squareness of the feet is in image of Earth. Heaven has Four Seasons, Five Phases, Nine Provinces, and three-hundred-and-sixty-six days. Humans also have Four Branches [i.e. limbs],<sup>221</sup> Five Storehouse Organs, nine orifices, and three-hundred-and-sixty-six joints. Heaven has wind, rain, cold and heat as humans have [feelings of] giving to and taking from [others] and joy and anger. Therefore, the gall bladder makes clouds, the lungs make breath (*qi*), the liver makes wind, the kidneys make rain, and the spleen makes thunder. Thereby, they partake with Heaven and Earth and the heart serves as their ruler. Therefore, ears and eyes are the [bodily] sun and the moon.<sup>222</sup> Blood and *qi* are the [bodily] wind and rain. Within the sun there is the three-legged crow Cunwu and within the moon there is the toad Chanchu. When sun and moon lose their motion/path, they weaken and eclipse and are without rays [of light]. When wind and rain are not at their times, they destroy and break and give birth to calamities. When the Five Planets lose their motion/path, the provinces and kingdoms receive disaster. (HNZ 7.2)

夫精神者，所受於天也；而形體者，所稟於地也。故曰：一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物背陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。故曰：一月而膏，二月而腠，三月而胎，四月而肌，五月而筋，六月而骨，七月而成，八月而動，九月而躁，十月而生。形體以成，五臟乃形。是故肺主目，腎主鼻，膽主口，肝主耳，外為表而內為裏，開閉張歛，各有經紀。故頭之圓也象天，足之方也象地。天有四時、五行、九解、三百六十六日，人亦有四支、五藏、九竅、三百六十六節。天有風雨寒暑，人亦有取與喜怒。故膽為雲，肺為氣，肝為風，腎為雨，脾為雷，以與天地相參也

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I keep here the image of the branches since it refers in my opinion to an understanding of the human body that parallels its torso and limbs to the universe and its root-branches (*benmo*) structure. With these imaginary parallels, the *Huainanzi* construes the human *corpus* as a bodily replication of the universe, an idea that will become prominent in the Utmost Purity (Shangqing 上清) and other later Daoist movements. For a discussion on early Chinese understandings of the body as a microcosm, see footnote 191.

222

In Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 (ca. 195-105 BCE) *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn* (*Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露) and more prominently in later Daoist conceptualizations and visualizations of the body, the eyes and ears are directly depicted as the sun and moon shining out into the world; the left eye functions as the bodily sun while the right eye serves as the bodily moon replicating the character for illumination (*ming* 明) from the perspective of the subject. Such a cosmic understanding of the body clearly contrasts modern understandings of these orifices as receptors. For the passage in the *Chunqiu fanlu*, see Liu Dianjue 劉殿爵 (D. C. Lau) et al. eds., *Chunqiu fanlu zhuzi suoyin* 春秋繁露逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshu guan 商務印書館, 1994), p. 58. For references to scholarly work on conceptualizations of the body as a microcosm in early China, see footnote 191.

，而心為之主。是故耳目者，日月也；血氣者，風雨也。日中有踰烏，而月中有蟾蜍。日月失其行，薄蝕無光；風雨非其時，毀折生災；五星失其行，州國受殃。<sup>223</sup>

In this elaborate section of the *Huainanzi*, we find a parallelism between the function and form of human physiology and the organization of the cosmos. At the beginning, the passage typifies that we receive our lighter body parts (*jingshen*) from the celestial realm while the heavier parts such as muscles and bones and our form and physique (*xingtǐ* 形體) originate from the terrestrial forms (*dixing* 地形). In that sense, we human beings are made up out of “matter” whose qualities are directly related to the spatial organization and the workings of the cosmically male sky and female earth.

The passage continues to elaborate on the idea of a correspondence between the human physique and the structure of the cosmos by referring to a famous passage from *Laozi* 42 that illustrates in numerical terms the creation of cosmic powers out of the Dao.<sup>224</sup> As a consequence, the text situates the concept of giving birth (*sheng* 生), which early Chinese texts frequently associate with the property of having a form (*youxing* 有形), within the processes of

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<sup>223</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 219-221

<sup>224</sup> The *Huainanzi*'s chapter organization follows the cosmogenesis laid out in *Laozi* 42, which claims that the “Way gave birth to one, one gave birth to two, two gave birth to three, and three gave birth to the Myriad Beings” (道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物). According to the Heshang Gong 河上公 commentary, the *Laozi* depicts in this sequence the creation of the universe and its matters (*yin* and *yang* and the three realms). It seems as if the *Huainanzi* follows a similar interpretation of the creation of the universe. See Wang Bi 王弼 ed., *Laozi zhu* 老子注, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954), 3.26-27.

the cosmos and its seasonal changes.<sup>225</sup> It parallels the *Laozi's* idea of a continuous diversification process during the birthing of the Myriad Beings with the accumulative gestation and development of a fetus. Thus, it construes a close relationship between the creation of human life and the becoming of the universe.

According to the *Huainanzi*, this cosmic origination of the human body explicitly manifests in our physique's emulation of the universe's structures: the roundness of our heads and the squareness of our feet are in image (*xiang* 象) of Heaven and Earth, respectively; our bodily form as expressed in the Four Branches, the Five Storehouse Organs, the nine orifices, and the three-hundred-and-sixty-six joints are in image of the celestial motions; and finally what we nowadays would call human emotions apparently relate, respond, and impact the weather and its various manifestations such as wind, rain, thunder, clouds, or temperature. Thus, the passage argues that the physique's partaking with Heaven and Earth (以與天地相參也) empowers human beings to connect and resonate with the cosmos. At the same time, it also renders them susceptible to celestial and terrestrial influences and powers. In so doing, it

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<sup>225</sup> The “Binglüe” chapter (*HNZ* 15.3), for example, claims punningly that “the Way [...] regulates punishment/form, yet is punishment-/formless” (道[...]制刑而無刑; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 493). Moreover, the “Shuilin” chapter (*HNZ* 16.85) claims that “what has form comes from the formless, and the not-yet-Heaven-and-Earth gave birth to Heaven and Earth” (有形出於無形，未有天地能生天地者也; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 539). For more examples of the Way as the one who exceeds the phenomenal world, yet gives birth to the Myriad Beings, see footnote 271.

creates an interesting parallel between the likeness and image of the body and the world. It links together the bodily functions and the organization of the universe since our human form (*xing* 形) and actions (*xing* 行) apparently are in image of cosmic procedures. In other words, being in image—in our case round- and squareness—is one of the means through which the *Huainanzi* construes homological relationships between seemingly disparate beings—in our case head/Heaven and feet/Earth.

### **The *Huainanzi* as a Textual Object in Image of the Cosmos? The Case of the Tree**

In the following discussion, I will use this strategy of the *Huainanzi* to construe such homologies between distinct entities based on a shared imagery as the basis of my analysis of the text's cosmicization. Thus far, scholars have emphasized only one of the images that the producers of the *Huainanzi* used to create homologies: the image of the tree. The *Huainanzi* translation group has convincingly argued that Liu An's text incorporated the model of root and branches (*benmo* 本末) in its design. In their understanding, the *Huainanzi*

Was composed to incorporate both the root of the Way and the branches as expressed in human affairs. Moreover, the text is organized in close accordance with the root-branch metaphor that structures its discussion of cosmology, cosmogony, human history, and self-development at many points. Chapter 1, "Originating in the Way," is the root of the entire text, and the text moves through increasingly ramified and posterior realms until it lands in the "current day" of the Han in chapter



20.<sup>226</sup>

As they clearly show, the *Huainanzi's* organization of chapters passes through a cosmogonic model reminiscent of *Laozi* 42 (see figure 7).<sup>227</sup>

## Root chapters

Chapter	Title	Translators
1	<i>Yüan-tao hsün</i> 原道訓 (Searching out <i>Tao</i> )	Frederic H. Balfour (1880); Evan Morgan (1933); Eva Kraft (1957-8)
2	<i>Shu-chen hsün</i> 儆真訓 (The Beginning of Reality)	Morgan; Kraft
3	<i>T'ien-wen hsün</i> 天文訓 (The Patterns of Heaven)	Herbert Chatley, unpublished manuscript
4	<i>Ti-hsing hsün</i> 地形訓 (The Forms of Earth)	Eduard Erkes (1916-7); John S. Major (1973)
5	<i>Shih-tse hsün</i> 時則訓 (The Seasonal Regulations)	Not translated
6	<i>Lan-ming hsün</i> 覽冥訓 (Peering into the Obscure)	Charles Le Blanc, in the present volume
7	<i>Ching-shen hsün</i> 精神訓 (The Seminal Breath and Spirit)	Morgan; Claude Larre, partial translation (1982)
8	<i>Pen-ching hsün</i> 本經訓 (The Fundamental Norm)	Morgan

## Branch chapters

Chapter	Title	Translators
9	<i>Chu-shu hsün</i> 主術訓 (The Craft of the Ruler)	Roger T. Ames, (1983)
10	<i>Miu-ch'eng hsün</i> 繆稱訓 (On Erroneous Designations)	Donald Harper, unpublished dissertation (1978)
11	<i>Ch'i-su hsün</i> 齊俗訓 (Placing Customs on a Par)	Benjamin E. Wallacker (1962)
12	<i>Tao-ying hsün</i> 道應訓 (The Responses to <i>Tao</i> )	Morgan
13	<i>Fan-lun hsün</i> 泛論訓 (A Compendious Essay)	Morgan
14	<i>Ch'üan-yen hsün</i> 詮言訓 (An Explanatory Discourse)	Not translated
15	<i>Ping-lieh hsün</i> 兵略訓 (On Military Strategy)	Morgan
16	<i>Shuo-shan hsün</i> 說山訓 (Discourse on Mountains)	Jay Sailey, unpublished manuscript (1972)
17	<i>Shuo-lin hsün</i> 說林訓 (Discourse on Forests)	Not translated
18	<i>Jen-chien hsün</i> 人間訓 (In the World of Man)	Not translated
19	<i>Hsiu-wu hsün</i> 修務訓 (The Necessity of Training)	Morgan
20	<i>T'ai-tsu hsün</i> 泰族訓 (The Grand Reunion)	Not translated
21	<i>Yao-lieh hsün</i> 要略 (Outline of the Essentials)	Not translated

Figure 7: List of Chapters in the *Huainanzi*<sup>228</sup>

The Liu clan's scripture begins with the origin or the root of the universe in form of the Dao 道 in chapter 1 "Originating in the Way" ("Yuandao" 原道). Then, it moves on to the generation of

226 Harold D. Roth et al. trans., *The Huainanzi*, p. 15

227 For the *Laozi* 42 passage, see footnote 224.

228 Charles Le Blanc, *Huai Nan Tzu*, pp. 15-16

original vapor (*yuanqi* 元氣) and potency (*de* 德) in chapter 2 “Activating the Genuine” (“Chuzhen” 俶真). In chapter 3 “Heavenly Patterns” and chapter 4 “Terrestrial Forms” (“Dixing” 墜形), the text deals with the creation of the cosmos’ vertical and horizontal expansion in form of Heaven (*tian* 天) and Earth (*di* 地). This process results in the rotation of the world in form of seasons and time (*shi* 時) in chapter 5 “Seasonal Rules” (“Shize” 時則). After the *Huainanzi* has gone through the processes that setup the space-time (*yuzhou* 宇宙) of the universe, the text concentrates then on the powers that work within all under Heaven by focusing on resonating correspondences (*ganying* 感應) in chapter 6 “Surveying the Undisclosed [Powers]” (“Lanming” 覽冥). At this point, the *Huainanzi* has gone through the entire cosmogenesis *sans* humanity. Accordingly, chapter 7 “Quintessential Spirit” (“Jingshen” 精神) explores the constitution of mankind and houses it in between the realms of Heaven and Earth. In other words, humanity appears in this cosmogonic scheme at the end, as the last process that is furthest away from the Way’s primordial unity in chapter 1. This vision of humanity as being alienated or separated from the Way reverberates then in Chapter 8 on the “Rooting the Warp” (“Benjing” 本經), which narrates the increasing decline of civilization and governance from an ideal, remote past to the recent past of the Middle Kingdoms. In that sense, the *Huainanzi* has taken us now from the origin and the creation of the universe to

humanity's recent history prior to the rise of the Liu clan.

In the branch-chapters 9 to 20, the *Huainanzi* explores then the Myriad Deeds of humanity (*wan shi* 萬事 or *renshi* 人事). It starts with chapter 9 on the “Arts of Rulership” (“Zhushu” 主術), which claims that the emperor should mimic the powers of the Way in order to make the empire run smoothly. In other words, the *Huainanzi* seems to construe a parallel between chapter 9 and chapter 1. While in the “Yuandao” chapter the Way is the origin of the genesis and the running of the cosmos, the *wuwei*-performing ruler who embodies the Dao becomes the origin of all the myriad affairs in the world without acting upon them in the “Arts of Rulership.” Chapter 10 on the “Profound Precepts” (“Miucheng” 繆稱) elaborates on this parallel between the genesis of the cosmos and the empire and describes how the ruler may generate such potency (*de* 德) within his body and spread it throughout all under Heaven by cultivating her/his heart (*xin* 心). After this general introduction to rulership, the *Huainanzi* focuses then on the various methods and techniques (*shu* 術) through which the emperor's non-acting (*wuwei*) potency may act in all under Heaven. In Chapter 11 on “Integrating Customs” (“Qisu” 齊俗), Liu An's text expounds the role of ritual in governance. Unfortunately, the function of Chapter 12 “Resonances of the Way” (“Daoying” 道應) is not clear since it merely pairs passages from pre-Han texts with snippets that contain “the techniques of Lao[zi]

and Zhuang[zi]" (*laozhuang zhi shu* 老莊之術) on which I will elaborate in chapter 5.2. Chapters 13 "Boundless Discourses" ("Fanlun" 汎論) and 14 "Sayings Explained" ("Quanyan" 詮言), however, follow the same pattern again and further describe deeds and techniques such as the timely adjustment of policies and standards and the implementation of Taiyi in human governance through which the powers of the emperor may operate. Chapter 15 "Overview of the Military" ("Binglüe" 兵略) explores the craft of warfare; Chapters 16 "A Mountain of Persuasions" ("Shuishan" 說山), 17 "A Forest of Persuasions" ("Shuilin" 說林), 18 "Among Humans" ("Renjian" 人間), and 19 "Cultivation and Service" ("Xiuwu" 修務) all focus on performative aspects of language and persuasive contexts of speech.<sup>229</sup> And finally, after the exposition on the various techniques and deeds through which the *wuwei*-performing sagely ruler impacts the empire, the *Huainanzi* reaches the present day of the imperial Liu clan and its "Exalted Lineage" with chapter 20 "Taizu" that creates a connection and weaves together the doctrinal and practical paths of the current rulers of the Han and the sagely rulers of the past (*jing gujin zhi dao* 經古今之道).<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> If the *Huainanzi* translation group's suggestion of a hierarchy in organization of the chapters is correct moving from more essential to increasingly peripheral concerns, Liu An apparently attributed more importance to ritual and Taiyi (chapters 11 and 14) than to persuasions and debates (chapters 16 and 17).

<sup>230</sup> I follow here Martin Kern's assessment that the last chapter "Yaolüe" should not be counted as a part of the *Huainanzi* "proper" but had later been added to the text. For the reference to Kern's work, see

As we have seen in this short and coarse summary of the chapters, it seems as if the *Huainanzi* does indeed follow a dual structure as laid out by the *Huainanzi* translation group. The first eight root-chapters concern the genesis of the cosmos out of the Way and the dissemination of her powers through the Myriad Beings (*wan wu* 萬物) while the second twelve branch-chapters elaborate on the basis of the empire in the sagely ruler and the dissemination of her/his *wuwei* actions and powers via the subjects' Myriad Deeds (*wan shi* 萬事). In other words, the *Huainanzi's* textual organization seems to replicate *Laozi's* vision of the generation of an increasingly diversified universe from a cosmic root (*ben* 本 and *gen* 根) in two ways.<sup>231</sup> First, it apparently employs the *benmo*-structure in its larger organization of chapters (i.e. chapters 1-8 vs. 9-20), a fact that is supported by the titles' changing rhyming patterns as Martin Kern has shown.<sup>232</sup> Second, it also utilizes the same model within each of the *Huainanzi's* two major parts by moving from the root and stem of the Way and her human embodiment in form of the sagely ruler in chapters 1 and 9 to the branches of the Myriad Beings and of humanity's Myriad Deeds, respectively.<sup>233</sup> In that sense, it appears as if the

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footnote 142.

<sup>231</sup> For two examples that depict the origin of the cosmos as a root, see *Laozi* 6 and 16 in Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.4 and 3.9.

<sup>232</sup> See Martin Kern, "Creating a Book and Performing It," pp. 137.

<sup>233</sup> See Harold D. Roth, "Daoist Inner Cultivation Thought," pp. 53-55 and 78 and Andrew Seth

*benmo*-structure pervades the entire organization of the Liu clan's scripture.

However, the *Huainanzi* does not only employ the image of trees to merely correlate its own textual order with depictions of the development of the universe and the empire. In his article "Root-Branches Structuralism in the *Huainanzi*," which we briefly encountered in the "Introduction," Andrew Meyer illustrates how root and branches serve as conceptual templates that determine both the *Huainanzi*'s composition AND doctrines:

The *Huainanzi* proposes that all dimensions of reality—cosmic, physiological, psychological, social, political, historical, epistemological, and so on—are determined by an organic root-branches structural dynamic. Though the various root-branches structures and processes that may be mapped out in divergent dimensions are analytically separable, the text asserts that they are all expressions of an underlying, unitary organic imperative. Thus, the root-branches concept articulated in the *Huainanzi* is no longer a conventionally figurative 'metaphor,' as was the case in many of the earlier texts upon which the *Huainanzi* draws, nor does it fall wholly within the typical range of what contemporary linguistic philosophical theory would deem a 'conceptual metaphor.' 'Root and branches' within the *Huainanzi* is neither an 'optional linguistic device' nor even a "primary [tool] for reasoning about ourselves and the world;" rather, it is the definitive formulation of the most fundamental dynamic principle conditioning the entire phenomenal realm.<sup>234</sup>

Meyer points out that the principle of a unitary and potent root developing in a variety of segregated and "limited" branches reverberates in such diverse areas as the *Huainanzi*'s depictions of the cosmos, body, consciousness, social structures, political institutions, or history. Hence, he rightfully claims that *benmo* is as much an underlying structure of the

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Meyer, "Root-Branches Structuralism in the *Huainanzi*," p. 34.

<sup>234</sup>

Andrew Seth Meyer, "Root-Branches Structuralism in the *Huainanzi*," p. 25

cosmos as it is an organizing model for Liu An's textual and intellectual project. The *Huainanzi's* implementation of the cosmic *benmo*-model in its own organization of the chapters apparently generates a homological relationship between Liu An's text and the workings of the universe. In other words, the *Huainanzi* understood to mimic the *benmo*-model is in image of the Way and the cosmos.

Although the *Huainanzi* translation group insightfully reads the *Huainanzi* through the lens of the *benmo*-structure and yields important insights into Liu An's text while providing coherence to its miscellaneous chapters, they unfortunately have largely disregarded many of the other image parallels the *Huainanzi* draws between the Way, the sage, and the Liu clan's scripture. In the rest of this chapter, I will therefore focus on some of the hitherto undiscussed images that Liu An and his workshop utilized to cosmicize the Liu clan's scripture. We will see that it apparently uses at least two more of such parallels—the hub of a wheel and a weaving texture—to paint the *Huainanzi* in image of the Way and the sage.

### **2.1 Beyond the Tree: The *Huainanzi's* Diverse Depictions of the Way and the World**

In the following section, we encounter a variety of images the *Huainanzi* uses to depict the relationship between the Way and the world. In order to do so, I introduce a lengthy passage

from the second chapter “Activating the Genuine” (“Chuzhen” 俶真) that presents several images within a rather small space to illustrate the Dao and how she acts in the world. We will use this passage in the next subsections as a starting point to explore whether the *Huainanzi* utilizes the images of the hub of a wheel and a weaving texture in addition to the tree’s roots to delineate sagely governance and the Liu clan’s scripture. As a result, I showcase that we miss out on a variety of aspects of the *Huainanzi*’s self-fashioning as a cosmicized text if we solely focus on the *benmo*-structure.

In a fascinating portion of Liu An’s text, the *Huainanzi* construes a parallelism between a variety of images including a tree, a chariot wheel, and a dyed fabric by using them together in a long *excursus* on the unitary basis of the Myriad Beings’ diversity in the formless Way. For convenience of discussing this long passage, I have divided it into nine parts. Let’s gradually go through these portions in a commentarial style in order to work out their underlying logic and structure. The passage begins as follows:

(1) The Way emerges from the One Source, penetrates the Nine Gateways, is scattered through the Six Crossroads, and is established in a limitless space. It is still and silent and thereby empty and non-existent. It is not that it acts on things; it is that things act on themselves. For these reasons, when affairs comply with the Way, it is not that the Way has accomplished them, but that the Way has impelled them. (*HNZ* 2.6)

(1) 道出一原，通九門，散六衢，設於無垓坵之宇，寂寞以虛無。非有為於物也，物以有為於



己也。是故舉事而順于道者，非道之所為也，道之所施也。<sup>235</sup>

In portion (1) the *Huainanzi* introduces the Way as the sole source of the entire universe by claiming that it emerges from one source (*chu yi yuan* 出一原) and penetrates or connects (*tong* 通) time and space. It construes the Way in terminologies reminiscent of the *Zhuangzi* by saying that “It is still and silent and thereby empty and non-existent” (寂寞以虛無). In the *Zhuangzi*’s chapters “The Way of Heaven” (“Tiandao” 天道) and “Ingrained Ideas” (“Keyi” 刻意) we find the expressions “still and silent” (*jimo* 寂寞) and “emptiness and nothingness” (*xuwu* 虛無) as characteristics of the Dao.<sup>236</sup> Since according to passage (1) the Way in its singularity connects with the Nine Gateways [i.e. the Gate(s) of Heaven (*tian zhi men* 天之門) according to the commentator Gao You] and the Six Crossroads [i.e. the Six [earthly] Directions (*liu he* 六合) according to Gao You], two expressions that may be understood to represent the Chinese concept of time-space (*yuzhou* 宇宙), it seems as if the *Huainanzi* develops and foreshadows here the theme of the entire passage: the Way as the singular force (*de* 德) that unites the entire universe and effects its motions and transformations by not acting upon it (非有為於物也，物以有為於己也).<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 55

<sup>236</sup> See Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.204 and 3.238.

<sup>237</sup> I understand the *Huainanzi*’s emphasis of the numbers nine and six in the expressions *jiu men* and *liu heng* as references to their temporal and spatial implications. While the *liu heng* seem to illustrate

(2) “That which Heaven overspreads; that which Earth bears up;”<sup>238</sup> that which is included in the Six Coordinates; that which is animated by *yin* and *yang*; that which is moistened by rain and dew; that which is supported by the Way and its Potency; these all are born from a single father and mother, and all partake of a single harmony. For these reasons, the locust and the elm, the orange and the grapefruit, together are brothers; the You Miao [people] and the [people of] San Wei are joined as a single family. (HNZ 2.7)

(2) 夫天之所覆，地之所載，六合所包，陰陽所响，雨露所濡，道德所扶，此皆生一父母而闋一和也。是故槐榆與橘柚合而為兄弟，有苗與三危通為一家。<sup>239</sup>

In section (2), the *Huainanzi* provides then a representative sequence of examples that the Way apparently supports and impells: the Way and her force allow Heaven and Earth to spread out the world. At the same time, they bring life to the Myriad Beings with the help of *yin* and *yang*. In that sense, we have reached a new stage in the description of the universe. While on the first stage we were still engaging in the universe’s source and origin, now we have reached the level of the separation of the Way’s primordial unity into polarities through which the Dao governs and gives birth to the world.

Interestingly, the *Huainanzi* creates here a parallel to the set up of the family as the basic

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coordination points that spread up space (up, down, east, west, north, and south), the Nine Gateways apparently refer to the movements of the ruler in space as may be found in the later conceptualization of the Nine Palaces (*jiu gong* 九宮). In that sense, I understand the expressions of *jiu men* and *liu heng* to express the space-time (*yuzhou* 宇宙) of the universe.

<sup>238</sup> This is a parallel to the *Record of Rites*’ (*Liji* 禮記) “Doctrine of the Mean” (“Zhongyong” 中庸) that illustrates the vast and penetrating power of the sagely ruler who matches Heaven (*pei tian* 配天). The same expression (天之所覆，地之所載) also appears in the *Xunzi* and the *Guanzi*. For the passage in the *Liji*, see Kong Yingda 孔穎達 ed., *Liji zhushu* 禮記註疏, *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, Ruan Yuan 阮元 ed. (Taipei: Yiwen yinshu guan yinhang 藝文印書館印行, 2001): 5.900a.

<sup>239</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 55

organization of the cosmos similar to Confucian understandings of the household (*jia* 家). While texts like the *Laozi* emphasize the Way as the single parent and mother of the universe (*mu* 母), the *Huainanzi* according to its model of a differentiation of a unity into *yin* and *yang* puts the power of birth into the hands of a gendered, bipartite household unit of father and mother (*yi fumu* 一父母).<sup>240</sup> Therefore, it claims at the end of the passage that the seemingly distinct Myriad Beings of “the locust and the elm, the orange and the grapefruit, together are brothers; the You Miao [people] and the [people of] San Wei are joined as a single family.” Although the universe apparently consists of disparate members, the *Huainanzi* claims that they all are brothers (*xiongdì* 兄弟) and belong to one family (*yi jia* 一家).

(3) When your eyes see the flight of wild geese and swans, “when your ears hear the sounds of the *qin* and the *se*,”<sup>241</sup> and your mind is in the midst of Yanmen,<sup>242</sup> within your single person, your spirit divides and splits up within the Six Coordinates so that in a moment you travel ten million miles. For these reasons, “when viewed from the perspective of their difference, [things as close as] the liver and the gall bladder can be as different as Hu and Yue. When viewed from the perspective of their similarities, the Myriad Beings are a single set.”<sup>243</sup> (*HNZ* 2.7)

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<sup>240</sup> For depictions of the Way as the mother of the universe, see *Laozi* 1, 20, 25, and 52 in Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.1, 3.11, 3.14-15, and 3.32.

<sup>241</sup> This is a textual parallel to the *Liji*'s “Records of Music” (“Yueji” 樂記), in which the text discusses the evocative power of music on the ruler. See Kong Yingda ed., *Liji zhushu*, 5.693b.

<sup>242</sup> Yanmen is a pass in modern-day Shanxi 山西. It seems as if the text parallels here the flight of the geese and the flight of the spirit (*shen* 神) to the Yanmen pass in the North of Chang'an, the capital of the Western Han.

<sup>243</sup> This sentence is a parallel passage to the *Zhuangzi*'s “The Seal of Virtue Complete” (“Dechongfu” 德充符) chapter. See Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.86-87.

(3) 夫目視鴻鵠之飛，耳聽琴瑟之聲，而心在雁門之間。一身之中，神之分離剖判，六合之內，一舉而千萬里。是故自其異者視之，肝膽胡越；自其同者視之，萬物一圏也。<sup>244</sup>

In section (3), the *Huainanzi* elaborates then upon this idea of differentiations in the universe and their origin in a unitary family. As a result of the differentiation process during the creation of the cosmos, the world is inhabited by a myriad of beings that seem to be unrelated. In order to illustrate this point, the text uses a comparison between the body and all under Heaven (*tianxia* 天下). Although the two organs liver (*gan* 肝) and gall bladder (*dan* 膽) sometimes seem to be as different as the Hu 胡 barbarians from the North and the Yue 越 barbarians from the South, they both belong at the end to one body (*yi shen* 一身) that is regulated by the heart (*xin* 心)—like the barbarians belong to one world that is governed by one ruler (*zhu* 主) in the Middle Kingdoms.<sup>245</sup> In that sense, the passage argues that unrelatedness between the Myriad Beings is only an illusion since when perceived from the perspective of similarities everything including the people of all under Heaven and the organs are a single set (*wanwu yi quan ye* 萬物一圏也). In other words, it reiterates and reaffirms the mantra from the beginning

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<sup>244</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 55

<sup>245</sup> “Now the heart is the ruler of the Five Storehouse Organs.” (*HNZ* 1.17)

夫心者，五藏之主也。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 35)

For another passage in the *Huainanzi* that creates such a parallel between the organization of the body and the universe, see the famous description of the gestation of a fetus in cosmic terms in the chapter “Quintessential Spirit” (“Jingshen” 精神) in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 219-221 that I discussed on pages 124-129.

that the Way is the singular and uniting force from which the entire phenomenal world and its diverse inhabitants derive.

(4) The Hundred Schools have different sayings/theories, and each has that where it's coming from. For example, Mo [Di], Yang [Zhu], Shen [Buhai], and [Lord] Shang's ways of governing are like individual ribs of a canopy and individual spokes of a chariot wheel. If you have them, you may use all the numbers/techniques; if you do not have [all of] them, it does not have harmful impact on [their] utility. [However, when] one [group] thinks that they alone have a monopoly [on true governing], then they do not connect in/with the disposition (*qing*) of Heaven and Earth. (HNZ 2.7)

(4) 百家異說，各有所出。若夫墨楊申商之於治道，猶蓋之無一椽，而輪之無一輻。有之可以備數，無之未有害於用也；己自以為獨擅之，不通之于天地之情也。<sup>246</sup>

In this context, the *Huainanzi* construes a connection between the organization of the human and the social body and the ruling of the world. It introduces the example of the Hundred Schools and their diverse claims about proper governance as another manifestation of the cosmic scheme of a diversity originating from a unitary force that *Laozi* 42 so poignantly develops in abstract terms. The *Huainanzi* refers to two examples—the canopy (*gai* 蓋) and the wheel (*lun* 輪)—in this situation that serve as synecdochal images for the chariot (*che* 車), an image commonly used to depict the cosmos, governance, and the power of a kingdom in early Chinese textual and visual cultures.<sup>247</sup> It compares the Hundred Schools' diverse paths of

<sup>246</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 55-56

<sup>247</sup> The *Huainanzi*'s "Arts of Rulership" chapter, for example, uses the image of charioteering to depict governance. It construes the empire as the chariot that is run by the moving officials (horses) and guided by the motionless emperor that resides in the chassis' center:

"The governance of a sagely ruler is like Zaofu's charioteering. (S)he smoothes the ride by controlling the reins

governance (*zhidao* 治道) with the ribs of the canopy and the spokes of a wheel illustrating vividly how the Hundred Schools are united by a great unitary center—a hub or top notch, respectively—that allows them to span up and spread the “intellectual” universe of the Warring States period.<sup>248</sup> By using the image of the canopy and the wheel, Liu An’s text clearly alludes to the prevalent cosmic model of Heaven as a canopy (*gaitian* 蓋天) that overspreads [all under Heaven] and Earth as the bearer [of the human world] (天之所覆，地之所載) that we encountered at the beginning of this passage. In that sense, it purports again a vision of the world as a diversified place whose individual parts appear to be as different as the thoughts and practical paths (*dao* 道) of Mo Di 墨翟 (ca. 470-391 BCE), Yang Zhu 楊朱 (ca. 440-260 BCE), Shen Buhai 申不害 (ca. 400-337 BCE), and Shang Yang 商鞅 (ca. 390-338 BCE), yet are in fact unified and connected by a great Way (Dao 道) at their center. Only if one realizes that each of these schools provides only a necessary instead of a sufficient means to governance, one will be

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and bit and regulates the speed by harmonizing with the [horses’] lips and breathing. [...] Therefore, power and positional advantage are the cart of the human ruler and the great officers are the team of horses of the human ruler.” (*HNZ* 9.24)

聖主之治也，其猶造父之御。齊輯之于轡銜之際，而急緩之于唇吻之和[...]是故權勢者，人主之車輿也；大臣者，人主之駟馬也。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 297)

For a discussion of the cosmic design of chariots in early China, see Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, pp. 37-69. For my brief discussion of the cultural significance of chariots in early China, see pages 161-167.

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For a brief discussion of techniques (*shu* 術) as the spokes of the Dao, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Chia I’s ’Techniques of the Tao’,” pp. 50-58.

able “to connect with the disposition of the universe” (通之於天地之情) “that is impelled by the Dao” (*dao zhi suoshi ye* 道之所施也) and keep the cart/empire/universe rolling. In that sense, it describes an intellectual universe similar to the one we may find in the intertextual writings of the Miscellaneous School, an aspect that will become important in our discussion of the image of the chariot wheel in relationship to the *Huainanzi* below.

(5) Now, when a smith forges an implement and the metal flies out of the forge, it must be either an overflow or discard. When it hits the ground, it will harden and take the form of a thing (*wu*). Although its shape may have some small use, it cannot be treasured as much as the Nine Tripods of the house of Zhou. How much more [is this] the case when compared to the one who has molded them? And when compared to the Way, their distance is even greater. (HNZ 2.7)

(5) 今夫冶工之鑄器，金踴躍于爐中，必有波溢而播棄者，其中地而凝滯，亦有以象於物者矣。其形雖有所小用哉，然未可以保於周室之九鼎也，又況比於規形者乎？其與道相去亦遠矣！

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In section (5), the *Huainanzi* switches from an image of spanning up an intellectual universe to a vision of a forge (*ye* 冶). At first, the text’s imaginary tour de force surprises the reader causing us to wonder what is the relationship between the previous discussion of the ribs and spokes and the forge. If we consider that the previous passage ended on the note that each Myriad Being and singular discourse of the Hundred Schools do not suffice to govern the universe, we may read the image of the forge as another explanation for their insufficiency. The *Huainanzi* introduces here the picture of the Way as the power, which forges the phenomenal world, an

image prominent in the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>250</sup> Seen within this discourse, the myriad words of the *bai jia*, as well as the Myriad Beings are equaled to the Nine Tripods and the leftovers that occur during the process of their production. The Nine Tripods, thereby, refer to the important ritual objects that the Zhou were thought to have produced with materials from all the Middle Kingdoms. In that sense, the Nine Tripods may be understood as arguably the most precious object of its times representing the Zhou dynasty's mandate to rule and embodying their power over the world.<sup>251</sup> By referring to the Nine Tripods, the *Huainanzi* argues that neither the consciously created, precious, and ritualistic object of rulership nor its accidental byproducts are as valuable as the force behind their production. The image of casting a cauldron from the diverse alloys of the Nine Provinces vividly alludes to the idea that the Myriad Beings after they have died, transform and dissolve into their basic components of primal energy (*yuanqi* 元氣) that return to the Way in order to be reassembled in a new form by the “shaper” (*zaohua zhe* 造化者).<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> In the famous great clod (*da kuai* 大塊) story in the “Great Ancestral Master” (“Dazongshi” 大宗師) chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, we find, for example, a passage claiming that the Way “via its creations and transformations is as a great forge” (以造化為大冶). See Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.119.

<sup>251</sup> For the *Shiji*'s depiction of the *jiu ding* and their production and utilization, see footnote 198.

<sup>252</sup> I use here the term shaper instead of creator to avoid a Christian connotation of God as a *creator ex nihilo*. In particular, I think that the term shaper relates better to the importance of the Way as the force that “loads us with form and belabors us with life” (載我以形，勞我以生) as the *Zhuangzi* mentions in the



(6) Now, the Myriad Beings' differentiation and branching off, the Hundred Deeds' proliferation and sprouting, all originate from a single root, yet grow into ten million [branches and leaves]. If it is this, then that which receives is not what gives. That which gives does not receive, and yet there is nothing it does not give. That of which there is nothing that it does not give is like thick rain clouds that grow exuberantly; piling up and spreading they make rain, profoundly soaking the Myriad Beings yet not getting wet together with them. (HNZ 2.7)

(6) 今夫萬物之疏躍枝舉，百事之莖葉條蘂，皆本於一根，而條循千萬也。若此則有所受之矣，而非所授者。所受者無授也，而無不受也。無不受也者，譬若周雲之籠蓂，遼巢彭瀆而為雨。沈溺萬物，而不與為濕焉。<sup>253</sup>

Section (6) functions as an intermediary summary of the discussion above. In order to visualize again the idea of a diversity that originates from an individual source, the *Huainanzi* refers to two biological/natural images: the tree, which we had been discussing above, and the sky in form of clouds (*yun* 雲) and rain (*yu* 雨). In both cases, the *Huainanzi* uses the images of the tree and sky to illustrate the nurturing and self-less (*wuji* 無己) quality of the Way that also appears in *Laozi* 34 and 51.<sup>254</sup> Like the root that remains hidden behind the growth of the tree

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“Grand Ancestral Master” chapter (see Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.110 and 3.119). The Chinese discourse of creation often emphasizes that the Way is without form but we human beings are defined by having a form that bequeaths us with life making us susceptible to the powers of transformation and death. For examples that illustrate how the Myriad Beings dissolve into their basic constituents and therewith return to the Way, see the stories of the four friends Zisi 子祀, Ziyu 子輿, Zili 子犁, and Zilai 子來 and the three friends Zisang Hu 子桑戶, Meng Zifan 孟子反, and Ziqin Zhang 子琴張 in the “Great Ancestral Master” (“Dazongshi” 大宗師) chapter (Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.116-124) or the vignettes on the death of Zhuangzi's wife and Huajie Shu's 滑介叔 tumor in the “Perfect Happiness” (“Zhile” 至樂) chapter (Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.271-272).

<sup>253</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 56-57

<sup>254</sup> For passages that illustrate the self-less, yet, nurturing quality of the Way, see *Laozi* 34 and 51 in Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.20 and 3.31-32.

while providing nutrients and water to the trunk and branches or the clouds that remain unaffected by the myriad raindrops they produce to wet the flora and fauna, the Way nurtures and provides energy to the Myriad Beings without being affected by such a dispersal of powers. In other words, the *Huainanzi* refers here to a natural imagery in order to express the nurturing relationship between the Way and the Myriad Beings. The Way does not only give birth to and design the Myriad Beings as enshrined in the image of the family or the forge; it also keeps the Myriad Beings alive by feeding and nourishing them without expecting anything in return (所受者無授也，而無不受也).

(7) Now, a good archer has the measure of the sight and the target in the same way as the carpenter has the callibrations of the compass and the square. These all are the means through which one may achieve the marvellous. It is so but Xi Zhong could not be Feng Meng, and Zaofu could not be Bo Le. Each had articulated a single corner but did not connect with the domain of the myriad methods. (HNZ 2.7)

(7) 今夫善射者有儀表之度，如工匠有規矩之數，此皆所得以至於妙。然而奚仲不能為逢蒙，造父不能為伯樂者，是曰諭於一曲，而不通于萬方之際也。<sup>255</sup>

In section (7), the *Huainanzi* returns from the Way as a caretaker and nurturer to the Way as a producer and employer by revisiting the problem of a lack of comprehensiveness in the Myriad Beings and discourses that the passage purported in sections (4) and (5). This time, however, it refers to the images of archery, charioteering, and craftsmanship to explain the limitations of

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Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 57

the phenomenal world.<sup>256</sup> Similar to the example of the forge, the passage introduces the examples of superior production. However, in contrast to the text's earlier focus on the product as reflected in the Nine Tripods, this time the *Huainanzi* centers on the sagely producers and users of technologies. Xi Zhong 奚中 was a legendary cartwright;<sup>257</sup> Feng Meng 逢蒙 was a legendary archer;<sup>258</sup> Zaofu 造父 was a legendary charioteer;<sup>259</sup> and Bo Le 伯樂 was a

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<sup>256</sup> John Major collects in his “Tool Metaphors in the *Huainanzi* and Other Early Texts” several instances in which Liu An’s text employs tools and crafts to explain and describe cosmic order and processes, the sage and his relationship to officials, laws and standards, and generally the enhancement of the lifeworld. Unfortunately, he does not fully work out a reasoning behind the *Huainanzi*’s utilization of tools. Instead, he just assumes some kind of rhetorical function for tool metaphors. On the contrary, I’d like to propose that tools and the Hundred Crafts (*bai gong* 百工) function in the *Huainanzi* as human manifestations of the Heavenly Mechanism (*tianji* 天機) and the workings of the Way within the human realm. We will see that a similar understanding of weaving and writing as cosmic procedures pervaded the Han dynasty. For Major’s discussion of tool metaphors, see John S. Major, “Tool Metaphors in the *Huainanzi* and Other Early Texts,” *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, Sarah A. Queen and Michael J. Puett eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 153-198.

<sup>257</sup> According to the *Shuowen jiezi*, “Chariot (*che*) is the collective name [for any object that has] a chassis and wheels. During the time of the Xia dynasty, Xi Zhong created them.”  
車：輿輪之總名。夏后時奚仲所造。(Xu Shen 許慎 ed., *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chubanshe 中華書局出版社, 1963), p. 301a)

<sup>258</sup> For brief references to Feng Meng as a superior archer, see Wang Xianshen 王先謙 ed., *Han Feizi jijie* 韓非子集解, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954), 5.201 and 5.301-302.

<sup>259</sup> For references to Zaofu’s charioteering skills, see Wang Xianqian 王先謙 ed., *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954), 2.87, 2.140, 2.176, 2.225, 2.267, 2.299, and 2.359 and Wang Xianshen ed., *Han Feizi jijie*, 5.249-253.

legendary horse breeder.<sup>260</sup> All of them developed excellent skills in distinct crafts and methods (*fang* 方); however, as the passage suggests, none of them was able to connect with the domain of the Myriad Methods (不通于萬方之際也). Neither Feng Meng and Zaofu nor Bo Le would have been able to create wheels of the quality of Xi Zhong. At the same time, Xi Zhong would not have been able to shoot an arrow, ride a chariot, or breed horses like the others. In that sense, the passage illustrates the problem of specific methods, techniques, and crafts. They are inherently suitable only for singular circumstances (*yu yu yi qu* 諭於一曲) and cannot be universalized. Apparently, only an appropriation and utilization of all crafts and skills, therefore, would allow a ruler to respond to the Myriad Deeds and Situations (*wan shi* 萬事), a concern prevalent in the *Huainanzi*'s ninth chapter on the "Arts of Rulership" ("Zhushu" 主術).<sup>261</sup>

(8) Now, if you use ferrous sulphate to dye black silk, then it will become blacker than ferrous sulphate; if you use indigo to dye blue-green silk, it will become bluer than the indigo. Ferrous sulphate is not black; indigo is not blue. Although [the fabrics] have met their mother, they are not able to transform back. What is the reason? This [would be] comparable to their [color's] becoming fainter with every turn [in the dye bath]. How much more is this so of those things that have not yet begun to be fashioned and transformed by ferrous sulphate and indigo? Even if you were to etch their transformation onto metal and stone, inscribe them onto bamboo and silk, how could we ever enumerate them? From this perspective, things are [inevitably] born into being, and the small and

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<sup>260</sup> For a critical appraisal of Bo Le's skills as a horse breeder, see the beginning of the "Horses Hoofs" ("Mati" 馬蹄) chapter in Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.149-151.

<sup>261</sup> For a discussion of the *Huainanzi*'s model of rulership as such an implementation and unification of the various arts of governance, see Roger T. Ames, *The Art of Rulership: A Study of Ancient Chinese Political Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 53-64 and 145-152.

great roam as companions. (HNZ 2.7)

(8) 今以涅染緇，則黑於涅；以藍染青，則青與藍。涅非緇也，青非藍也。茲雖遇其母，而無能復化已。是何則？以諭其轉而益薄也。何況夫未始有涅、藍造化之者乎？其為化也，雖鏤金石，書竹帛，何足以舉其數！由此觀之，物莫不生於有也，小大優遊矣！<sup>262</sup>

In section (8), we move then from archery and craftsmanship to the dyeing of fabrics. The passage uses this interesting comparison of the Myriad Beings with dyed fabrics to explain how birth inevitably and irreversibly separates the newborn from their mother (*wu neng fuhua yi* 無能復化已). The logic behind this image is as follows: indigo, as well as ferrous sulphate are in their original and untreated form brighter than the dye they effect. Indigo is produced out of the fermented, green leaves of the *indigofera tinctoria* while ferrous sulphate consists of light green crystals. As the *Huainanzi* mentions neither of these substances is black or blue (涅非緇也，青非藍也), yet they effect that silks change their colors into black and blue. We encounter a similar reasoning to section (5) in this example. The dyes are unintended byproducts of the production of colored fabrics similar to metal chips that fly out of the forge (金踴躍於爐中) during the production of a cauldron. In that sense, the text construes a seeming hierarchy between objects with a clear function (*yong* 用)—i.e. colored fabrics and cauldrons—and useless, leftover products such as used dyes and metal chips.

That being said, however, both passages argue at the same time that neither the dyed

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<sup>262</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 57

fabric/cauldron nor the dye/metal chips are the most valuable aspect of this crafting process. Most treasured are in fact the plant and/or the dyer that alike the forger (*guixing zhe* 規形者) function as the force behind the production of these cultural objects and their byproducts. In that sense, sections (5) and (8) both verbalize the force behind the creation and transformation (*zaohua* 造化) of the Myriad Beings as the central and most treasured aspect of the entire process of production. In this vision, neither the byproducts of dyes and metal chips nor the created products of colored fabrics and cauldrons have the ultimate value of their producer. In fact, they belong to the same process of creation: without the byproducts the created objects would not exist and vice versa.

One aspect that both of these images emphasize is the irreversibility of this process of creation. Neither the dyed silk fabric nor the cauldron may be reversed to their original state without being destroyed. In that sense, the example of dyeing, which also prominently sports in the *Mozi's* depiction of how a ruler may have effect and may be influenced by his subjects, serves in this passage as an example that illustrates the process of transformation out of a meeting with the mother of the universe (*yu qi mu* 遇其母).<sup>263</sup> After one has met with the

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<sup>263</sup> The *Mozi's* 墨子 chapter “On Dyeing” (“Suoran” 所染), for example, compares the impact of dye on silks (*si* 絲) to the mutual influence of rulers and/or officials on the governance of kingdoms (*guo* 國) and of friends and family on the educated elite (*shi* 士) and vice versa. See Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 ed., *Mozi*

mother, one will be born and transform into a distinct being that may only return to the origins of its production in the moment of death and dissolution.<sup>264</sup>

Not surprisingly, the concept of transformation, one of the central ideas related to the Dao and its powers as a shaper (*zaohua zhe* 造化者), plays a prominent role in the second half of this section. The *Huainanzi* creates an insurmountable distinction between the force that creates and the things that are created from it. In that sense, the passage has returned via the image of transformation to the beginning of the passage, to the unitary root of the entire universe that effected the creation of its binary forces of *yin* and *yang* as alluded to in the expression that “things are [inevitably] born into being, and the small and great roam as companions” (物莫不生於有也，小大優遊矣).<sup>265</sup> In other words, we have returned to the origin in passage (1) after having encountered several examples that illustrated the powers of the ineffable Way and her relationship to the phenomenal world. Accordingly, the last portion of this elaborate part of the *Huainanzi*'s second chapter returns to explicate the Way in

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*jiangu* 墨子閒詁, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954), 4.6-11.

<sup>264</sup> See footnote 252.

<sup>265</sup> The same image of a cosmogenesis with the help of the two terms small and big (*xiaoda* 小大) may also be found at the beginning of the *Zhuangzi*, which narrates the transformation of the gigantic fish Kun 鯤 whose name means spawn or roe, the moment before a fish is born into the big bird Peng 鵬 that has a conversation with a cicada and a small bird. In other words, the *Zhuangzi* begins with a cosmogonic illustration that develops the phenomenal quality of small and big out of their union in Kun. See Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.1-7.

paradoxical language typical for the *Laozi* that we had encountered at the beginning.

(9) The tip of an autumn hair [may be minute], but slip it into space in which there is no gap and it becomes [in effect] enormous. If you take the thinness of a reed and insert it into something where there is no crack, it becomes [in effect] bulky. [That which] lacks [even] the fineness of an autumn hair or the thinness of a reed, [extending] unboundedly to the Four Endpoints, pervading the Limitless: nothing can stop or impede it. It is exquisitely refined and doubly marvellous. It lifts and lowers the Myriad Beings, harmonizes and coils up alterations and transformations: how can anything in Heaven and Earth suffice to explain it? A fast wind can snap trees, yet it cannot pull out feathers or hair. From the height of a cloud terrace, a person who falls will break his spine and shatter his skull, but for a mosquito or a gnat, it is high enough to take flight from it. Now we, alike centipedes and worms, mount the heavenly mechanism, and we receive our form as part of the same set [of living things], but it is the things that fly and are light and that are tiny and minute that find [their form] sufficient to escape with their lives. How much more is this so for that which has no category? Looked at from this perspective, it is even more apparent that what has no form generates what has form. (HNZ 2.7)

(9) 夫秋毫之末，淪於無間而復歸於大矣；蘆苻之厚，通於無壅而復反於敦龐。若夫無秋毫之微，蘆苻之厚，四達無境，通于無圻，而莫之要御天遏者，其襲微重妙，挺捫萬物，揣丸變化，天地之間何足以論之。夫疾風亭女木，而不能拔毛髮；雲臺之高，墮者折脊碎腦，而蟲蟲適足以翱翔。夫與蚊蟻同乘天機，夫受形於一圈，飛輕微細者，猶足以脫其命，又況未有類也！由此觀之，無形而生有形，亦明矣。<sup>266</sup>

Right at the beginning, the *Huainanzi* alludes to a story about Li Lou 離婁 or Li Zhu 離朱 who was thought to be able to see the tip of an autumn hair from hundred steps away (離朱之明，

察秋毫之末于百步之外).<sup>267</sup> Some version of this story from the *Shenzi* seems to have been

common knowledge in the Western Han dynasty and apparently manifested in various guises in

<sup>266</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 57-58

<sup>267</sup> Qian Xizuo 錢熙祚 ed., *Shenzi 慎子, Zhuzi jicheng 諸子集成* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954), 5.8



texts like the *Mengzi* or the *Huainanzi*.<sup>268</sup> Our focus obviously lies less in the history of this little narrative than in the *Huainanzi*'s utilization of the story's plot of superior vision. The *Huainanzi* argues with the example of the tip of the autumn hair that people with acute sensual organs such as Li Zhu still would not be able to glimpse at the Way. In fact, it creates the argument that the ineffable Way may not be grasped with any human faculty. This theme of "how can anything in Heaven and Earth suffice to explain it" (天地之間何足以論之) permeates the rest of this passage.

The *Huainanzi* evokes here a similar strategy to the discussion of the production of cauldrons and dyes that we have found above. This time, however, it uses the various forms of the Myriad Beings to argue for the limitation of each being. In particular, it uses a comparison between flies that allude to the flying metal chips—rather minute and powerless beings in the phenomenal world—and human beings that allude to the Nine Tripods to explain our own limitations. Besides the fact of being more powerful and larger than any fly, human beings will definitely die if they fall from the heights of a cloud terrace (*yuntai zhi gao* 雲臺之高). Unfortunately, Gao You's commentary only mentions regarding the *yuntai* that it is a terrace

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In addition to the *Huainanzi*, we may find the expression "the tip of an autumn hair" (*qiu hao zhi mo* 秋毫之末) as a way to refer to superior vision in *Mengzi*'s "Upper Chapter on King Liang Hui" ("Liang Hui Wang Shang" 梁惠王上). See Jiao Xun 焦循 ed., *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954): 1.50.

that reaches up into the clouds (*tai gaoji yu yun* 臺高際於雲).<sup>269</sup> In the *Hanshu*, the cloud terrace is often related to the Southern Palace (*nangong* 南宮), a palatial structure that replicates the celestial seat of the Vermillion Bird Star (*Zhuniao xing* 朱鳥星). Hence, I suggest that the stage of having reached a cloud terrace might signify a step prior to the arrival at the ultimate Heavens and the Way. Nonetheless, human beings would still die if they would fall from such extreme heights within the human realm due to their heavy form (*xing* 形). In that sense, Liu An and his workshop allude here to the problem of reaching the Way. Human beings by being confined to their own bodily form and senses are inherently unequipped to safely reach such heights. Therefore, the *Huainanzi* asks, “How much more [i.e. harder to reach] is this for that which has no category” (又況未有類也), that is the Way that exceeds any categorizations?

At this point, we have reached the final portion of this passage. The *Huainanzi* has laid out a long sequence of examples that intend to show that the formless (*wuxing* 無形) Way produces every being in this world and loads them with a form (*youxing* 有形).<sup>270</sup> Yet at the

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<sup>269</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 58

<sup>270</sup> “Now the formless is the great ancestor of the [Myriad] Beings.” (*HNZ* 1.12)

夫無形者，物之大祖也。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 28)

same time, she exceeds any constraints and aspects of the phenomenal world.<sup>271</sup> Like roots hidden underneath the earth, the producer of colored fabrics and cauldrons, or the immovable center of a wheel and an umbrella that allows their spokes and ribs to circle, this passage describes the Way as an entity that transcends the limitations and one-sidedness of the phenomenal world while her actions remain hidden for her children.

My commentary-style reading of this long portion from the *Huainanzi* obviously leaves some connections undiscussed. In fact, it is in my opinion doubtful that one may construe a completely coherent vision of this sequence of passages beyond the realization that it somehow illustrates the relationship between the Way and the phenomenal world by moving from the origin of the universe via the creation of the Myriad Beings back to their dissolution into the shaper. However, whether or not we follow or agree with the *Huainanzi's* sequence of examples to express this relationship between the universe and its mother is rather insignificant at this point. That being said, it is, nonetheless, important to realize that the *Huainanzi* in fact uses several, distinct images (*xiang*) in this sequence of examples to depict the relationship between the Way and the world: an autumn hair before its first growth (without spatial expansion), the dyer of a fabric, an ultimate craftsman and master of all arts (*yi* 藝), a cloud or

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For passages that illustrate the Way as a formless entity that exceeds the constraints of the phenomenal world, see *HNZ* 1.1 and 1.13 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 1-2 and 29-30.

root, a forger, a hub or top notch, the heart and a father and mother. Hence, although the *benmo*-model is truly an important image to illustrate aspects of the formless Way and its relationship to the Myriad Beings and their affairs as worked out by the *Huainanzi* translation group, it seems as if it is just one of many images that the *Huainanzi* utilizes to depict the Dao. Liu An's text apparently relies on a variety of images and models to explain the comprehensive structure of the universe.

This diversity is not surprising once we consider how the *Laozi* uses various, oftentimes contradicting images to depict the ineffable Way.<sup>272</sup> In fact, we may understand this multitude of visions as a literary strategy to circumvent the Dao's ineffability and to reconstruct the

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Similar to the *Huainanzi*, the *Laozi* regularly creates "paradoxes" and uses antithetic pairs to depict aspects of the Way and its powers (*de* 德). *Laozi* 41, for example, claims:

"The brightened Way is as if it is dark. The entered Way is as if it is retreated. The leveled Way is as if it has knots. The highest power is as if it is a valley; the absolute white is as if it is besmirched; the expansive power is as if it is not enough; the established power is as if it is stolen; substantialized reality is as if it is changing; the great square has no corners; the great vessel becomes completed lately; the great noise has an indiscernable sound; the great image has no form; the Way hides in that without a name. Now, only the Dao is good at letting [things] go, yet, [still] making them complete."

明道若昧；進道若退；夷道若類；上德若谷；太白若辱；廣德若不足；建德若偷；質真若渝；大方無隅；大器晚成；大音希聲；大象無形；道隱無名。夫唯道，善貸且成。(Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.26)

With the help of the structures (x) 若 (-x) and (x) 無 (y), the passage construes a sequence of paradoxical images to depict the Dao. Furthermore, it uses logically excluding pairs such as "the bright Way can neither be brought to light" (*mingdao ruo mei* 明道若昧) nor "may this entered path be treaded upon" (*jindao ruo tui* 進道若退) to dissolve any attempt of clearly denominating the Dao. In other words, it construes a pastiche that depicts the ineffable Way *ex negativo*. For a discussion of vagueness in the *Laozi*, see Steve Coutinho, "The Abduction of Vagueness: Interpreting the *Laozi*," *Philosophy East & West* 52.4 (2002): 415-421.

“formlessness of [her] great image” (*daxiang wuxing* 大象無形).<sup>273</sup> Consequently, we should refrain from championing from the outset any image as the sole model that structures the Liu clan’s scripture and cosmos as the *Huainanzi* translation group recently pushed forward. Instead, I suggest that we should explore several of the images the *Huainanzi* uses in the passage above and in many other parts of the text to depict the Way and investigate whether or not Liu An’s text also utilizes them as ways to construe homologies similar to the example of the tree. Accordingly, I will spend the next two subsections to further analyze the two images of the chariot wheel and the fabric that the *Huainanzi* mentions in the passage above as case studies of its strategy to fashion itself and the sagely ruler in image (*xiang*) of the Way.<sup>274</sup>

## **2.2 Being a Hub: The Way, Sage, and Liu Clan’s Scripture as a Uniting Center**

As we have discussed in the example above, the *Huainanzi* apparently refers to the synecdochal images of the canopy and chariot wheel to depict the relationship between the ultimate Way

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<sup>273</sup> Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.26

<sup>274</sup> Obviously, there are more homologies that the *Huainanzi* construes. For example, I suggest in my article “Agricultural Imagery, Governance, and (De-)Cultivation in the *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*” that Liu An’s text (*HNZ* 9.13) uses the dichotomy between tilled fields and overgrown court gardens in a similar fashion (see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 282). The spatial constraints of a dissertation, however, limit me to a selective discussion of such homological correlations in the *Huainanzi*. In the future, I plan to work out the image of the forge, the chariot (wheel), and the canopy in the same detailed way I will analyze the image of weaving in chapter 3 to 5.

and the Myriad Beings. In my reading, both images create a contrast between a unifying center or origin (i.e. the hub and top notch) and its myriad diversifications (i.e. the spokes and ribs) through which the “non-active” pivots in the middle act in the world (i.e. role and span up a canopy). In other words, they express again a cosmogonic model close to *Laozi* 42 that roots the generation and functioning of the entire universe within the form- and action-less Way.

However, as we will see in this chapter, the image of the wheel that we encountered in the passage from the *Huainanzi*'s “Chuzhen” chapter does not only refer to the Way and the organization of the universe. Liu An's text also uses it to depict the sagely ruler and the governance of the empire. In this vision that is quite prominent in the chapter on the “Arts of Rulership,” the emperor is most often depicted to function like the hub (*gu* 轂) or axle (*zhu* 軸) of a wheel that provides the Hundred Officials (*bai guan* 百官) with positions (*wei* 位) and tasks (*shi* 事) without getting involved in their exertions. In that sense, Liu An's text portrays the emperor as the *wuwei*-performing center of the empire with which the officials are linked and through which these human spokes may perform their deeds (*xingshi* 行事) that keep the empire running.

Beyond its utilization in the *Huainanzi*'s conceptualization of rulership, the image of the wheel also appears in discourses about writings of the past and the doctrines (*dao*) of the

Hundred Schools. Due to the character 道's double meaning as the ultimate Way and (partial) doctrinal and practical paths, I propose that the image of the chariot wheel may also be understood as a reference to Liu An's text and its miscellaneous style. In fact, we will find out that the image of a wheel (*lun* 輪), a cognate term of the character discourse (*lun* 論), follows a logic quite similar to the *benmo*-structure, which according to the *Huainanzi* translation project functioned as a model of the universe and of the *Huainanzi*'s textual organization. In this vision, the Liu clan's scripture operates as the hub of the wheel connecting the myriad discourses of the *bai jia* while providing each of these paths of one trace (*yi ji zhi lu* 一跡之路) and schools' one-sided aims (*yi yu zhi zhi* 一隅之指) with a place in Liu An's text—a vision that is in my opinion quite in line with the text's syncretic form, its self-descriptions, and receptions.<sup>275</sup> Accordingly, I propose that the *Huainanzi* might have utilized the image of the wheel and its hub to construe Liu An's text and the sage in image of the Way. But before we delve into the *Huainanzi*'s utilization of the chariot wheel, let's briefly explore the cultural significance of the chariot as a microreplica of the universe and as a sign for governance for which the wheel and the canopy may stand in as synecdochal images.

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For my discussion of the “Yaolüe” passage that provides these expressions for the Hundred Schools' limited doctrinal and practical ways (*dao*), see pages 201-207.

## Preliminary Thoughts: The Chariot as a Microreplica of the Universe

Early Chinese texts often construe the chariot and its synecdochal images of wheels and canopy as microreplica of the universe (see figure 8). This vision, for example, explicitly manifested in the “Record of Gauging Crafted [Objects]” (“Kaogong ji” 考工記) from the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), which states:

The chassis’ squareness is in image of Earth. The canopy’s roundness is in image of Heaven. The thirty spokes of the [two] wheels are in image of the sun and moon. The twenty-eight [ribs] of the canopy are in image of the stars. The nine fringes of the Dragon Banner are in image of the Great Fire [lodge]. The seven fringes of the Bird Flag are in image of the Quail Fire [lodge]. The six fringes of the Bear Banner are in image of the Invader [lodge]. The four fringes of the Turtle Snake [Banner] are in image of the Encampment [lodge]. The crooked arrow of the Bow Banner is in image of the Crescent [lodge].

軫之方也，以象地也。蓋之圓也，以象天也。輪輻三十，以象日月也。蓋弓二十有八，以象星也。龍旗九旒，以象大火也。鳥旗七旒，以象鶉火也。熊旗六旒，以象伐也。龜蛇四旒，以象營室也。弧旌枉矢，以象弧也。<sup>276</sup>

This portion of the *Zhouli*, which prescribes strict standards for “the deeds of the Hundred Crafts all of which have been created by the sages” (百工之事，皆聖人之作也), correlates the chariot’s design with cosmic structures.<sup>277</sup> While the “Kaogong ji” claims that the chassis and the canopy are in image (*xiang* 象) of Heaven and Earth, their spokes and ribs, as well as the fringes of its banners were also thought to relate to cosmic entities.<sup>278</sup> In this vision, the thirty

<sup>276</sup> Kong Yingda 孔穎達 ed., *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮注疏, *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, Ruan Yuan 阮元 ed. (Taipei: Yiwen yinshu guan yinhang 藝文印書館印行, 2001): 3.614a-614b

<sup>277</sup> Kong Yingda ed., *Zhouli zhushu*, 3.595a

<sup>278</sup> According to Magdalena von Dewall, the basic form of the early Chinese chariot consisted



spokes of each wheel would relate to the sun and moon so that the two turning wheels might have been meant to mimic the sexagenary cycle of Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches (*tiangan dizhi* 天干地支). The twenty-eight ribs of the canopy were linked to the twenty-eight lodges (*xiu* 宿) in the sky. In addition, each of the banners was made in image of one of the twenty-eight lodges so that these flags might have been arranged and placed on the canopy according to each constellation's place in the celestial dome.

Although the “Kaogong ji's” idealized—or better ritualized—vision of the chariot and its individual parts is quite unique in its attention to detail, it is not special in regards to its general association of the chariot with the cosmos. In fact, we find in several early Chinese scriptures this linking of the chariot's design with the iconic round and square forms that are commonly attributed to the organization of the universe.

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of two wheels placed in the middle of the chassis. For a discussion of the chariot's design, see Magdalena von Dewall, *Pferd und Wagen im frühen China* (Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 1964), pp. 127-132.



Figure 8: Chariot with Thirty-spoked Wheel from the Tomb of Qinshi Huangdi<sup>279</sup>

As the *Huainanzi* frequently mentions in expressions such as “that which is round is Heaven and that which is square is Earth” (夫圓者天也；方者地也; *HNZ* 15.3),<sup>280</sup> “Heaven is round, Earth is square, and the Way is at the center” (天圓地方，道在中央; *HNZ* 3.24),<sup>281</sup> or “The Way of Heaven is called round; the Way of Earth is called square” (天道曰圓，地道曰方; *HNZ* 3.2),<sup>282</sup> “the chariot wheel’s roundness and the chassis’ squareness” (*lun yuan yu fang* 輪圓輿方; *HNZ* 20.13) had clearly been associated with the terrestrial and celestial realms.<sup>283</sup> As Lan-ying

<sup>279</sup> “Chariot. Second half of the third century BCE. Gilt bronze. 225 x 152 cm. Unearthed in 1980 in the west of the mausoleum of the First Emperor of Qin in Lintong, Shaanxi.” (Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, p. 48)

<sup>280</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 492

<sup>281</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 107

<sup>282</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 80

<sup>283</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 675

Tseng writes,

The signification of the formal combination of circle and square was spelled out in the received texts produced not long before the Han dynasty. Song Yu 宋玉, a poet active in the third century BCE, employed the following metaphor in his *Rhapsody on Talks about Greatness* (*Dayan fu* 大言賦) to describe the ultimate goal that all men should aspire to: “Take square Earth as a chariot. Take round Heaven as its canopy. The shining long sword [accompanying the great man] thus leans far beyond Heaven.” The same metaphor appears in the *Record of Artificers* (*Kaogong ji* 考工記), a document probably put together at the end of the Zhou in the Warring States period (475-222 BCE): “The squareness of the chariot is to represent Earth; the roundness of the canopy is to represent Heaven.” The two texts show that the ancient Chinese considered Heaven to be round, and Earth to be square; together they could be compared to the canopy and the body of a chariot.<sup>284</sup>

According to her analysis, texts such as Song Yu’s “Dayan fu” or the aforementioned “Kaogong ji” and *Huainanzi* clearly connected the two basic forms square and round with the setup of the cosmos AND the chariot’s design. These texts linked the round canopy/wheels with the heavenly dome and the square chassis with the earthly base construing the chariot as a microreplica of the universe.

Since the material reality of excavated war chariots from the Shang and Zhou dynasty, however, does not align with the “Kaogong ji” and other texts’ visualizations of chariots as Edward Shaughnessy has shown, it seems unlikely that these texts faithfully illustrate the structure and reception of everyday chariots.<sup>285</sup> In fact, they might rather point towards the

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<sup>284</sup> Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, pp. 46-47

<sup>285</sup> See Edward Shaughnessy, “Historical Perspectives on the Introduction of the Chariot into China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48.1 (1988): 189-237.

existence of a ritualistic imagination during the Warring States and early imperial period,<sup>286</sup> which correlated the imperial chariot and its individual parts to cosmic bodies.<sup>287</sup> Such a construction of the imperial chariot in image of the cosmos would have far-reaching consequences for our understanding of its function since the ruler would literally dwell at the center of Heaven and Earth while riding in it.<sup>288</sup> By roaming through her/his empire, the ruler

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<sup>286</sup> For two studies that work with the concept of a ritual imagination, see Paul Copp, *The Body Incantatory: Spells and Ritual Imagination in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 1-25 and Erik W. Davis, *Deathpower: Buddhism's Ritual Imagination in Cambodia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 8-19.

<sup>287</sup> In fact, the same image had also been used to depict the human body. As we have seen in chapter 2 on pages 125-126, the *Huainanzi* (HNZ 7.2) states, “The roundness of the head is in image of Heaven and the squareness of the feet is in image of Earth” (頭之圓也象天，足之方也象地; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 220). This relationship between the body and the chariot allows us to understand many of the “meditative” practices and the imperial tours in a new light. Like the ruler riding the chariot, the spirit (*shen* 神) would ride the human body according to the *Huainanzi*. Such a synchronic vision of outer and inner journeys is quite similar to Daoist master’s preparations of their bodies prior to ritual performances in which the inner journey to the origin of the cosmos is visualized to the audience on the back of the master’s robe. For a depiction of the Daoist master’s inner journey to the cosmic origin, see Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, pp. 95-99.

<sup>288</sup> Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179-104 BCE) perhaps provided the most famous example of this logic that had been prevalent during the Western Han. In the chapter “The Kingly Way Connects the Three [Realms]” (“Wangdao tong san” 王道通三) of his *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn* (*Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露), Liu An’s contemporary claims that the character for king (*wang* 王) is a linguistic manifestation of the ruler’s task of connecting the Three (*san* 三) Realms. Hence, Dong interprets the Chinese character for king as the very expression of the ruler’s power to unite and connect the Three Realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity by residing in their middle. In that sense, the design of the imperial chariot apparently crystallizes the idea of the ruler as the human pivot that unites the Three Realms with the help of his refined, still, and *wuwei*-performing body while roaming through all under Heaven. See Liu Dianjue et al. eds., *Chunqiu fanlu zhuzi suoyin*, pp. 51-52 and Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major trans., *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*

would physically connect the two realms of Heaven and Earth in form of the square- and roundness of the cart and canopy suggesting that the imperial chariot might have functioned as a mobile Hall of Bright.<sup>289</sup> Such a vision of the chariot as a mobile Hall of Bright seems to be reflected in visual representations of the Northern Dipper (*beidou* 北斗) as the celestial chariot in which Taiyi and Shangdi 上帝 tour their heavenly realm to hold court (see figure 9).

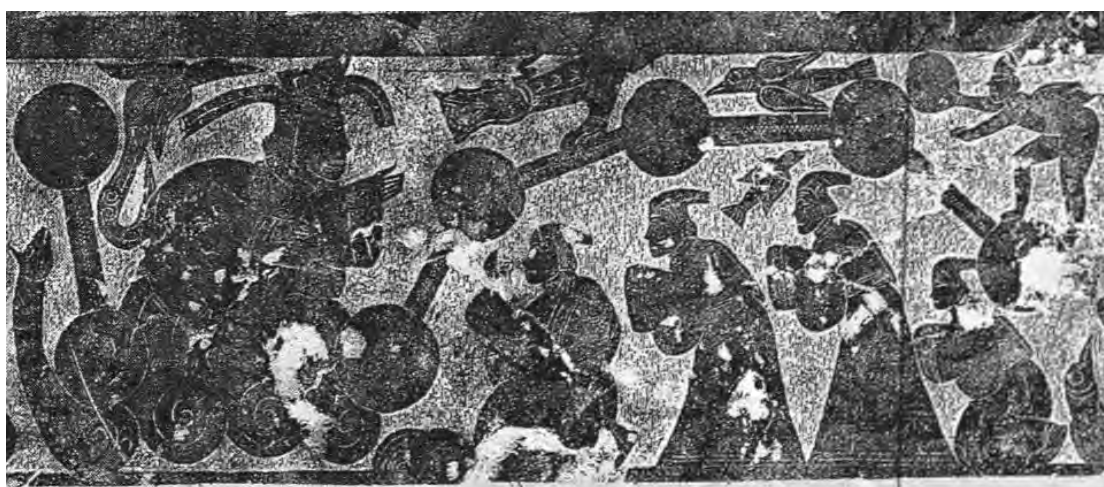


Figure 9: Detail, Taiyi Riding the Northern Dipper (*beidou* 北斗), Wu Family Shrine<sup>290</sup>

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(New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 399.

<sup>289</sup> As Lan-ying Tseng argues in her book *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, the Han emperors apparently built the halls in such a way that they replicated with their “circling the square” and the “squaring the circle” patterns both the imperial chariot and *The Zhou Gnomon* (*Zhoubi* 周髀). Hence, both the Hall of Bright and the chariot apparently functioned as a central space in which Heaven and Earth would meet construing the emperor as the connecting axis and pivot (*shu* 樞) of the universe. In the future, I will elaborate on this parallel between the Hall of Light and early Chinese understandings of the imperial chariot. However, for the sake of brevity, I decided to exclude this discussion from the project at this point. For a schematic map of the *mingtang* and a reference to Tseng’s work, see page 115.

<sup>290</sup> Detail of a rubbing of the north wall of stone chamber one, Wu Family Shrine, Eastern Han dynasty, late second century CE, ink on paper, h. 96.0 cm, w. 147.7 cm. Princeton University Art Museum,

As enticing as these suggestions are in my opinion, they unfortunately remain speculative at this point and therefore need further research.<sup>291</sup> For the purpose of my dissertation, however, we may at least deduce one important aspect from this brief discussion: namely that Liu An and his workshop apparently understood the chariot and, as we will see, the synecdochal image of the chariot wheel as microreplica of the cosmos—a vision that seems to be widely shared during the early imperial period. In other words, the chariot and its parts such as the thirty-spoked wheel and twenty-eight spoked canopy had clearly been associated with the organization of the cosmos and the Dao's workings, an idea that the *Huainanzi's* utilization of the image of the hub reflects.

### **The Dao as a Hub in the *Huainanzi***

Visions of the hub as an image for the Way appear frequently in scriptures that later had been

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Princeton, NJ. For the rubbing, see Cary Y. Liu, Michael Nylan, and Anthony Barbieri-Low eds., *Recarving China's Past: Art, Archeology, and Architecture of the "Wu Family Shrines"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 146. For a discussion of the problems with dating the shrine as an Eastern Han monument, see Cary Y. Liu, "Introductory Essay," *Recarving China's Past: Art, Archeology, and Architecture of the "Wu Family Shrines,"* Cary Y. Liu, Michael Nylan, and Anthony Barbieri-Low eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 23-74.

<sup>291</sup> In the future, I plan to explore this significance of the chariot as a cosmicized object and its ritualistic utilization in imperial tours. I expect to uncover new insights into the practice of *wuwei* and roaming that clearly exceed scholar's current understanding of this practice as a mere form of meditation.

categorized as early Daoist texts. *Laozi* 11, for example, proclaims in a discussion of emptiness and its usefulness that

Thirty spokes come together in one hub. Due to its “emptiness” [in the middle for the axle] there is a use for the wheel. Clay is used to make vessels. Due to their emptiness, there is a use for the vessel. The doors and windows are cut out from the wall to make a room. Due to their emptiness, there is a use for the room. Therefore, that that is makes [it] beneficial. That that is not makes [it] useful.

三十輻，共一轂，當其無，有車之用。埴埴以為器，當其無，有器之用。鑿戶牖以為室，當其無，有室之用。故有之以為利，無之以為用。<sup>292</sup>

This early example of the hub image, which repeats the “Kaogong ji’s” vision of the thirty-spoked chariot wheel obviously does not explicitly refer to the Way. Instead it emphasizes the importance of empty space in the middle of the hub in which the axle (*chezhu* 車軸) resides and therewith provides the wheel with a benefit and use. The *Laozi* parallels this observation of the object’s emptiness in the middle with the structure of a vessel and a house’s doors and windows. All of these objects share the same idea: they may only be used because of their emptiness (*qi wu* 其無) in the center.<sup>293</sup>

Although the *Laozi* remains vague about the reference for the image of the hub, it seems

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<sup>292</sup> Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.6

<sup>293</sup> Crafts play an important role in early Chinese visions of the Way. Particularly, the *Zhuangzi* is famous for its utilization of carpenters, butchers, or smiths, to name just a few. For a discussion of tools in early Chinese texts, see John S. Major, “Tool Metaphors,” pp. 153-198. For a comparison between the role of crafts in the *Zhuangzi* and Aristotle’s writings, see David Macheck, “The Doubleness of Crafts: Motifs of Technical Action in Life Praxis according to Aristotle and Zhuangzi,” *Dao: Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 10 (2011): 507-526.

to point towards the Way since it expresses various important aspects the Daoist classic commonly associates with the Dao. First, it emphasizes the importance of emptiness at the center of the wheel, a discourse that permeates the entire *Laozi* and its depiction of the formless (*wuxing* 無形), non-acting (*wuwei* 無為), desireless (*wuyu* 無欲), unnamable (*wuming* 無名), and being-less (*wuwu* 無物) mother of the Myriad Beings (*wan wu zhi mu* 萬物之母).<sup>294</sup> Second, the rotation of the wheel and hub allude to the importance of swirling and other circular motions in early Daoist visions of the Way as a primordial chaos (*hundun* 混沌).<sup>295</sup> In addition, the hub also embodies a central idea associated with the Way: likewise, it resides at the center and therefore moves forward without actually moving in space (*xing wuxing* 行無行)—i.e. changing its position.<sup>296</sup> As Wim De Reu has shown, the *Zhuangzi*—but also texts like the *Laozi* and *Huainanzi*—commonly associate this idea of an unmoving, yet

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<sup>294</sup> For passages that use these terms to depict the Way, see *Laozi* 1, 14, 20, 25, 32, 34, 37, 41 and 52 in Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.1, 3.7-8, 3.11, 3.14, 3.18-21, 3.26, and 3.32.

<sup>295</sup> For an example of the Way as an endlessly cycling entity, see pages 177-179.

<sup>296</sup> Although the *Laozi* develops the expression “moving without motion” or “acting without action” (*xing wuxing* 行無行) in a military context in chapter 69, the image of moving without motion reverberated in later texts such as the *Huainanzi*, which explicitly associates the practice of *wuwei* with superior motility. Within the *Laozi*, we may find a comparable discourse in chapter 27 in form of the expression that “superior motions are without cart tracks” (*shanxing wucheji* 善行無轍迹)—i.e. without signs of action. For the relevant passages in the *Laozi*, see Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.15-16. For my discussion of the *Huainanzi*’s paralleling of *wuwei* and superior motions that leave no traces, see Tobias Benedikt Zürn, “Agricultural Imagery, Governmentality, and (De-)Cultivation in the *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*,” forthcoming.



circling center with the practice of *wuwei* and the Dao's potency (*de* 德).<sup>297</sup> In that sense, the image of the hub does indeed express several core-principles of the Way. If we consider these conceptual parallels and the fact that texts like the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi* also use images related to pottery and houses to depict the Way, it is in my opinion very likely that this entire passage from *Laozi* 11 already utilizes the image of the hub as an implicit reference to the Way.<sup>298</sup>

This vision of the wheel as a representation of the workings of the cosmos is more explicitly expressed and further elaborated in the *Zhuangzi* and the *Huainanzi*. The famous story about Wheelwright Bian at the end of the "Way of Heaven" ("Tiandao" 天道) chapter, for example, narrates a conversation between a craftsman and Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (d. 643 BCE). In this story, the wheelwright encounters the Duke on his throne while reading that prompts a

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<sup>297</sup> A similar vision appears in the *Zhuangzi*'s "Qiwulun" chapter in form of the Ways's Pivot (*daoshu* 道樞), which the text describes as the point "where "that" and "this" cannot be their mates. [...] Only when the pivot is located in a ring's center [may] it respond without exhaustion."

彼是莫得其偶[···]樞始得其環中，以應無窮。(Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.32-33)

For a discussion of the *Zhuangzi*'s employment of the potter's wheel, grinding wheel, and ring as ways to illustrate "Stillness of the Mind," "Flexibility in Response," and "Living Out One's Years," see Wim De Reu, "How to Throw a Pot: The Centrality of the Potter's Wheel in the *Zhuangzi*," *Asian Philosophy* 20.1 (2010): 43-66.

<sup>298</sup> For an example that uses the image of a great vessel (*daqi* 大器) to express the Way, see *Laozi* 41 in Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.26. For an example of the house, see Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.323-324.

conversation about the usefulness of language and texts:

Duke Huan was reading in the upper part of his hall and Wheelwright Bian was hewing a wheel in the lower part. Setting aside his hammer and chisel, the wheelwright went to the upper part of the hall and inquired of Duke Huan, saying, "I venture to ask what words Your Highness is reading?" "The words of the sages," said the duke. "Are the sages still alive?" "They're already dead," said the duke. "Then that which my lord is reading are merely the dregs of the ancients." "How can you, a wheelwright, comment upon what I am reading?" asked Duke Huan. "If you can explain yourself, all right. If you cannot explain yourself, you shall die." "Your servant looks at it from his occupation," said Wheelwright Bian.<sup>299</sup> "If the spokes are loose, they'll fit sweet as a whistle but the wheel won't be solid. If they're too tight, you won't be able to insert them no matter how hard you try. To make them neither too loose nor too tight is something you sense in your hand and feel in your heart. There's a knack to it that can't be put in words. I haven't been able to teach it to my son, and my son hasn't been able to learn it from me. That's why I'm still hewing wheels after seventy years. When they died, the ancients took with them what they couldn't transmit. So what you are reading are [just] the dregs of the ancients."<sup>300</sup>

桓公讀書於堂上，輪扁斲輪於堂下，釋椎鑿而上，問桓公曰：「敢問公之所讀者何言邪？」公曰：「聖人之言也。」曰：「聖人在乎？」公曰：「已死矣。」曰：「然則君之所讀者，古人之糟魄已夫！」桓公曰：「寡人讀書，輪人安得議乎！有說則可，無說則死。」輪扁曰：「臣也，以臣之事觀之。斲輪，徐則甘而不固，疾則苦而不入。不徐不疾，得之於手而應於心，口不能言，有數存焉於其間。臣不能以喻臣之子，臣之子亦不能受之於臣，是以行年七十而老斲輪。古之人與其不可傳也死矣，然則君之所讀者，古人之糟魄已夫。」<sup>301</sup>

The narrative presents a cruel game between the ruler and his subordinate. Convinced that his social status, intellect, and literacy make him superior to the petty craftsman, Duke Huan

<sup>299</sup> In this case, I think that the *Zhuangzi* plays with the self-referential term *chen* 臣 whose meaning may also refer to the serving position of a person below (*xia* 下) in regards to a ruler or other ruling person above (*shang* 上). Since the text compares here two occupations—the sage and the wheelmaker and the ruler and her/his subjects, respectively—I decided to translate *chen zhi shi* 臣之事 as “servant occupation.”

<sup>300</sup> This translation is based on Victor H. Mair trans., *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), pp. 128-129.

<sup>301</sup> Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.217-218

interprets Bian's disruption and dismissal of the sages' words as an act of hubris: "How can you, a wheelwright, comment upon what I am reading" (寡人讀書，輪人安得議乎)? As a result, he proposes a competition: if the craftsman is able to convince him that it is indeed useless to read the sages' words, the Duke would spare Bian's life. If not, the wheelwright would lose his life merely for a comment.

As it turns out, the craftsman provides the ruler with a servant's perspective (以臣之事觀之) on this matter that is based on his own experience with the creation of wheels rather than with the sages's words (*shengren zhi yan* 聖人之言) and the lord's bookish learning (*jun zhi suo du zhe* 君之所讀者). In order to explain his reasons for why the writings of the dead sages cannot transmit their experience of the Way, Bian narrates his attempts to teach his son the arts of wheelmaking. However, he uses this example to argue that all his explanations cannot replace the personal experience of finding the middleground between a firm and loose fit of the spokes that guarantees a wheel's smooth running. As he says, "one achieves it with the hand and responds to it with the heart, [but] the mouth cannot put it in words" (得之於手而應於心，口不能言). Or to put it simply, one may not learn to find this middleground from texts or speeches. Only the repeated practice of making spokes with one's own hands and learning to respond to the distinct materials' varying conditions might enable one to finally produce a

wheel that perfectly links the hub with the spokes.

According to Bian's story, his son apparently had not been able to find this middleground despite the fact that he had a living teacher who could directly guide (*dao*) him. The wheelwright mentions in this context that he is already seventy years old so that his experience and technique (*shu* 術) will be dying with him like the teachings of the sages. In that sense, he construes a parallel between the transmission of his craft and the sages' transmission of their ways/doctrines (*dao*). In so doing, he raises an implicit question: if it has been impossible for him to teach his son who was probably thought to inherently possess parts of Bian's skills due to their shared lineage the arts of making a wheel while he is still living, how could a dead, written record achieve this feat and teach the arts of the Way? Analogically, he proposes therefore that the writings of the sages are in fact dregs of the ancients (*guren zhi zaopo* 古人之糟魄), i.e. useless leftovers of their interactions with the Way that cannot transmit their embodied knowledge, experiences, and practices.

At the end of this story, we have therefore reached an interesting impasse: despite the fact that the craftsman's life is on the line, the story does not provide us with an explicit solution since it does not present how Duke Huan responded to the wheelwright's exposition. Of course it is possible to interpret the anecdote as a fragment at this point that misses the Duke's final

judgment of the wheelwright's exposition in order to explain this impasse. In my opinion, however, there is another possibility that fits better to the *Zhuangzi's* general gist of creating paradoxes and textual surprises.<sup>302</sup> The duke's stillness might rather suggest that Bian's speech has hit the mark and in fact made the superior speechless. In this reading, the story crosses the reader's expectation that the ruler will act upon the disputation (*bian* 辯) and will have the last word as foreshadowed at the beginning of the anecdote. Hence, it plays with the protagonists' antithetic positions in society and personal cultivation and reverses (*fan* 反) their roles:<sup>303</sup> the uncultivated becomes the truly cultivated; the one who does not read becomes the one who knows; and the inferior servant (*chen* 臣) becomes the superior. Or simply put, the story starts out with the Duke reading the sages' "dead," writings (*shu* 書) and it ends with the Duke listening to the living and speaking wheelwright who embodies his arts.

The significance of this story becomes clear once we consider its direct textual context. The *Zhuangzi* in its extant form nests this narrative about Wheelwright Bian within a larger

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<sup>302</sup> For a discussion of the *Zhuangzi's* paradoxical language, see Steve Coutinho, *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy: Vagueness, Transformation, and Paradox* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004) and Wang Youru, *Linguistic Strategies in the Zhuangzi and Chan Buddhism: The Other Way of Speaking* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>303</sup> The idea of returns or reversals looms large in the *Zhuangzi* and the *Laozi*. *Laozi* 40, for example, depicts the return or reversal as the movement of the Dao (反者道之動) so that the performance of tipping or turning over common narratives and concepts may be understood as an expression of the Way's power. See Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.25.

discourse on the unfitness of language and writing to explicate the Way.<sup>304</sup> The portion that directly precedes the wheelwright's story states that although "writings are that through which the world values the Way/doctrines/speaking" (世之所貴道者書也), such texts do not transcend language (*shu bu guo yu* 書不過語) and are therefore only a human form of expression.<sup>305</sup> According to this passage, "that which [our language-based] meanings follow, [however] cannot be transmitted in words" (意之所隨者，不可以言傳也) so that writings are comparable to the outward expressions of "names, sounds, form, and color, which are actually insufficient to grasp the disposition of another [person]" (形色名聲果不足以得彼之情).<sup>306</sup> At the end, any writings (like any beings) are dependent or based on the "mother of the Myriad

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<sup>304</sup> The *Zhuangzi* is a text that most scholars consider to contain materials of a variety of writers that had later been attributed to a person called Master Zhuang of whom we know very little. Guo Xiang has probably edited the extant version so that my interpretation of the story of Wheelwright Bian and its direct textual context refers to Guo Xiang's edition rather than an intentional production of an author called Zhuang Zhou 莊周. In other words, I think it is likely that Guo Xiang or another earlier editor grouped these two texts together since they share the theme of the unfitness of language and writing to depict the Way. And my interpretation discusses this "logic" behind their organization. For a brief introduction to the *Zhuangzi*'s textual history, see Harold D. Roth, "Chuang tzu 莊子," *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, Michael Loewe ed. (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China; Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California Berkeley, 1993), pp. 56-66.

<sup>305</sup> Later Daoist movements therefore would consider such human language to be a post-celestial (*houtian* 後天) rather than a pre-celestial (*xiantian* 先天) phenomenon, i.e. a product of the period after the world had been conceived and diversified. On the distinction between *xiantian* and *houtian*, see Fabrizio Pregadio, "Xiantian and Houtian," *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Fabrizio Pregadio ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1094-1095.

<sup>306</sup> Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.217

Beings,” to use the *Laozi*’s terminology, yet they are inherently unfit to transmit any experience of her powers or express her workings via the static and denominating media of words and writings.

If we read Wheelwright Bian’s story through this lens, it seems as if the narrative proposes that the craftsman with his embodied knowledge of the process of wheelmaking has achieved more understanding of the Heavenly Mechanism (*tianji* 天機) than the reading ruler.<sup>307</sup> In other words, the story suggests that the creative process of making and the experience of working with wheels enabled Bian to realize the Way and its powers in a more lively and actual way than any sagely writings of the past could ever transmit. Hence, the *Zhuangzi* illustrates the wheel and the hub as two entities that replicate and make experientiable the actions of the ineffable Way.<sup>308</sup> At the end, we are left with the conclusion that the sages’ writings are only dead experiences. If we want to know the inexhaustible and constantly transforming source from which life originates, we may realize it by engaging with and producing wheels, which Bian portrays as a human manifestation of the Way’s powers.

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<sup>307</sup> For discussions of the *Zhuangzi*’s concept of an embodied knowledge of the Way, see, for example, Mark Meulenbeld, “Daoist Modes of Perception: Sire Thunder’s Ritual Conversion into the Human Body-cosmos,” *Daoism: Religion, History, and Society* (forthcoming).

<sup>308</sup> It is important to realize that the *Zhuangzi* also associates wheels with written texts and doctrines, an association that reappears in the *Huainanzi*’s image of the Hundred Schools as a wheel that we will discuss below.

As we have seen in this example, the *Zhuangzi* utilizes the image of the wheel within the context of experiencing the Dao and her powers. Apparently, the text treats the wheel as an object that contains the potential of realizing the workings and the structure of the universe. This association of the wheel with the universe and its hub as the central, moving force that remains unmoved by the wheel's motion does also appear in the *Huainanzi*. First of all, Liu An's text contains a shortened version of Wheelwright Bian's story in the chapter "Daoying" (HNZ 12.18) that explicates the relationship between this narrative and the problem of language by ending with the beginning of *Laozi* 1: "The Way that can be spoken of/walked on is not the constant Way. The name that can be denominated is not the constant name" (道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名).<sup>309</sup> In that sense, the *Huainanzi* reiterates the *Zhuangzi*'s concern about the Way and its ineffability in form of the picture of wheelmaking.

In addition to this passage, the *Huainanzi*'s chapter on warfare contains a passage that similarly refers to the Way with the help of the images of the chariot and its wheels. The "Binglüe" states

(1) What is called the Way embodies the circle and is modeled on the square, shoulders the *yin* and embraces the *yang*, is soft on the left and hard on the right, treads in the obscure and carries illumination. She alters and transforms without constancy; she obtains the source of the One and thereby responds limitlessly. This is called spirit illumination.

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Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 391



(2) The circle is Heaven; the square is Earth. Heaven is circular and without terminus, thus one cannot view its form; the earth is square and without boundaries, thus one cannot see its gateway. Heaven transforms and nurtures, yet is without form. Earth generates and rears, yet is without measure. Vague, hazy, who knows their capacity.

(3) All things have that which defeats them; only the Way is invincible. She is invincible because she has no constant shape or force.<sup>310</sup> Her wheels cycle without exhaustion, like the motion of the sun and moon. Just as summer and autumn alternate, just as the sun and the moon have day and night, she reaches an end and begins again; she illuminates and becomes dark again. None can attain her pattern. (HNZ 15.3)

(1) 所謂道者，體圓而法方，背陰而抱陽，左柔而右剛，履幽而戴明。變化無常，得一之原，以應無方，是謂神明。

(2) 夫圓者，天也；方者，地也。天圓而無端，故不可得而觀；地方而無垠，故莫能窺其門。天化育而無形象，地生長而無計量，渾渾沉沉，孰知其藏。

(3) 凡物有朕，唯道無朕。所以無朕者，以其無常形勢也。輪轉而無窮，象日月之運行，若春秋有代謝，若日月有晝夜，終而復始，明而復晦，莫能得其紀。<sup>311</sup>

In this passage, we find a long description of the Way that resonates strongly with the “Kaogong ji’s” cosmic vision of chariots and their individual parts. The *Huainanzi* develops this depiction of the Dao in three steps. First, it construes the Way as the center of dyads: as the place in which the round and square conflate, *yin* and *yang* merge, or left/soft and right/hard meet. In the second step, it specifies that the Way is the very place in which Heaven and Earth come together. After describing Heaven and Earth in some detail, the passage returns then in the third part to the Way. In this portion, it describes her as an everturning wheel (*lun zhuan er*

<sup>310</sup> I follow here Wang Shumin’s proposed emendation of *zhen* 朕 into *sheng* 勝. See Liu Dianjue 劉殿爵 (D. C. Lau) et al. eds., *Huainanzi zhuzi suoyin* 淮南子逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshu guan 商務印書館, 1995), p. 144.

<sup>311</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 492-493

*wuqiong* 輪轉而無窮) that is in image of the evermoving sun and moon. In other words, the *Huainanzi* clearly refers with the help of the image of the wheel and its center to the Way and its powers as they manifest in the circular motions of the seasons and time. In this vision, the Dao becomes the point of conflation, the pivot that enables the universe's endless turnings and transformations. In other words, we also find in the *Huainanzi* the association of the wheel with the workings of the universe and of the Dao with the hub that we have encountered in various forms, thus far.

Although, the Liu clan's scripture picks up the larger discourse of the Way as a central, rotating, and pivot-like hub as the last example has shown, Liu An and his workshop most explicitly develop this relationship between the wheel's center and the Way in the image of the axle (*chezhu* 車軸). In the chapter "Integrating Customs," the *Huainanzi*, for example, discusses the problem of different perspectives on what is right or wrong, a position closely related to its discussion of the Hundred Schools. It states,

The one who connects with the Way is therefore like a chariot's axle. (S)he does not move in her-/himself. But being together with the hub of the wheel, (s)he reaches a thousand *li* and rotates [in/with] the inexhaustible source. One who does not connect with the Dao is as if lost and confused. If you tell one to use east, west, north, and south, the place where (s)he resides will be clear. One crooked turn, however, (s)he strays and suddenly does not reach it and is lost and confused again. Thus, to the end (s)he will serve others like a weather vane in the wind. (S)he is not stable for an instant. Thus the sage embodies the Way and returns to the disposition. If by not transforming (s)he awaits transformation, then (s)he comes close to withdrawal. (HNZ 11.15)

故通於道者如車軸，不運於己，而與轂致千里，轉無窮之原也。不通於道者若迷惑，告以東西南北，所居聆聆，一曲而辟，然忽不得，復迷惑也。故終身隸於人，辟若覩之見風也，無須與之間定矣。故聖人體道反性，不化以待化，則幾於免矣。<sup>312</sup>

The image of the one who connects with the Way like an axle evokes a vivid scenario. It seems as if the *Huainanzi* considers the Dao to be the hub in which the sagely ruler may latch and enter (*ru* 入).<sup>313</sup> The “one who connects with the Way” (*tong yu dao zhe* 通於道者) nests in the emptiness of the hub and therewith is able to partake in its centrality beyond the directions of east, west, north, and south. By returning into the Way, (s)he “does not move in itself, yet, reaches a thousand *li* by being together with the hub” (不運於己，而與轂致千里).<sup>314</sup>

Accordingly, I summarize that the *Huainanzi*, as well as the *Zhuangzi* and *Laozi*, apparently present the wheel as an image for the cosmos in which the rotating, yet motionless hub refers to

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<sup>312</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 367-368

<sup>313</sup> The image of the sage entering the Way appears in various forms throughout the *Huainanzi*. The “Jingshen” chapter (*HNZ* 7.7), for example, mentions, “the disposition of the ones who are called True Men merges with the Way. [...] They emerge from and enter into that which has no space” (所謂真人者也，性合于道也[...]出入無間; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 227-229). The “Yuandao” chapter (*HNZ* 1.8) states, “those who have reached the Way [...] enter the Heavenly Gate” (故達於道者[...]入于天門; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 20). In other words, the ability to enter the realm of the Way is a defining aspect of those that have reached the Way (*dedaozhe* 得道者).

<sup>314</sup> A passage in the “Yuandao” chapter (*HNZ* 1.2) illustrates Fuxi and Nüwa as rulers who have “connected with the Way” (*tong yu dao* 通於道) by “grasping her handles” (*de dao zhi bing* 得道之柄) and therefore “cycle round and round [with the Way] without stopping” (*lunzhuan er wufei* 輪轉而無廢; see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 2). This idea of the Way as a cycling or turning entity appears also explicitly in the continuation of the passage on Fuxi and Nüwa. *HNZ* 1.3 states, “The most exalted Way [...] cycles endlessly, yet cannot be fathomed” (太上之道[...]旋縣而不可究; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 3-4).

the Way, the very force that keeps the universe turning.

### The Sagely Ruler as a Hub in the *Huainanzi*

The *Huainanzi*, however, does not only utilize the image of the chariot wheel to describe the cosmos and its relationship to the Myriad Beings. As the image of the axle in the previous example has shown, the sage becomes one with the hub by connecting with and embodying the Way. A similar image of the sagely ruler as an axle also appears in the *Huainanzi*'s chapter on the "Exalted Lineage" in order to depict the proper actions of those in high position. In this case, the passage compares the running of the empire with the playing of the *se* and the revolving of an axle:

The *se* does not make a sound, but each of its twenty-five strings responds to its own [respective] tone. The axle of a cart does not revolve, but each of its thirty spokes contributes its respective strength to the turning [of the wheel]. Only when [all] strings have their [appropriate] tension and size is it possible to create a tune. Only through [appropriately] hard or easy pulling and [appropriate] moving and stopping is it possible for a cart to travel far. What causes things to sound has no sound. What enables things to journey a thousand *li* does not move. Thus, when high and low follow different ways, there is order. When they follow the same way then there is disorder. When those in high position take the Great Way, things go smoothly; when matters are great, but the way is small, things go badly. (*HNZ* 20.36)

琴不鳴，而二十五絃各以其聲應；軸不運，而三十軸各以其力旋。絃有緩急小大，然後成曲；車有勞逸動靜，而後能致遠。使有聲者，乃無聲者也；能致千里者，乃不動者也。故上下異道則治，同道則亂。位高而道大者從，事大而道小者凶。<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>315</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 694-695

In the first part, the passage parallels the *se* and its twenty-five strings with the axle and its thirty spokes. As we can see here, the *Huainanzi* illustrates the axle as the hub that unites the spokes. In both cases, the *se* and the axle are depicted as non-active (*bu* 不) parts of the production of sounds and movement. Yet the passage claims that through (*yi* 以) these non-active parts the instrument and the wheel *de facto* create their sounds (*sheng* 聲) and torque (*li* 力). Accordingly, it states, “What causes things to sound has no sound. What enables things to journey a thousand *li* does not move” (使有聲者，乃無聲者也；能致千里者，乃不動者也), expressions that resonate strongly with depictions of the Way.<sup>316</sup>

In the second part, the passage elaborates on the context for which it presented this paralleling of the *se* and the wheel. It argues that such a division of labor between a unifying and non-active center and a diverse and active periphery is a prerequisite for order. It says that this universal model pertains not only to the case of instruments and wheels but also to the social realm in which those above and those below should follow different paths in order to

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<sup>316</sup> The chapter “Qisu” (HNZ 11.14) explicitly states, “what does not respond to any of the Five Tones, but to which all twenty-five strings respond, is the Way which cannot be transmitted.” (其於五音無所比，而二十五絃皆應，此不傳之道也; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 365) In other words, the *Huainanzi* uses the example of music and sounds to explicate the resonating power of the Way. Accordingly, the chapter “Lanming” (HNZ 6.4) also contains a passage that utilizes the image of music to illustrate the universal resonance of those who “have not begun to emerge from the Ancestor” (*wei shi chu qi zong* 未始出其宗) and therefore are “connected with Supreme Harmony” (*tong yu taihe* 通於太和) [i.e. the Way]. See Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 201.

guarantee order: “when high and low follow different ways, there is order. When they follow the same way then there is disorder” (故上下異道則治，同道則亂). In other words, this vision associates two diametral, governmental roles to the one above (i.e. the sagely ruler) and the ones below (i.e. the officials and subjects) and sees it expressed in the image of the wheel and the *se*.<sup>317</sup>

The image of the wheel as a means to depict the different roles of the non-active and traceless emperor (hub or axle) and the ever-moving and commands exerting officials (spokes) also appears in a passage from the *Huainanzi*'s chapter on the “Arts of Rulership.” The “Summary of the Essentials” claims about chapter 9 that it addresses

the affairs of the ruler of mankind. It provides the means by which to adapt tasks [to individuals] and scrutinize responsibilities so as to ensure that each of the numerous officials exerts his abilities exhaustively. It illuminates how to wield authority and manage the handles of governance and thereby regulate the multitudes below; how to match official titles with actual performance and investigate them [with the techniques] of the Threes and Fives. It is what enables the ruler of men to grasp techniques and sustain essentials and not act recklessly based on happiness or anger. Its techniques straighten the bent and correct the crooked, set aside self-interest and establish the public good. They enable the Hundred Officials to line up, connect, and be the spokes around [the axle]. Each concentrates on their respective task, while the people succeed in their accomplishments. Such is the brilliance of the “Arts of Rulership.” (HNZ 21.2)

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The *Huainanzi*, for example, utilizes in its chapter on the “Arts of Rulership” (HNZ 9.13) the images of overgrown courtyards and tilled fields to depict the difference between the active and cultivated official and the non-active and decultivated emperor. For the original passage, see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 282. For my discussion of this passage, see Tobias Benedikt Zürn, “Agricultural Imagery, Governance, and (De-)Cultivation in the *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*,” forthcoming.

君人之事也。所以因作任督責，使羣臣各盡其能也。明攝權操柄，以制羣下，提名責實，考之參伍，所以使人主秉數持要，不妄喜怒也。其數直施而正邪，外私而立公，使百官條通而輻輳，各務其業，人致其功。此主術之明也。<sup>318</sup>

Right from the beginning, the “Summary of the Essentials” makes it clear that chapter 9 addresses the relationship between the ruler and his officials and how (s)he may utilize and control the subordinates in such a way that the empire runs smoothly. At the end of a long list of techniques of governance (*zhushu* 主術) such as the Threes and Fives (*san wu* 參伍) or the Two Handles (*er bing* 二柄) that the chapter apparently contains, the text utilizes again the image of the wheel to depict the relationship between the ruler and the subordinates.<sup>319</sup> It compares the Hundred Officials with the spokes of the wheel in order to visualize the “brilliance of the arts of rulership” (*zhushu zhi ming* 主術之明). According to the “Yaolüe,” these techniques “enable the Hundred Officials to line up, connect, and be the spokes around [the axle] so that each concentrates on their respective task” (使百官條通而輻輳，各務其業). In

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<sup>318</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 703

<sup>319</sup> The *Han Feizi* 韓非子 develops the concept of the Two Handles (*er bing* 二柄), i.e. punishment (*xing* 刑) and rewards (*de* 德), as the basis for proper rulership. By maintaining control over these two governing tools the ruler was thought to yield control over his inherently unruly subjects. The *Huainanzi*'s reading of this technique starkly differs from the *Han Feizi* by putting the power of the Two Handles into the hands of the officials. For the *Han Feizi*'s chapter on the Two Handles, see Wang Xianshen ed., *Han Feizi jijie*, 5.26-29. For a passage in the *Huainanzi* that explicitly claims that the officials should administer punishments and rewards, see HNZ 9.13 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 282. The *Huainanzi* associates the techniques of the Threes and Fives with the policies of the Five Thearchs (*wu di* 五帝) and Three Kings (*san wang* 三王) that were thought to connect the three realms and the Five Relationships with them. For my discussion of a passage in the *Huainanzi* that explicates these techniques, see pages 221-224.

other words, the *Huainanzi* alludes in this passage again to the role of the ruler as the center of the wheel that connects all the spokes of officials while providing them with a distinct deed and service.

As it turns out, this picture of the empire as a wheel that the “Yaolüe” uses to depict the *Huainanzi*’s “Arts of Rulership” does indeed appear in several passages of chapter nine. In the following example, we find a complete association of the emperor’s governmental wheel with the universe as we have seen it in the “Kaogong ji’s” depiction of the chariot:

(1) The Way of the ruler is round, revolving and turning endlessly, transforming and sustaining, like a spirit, vacant, gliding without apparent purpose, always at the rear and never taking the lead. The way of the official is square, discussing practicalities and being in the right place.<sup>320</sup> In accomplishing tasks, he is the first to take the lead. Guarding his store of knowledge and distributing its brightness, he thereby establishes his success.

(2) Therefore, when the ruler and [his] officials follow different ways, there is order. [When they follow] identical ways, there is disorder. When each obtains what is appropriate to him and situates himself in his proper place, above and below can work with each other.

(3) In listening to affairs the ruler is empty of mind and soft of will; clear, bright, and unclouded. Thus the many officials are assembled like the spokes of a wheel and advance in unison. Whether foolish or wise, worthy or unsatisfactory, none fails to use his abilities to the fullest extent. In this way, the ruler obtains the means to control his ministers, and they obtain the means to serve the ruler, so the way of ruling the state is clear. (*HNZ* 9.15 and 9.16)

(1) 主道員者，運轉而無端，化育如神，虛無因循，常後而不先也；臣道方者，論是而處當，為事先倡，守職分明，以立成功也。

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In this instance, I follow Wang Niansun's 王念孫 (1744-1832) suggestion that the text originally read 臣道方者 and not 臣道員者連轉而無方 as the extant version claims. The omission of the middle part, a verbatim repetition of the description of the ruler, leads to a meaningful, contrastive parallel between the ruler and her/his officials, an idea that permeates the entire chapter on the arts of rulership.



(2) 是故君臣異道則治，同道則亂。各得其宜，處其當，則上下有以相使也。

(3) 夫人主之聽治也，虛心而弱志，清明而不闇。是故羣臣輻湊竝進，無愚智賢不肖，莫不盡其能者，則君得所以制臣，臣得所以事君，治國之道明矣。<sup>321</sup>

This passage follows again a tripartite logic. In part (1), it creates a contrast between the round and celestial ruler and the square and earthly official evoking associations to the text's own depiction of the imperial chariot's synecdochal images of round wheels and square chassis (*lun yuan yu fang* 輪圓輿方).<sup>322</sup> It depicts the official (*chen* 臣) as the one who accomplishes tasks (*weishi* 為事) and generates success (*yi li cheng gong* 以立成功) by using discourses (*lun* 論), maintaining knowledge (*shou zhi* 守職), distributing her/his brightness (*fen ming* 分明), and taking the lead (*xianchang* 先倡). On the contrary, the passage construes the sagely ruler as a heavenly embodiment of the Way. Several aspects of the ruler's way (*zhudao* 主道) clearly resonate with ideas the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and other early Chinese texts frequently attribute to the Dao: (S)he is empty (*xu* 虛), without being (*wu* 無), spirit-like (*rushen* 如神), and revolves (*yunzhuan* 運轉) without beginning (*wuduan* 無端). In that sense, it seems as if the *Huainanzi* closely associates the ruler with the powers of transformation, birth (*huayu* 化育) and responsivity (*yinxun* 因循 and *changhou er bu xian* 常後而不先).

Because of this structural difference between the two, the passage claims in section (2)

<sup>321</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 283-284

<sup>322</sup> For my discussion of the parallel between the *Huainanzi*'s depiction of Heaven and Earth and the chariot, see pages 161-167.

that both have to fulfill different roles. The *Huainanzi* uses here an expression almost verbatim to the one from the “*Yaolüe*” we encountered above that likewise expresses a kind of job sharing situation. Only if those above and below work for each other and fulfil their distinct roles, order will prevail in the empire.

In order to visualize this difference regarding the distinct paths (*yidao* 異道) of officials and the sagely ruler, the passage from the *Huainanzi* employs again the image of the wheel by saying that “the many officials are assembled like the spokes of a wheel” (*qunchen fucou* 群臣輻湊). Only if each part of the empire receives its fitting place and performs according to it, there will be order. Only if the spokes perform as spokes and the hub acts like a hub, the governance will run smoothly. “Thus, the ruler and [his] officials [need to] follow different ways [so] there is order. [When they follow] identical ways, there is disorder” (是故君臣異道則治，同道則亂).

As we have seen, this image of sagely rulership as a well-functioning wheel appears multiple times in the “*Arts of Rulership*” following a rather rigid “argumentative” pattern. They all illustrate how the hub/emperor/Dao is capable of moving/acting (*xing* 行) without ever having to leave the pivot/capital—the central hub of the cosmos and the empire,

respectively.<sup>323</sup> The sagely ruler may achieve such order and power by controlling and commanding the spokes/officials/*wanwu*. The image entails that the hub needs to provide each spoke with its own distinct place (*wei* 位) and role (*fen* 分) in order to keep the entire wheel rolling. Only if the hub is establishing or patterning the spokes in a well-ordered way, the wheel understood to be an image of the turnings of the cosmos and the empire will run smoothly.

This twofold meaning of the wheel as the running of the empire and the universe also stars in an anecdote on the two August Lords of high antiquity who lived in an age when the Way was still active in their governance.<sup>324</sup> In this depiction of the *Huainanzi*'s vision of sagely rulership, the images of the wheel, the potter's wheel, circulation, non-action, and many other concepts related to the Way turn up again to depict the primordial paradise:

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<sup>323</sup> In regards of the *Huainanzi*'s usage of the term trace (*ji* 跡) as the remnants of words (*yan* 言) and deeds (*shi* 事), this image nicely reflects the twofold understanding of governance in the *Huainanzi*. While the hub never comes close to and flies above the ground remaining distant to the dust and dirt of a path, the spokes almost literally scratch the mud. In that sense, while the hub that doesn't move in distance physically never inscribes in the path and therefore is without a trace (*wuji* 無跡) like the Dao, the spokes that almost touch the ground press at various different points of the cart's movement in the soil leaving a track behind. In that sense, the image of the hub connects the idea of leaving a trace as the outcome of the spokes' actions with the deeds (*shi*) of the subjects to visualize the difference between the non-moving, non-interfering, non-acting emperor and the actively serving officials. For a discussion of the semantic field of traces in the *Huainanzi*, see Tobias Benedikt Zürn, "Traces of the Ancients in the *Huainanzi*," forthcoming.

<sup>324</sup> Although Gao You thinks that the two August Lords are Fuxi and Shennong, I follow here Harold D. Roth et al. who suggest that they are Fuxi and Nüwa. In my opinion, the iconic depiction of Fuxi and Nüwa holding the compass and the square while swirling their tails may substantiate the interpretation of Roth et al. In my reading, this image may in fact represent the August Lords' holding of the empty Way's handles.

(1) The two August Lords of high antiquity [Fuxi and Nüwa] grasped the handles of the Way and so were established in the center. Their spirits mysteriously roamed together with all transformations and thereby pacified the Four Directions. Hence they could revolve like Heaven and stand still like Earth, cycle round and round without stopping, flowing unceasingly like water, they ended and began together with all things. Like the potter's wheel turning, like the wheel hub spinning, they circled round and round. Both carved and polished, they returned to the Unhewn. They acted non-actively and were united with the Way. They spoke non-actively and were suffused by its potency. They were peaceful and without cares and attained harmony. Although there were a myriad of different things in the world, they accorded with their various natures. Their spirits could concentrate [on something as small as] the tip of an autumn hair and something as vast as the totality of space and time.

(2) Their potency accorded with Heaven and the Earth and harmonized *yin* and *yang*; delimited the Four Seasons and attuned the Five Phases. [Because] it affectionately supported and nurtured them, the Myriad Beings nourished their vitality. It could seep into grasses and trees and soak into metal and rock. Among the multitude of kinds of wild beasts the hairs of their coats were sleek and moist. Their feathers and wings fluttered; their horns and antlers grew. The embryos of beasts were stillborn. The eggs of birds were not infertile. Fathers were spared the grief of mourning their sons. Elder brothers were spared the sadness of mourning their younger brothers. Children did not become orphans. Wives did not become widows. Double rainbows did not appear. Baleful stars did not occur. This is all the result of the Potency with which they were imbued. (HNZ 1.2)

(1) 泰古二皇，得道之柄，立於中央。神與化遊，以撫四方。是故能天運地滯，轉輪而無廢，水流而不止，與萬物終始。風興雲蒸，事無不應；雷聲雨降，竝應無窮。鬼出電入，龍興鸞集，鈞旋轂轉，周而復匝，已彫已琢，還反於朴，無為為之而合于道，無為言之而通乎德，恬愉無矜而得於和，有萬不同而便於性，神託於秋豪之末，而大宇宙之總。

(2) 其德優天地而和陰陽，節四時而調五行。呬諭覆育，萬物羣生，潤於草木，浸於金石，禽獸碩大，豪毛潤澤，羽翼奮也，角觫生也。獸胎不曠，鳥卵不鰈，父無喪子之憂，兄無哭弟之哀，童子不孤，婦人不孀，虹蜺不出，賊星不行，含德之所致也。<sup>325</sup>

The entire first half of this depiction describes the actions of the two August Lords Fuxi and Nüwa. In fact, the passage explicitly depicts them in terms of the hub. It literally claims that they returned to the unhewn block (*huanfan yu pu* 還反於朴) by circling around (*zhuanlun* 轉

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Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 2-3

輪 and *zhou er fuza* 周而復匝) like the hub of the chariot and potter's wheel (*jun xuan gu zhuān* 鈞旋轂轉). This circling apparently is possible since “they were established in the center so that their spirit may roam” (立於中央。神與化遊). According to this illustration they acted without action and speech and therewith were capable of uniting with the Way (*he yu dao* 合于道) and connecting with her powers (*tong hu de* 通乎德). In so doing, they were regulating the empire and all the Myriad Beings in the same responsive way through which the Dao keeps the universe turning on which the anecdote then elaborates. In that sense, they seem to depict the two sages as people that have linked and latched in the empty Way and her powers.

While the story depicts the ways through which and the fact that the two August Lord's became infused with the powers of the Dao in the first part, the second part illustrates the positive outcome of such sagely rulership for all under Heaven. Since the two August Lords' powers “accorded with Heaven and Earth and harmonized *yin* and *yang*; delimited the Four Seasons and attuned the Five Phases” (其德優天地而和陰陽，節四時而調五行), the entire universe responded with auspicious signs such as births and timely deaths and the lack of bad portents such as double rainbows (*hongni* 虹蜺) and baleful stars (*zeixing* 賊星). In that sense, the *Huainanzi* depicts the result of such an implementation of the Way in the two August Lords' actions and bodies as the very tool with which they realized a well-organized paradise in all

under Heaven.

At the end, we may summarize that the wheel and its hub or axle were not only images that the *Huainanzi* frequently employs to depict the Way and the universe at large. It also utilizes them in order to depict sagely governance and particularly the emperor's attuning, aligning, and connecting with the Dao. *HNZ* 21.2 stated that the ruler needs to function as the hub in the center of the empire in order to "enable the Hundred Officials to line up, connect, and be [its] spokes [while] each [official] concentrates on their respective tasks" (使百官條通而輻輳，各務其業). By embodying the Way (*tidao* 體道) and establishing themselves in the center (*li yu zhongyang* 立於中央) of all under Heaven as *HNZ* 11.15 and *HNZ* 1.2 claim, the ruler was apparently thought to achieve a connection and unity with the Way (*tong yu dao* 通於道 or *he yu dao* 合于道) so that (s)he may turn with her and thereby exert the same powers (*de* 德) that govern the universe. Hence, it seems as if Liu An and his workshop refer to the shared image of the wheel's hub as a means to construe the sagely ruler and her/his actions in image of the Dao.

### **The *Huainanzi* as a Hub of the Hundred Schools?**

As we have seen in the last subsection, the *Huainanzi* widely uses the images of the hub and

the chariot wheel in its discussions of cosmic and imperial order. At the same time, however, the *Zhuangzi*'s story of Wheelwright Bian and the *Huainanzi* have already foreshadowed that the image of the wheel may also refer to writings and discourses, an idea on which I will focus in the following section. For example, the long excerpt from Liu An's text that we discussed in chapter 2.1 explicitly connected the image of the chariot wheel with discourses about the value and usefulness of the Hundred Schools' doctrinal paths (*dao*). In my discussion of this portion, I argued that Liu An and his workshop used the wheel in this instance in order to depict the cosmic Dao and her relationship to the sages' partial perspectives.

In the following pages, however, I propose that we may also read this illustration of the relationship between the intellectual world of the late Warring States period and the ultimate Way as a self-depiction of the Liu clan's scripture. In such a view, the *Huainanzi* would function like the hub of the Hundred Schools that unites their partial views and doctrines into a miscellaneous whole—a vision quite in line with Ban Gu's depiction of the *zajia* as those texts that “bring together [ideas/texts] of the Ru[ist] and Mo[hist] and harmonize those of the Names (*ming*) and Laws (*fa*)” (兼儒墨，合名法). Hence, I suggest that the *Huainanzi* might refer in its utilization of the image of the hub not only to the Way and the sage but also to the Liu clan's scripture.

Let's revisit the passage from the "Chuzhen" chapter. As I argued above, the *Huainanzi* presents in this portion of chapter 2 various examples that illustrate or manifest the relationship between the Way and the Myriad Beings. The passage starts out with a reference to the Myriad Beings' kin relationships (*jia* 家) and then moves slowly via a discourse on the unity of the body (*yishen* 一身) to the relations between the Hundred Schools:

(3) The Hundred Schools have different sayings/theories, and each has that where it's coming from. For example, Mo [Di], Yang [Zhu], Shen [Buhai], and [Lord] Shang's ways of governing are like individual [umbrella] ribs of a canopy and individual spokes of a chariot wheel. If you have them, you may use all the numbers; if you don't have [all of] them, it does not have harmful impact on their utility. [However, when] one [group] thinks that they alone have a monopoly [on true governing], then they do not connect in/with the disposition (*qing*) of Heaven and Earth. (HNZ 2.7)

(3) 百家異說，各有所出。若夫墨楊申商之於治道，猶蓋之無一椽，而輪之無一輻。有之可以備數，無之未有害於用也；己自以為獨擅之，不通之于天地之情也。<sup>326</sup>

In my reading, the *Huainanzi* illustrates the intellectual world of the Warring States period with the help of the images of a wheel and canopy. In so doing, it suggests that the myriad doctrines (*dao*) of the Hundred Schools are all connected to and originate from one hub or top notch, which apparently refers to the unifying "Truth" of the ultimate Dao.

This mantra of the Way as the one who unifies the diversity of the Hundred Schools appears in several passages throughout the *Huainanzi*. In the chapter "Integrating Customs" ("Qisu" 齊俗), for example, Liu An's text presents a depiction of the Way as the uncarved block

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<sup>326</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 55-56



whose ultimate greatness it is to have a form-less shape (樸至大者無形狀) and whose ultimate marvel it is to be a degree-less measure (道至妙者無度量). After this brief introduction of the Way, it presents the examples of several sages that had reached the Way (*dedao* 得道). In this context, the *Huainanzi* makes an important statement:

Their acts were different, yet that which guided them (*dao*) was one/unity. Now, those who bear the Way in order to connect the [Myriad] Beings are without mutual rejections. [...] If you chop down a cedar or camphor [tree] and carve and split it, some of it will become coffins or linings, [and] some [of it] will become pillars and beams. Cutting with or against the grain, its uses are myriad, but it all is the material from a single tree. Thus, the designations and prescriptions of the words of the Hundred Schools are mutually opposed, but their matching doctrines are a single body. (*HNZ* 11.13)

所為者各異，而所道者一也。夫稟道以通物者，無以相非也。[...]伐榿柟豫樟而剖梨之，或為棺槨，或為柱梁，披斷撥櫨，所用萬方，然一木之樸也。故百家之言，指奏相反，其合道一體也。<sup>327</sup>

The passage argues that all those sages who were bearing the Dao (in their bosoms?) were impartial (*xiangfei* 相非) despite the fact that they all did different acts. The passage explains this disparity by claiming that all of their distinct activities were in fact guided (*dao* 道) by the ineffable power of the Way whose unity inevitably expresses itself in myriad forms in the universe. In that sense, it refers again to the theme of the cosmos' diversity out of a unitary origin that we have encountered now in many instances.

In order to illustrate this idea of a unitary guiding force that led these sages' actions, the *Huainanzi* introduces again the image of the tree and the theme of the Hundred Schools. Like a

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<sup>327</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 362-363

tree that may be used in a variety of different ways, the sages developed the various techniques and words (*yan* 言), which mutually oppose each other, out of the ultimate Way whose “words may not be put in words” (*yan fu neng yan* 言弗能言).<sup>328</sup> In that sense, the passage does not depict the Hundred Schools’ doctrines and practices as truly oppositional viewpoints but as matching ideas and actions that taken together build a single body (*qi he dao yiti* 其合道一體). In other words, this passage seems to refer to the image of the wheel again in which the hub unifies the various doctrinal spokes and provides each of them with a matching place in the wheel. Accordingly, we may conclude that this passage from the *Huainanzi*’s “Qisu” chapter also depicts the sage as someone who connects the diversified phenomenal world with his actions and therefore bears the Way within. Hence, this idea of the sage as the one who bears the ultimate Way within themselves and therewith becomes the point of convergence for the Hundred Officials that we have encountered in the last subsection apparently also applies for the Hundred Schools.

The *Huainanzi* repeatedly uses this vision of a unitary source of the Hundred Schools in various forms. Seemingly referring to *Laozi* 32, the “Fanlun” chapter (*HNZ* 13.3) provides a related image that succinctly summarizes the relationship between the sagely ruler and the

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<sup>328</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 427

Hundred Schools.<sup>329</sup> It states, “The Hundred Rivers [have] different sources, but all return to the ocean. The Hundred Schools [have] different businesses, but all are serviceable in governance” (百川異源，而皆歸於海；百家殊業，而皆務於治).<sup>330</sup> In this passage, the matching of the paths into one body takes on a very concrete form.<sup>331</sup> Liu An and his workshop construe the sage as the one who impartially organizes and appoints in her/his governance the services that the Hundred Schools offer. In that sense, the emperor becomes the one who

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<sup>329</sup> Interestingly, the *Huainanzi* reverses the logic of *Laozi* 32, which states, “The Way is in all under Heaven like the streams in ravines become part of the rivers and sea” (譬道之在天下，猶川谷之與江海; Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.19). The *Laozi* emphasizes the Way as the origin of the universe in its image while the *Huainanzi* focuses on the return (*gui* 歸) of all beings into the Way.

<sup>330</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 427

The continuation of this passage on the Hundred Rivers and Schools presents exactly such a vision. In fact, it picks up the discourse on the words of the sages from the *Zhuangzi*'s Wheelwright Bian story, which we have encountered above. It construes the *Odes* and other classics as creations of a declining age (*shuaishi zhi zao* 衰世之造) that inevitably only contain the primordial Way in a maimed or partial form. What follows is an argument for the indeficiency of these “sagely” writings that follows the same reasoning Bian utilized to convince Duke Huan:

“Now speaking of her [i.e. the Way's] maimed/partial [expression] is not like speaking of her intact totality. [Therefore,] reciting the *Odes* and *Documents* of the former kings is not like hearing and attaining their [i.e. the former kings'] words. Hearing and attaining their words is not like attaining that about which they were speaking. Attaining that about which [the former kings] were speaking, [her] “words” cannot be put/expressed in words.” Therefore, “The Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way (*Laozi* 1).” (*HNZ* 13.4)

夫道其缺也，不若道其全也。誦先王之詩書不若聞得其言，聞得其言，不若得其所言，得其所言者，言弗能言也。故道可道者，非常道也。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 427)

<sup>331</sup> In fact, the “Mountain of Persuasions” (“Shuishan” 說山) chapter (*HNZ* 16.83 and 16.84) contains a similar passage that parallels the rivers' flowing into the Eastern Sea (Donghai 東海) with the image of the wheel. See Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 539.

embodies the Way by installing in the empire her powers that express themselves in form of the Hundred Schools' myriad methods and discourses. In other words, the sagely ruler becomes the ocean in which all rivers flow, the inactive governance behind all policies, and the impartial, hub-like unifier of the miscellaneous doctrines (*dao*) and techniques (*shu*).<sup>332</sup>

In my opinion, such a vision of the sage as the person that unites and employs the services of the Hundred Schools strongly resonates with the *Huainanzi*'s miscellaneous style. As we have seen before, Ban Gu mentioned in the "Yiwenzhi" that the texts from the Miscellaneous School "bring together [ideas/texts] of the Ru[ist] and Mo[hist] and harmonize those of the Names (*ming*) and Laws (*fa*)" (兼儒墨，合名法).<sup>333</sup> In fact, Ban Gu utilizes a vocabulary that is related to the sages' actions. Particularly the act of matching or uniting (*he* 合) appears throughout the *Huainanzi* as an illustration of sagely acts.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi argues that early Chinese texts perceived techniques (*shu*) in terms of spokes: "The *Shuo-wen* 說文 dictionary (ca. 100 AD) identifies *shu* as an urban thoroughfare, with the phonetic component *shu* allied with the semantic component *hsing* 行, to ambulate. It is closely related to, and sometimes a loan word for, the graph *shu* 述, to narrate. They form a pair of meanings – a road and to speak – words whose meanings are very different from the two meanings of *tao* as seen in the first line of the received *Lao-tzu*. Indeed, *shu* is often defined in terms of *tao* and used in similar contexts. The tenth-century philologist Hsü K'ai 徐鍇 (920-974) neatly summarizes the relationship between the two with the statement that *shu* is "a branch of the great *tao* 大道之派," which he likens to the spokes on a wheel or in a carriage cover." (Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Chia I's 'Techniques of the Tao'," p. 50)

<sup>333</sup> For my discussion of this passage, see pages 13-14.

<sup>334</sup> The "Binglüe" chapter (*HNZ* 15.4), for example, states, "In the past, those who have reached

Moreover, Gao You emphasized that the *Huainanzi* had been produced by “many of the masters in all under Heaven that [practiced] techniques and methods [...] [and] various erudite followers from the Great Mountain and Small Mountain” (天下方術之士[...]及諸儒大山小山之徒[...]著此書) so that he apparently understood the creation of the text as the court of Huainan’s effort to include the diversity of the empire and of the Hundred Schools in the production of the Liu clan’s scripture. In addition, Gao You suggested that the *Huainanzi* includes all “beings and deeds’ resonating categories [so that] there is none that is not written [into it]” (物事之類。無所不載) depicting it as a text that replicates the universe’s diversity and riches in a unified, textual form.<sup>335</sup>

This view of the *Huainanzi* as a textual object that contains and unites the world’s varieties and discourses, however, does not only appear in Han receptions. Similar visions of the *Huainanzi* as a syncretic scripture that incorporates miscellaneous texts and ideas dominate the discourse on Liu An’s text in the twentieth century. Roger Ames claimed regarding the *Huainanzi*, “It is a syncretic text which borrows widely and heavily from pre-Ch’in sources and

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the Way in stillness modeled [themselves] on Heaven and Earth, in motion followed the sun and moon, in delight and anger matched the four seasons.” (古得道者，靜而法天地，動而順日月，喜怒而合四時; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 493-494)

<sup>335</sup>

For my discussion of this passage, see pages 101-102.

adapts earlier contributions to its own ends.”<sup>336</sup> As a result, he attempted to reconstruct the ways in which the *Huainanzi* combines and reinterprets Daoist, Confucian, and Legalist concepts such as non-action (*wuwei* 無為), benefitting the people (*limin* 利民), or law (*fa* 法). As mentioned before, Charles Le Blanc has also shown that “a close study of *Huai-nan Tzu* reveals massive borrowing from earlier sources. Approximately one-third of the text derives directly from more than twenty pre-Han works belonging to a wide variety of philosophical schools and literary genre.”<sup>337</sup> In fact, the *Huainanzi*’s form-less shape (*wuxing zhuang* 無形狀), to use an expression in the “Qisu” chapter to depict the uncarved block, has apparently fired the longlasting discussion over the text’s school affiliation and originality.<sup>338</sup> In that sense, people have been very aware that the *Huainanzi* apparently combines and unites the myriad discourses of the Hundred Schools. Charles Le Blanc’s list of sources of the *Huainanzi* in figure 10 further substantiates that the *Huainanzi* is indeed a miscellaneous text. Accordingly, it seems to me as if Liu An and his workshop construed the scripture as a textual wheel that matches or connects the myriad paths of the pre-Qin period in its chapters. Thus, like the Way and the sage, the *Huainanzi* seems to function as a textual hub that unites the *bai jia*’s doctrinal spokes.

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<sup>336</sup> Roger T. Ames, *The Art of Rulership*, p. xiv

<sup>337</sup> Charles Le Blanc, *Huai Nan Tzu*, p. 79

<sup>338</sup> For a brief discussion of the discourse on the *Huainanzi*’s school affiliation, see Harold D. Roth et. al. trans., *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early China*, pp. 27-32.

SOURCES OF HUAI-NAN TZU																							
Works Quoted	Chapters of <i>Huai-nan Tzu</i>																					Total	
	Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20		21
<b>Classics</b>																							
<i>Yi ching</i> 易經											6	1		1	1				1		1		11
<i>Shih ching</i> 詩經		1							1	1	3			1	1				1		1		10
<i>Chou shu</i> 周書						1								1									2
<b>Confucianists</b>																							
<i>Lun yü</i> 論語											1												1
<i>Tzu-ssu</i> 子思											11												11
<i>Meng Tzu</i> 孟子						1			2	2							1	1		1	3		11
<i>Hsün Tzu</i> 荀子	1					3		4	3	3	1	1	9	3	2				4	1			35
<i>Kung-sun Ni</i> 公孫尼						1	1												1				3
<i>Yen Tzu ch'un-ch'iu</i> 晏子春秋	1							1	1	1	1	1	2	1									9
<i>Chia Yi</i> 費誼						1																	1
<b>Taolists</b>																							
<i>Huang Ti ssu-ching</i> 黃帝四經	10			1				2	3	2	1				3	1		2			1		26
<i>T'ai Kung</i> 太公																			1				1
<i>Lao Tzu</i> 老子	15	1	1			1	4	1	5	1	5	57	1	1			2	2	2				99
<i>Chuang Tzu</i> 莊子	28	55	1			22	43	9	7	6	17	14	7	13	3	11	15	7	5	6			269
<i>Kuan Tzu</i> 管子	5	1			5	2	3		2	1	1	1			4				1		2		28
<i>Sun Tzu</i> 孫子	1														13						1	1	16
<b>Mohists</b>																							
<i>Mo Tzu</i> 墨子	1					1					1	1								2	1		7
<i>Hu Fei Tzu</i> 胡非子																			1		1		2
<i>Sui Ch'ao Tzu</i> 隨巢子								2															2
<b>Legalists</b>																							
<i>Shen Pu-hai</i> 申不害										1	1					1							3
<i>Shen Tao</i> 慎到	1									2		1										1	5
<i>Teng Hsi Tzu</i> 鄧析子										1													1
<i>Han Fei Tzu</i> 韓非子	2					2	4		6	4	4	8	2	1	1	11	1	15	4	5	2		72
<b>Syncretists</b>																							
<i>Tsou Yen</i> 鄒衍					1																		1
<i>Shih Tzu</i> 尸子		1	2		1	1	3	2		2		3	2		3		1	4	1	1			27

Figure 10: List of pre-Han Sources in the *Huainanzi*<sup>339</sup>

My reading of Liu An's text as a wheel, however, does not only resonate with the *Huainanzi's* categorization as a *za*-text and its reception. In fact, the "Yaolüe" itself fashions the Liu clan's scripture in this light, as well. The final statement of the "Summary," for example, reflects such a uniting aspect of Liu An's text. It states:

(1) This scripture of the Liu clan observes the images of Heaven and Earth, connects the deeds of past and present, weighs affairs and establishes regulations, measures forms and applies what is suitable, traces to its source the heart of the Way [and her virtue],<sup>340</sup> and unites the customs of the Three Kings in order to smelt together the crown prince and the emperor.

(2) At the core of profound mystery, the infinitesimal movements of the essence have been revealed. By casting aside limits and boundaries and by drawing on the pure and tranquil, it thereby unites all under Heaven, gives order to the Myriad Beings, responds to the alterations and transformations, and connects the different categories.

(3) It does not follow the path of one trace; [does not] adhere to the aims of one side; [does not] become seized and tied up with the linked things; and [does not] not shift and move with the ages. Therefore, it fits in a *xun* and a *chang*, yet it does not fill. It spreads over all under Heaven, yet it does not crack. (HNZ 21.4)

(1) 若劉氏之書，觀天地之象，通古今之事，權事而立制，度形而施宜，原道[德]之心，合三王之風，以儲與扈冶。

(2) 玄眇之中，精搖靡覽，棄其畛挈，斟其淑靜，以統天下，理萬物，應變化，通殊類。

(3) 非循一跡之路，守一隅之指，拘繫牽連之物，而不與世推移也。故置之尋常而不塞，布之天下而不窳。<sup>341</sup>

A first look at the passage reveals that it contains three chains of sentences that describe a procedural development of effects. Each of these chains ends with the depiction of results due to some positive (units 1 and 2) or negative (unit 3) actions (以儲與扈冶; 以統天下; and 故置

<sup>340</sup> I follow here the concordance's suggestion to include the term power (*de*) in order to maintain the five-character pattern. See Liu Dianjue ed., *Huainanzi zhuzi suoyin*, p. 228.

<sup>341</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 711-712



之尋常而不塞). The passage strings these chains together in a sequence by omitting an explicit subject for each of these units (觀天地之象，通古今之事...; 玄眇之中，精搖靡覽; and 非循一跡之路，守一隅之指). This seeming lack of a subject obviously causes us problems in understanding the content of these sentences. Who is the initiator of all these outcomes?

Recent scholarship and translations of this paragraph reacted to this problem by adding a subject of their own choice. Although the beginning of the passage offers in my opinion an admittedly unusual, yet clear answer to this question, they deliberately included a human agent in this sequence in order to make up for its presumable lack thereof in the Chinese.<sup>342</sup> Roth et al., for example, librate between the book and a first person depiction of its authors (“[we have]”) as the subjects of these sentences.<sup>343</sup>

In my opinion, this adding of and inconsequential installing of a subject is surprising and unnecessary since the passage prominently mentions at the beginning that it is going to talk

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<sup>342</sup> Although this interpretive move is quite common and may arguably be possible since early Chinese texts often omit a direct subject of a sentence, it rather points, in my opinion, to the fact that scholars felt uncomfortable with the idea that the “Yaolüe” uses a vocabulary and imagery reminiscent of the Dao to depict the scripture of the Liu clan.

<sup>343</sup> See Harold D. Roth et al. trans., *The Huainanzi*, p. 867. Charles Le Blanc and Rémi Mathieu's translation remains opaque on this matter since the French term for book is masculine, as well. In that sense, it remains unclear whether they consistently refer to the Liu clan's scripture or sometimes also to Liu An in their rendering. See Charles Le Blanc and Rémi Mathieu trans., *Philosophes Taoïstes II: Huainan Zi* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), p. 1032. Judson Murray clearly considers the last portion of the *Huainanzi* to be an illustration of the text rather than the producers. See Judson B. Murray, “The Consummate Dao,” pp. 389-390.

about the *Huainanzi*. It employs the marker *ruo* 若 to indicate that “this” scripture of the Liu clan (*ruo Liushi zhi shu* 若劉氏之書), which Liu An might have presented to Han Wudi in 139 BCE, is in fact the theme of the entire passage and the focal point of the “Yaolüe’s” final words. The Chinese sentences neither contain a person or pronoun nor employ a nominalizing word like *zhe* 者 to highlight that someone besides the text itself would be the initiator of these effects. Furthermore, the entire “Yaolüe” discusses and describes the form and content of Liu An and his workshop's textual project so that it is rather plausible that the last part of the “Summary” recapitulates their reading of the *Huainanzi* as a whole.<sup>344</sup> Thus, I think there are indeed good reasons to read this last piece of the “Summary” as a description of the scripture and not of its authors.

If we accept this observation, some interesting consequences may be drawn from it. The first part of this passage, for example, contains various verbs of taxonomy and order, connection and combination that would not depict the activities of the authors performed during the process of writing as Roth et al. translate. It would rather claim that the *Huainanzi*

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<sup>344</sup> Explaining the purpose of the text proves to be a very fitting topic to end the final chapter since Liu An supposedly used it to introduce his ambitious project to the emperor during his inaugural visit. Within this context, it would be more important to clarify the purpose of the text to the emperor rather than merely reporting what the editors of the text were doing. Therefore, it seems to be quite plausible in my opinion that the passage talks in this entire passage about the function and form of the *Huainanzi*.

connects or penetrates (*tong* 通) the deeds of the past and present, combines or matches (*he* 合) the customs of the Three Kings, unifies (*tong* 統) all under Heaven, or brings/gives order (*li* 理) to the Myriad Beings.

The idea that the writing itself causes effects and responses provokes some interesting implications for our understanding of the text since the “Yaolüe” again uses terms in this passage that the *Huainanzi* commonly employs to describe the tasks or activities of the emperor and the actions of the cosmic Way.<sup>345</sup> Especially the idea that a sagely empire is connected, well-ordered, and ever-responsive (*ying* 應) pervades Liu An’s text and its depictions of the political manifestations and implementations of the Dao.<sup>346</sup> Thus, the appearance of a shared set of terminology would indeed suggest that this passage describes the Liu clan’s scripture in image of the Way.

The last part of this passage further intensifies this impression. By claiming that the text

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<sup>345</sup> For three examples that use the term connect (*tong* 通) to describe some of the sagely ruler’s activities, see *HNZ* 1.2 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 2 and *HNZ* 8.5 and 8.7 in Liu Wendian, *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 252 and 259. For two examples that use the term organize (*li* 理) or follow patterns (*xunli* 循理) to describe the emperor’s activities, see *HNZ* 8.5 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 252 and *HNZ* 14.38 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 475. For an example that describes the sage as a person that does *he*, see footnotes 313 and 334.

<sup>346</sup> For an example of such an empire in which “no deed was unresponsive” (*shi wu buying* 事無不應) and thunder and rain “responded without exhaustion” (*ying wuqiong* 應無窮), see *HNZ* 1.2 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 2-3.

may be put in a small place, yet cannot be filled up and that it may be spread over the entire universe without tearing apart (置之尋常而不塞，布之天下而不窳), it clearly refers to other paradoxical and antithetical depictions of the Dao and *dao*-like actions in the *Laozi* and the *Huainanzi* that frequently employ such dichotomical pairs.<sup>347</sup> In fact, the “Yaolüe” repeats in this depiction of the Liu clan’s scripture almost verbatim a shortened passage from the “Amongst Humans” chapter (*HNZ* 18.1) that states: “The Way: place it in front, and [the cart] will not lean forward; place it behind, and [the cart] will not lean backward. It fits inside a *xun* and a *chang*, yet it does not fill. It spreads over all under Heaven, yet it does not crack” (道者，置之前而不輦，錯之後而不軒，內之尋常而不塞，布之天下而不窳).<sup>348</sup> Furthermore, the claim that the *Huainanzi* does neither follow just one way nor move with the generations would reflect two central aspects of the Dao: her impartiality towards the Myriad Beings/discourses and her uneffectedness by the transformations of life and death. In this vision, the *Huainanzi* would exactly act like the sages above since it does not ascribe to the traces of one specific school and its doctrinal paths (*dao*).

Hence, I propose that the “Yaolüe” alludes in its final words “It does not follow the path of one trace [and] it does not adhere to the aims of one side” (非循一跡之路，守一隅之指) to

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See footnote 272.

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Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 586

an imagery of travelling and the aforementioned image of the wheel that we have encountered throughout this chapter. If we consider the appropriation of the wheel image in order to describe the role the *bai jia* play for the sagely emperor in the passage above, I cannot but wonder whether the “*Yaolüe*” presents here the *Huainanzi* as a textual hub of the Hundred Schools that creates a connection between the various traces of the past via its assemblage of textual fragments.<sup>349</sup> Does the solution to the question why the *Huainanzi* is such a miscellaneous text that incorporates a large amount of textual fragments from the pre-Han period perhaps then at least partially lie in this connective (*tong*) and matching (*he*) function of the text? And should we read the *Huainanzi* as a manifestation of the image of the wheel, then?

At this point, it is impossible to fully prove that Liu An and his workshop produced the scripture with such a vision in mind. Unfortunately, there is no explicit statement in the *Huainanzi* that could substantiate this idea. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Liu An’s text does not mention the image of roots and branches in any self-description, either. And it is in my opinion hard to deny that the *benmo*-model meaningfully explains the organization of the chapters in Liu An’s text. Therefore, I think it is very likely that the *Huainanzi*’s miscellaneous style follows a cosmicizing strategy similar to the *benmo*-model by

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For a brief discussion of traces as words of pre-Han writers, see footnotes 550 and 556.

implementing the image of the wheel (*lun*) and its hub (*gu*) in the text's form and syncretic style.

If we observe the *Huainanzi* through the lens offered by the image of the wheel, we may slowly see a new purpose behind the text's miscellaneous style that has been hidden for scholars such as Graham, Fung, and Chan. Just as the implementation of the root-branches-structuralism in the *Huainanzi's* chapter organization may be an attempt to incorporate the cosmological model of *benmo* in the text's organization of the chapters, the text's all-inclusive and all-encompassing miscellaneous style may be read as Liu An and his workshop's attempt to create a textual hub of the Hundred Schools' doctrinal spokes in form of the *Huainanzi*. In other words, I read it as another cosmicizing strategy to construe the Liu clan's scripture in image of the all-pervasive and all-inclusive Way.

### **2.3 Being a Weaver: The Way, Sage, and Liu Clan's Scripture as Connecting Agents**

In the previous section, I showcased that the *Huainanzi* possibly depicts itself not only as a tree but also as a hub of the Hundred Schools. In fact, I suggested that Liu An and his workshop might have created the Liu clan's scripture in such a miscellaneous style since they intended the text to be in image of a wheel. In the following pages, I will continue this work on the *Huainanzi's* imagery and

illustrate that the producers of Liu An's text also fashioned the scripture in image of a weaving texture. As we have seen in passage (8) above, the *Huainanzi* referred to the process of dyeing a fabric in order to depict the relationship between the cosmic Way and its offspring. Thereby, the Myriad Beings functioned as the variously colored fabrics and the Way's power as the dye through which the cosmic dyer achieves her results. In this portion of the chapter, I will elaborate on this image and work out two related images that play an important role in the *Huainanzi's* depiction of the Way and the phenomenal world. I will analyze how Liu An's text uses the images of weaving a fabric (*jingwei* 經緯) and knotting a net (*jigang* 紀綱) to depict the powers of the Way, the sage, and the Liu clan's scripture.

It will turn out that the image of weaving follows a pattern similar to the chariot wheel. For most parts, the *Huainanzi* uses it to illustrate the ways in which the Dao and her celestial manifestation Taiyi connect and organize the universe. They apparently were thought to link together the celestial bodies and terrestrial forms into a meaningful pattern, which guides and organizes the life of the Myriad Beings in all under Heaven. In other words, Liu An's text construes the universe as a highly interlinked and interwoven fabric that the cosmic weaver has produced by providing each Myriad Being with a specific place in its texture.

At the same time, however, Liu An's text also utilizes the same imagery to delineate the sagely

ruler's ability to connect and unite the empire. As in the case of the chariot wheel, it characterizes the emperor as the human embodiment of the Way that mimics her powers in her/his (political) actions. In this vision, the *Huainanzi* construes the emperor as the human equivalent to Taiyi, the divine embodiment of the Way in the sky who governs his celestial realm by weaving together the heavenly bodies into a pattern. Accordingly, the *Huainanzi* proposes that it is one of the ruler's most important responsibilities to administer the Hundred Officials and taxonomize all under Heaven so that the human realm may run smoothly.

In the last portion, we will see then that the "Yaolüe" extends this image of weaving beyond the Way and the sage and utilizes it to portray the Liu clan's scripture, as well.<sup>350</sup> As we have encountered in the example above, the "Yaolüe" concluded its self-illustration with an allusion to the chariot wheel. Contrary to the wheel, however, the "Yaolüe" begins this time its portrayal of the *Huainanzi* with the images of weaving a fabric, knotting a net, and a tree effectively bracketing the "Yaolüe" with these four iconic images that commonly refer to the Way as we have seen throughout this chapter. Accordingly, it is in my opinion likely that Liu An and his workshop consciously employed

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<sup>350</sup> Although I do not extend my analysis much beyond the *Huainanzi* in this dissertation, it is important to realize that the *Lüshi chunqiu*'s "Postface" ("Xuyi" 序意) also utilizes and plays with an imagery of knotting/recording (*ji* 紀) and binding/maintaining (*wei* 維) to depict the workings of its "Twelve Knots" ("Shier ji" 十二紀) almanac (see Gao You 高誘 ed., *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954), 6.122-123). In that sense, the image of weaving within the context of cosmicized texts seems to be more widely spread than just Liu An's text.



the images of a tree, chariot wheel, and weaving at such exalted positions to market to young Emperor Wu the shared principle that underlies the production of the *Huainanzi*: namely, that both the sage and the Liu clan's scripture are in image of the ultimate Way.<sup>351</sup>

### **The Dao as the Weaver of the World in the *Huainanzi***

Throughout the *Huainanzi* we find several passages that depict the Dao and Taiyi as the weaver of the world's fabric. The second chapter, for example, states,

The Way has both a warp and a weft (*jingji*) linked together. It achieves the path of oneness and links the thousand branches and myriad leaves. Therefore, the noble ones through it have their acting out of orders. The lowly ones through it have their forgetting of their lowliness. The poor ones through it have joy in their work, [and] the hardpressed through it have a place amid dangers. (HNZ 2.4)

夫道有經紀條貫，得一之道，連千枝萬葉。是故貴有以行令，賤有以忘卑，貧有以樂業，困有以處危。<sup>352</sup>

Here, we see that the *Huainanzi* correlates the woven texture of the cosmos, illustrated in the vivid image of the universe as a tree that we encountered earlier, with the basic organization of human society.<sup>353</sup> In the first sentence, it illustrates the Way as the one who holds and links the warp and woof of the universe together. In other words, it presents the Way as a cosmic weaver that connects

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<sup>351</sup> My discussion of the *Huainanzi*'s self-fashioning as a weaving texture is a bit shorter and less detailed in the following pages than my analysis of the hub since chapters 3-5 will further elaborate on these themes in much more detail.

<sup>352</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 50

<sup>353</sup> For my discussion of the tree image, see pages 129-136.

and creates the Myriad Beings.

In the second sentence, the text then projects this vision of the universe as being woven together by the cosmic Way onto the social structure of the human world. Within this vision, each silk thread would stand for a social rank—the noble ones (*gui* 貴), the lowly ones (*jian* 賤), the poor ones (*pin* 貧), and the hardpressed ones (*kun* 困)—that, woven together as a whole, would make up the social fabric. It seems as if the *Huainanzi* suggests that as much as an embroidered brocade necessitates varicolored threads to spawn a pattern (*wen* 文) a well-ordered society needs each societal element to fulfill its role in order to function harmoniously (*he* 和).<sup>354</sup> In fact, such a vision of social organization based on the utilization of the various people (*yong zhongren* 用眾人) is prevalent throughout Liu An's text as Roger Ames has shown in his book *The Art of Rulership: A Study of Ancient Chinese Political Thought*.<sup>355</sup> In that sense, we encounter here a passage that explicitly depicts the Way as a weaver of cosmic order while construing social organization and hierarchies as

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<sup>354</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi remarks regarding such a naturalistic justification of social order in early Chinese texts that “the basic idea that the human world should be patterned on the natural world is clearly foreshadowed in *Hsün-tzu*'s use of the term *t'ien-shu* 天數, ‘Heaven’s algorithm,’ in connection with periodic cyclical change in nature. *Hsün-tzu* used this concept, also found in the *Han Fei-tzu* 韓非子 and the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* 呂氏春秋, to argue that social hierarchy was justified by the existence of natural hierarchies.” (Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Chia I's 'Techniques of the Tao',” p. 52)

<sup>355</sup> For a discussion of the *Huainanzi*'s focus on the emperor's task to provide a role (*fen* 分) and/or place (*wei* 位) for his subjects as expressed in the idea of utilizing the various people (*yong zhongren* 用眾人), see Roger T. Ames, *The Art of Rulership*, pp. 56-65 and 142-152.

manifestations of this cosmic fabric in the human world.

The beginning of chapter four “Terrestrial Forms” further elaborates on this connection between weaving and the cosmos. Regarding the organization of the sky and the seasons, it mentions that

The ones that terrestrial forms carry [i.e. the terrestrial entities and Myriad Beings (*wanwu* 萬物) that are defined by having a form (*you xing* 有形)] are within the Six Coordinates and within the Four Endpoints. [The Dao] illuminates them with the sun and moon, warps them with the stars and planets, threads them with the Four Seasons, and controls them with the great Year Star. Between Heaven and Earth there are Nine Provinces and Eight Pillars. The dry land has nine mountains; the mountains have nine passes. The wetlands have nine marshes, the winds have Eight Directions, and the rivers have six streams. (HNZ 4.1)  
 墜形之所載，六合之間，四極之內，照之以日月，經之以星辰，紀之以四時，要之以太歲，天地之間，九州八極，土有九山，山有九寨，澤有九藪，風有八等，水有六品。<sup>356</sup>

In this depiction, the *Huainanzi* discusses two elements: First it mentions the celestial bodies and their function for the terrestrial realm. Afterwards it explicates some homological examples of the terrestrial forms in a numerological fashion typical for Liu An’s text.<sup>357</sup> Within this framework, the passage illustrates the celestial bodies as a fabric that spans over the human realm. It alludes here to the concepts of Canopy Heaven (*gaitian* 蓋天), which we encountered in the image of the chariot wheel, and of heavenly patterns, a title that the *Huainanzi* uses in chapter three for its discussion of the various celestials bodies in the sky. Thus, it presents a situation in which the Dao organizes the

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<sup>356</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 130

<sup>357</sup> See for example the famous beginning of chapter seven “Refined Spirit” (“Jingshen” 精神) that correlates the human body to the celestial realm and that I discussed on pages 124-129. For the most obvious examples that use numerical equivalence to create homological sequences, see the chapters “Tianwen” and “Dixing.”

heavenly realm by threading together the planets and stars into a well-ordered texture that like the [Canopy] Heaven covers the human realm.<sup>358</sup>

This fabric was thought to have a governing impact on the terrestrial realm since the celestial bodies apparently illuminate (*zhao zhi* 照之), warp (*jing zhi* 經之), thread (*ji zhi* 紀之), and control (*yaozhi* 要之) the earthly forms, an idea likely based, for example, on early understandings of the seasons and the (perceived) correlation between the moon, menstruation, and the tides.<sup>359</sup> In that sense, the passage depicts an interlinkage between a celestial fabric, constructed out of planetary lights and seasonal changes, and the beings in the terrestrial realm.

In a later passage in the same chapter the *Huainanzi* replicates this idea of the world as a fabric in its depiction of the Four Directions. It creates a quasi-cosmogonic scheme that roots the creation of the Myriad Beings within the basic patterns of the terrestrial world for which Liu An's text falls back

<sup>358</sup>

This illustration of the sky as a web or a net is clearly reflected in the idea that Heaven is divided up into a roster of fifteen day nodes (*jie* 節) and twenty-eight lunar lodges (*xiu* 宿) that compartmentalize the celestial realm's space-time. This vision of the celestial realm as a net also appears in another passage from the "Tianwen" chapter, in which the *Huainanzi* evokes the image of a net's binding cords to depict the Four "Corner" Directions of the sky: "Northeast is the binding cord of Returning Accretion; Southwest is the binding cord of Reverting Yang; Southeast is the binding cord of Perpetual Ocean; Northwest is the binding cord of Penetrating Cleft." (*HNZ* 3.16)

東北為報德之維也，西南為背陽之維，東南為常羊之維，西北為蹠通之維。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 96)

<sup>359</sup>

One may also interpret this passage as an act performed by Taiyi. However, since the *Huainanzi* depicts Taiyi as the celestial embodiment of the Way, I interpret the process of weaving the world together as a *dao*-act.

again on the image of weaving.

Regarding the terrestrial forms: East/West is the woof (*wei*) and South/North is the warp (*jing*). Mountains are accumulated power/virtue and streams are accumulated punishment. That which is high is life and that which is below is death. Mounds and hills are male and rivers and valleys are female. Waters [congealed] in a round shape have pearls. Waters congealed in a square shape have jades. Clear waters have yellow gold and dragon abysses have jade flowers [i.e. a vein?]. In the terrestrial realm everything is born into a category (*lei*). Therefore, *qi* of mountains is more in man and *qi* of swamps is more in women; *qi* of dykes is more in mute [people] and *qi* of wind is more in deaf [people]; *qi* of forests is more in paralyzed [people] and *qi* of woods is more in [people with] deformed spines; *qi* of seashores is more in swollen [people]; *qi* of stones is more in strong [people]; *qi* of steep passes is more in [people with] goiter; *qi* of heat is more in [people who] die young and *qi* of cold is more in [people who] live long; *qi* of valleys is more in paralyzed [people] and *qi* of hills is more in insane [people]; *qi* of overflown [places] is more in humane [people] and *qi* of mounds is more in greedy [people]; light soil is more in profit-driven [people] and heavy soil is more in sluggish people; the sound of clear water is small and the sound of muddy water is great; people at rushing water are light and people at slow waters are heavy. [In] the central region are more sages. All are in image of their *qi* and all respond according to their category.” (HNZ 4.8)

凡地形，東西為緯，南北為經。山為積德，川為積刑。高者為生，下者為死。丘陵為牡，谿谷為牝。水圓折者有珠，方折者有玉。清水有黃金，龍淵有玉英。土地各以其類生，是故山氣多男，澤氣多女。障氣多暗，風氣多聾，林氣多癰，木氣多傴，岸下氣多腫，石氣多力，險阻氣多癭，暑氣多夭，寒氣多壽，谷氣多瘠，丘氣多狂，衍氣多仁，陵氣多貪。輕土多利，重土多遲，清水音小，濁水音大，湍水人輕，遲水人重，中土多聖人。皆象其氣，皆應其類。<sup>360</sup>

In this scheme, the passage seems to use a similar association of weaving with the Four Directions

that we will later encounter in the *Shijing*'s expression “establishing and managing the Four Quarters”

(*jingying sifang* 經營四方).<sup>361</sup> According to this vision, the Four Quarters set up a grid-like fabric that

provides each of the following Myriad Beings with a specific place and, as we will see later, with

<sup>360</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 139-140

<sup>361</sup> For my brief discussion of the *Shijing*'s use of the expression *jingying sifang*, see pages 266-268.

specific properties associated with the region from which they originated.

Fitting to this idea of providing a place (*wei* 位) to the Myriad Beings, it associates the royal North/South-axis with the warp, the pattern-giving backbone of most woven products in early China as we will see in chapter 3. The passage slowly fills in the Myriad Beings into this basic spatial setup of the world that resembles a grid-like structure. Mountains and streams, which most likely relate to China's geography—generally speaking, the mountains reside in the West and the streams run eastward to the ocean—become gendered so that the high [western] positions (i.e. any mounds and hills) are considered to be expressions of male cosmic forces (*mu* 牡), whereas the lower and moist [eastern] regions were thought to be manifestations of female cosmic principles (*pin* 牝).<sup>362</sup> In that sense, it parallels the terrestrial forms and their basic division of masculine and female categories (*lei* 類) to the woof of the universe as a whole. In other words, the *Huainanzi* projects the image of a woven fabric on the Middle Kingdoms by claiming that the human realm is governed by both the royal warp axis and the cosmically gendered woof of China's geography.

The passage goes on to explain in a list fashion the various ways in which these earthly

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This idea manifested in the two deities Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母) and Lord King of the East (Dongwanggong 東王公) who replicate the concepts of small *yin* in big *yang* (Queen Mother's abode is in Mount Kunlun) and small *yang* in big *yin* (Lord King's abode is in the Eastern Sea). See Suzanne E. Cahill, *Transcendence & Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 27.

categories, which are constructed by the warping and woofing of the Four Quarters, impact the life and form of the Myriad Beings who “all resonate according to their categories” (*jie ying qi lei* 皆應其類):<sup>363</sup> For example, *HNZ* 4.9 asserts in a reversed physiognomic observation that “people from solid soil are steely and people from soft soil are chubby; people from black [i.e. moist?] soil are tall and people from sandy soil are small; people from fertile soil are beautiful and people from waste soil are ugly” (堅土人剛，弱土人肥，墟土人大，沙土人細，息土人美，耗土人醜).<sup>364</sup> Since these soils are attributed to specific regions within the earthly grid set up by the north-south-warp and the east-west-weft, the passage attributes concrete resonating powers to the fabric of the world via the concept of responses according to one’s category (*ying qi lei* 應其類).

As we have seen in these passages, the *Huainanzi* depicts the Way as a cosmic weaver that links together the celestial and terrestrial fabrics in which the Myriad Beings reside. With the help of these textures, the Way, however, does not only provide space for the Myriad Beings. In fact, the *Huainanzi* repeatedly describes it as the very means through which the Dao orders and impacts their behavior and dispositions (*qing* 情). Hence, this vision of the world as a fabric seems to be closely related to the concept of *ganying*. In other words, it seems as if the *Huainanzi* describes weaving as the very process through which the Way expresses her universally resonating powers in the cosmos.

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<sup>363</sup> See Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 141

<sup>364</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 142

### Sages and Emperors as Weavers in the *Huainanzi*

In the last example, we have seen that the *Huainanzi* does not only depict the universe as a woven fabric but also associates the royal axis with the ordering capacity of the warp. This correlation between rulership and the process of weaving appears in several passages throughout Liu An's text. In fact, chapter eight "Rooting the Warp" ("Benjing" 本經) explicitly illustrates the thearch as a weaver.

The *Huainanzi*'s passage reads as follows:

The Thearch embodies (*ti* 體) the Grand One (Taiyi); kings emulate *yin* and *yang*; hegemony follows the Four Seasons; lords use the six pitch pipes. Now the Grand One like a basket envelopes (*lao long* 牢籠) Heaven and Earth, weighs on and crushes the mountains and streams, retains and emits *yin* and *yang*, stretches out and drags along the Four Seasons, knots the net of the Eight Pillars (*jigang baji* 紀綱八極), and weaves the tapestry of the Six Coordinates (*jingwei liuhe* 經緯六合). It renews the dew and casts out a guiding light, universally overflowing and without selfishness; [from] the waterflies' flight [to] the wriggling things' moves, there is nothing that does not rely on its power and is alive/born. (HNZ 8.7)

帝者體太一；王者法陰陽；霸者則四時，君者用六律。秉太一者，牢籠天地，彈厭山川，含吐陰陽，伸曳四時，紀綱八極，經緯六合，覆露照導，普汜無私；蠓飛蠕動，莫不仰德而生。<sup>365</sup>

In this passage, we see that the *Huainanzi* construes the emperor as an embodiment of Taiyi (*ti taiyi* 體太一), as the human counterpart to this celestial manifestation of the Way.<sup>366</sup> The claim that a

"human" could be such a divine being does not really surprise considering that the *Huainanzi* contains

<sup>365</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 258

<sup>366</sup> The beginning of chapter 14 "Quanyan," for example, depicts Taiyi in terms reminiscent of the Way: "Cavernous, it is together with Heaven and Earth, muddy and turbid (*hundun*) it is an uncarved block; not shaped, yet a perfected being it is called Taiyi."

洞同天地，渾沌為樸，未造而成物，謂之太一。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 463)



an entire discourse on the possibility of self-divinization as mentioned in chapter 1.1.<sup>367</sup> However, what is new in this passage is the clear parallel the text construes between cosmic and political organization.<sup>368</sup>

According to this passage, the ruling elite is arranged in similar fashion to Heaven and Earth. As reflected in the architectural structure of the Altar to Taiyi at Ganquan (*Ganquan Taiyi tan* 甘泉太一壇) and in the *Huainanzi* passage, the unity of Taiyi envelops the world like a basket (*laolong tiandi* 牢籠天地), retains the duality of *yin* and *yang*, stretches out the Four Seasons (*shenyi sishi* 伸曳四時), and weaves together the Eight Pillars and Six Coordinates (紀綱八極，經緯六合).<sup>369</sup> In that sense, the *Huainanzi* construes Taiyi in terms reminiscent of the Way, which *HNZ* 1.1 also depicts as the one who “covers Heaven and upholds Earth, extends the Four Directions and divides the Eight Pillars” (覆天載地，廓四方，柝八極).<sup>370</sup> In this vision, Taiyi becomes the ultimate unity (*taiyi* 太一) from which the diversity of the universe originates, the zenith of the basket-like dome under which the

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<sup>367</sup> For a discussion of the idea that human beings may divinize themselves in early Chinese texts, see footnote 106.

<sup>368</sup> Mark Edward Lewis has shown that the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices underlie a similar parallelism between heavenly and terrestrial rulership. For a discussion of the figure of the Yellow Emperor and the terrestrial re-enactment of his powers in form of the *feng* and *shan* rituals, see Mark Edward Lewis, “The *Feng* and *Shan* Sacrifices of Emperor Wu of the Han,” *State and Court Ritual in China*, Joseph P. McDermott ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 61-65.

<sup>369</sup> See my reference to the Altar of Taiyi at Ganquan in footnote 194.

<sup>370</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 1

Myriad Beings settle.

Similar to this vision of Taiyi as a celestial embodiment of the Way, the thearch is supposed to be the center and the controlling force for the diversifying ruling *corpus* in the human realm. Like Taiyi sitting in the pivot of the dome-like sky controlling the warping and woofing of the celestial bodies,<sup>371</sup> the ruler should hide in the center of the human realm serving as the pivot for the Myriad Officials around him.<sup>372</sup> In that sense, the passage parallels the thearch's guiding and controlling of the kings and officials to Taiyi's "knotting the net of the Eight Pillars (*jigang baji* 紀綱八極) and weaving the tapestry of the Six Coordinates (*jingwei liuhe* 經緯六合)."<sup>373</sup> Within this system, the thearch

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<sup>371</sup> I think that an early understanding of weaving is the backdrop to this image. In early forms of weaving, the warps were connected to the hips of the weaver in order to create tension. That means that all the warps conflated at the hip of the weaver from which they spread out. It seems as if the vision of Taiyi as the weaver at the center of the sky correlates here the image of the basket-like sky with such an understanding of weaving.

<sup>372</sup> The idea that the ruler should not be directly involved in the running of the empire is one of the central political doctrines in the *Huainanzi*. As I argue in my article on "Agricultural Imagery, Governance, and (De-)Cultivation in the *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*," Liu An's text repeatedly depicts hiding (*yanji* 掩跡) and eradicating traces (*mieji* 滅跡) of one's actions as important techniques of any sagely rulership in order to transform the ruler into an "entity" similar to the traceless (*wuji* 無跡) Dao. Roger Ames remarks about this aspect of *wuwei*-rulership following: "The ruler's personal demonstrations of partiality are discouraged because they give rise to disorder and a breakdown of the established systems [...]. On the other hand, in refraining from interfering in the smooth functioning of the law and the bureaucratic organization, the ruler makes it possible for these systems to operate with a certainty which will inspire keen observance among his subordinates [...]. Because the ruler keeps himself beyond the probing gaze of his subordinates, he is able to retain an aura of loftiness and omnipotence." (Roger T. Ames, *The Art of Rulership*, pp. 60-61)

<sup>373</sup> In a later passage, the *Huainanzi* mentions the dire consequences if a thearch fails to embody

apparently functions as the human counterpart to the celestial ruler Taiyi by weaving together the ordering warps of human governance.

The same idea of sagely rulership as a process of weaving appears in another passage from the “Chuzhen” chapter. Contrary to the previous one, however, it presents a quasi-historical narrative about the sagely rulership of the Divine Farmer (Shennong 神農) and the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 皇帝):

Coming to the Age of the Divine Farmer and the Yellow Emperor, they split and sundered the Great Ancestor, examining and directing Heaven and Earth, enumerating the Nine Vacancies, and demarcating the Nine Boundaries. They clasped *yin* and *yang*, kneaded the hard and the soft, split the branches, and sorted the leaves. The Myriad Beings and Hundred Clans each had a warp and a weft (*jingji*) linked together. At this, the myriad people all were alert and awake, and there were none who did not straighten up to listen and look. Therefore, rule but you cannot harmonize downwards. (HNZ 2.10)

乃至神農黃帝，剖判大宗，竅領天地，襲九竅，重九熬，提挈陰陽，媵掄剛柔，枝解葉貫，萬物百族，使各有經紀條貫。於此萬民睢睢盱盱然，莫不竦身而載聽視。是故治而不能和下。<sup>374</sup>

The passage describes these sagely rulers as having succeeded in creating what the *Huainanzi* calls

Taiyi and act according to his rank:

“If a thearch [merely] embodies *yin* and *yang*, he will be usurped. If a king [merely] models himself on the Four Seasons, he will be seized. If a hegemon [merely] regulates himself by the Six Pitch Pipes, he will be disgraced. If a prince neglects the level and the marking cord, he will be eradicated. Therefore if one is small but carries out great [deeds], it will be turbulent, insubstantial, and uncongenial. If one is great but carries out lesser [deeds], it will be narrow, cramped, and unpleasing. If honorable and mean do not lose their proper embodiments, then all under Heaven will be governed.” (HNZ 8.7)

帝者體陰陽則侵，王者法四時則削，霸者節六律則辱，君者失準繩則廢。故小而行大，則滔窳而不親；大而行小，則陜隘而不容。貴賤不失其體，則天下治矣。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 260)

<sup>374</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 65

“an age of utmost virtue or power” (*zhide zhi shi* 至德之世).<sup>375</sup> During this period, the Myriad Beings were thought to thrive and automatically follow the orders of the rulers. Interestingly, the passage employs exactly the same terminology for this age that we have seen in an illustration of the Dao from a prior passage in the “Chuzhen” chapter. Thus both the Dao and all people within a sagely empire “have a warp and a weft linked together” (*you jingji tiaoguan* 有經紀條貫). In so doing, the *Huainanzi* clearly considers the empire of a sagely ruler to be equivalent and in image of the Dao’s organization of the cosmos, a powerful governance that would “magically” weave together the Myriad Beings and therewith establish order in a harmonious and well-patterned way.

Due to this association of the sage’s rulership with weaving, the *Huainanzi* also uses the term “governance’s knotting of a net” (*zhi zhi gangji* 治之綱紀) in the penultimate chapter “Exalted Lineage” (Taizu” 泰族) to depict the various steps that make up the process of ordering and organizing the empire.

In the past, when the Five Thearchs and the Three Kings established their policies and instituted their teachings, they inevitably used the [procedures of] Threes and Fives. What are the procedures of Threes and Fives? Looking upward, they selected images from Heaven; looking downward, they selected standards from Earth. In the middle, they selected standards from people. Thereupon, they established the Hall of Bright audiences and carried out the Hall of Bright edicts. Therewith, they tuned the *qi* of *yin* and *yang*, harmonized the nodes of the Four Seasons, and avoided the calamities of illness and fever. Looking downward, they observed Earth’s patterns in order to devise standards and measures. They investigated the

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For an example that mentions the “age of utmost power,” see *HNZ* 2.14 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 75.

suitability of mountains and plains, rivers and water-meadows, rich and poor land, and high and low areas, setting tasks to generate wealth [and] to eradicate the disasters of hunger and cold. In the middle, they investigated human virtues to devise rites and music and implement the Way of Humaneness and rightness in order to govern human relations and eradicate calamities of violence and disorder. Thereupon, they clarified and outlined the [respective] natures of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth in order to establish the affection [that should prevail] between fathers and sons so as to perfect the family. They distinguished the high and low sounds of the Five Tones and numerology of the mutual production of the Six Pitch Pipes in order to establish the Rightness [that should prevail between] rulers and ministers so as to perfect the state. They studied the successive order of the Four Seasons in order to establish the propriety [that should prevail between] elders and the young so as to perfect bureaucratic rank. This all is called “Threes.” To regulate the Rightness of ruler and ministers, the affection of fathers and sons, the distinction of husbands and wives, the precedence of elder and younger, the intimacy of friends – this is called “Fives.” Thereupon, [sage-kings] parceled out land and made provinces for them [i.e., the people], divided up official duties and governed them, built walled cities and [made] residences for them, partitioned neighborhoods and differentiated them, divided up wealth and clothed and fed them, set up academies and taught and instructed them, woke them up early and rested them late, to employ and exert them. This is the “governance’s knotting of a net.” (HNZ 20.11)

昔者，五帝三王之蒞政施教，必用參五。何謂參五？仰取象於天，俯取度於地，中取法於人，乃立明堂之朝，行明堂之令，以調陰陽之氣，以和四時之節，以辟疾病之蓄。俯視地理，以制度量，察陵陸水澤肥墪高下之宜，立事生財，以除饑寒之患。中考乎人德，以制禮樂，行仁義之道，以治人倫而除暴亂之禍。乃澄列金木水火土之性，故立父子之親而成家；別清濁五音六律相生之數，以立君臣之義而成國；察四時季孟之序，以立長幼之禮而成官。此之謂參。制君臣之義，父子之親，夫婦之辨，長幼之序，朋友之際，此之謂五。乃裂地而州之，分職而治之，築城而居之，割宅而異之，分財而衣食之，立大學而教誨之，夙興夜寐而勞力之。此治之綱紀也。<sup>376</sup>

The passage uses the term of “governance’s knotting a net” to describe two groups of policies: the Threes and the Fives. The Threes, thereby, refer to several activities that are based on the observation of the (vertical) tripartite structure of the cosmos: the heavenly, human, and earthly realm. The text relates each of these layers of the cosmos to a specific political structure. The Hall of Bright, for

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Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 671-672

example, served as the political tool to observe and regulate the empire according to the sky and the seasons. The creation of standards and the compartmentalization of land correspond to the observation of the earth. And lastly, the organization of human interrelationships with the help of rites (creates separations) and music (creates connections) accords with the observation of the human realm. These “cosmically” vertical Threes are paired with the policy of the horizontal Fives. Based on the cosmological scheme of the Five Quarters (*wu fang*) that organizes the time and space of the terrestrial realm, the Confucian concept of the Five Relationships (*wu lun* 五倫) should be used to divide up the professions, property, and wealth throughout the empire according to the passage above.

Thereby, all of these policies aim on organizing and structuring the empire: they “tune the *qi* of *yin* and *yang* and harmonize the nodes of the Four Seasons” (以調陰陽之氣，以和四時之節). They “govern human relations and eradicate calamities of violence and disorder” (以治人倫而除暴亂之禍). And they “parceled out land and made provinces for them [i.e., the people], divided up official duties and governed them, built walled cities and [made] residences for them, partitioned neighborhoods and differentiated them, divided up wealth and clothed and fed them” (乃裂地而州之，分職而治之，築城而居之，割宅而異之，分財而衣食之). Thus, the idea of organizing and regulating the setup of the cosmic and societal fabric seems to underlie the entire conceptualization

of the governance's knotting a net.

Hence, we may summarize that the *Huainanzi* does not only construe the Way as a weaver. In fact, it also refers to this image in its depiction of the human thearch that connects vertically the empire with Heaven and Earth and at the same time organizes horizontally the human realm and social relations by being its central pivot.<sup>377</sup> In other words, the *Huainanzi* explicitly illustrates the world as a fabric and its structuring and ordering as a process of weaving. As we will see in the next chapter, Liu An and his workshop similarly applied this image of weaving to characterize the Liu clan's scripture.

### **The *Huainanzi* as a Weaving Texture?**

When we turn our focus to the beginning of the “Yaolüe”, we also find a depiction of Liu An's text as a tapestry and net.<sup>378</sup> The very first part of the *Huainanzi*'s self-illustration that Liu An might have used to present his textual project to young Emperor Wu begins its elaborations with the image of weaving. It states:

Now, these writings and discourses we have created and composed are a means to knot a net of the Way

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<sup>377</sup> For my discussion of Dong Zhongshu's explanation of the character “king” (*wang* 王) as the one who connects the three realms, see footnote 288.

<sup>378</sup> For a discussion of the reasons why the “Yaolüe” might be considered as a lyrical self-illustration, see footnote 142.

and its Powers and weave a tapestry of humankind and its affairs. Soaring up it investigates Heaven, descending it measures Earth, being in the middle it connects all lines. Although it is not able to draw out fully the core and abilities of the Profound Mystery, its opulence is enough to observe the end and beginning. It gathers and sums up everything, yet its words do not dissect and separate the Pure and Unhewn and do not differentiate the Great Ancestor. We are afraid about the confusion of people. Being confused one does not understand it. Therefore, numerous are the words we have composed and extensive are the illustrations we have provided. Again we fear that people will depart from the root and draw near to the branches. Thus, if we speak of the Way, yet not of affairs, then there is nothing with which one [may] sink and drift with the ages. If we speak of affairs then there is nothing with which one [may] roam and rest with the transformations. (HNZ 21.1)

夫作為書論者，所以紀綱道德，經緯人事，上考之天，下揆之地，中通諸理，雖未能抽引玄妙之中才，繁然足以觀終始矣。總要舉凡，而語不剖判純樸，靡散大宗，懼為人之昏昏然弗能知也；故多為之辭，博為之說，又恐人之離本就末也。故言道而不言事，則無以與世浮沉；言事而不言道，則無以與化游息。<sup>379</sup>

We will discuss this passage more carefully in chapter 5.1. At this point, it is first and foremost important for us to realize that the “Yaolüe” introduces the Liu clan’s scripture as a weaver. It clearly states that Liu An and his workshop created the *Huainanzi* as a means to “knot a net out of the Way and her powers and to weave a tapestry of humankind and its affairs” (所以紀綱道德，經緯人事). In that sense, the very beginning of the “Summary,” which according to Martin Kern might have been performed in front of Emperor Wu to introduce the Liu clan’s scripture, starts out with the vision of a texture that connects not only humanity and its affairs but also the powers that underlie the organization and workings of the universe.

This vision of the *Huainanzi* as a weaver or weaving texture, however, does not only appear in

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<sup>379</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 700



the “Yaolüe’s” general depiction of the Liu clan’s scripture. In the first part of the “Yaolüe’s” summary of “The Exalted Lineage” chapter, Liu An’s text refers to the same image. It states:

“The Exalted Lineage” traverses the Eight Pillars, extends to the highest heights, illuminates the Three Luminaries above, and harmonizes water and earth below. It weaves together the paths of the past and present, orders the hierarchy of human relationships and patterns, assembles the aims of the myriad methods/regions and returns them home to a single root and therewith knots together the governing ways and weaves together the kingly affairs. (HNZ 21.2)

《泰族》者，橫八極，致高崇，上明三光，下和水土，經古今之道，治倫理之序，總萬方之指，而歸之一本，以經緯治道，紀綱王事。<sup>380</sup>

Liu An and his workshop apparently illustrate the *Huainanzi* as a texture in the “Yaolüe” chapter that connects and “weaves together the paths of the past and present” (*jing gujin zhi dao* 經古今之道) and “assembles the aims of the myriad methods/regions” (*zong wanfang zhi zhi* 總萬方之指). In so doing, it “knots together the governing ways and weaves together the kingly affairs” (經緯治道，紀綱王事), activities that the *Huainanzi* commonly attributes to the Way and sagely rulership as we have seen above.

These two examples raise a question regarding the “Yaolüe’s” choice of imagery and vocabulary. Why does it make these claims about the *Huainanzi*’s weaving together and connecting of ways and affairs into a texture at such prominent positions? As already suggested in the case of the chariot wheel, I read the *Huainanzi*’s utilization of the image of weaving as a literary means to create homological relationships between the Way, the sage, and the Liu clan’s scripture. It seems as if we

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Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 706

have found in the examples of the tree, the chariot wheel and weaving a repetitive pattern. The *Huainanzi* uses images, which it most often employs to illustrate the Way, to describe the sagely rulers and apparently also the Liu clan's scripture. In other words, it seems as if Liu An and his workshop intended to construe their text—like the sage—in image of the Dao, as beings that perform the same actions as the Way. However, as we will see in my case study of the *Huainanzi*'s intertextual design in the next chapter, Liu An's text does not only use these images to construe the sage and the Liu clan's scripture in image of the Way. It rather seems as if Liu An and his workshop attempted to mimic the process of weaving in their writing strategy so that the text in fact functions as an embodiment of the Way's powers.

#### **2.4 Intermediary Remarks I: Being in Image of the Way**

We started this discussion of the *Huainanzi*'s imagery with the observation that various early Chinese material cultural objects apparently replicated cosmological schemes in their designs, a phenomenon I called cosmicization. As we had seen in the few examples I provided, these objects seemed to achieve such a replication of the cosmos in their design by transforming cosmological models such as Heaven and Earth (*tiandi* 天地), the Five Quarters (*wu fang* 五方), or the Nine Provinces (*jiu zhou* 九州) into visuo-spatial structures.

With the help of Mark Edward Lewis, I proposed that texts such as the *Huainanzi* were in fact cosmicized objects, as well, and might belong into a similar category. Despite the fact that they do not explicitly display any visuo-spatial structures in their design like the *Guanzi's* "Youguantu" or the *Chu Silk Manuscript*, I showcased that the Liu clan's scripture utilizes different means to reconstruct cosmic schemes. In my reading, Liu An and his workshop apparently construed the Liu clan's scripture in image of the Way by employing a shared imagery for the Dao, the sage, and the text. In addition to the *Huainanzi* translation group's analysis of the *benmo*-model that permeates the organization of its chapters, Liu An's text seems to utilize at least the images of weaving and of a chariot wheel to construe a homology between these three entities.

On the one hand, the image of the chariot wheel evoked visions of the Way, the sage, and the *Huainanzi* as the central hubs that unite and match (*he* 合) the spokes of Myriad Beings in their ordering taxonomy. While the Dao functions as the pivot of the cosmos that enables the world to turn and transform (seasons, etc.), the sagely ruler would serve as the center of the empire, which impartially employs the Hundred Officials (*bai guan* 百官) in her/his rulership. In my reading of the *Huainanzi*, I suggested that this vision also applies to the text and its miscellaneous style. Parallel to the construction of the sage and the Way as a hub, it seems as if the Liu clan's scripture fashions itself as a textual unit that incorporates and connects the ideas and practices of the Hundred Schools (*bai*

*jia* 百家).

On the other hand, the image of weaving conjured ideas of the Way, the sage, and the *Huainanzi* as cosmic, social, and textual weavers that organize, order, and connect the Myriad Beings (*wan wu*), the deeds of the Hundred Officials (*bai guan zhi shi* 百官之事),<sup>381</sup> and the words of the Hundred Schools (*bai jia zhi yan* 百家之言).<sup>382</sup> While the Way controls and orders the terrestrial and celestial realm by weaving together the heavenly patterns and earthly forms, the *Huainanzi* illustrated the sagely ruler as the weaver of the social fabric that provides each being in all under Heaven with a specific place (*wei* 位) and role (*fen* 分). As I showcased with some of the *Huainanzi*'s self-illustrations from the "Yaolüe," Liu An and his workshop apparently used again the same vocabulary and imagery that we encountered in the cases of the sage and the Way to depict the Liu clan's scripture. In other words, it seems as if in addition to Mark Edward Lewis' suggestion of "recurrent patterns, ultimate origins, numerical categories implying totality [...], or related models," the *Huainanzi* employs shared imagery in form of the *benmo*-structure, the chariot wheel, and weaving to illustrate the sage and Liu An's text in image of the Way.<sup>383</sup>

In the next chapters, I will further examine with the help of the image of weaving whether the

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<sup>381</sup> See HNZ 9.25 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 301.

<sup>382</sup> See HNZ 11.13 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 363.

<sup>383</sup> For my brief discussion of Mark Edward Lewis' description of what I call strategies of cosmicization, see pages 120-124.

*Huainanzi* only illustrates the sage and the text as being in image of the Way, i.e. as representations of the Way in the human realm. We will see that it seems as if Liu An and his workshop attempted to create the *Huainanzi* as an embodiment rather than a representation of the Way since it apparently mimics the cosmic process of weaving in its intertextual writing practice.

### 3. THE IMAGE FIELDS OF WEAVING

*CLOUDS AND THUNDER [FORM TRIGRAM 3] ACCUMULATION (ZHUN). THE NOBLE ONE USES IT/THEM TO WEAVE TOGETHER THE GUIDING WARP—“XIANG ZHUAN”<sup>384</sup>*

*CULTIVATING ONE’S LIFEFORCE IN ORDER TO WEAVE TOGETHER THE GENERATIONS; BEARING THE POWER [OF THE WAY] IN ONE’S BREAST IN ORDER TO [LET PEOPLE] LIVE OUT THE YEARS: THIS MAY BE CALLED BEING ABLE TO EMBODY THE WAY—HUAINANZI 2.13<sup>385</sup>*

In the previous chapter, we have seen that the *Huainanzi* apparently uses at least three images to construe Liu An’s text and the sagely ruler in image of the cosmic Way: the root of a tree, the hub or axle of a chariot wheel, and weaving. Moreover, the examples of the tree and chariot wheel preliminarily suggested that Liu An and his workshop might have intended to enshrine these two images in the text’s design. The *benmo*-structure apparently underlies the *Huainanzi*’s chapter organization and the wheel image its miscellaneous style. In the following chapters, we will focus on the image of weaving to unearth that Liu An and his workshop did not only use this image to represent the Liu clan’s scripture in homological terms to the Way and the sage. Instead, I argue that Liu An and his workshop rather mimicked and therewith

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<sup>384</sup> 雲，雷，屯；君子以經綸。(Kong Yingda 孔穎達 ed., *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義, *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, Ruan Yuan 阮元 ed. (Taipei: Yiwen yinshu guan yinhang 藝文印書館印行, 2001): 1.22a)

<sup>385</sup> 養生以經世，抱德以終年，可謂能體道矣。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p.

incorporated the process of weaving in their intertextual writing practice construing the *Huainanzi* also as an embodiment of the Way and its cosmic texture.<sup>386</sup>

For the purpose of elucidating this point about the *Huainanzi*'s embodiment of the Dao, I will situate the production of the *Huainanzi* within what I call an *imaginaire* of writing as weaving that, as I claim, gained prominence during the late Warring States period and the early Han dynasty and that culminated in the well-known phenomenon of coining literary genres based on weaving terminology in China such as classics (*jing* 經), weft-writings (*chenwei* 織緯), or records (*ji* 紀 or 記).

In order to further investigate this marriage between weaving and textual production during the Han dynasty, the following part of the dissertation ventures out in chapter 3 and 4 to first reconstruct some of the image fields of weaving and writing during the early imperial period.<sup>387</sup> As we will see, various early Chinese texts depict the processes of weaving and

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<sup>386</sup> In the "Conclusion," I will provide a more detailed discussion of the concept of embodiment in the *Huainanzi*. Here suffice it to say that I define embodiment of the Way as the implementation of the Way's actions within a Myriad Being. In some sense, my understanding of embodiment in the *Huainanzi* is close to Michael Puett's idea of self-divinization. For my discussion of *tidao*, see pages 342-351.

<sup>387</sup> We may understand the gendered reading of weaving as female services (*nüshi* 女事) or women's work (*nügong* 女工) and writing/engravings/farming as male services (*nanshi* 男士) and men's work (*nangong* 男工) as activities that represent two sides of the same coin within a *yin* and *yang* system. In fact, it seems as if this gendered understanding of human labor, which also neatly parallels the conceptualization of rites and music, is related or even founded in the perceived overlap between writing and weaving that started to

writing as parallel activities that share important commonalities: both originate in the cosmos and had been revealed to the sages; both are created with the help of a vertical axis on which textual and design patterns appear via the insertion of threads or words, respectively; both were perceived to have an ordering impact on the cosmos and the empire; and finally both had been ritualistically implemented in the governance of the Han dynasty.

Chapter 5 continues this endeavor by asserting that the perceived parallel between weaving and writing resulted in an *imaginaire* of writing as weaving during the Western Han dynasty that, as I argue, concretely manifested and became enshrined in the *Huainanzi's* intertextual design and self-descriptions. As we have seen in chapter 2.3, some of the text's self-reflective comments claim that the Liu clan's scripture knots together the Way and her powers and weaves the deeds of mankind into a texture construing the Liu clan's scripture in homological terms to the Way. Hence, I suggest it is likely that Liu An and his workshop employed a rigid intertextual practice in order to create a patterning or texture of the Way (*dao*

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manifest in the late Warring States period and Western Han dynasty. For a discussion of mainly weaving, but also farming and writing as gendered activities, see Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 183-191 and Angela Sheng, "Women's Work, Virtue and Space: Change from Early to Late Imperial China," *Journal of East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 36 (2012): 9-38. For a voice suggesting that this gendered division of weaving and writing was less rigid in the Han dynasty than it is often portrayed, see Michael Nylan, "Golden Spindles and Axes: Elite Women in the Achaemenid and Han Empires," *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender*, Chenyang Li ed. (Chicago: Open Court, 2000), pp. 199-222.



*zhi wen*).<sup>388</sup> By incorporating multifarious textual threads, i.e. fragments of early Chinese texts, in the *Huainanzi's* texture—a process homological to the Way's weaving in of celestial bodies and terrestrial forms in the cosmos—the writers at the court of Huainan apparently intended to replicate the connective power and structure of the universe within the Liu clan's scripture.

However, before we start delving into the *imaginaire* of writing as weaving and its incorporation in the *Huainanzi's* intertextual design, let us first revisit the early history and technology of weaving as part of my project to reconstruct some of the image fields of weaving and writing during the late Warring States and early imperial periods. I will utilize as the starting point for our discussion the history of weaving in the Middle Kingdoms and Wang Yi's 王逸 (ca. 89-158 CE) "Rhapsody on Weaving Women" ("Jifu fu" 機婦賦), a textual example that illustrates a literary vision of the production of fabrics and looms during the Eastern Han dynasty. Despite being a later product than the *Huainanzi*, Wang Yi's poetic illustration of an idealized weaving process succinctly displays many of the points that appear throughout this chapter and, therefore, will be a helpful starting point to discuss and accentuate the strong connection between understandings of the cosmos, weaving, and its sagely discovery that has permeated early Chinese scriptures.

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For a brief discussion of the expression *dao zhi wen*, see footnote 184.

### **3.1 The History and Process of Weaving**

For the purpose of underlining the cultural and ritualistic significance of weaving in early China, let us briefly consider its early history and process. This short narrative will accentuate two important aspects of weaving in early China: first, that this technology significantly advanced around the rise of the Han with the development of complex looms; and secondly that from early on warp-faced weaving techniques dominated the production of silks and other fabrics in early China so that weaving was largely associated with a vertical process.

#### **The Early History of Weaving**

Weaving has a long history in China. Archeologists have found tools such as hand spindles or needles, as well as carved ivory representations of silkworms at Hemudu 河姆渡 in Zhejiang 浙江 province. These finds may serve as indirect evidence for the production of silks for as early as 5000 BCE in the area that later became the Middle Kingdoms.<sup>389</sup> The earliest direct evidence in form of a silk fabric excavated at the site of Qingtaicun 青台村 at Xingyang 滎陽

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For a discussion of the hand spindle from Hemudu, see Chen Weiji, *History of Textile Technology of Ancient China*, Gao Guopei trans. (New York: Science Press, 1992), pp. 23-26. For the Chinese original version of this text, see Chen Weiji 陳維稷, *Zhongguo fangzhi kexue jishu shi: gudai bufen* 中國紡織科學技術史：古代部分 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe 科學出版社, 1984). For a discussion of the carved ivory silkworms found at Hemudu, see Hemudu yizhi kaogudui 河姆渡遺址考古隊, “Zhejiang Hemudu yizhi di erqi fajue de zhuyao shouhuo” 浙江河姆渡遺址第二期發掘的主要收穫, *Wenwu* 文物 (1980.5): 1-15.

county in Henan 河南 dates from around 3630 BCE.<sup>390</sup> Unfortunately, the fabric was already so deteriorated that scholars were not able to draw many conclusions regarding weaving techniques and styles from this example.

Another early find of silk fabrics at Qianshanyang 錢山漾 in present day Zhejiang, however, revealed that the technological know-how during that period was so advanced that weavers were capable of producing fabrics “with a warp density of fifty-three threads per centimeter and a weft density of fifty-nine, [bringing it] close to the specifications of some modern silk fabrics in its compactness.”<sup>391</sup> In that sense, it seems as if there existed a high technological standard regarding the production of silk fabrics for as early as the third millennium BCE.

It is rather certain that these early products were made without drawback looms, a technological tool that is needed to develop high-class silk fabrics. However, early cultures in the region of the Middle Kingdoms apparently had already developed the technology of the stationary loom (*ji* 機) and other weaving devices sometime in the first millennium BCE that

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<sup>390</sup> Zhao Feng 趙豐, *Sichou yishu shi* 絲綢藝術史 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang meishu xueyuan chubanshe 浙江美術學院出版社, 1992), p. 7

<sup>391</sup> Shelagh Vainker, *Chinese Silk: A Cultural History* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 24

For a discussion of the silk fragments from Qianshanyang, see Zhou Kuangming 周匡明, “Qianshanyang can juanpian chutu de qishi” 錢山漾殘絹片出土的啟示, *Wenwu* 文物 (1980.1): 74-77.

finally peaked in the invention of complex looms during the Han dynasty.<sup>392</sup>

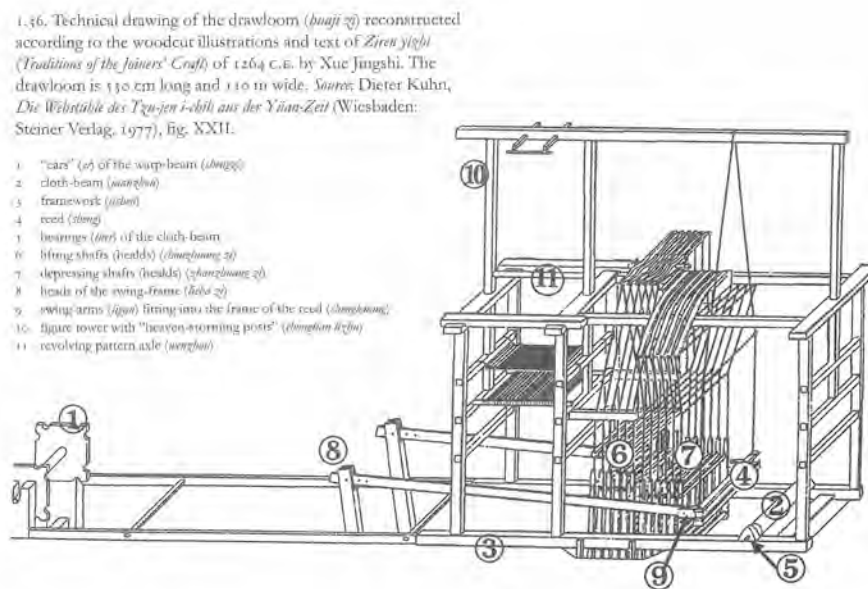


Figure 11: Technical Drawing of a Drawloom<sup>393</sup>

Scholars such as Chen Weiji 陳維稷, for example, have traced the usage of complex looms like the warp sheet loom or the drawback loom with tower (see figure 11) back to the late Warring

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“Also starting in the Han era, complex looms (most likely including the drawloom with harness tower) were set up and operated in large private or state-run weaving workshops, such as the official Three Seasons Tailoring Workshop (*sanfuguan*) in Qi commandery (in today’s Shandong).” (Dieter Kuhn, “Reading the Magnificence of Ancient and Medieval Chinese Silks,” *Chinese Silks*, Dieter Kuhn ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 11)

For a discussion of the development of the spindle-wheel during the Zhou dynasty, see Dieter Kuhn, “The Spindle-Wheel: A Chou Chinese Invention,” *Early China* 5 (1979-80): 14-24. For a discussion of three types of looms at work during the Han dynasty, see Dieter Kuhn, “Silk Weaving in Ancient China: From Geometric Figures to Patterns of Pictorial Likeness,” *Chinese Science* 12 (1995): 90-97.

<sup>393</sup>

Dieter Kuhn, “Reading the Magnificence of Ancient and Medieval Chinese Silks,” p. 61

States and the early imperial period, respectively.<sup>394</sup> In so doing, they suggest that the Middle Kingdoms possessed the latter technology about 1500 years prior to any other culture.<sup>395</sup>

Textual evidence for this development may also be found in Han sources such as the *Huainanzi*.



Figure 12: Detail, Zengzi's Mother Dropping her Weaving Shuttle, Wu Family Shrine<sup>396</sup>

<sup>394</sup> “As early as the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States period, there were already in use in China looms complete with healds and treadles. Between the Qin and the Han dynasties, the oblique warp sheet loom made its appearance; with an ingenious structure and high efficiency, it was widely employed for producing cloth for making the everyday wear of the people. It is not yet known when the loom originated, as there are not enough historical records on which to base a conclusion. However, judging from the pictures on the stone reliefs of the Han dynasty and a number of parts of looms unearthed from the rock-cut tomb at Guixi, Jiangxi Province (Figs. III-5-1—3), the perfection of the oblique warp sheet loom could be traced as far back as the Warring States Period; there cannot be any possible doubt as to its universal employment during the Han dynasty.” (Chen Weiji ed., *History of Textile Technology of Ancient China*, pp. 244-245)

<sup>395</sup> “The earliest non-Chinese and indisputable reference to the drawloom with figure tower dates only as far back as 1376, when Sultan al-Ashraf Sha’ban visited the Dar al-Tiraz (the textile workshop) of Alexandria.” (Dieter Kuhn, “Reading the Magnificence of Ancient and Medieval Chinese Silks,” p. 56)

<sup>396</sup> Detail of a rubbing of the west wall of stone chamber three, Wu family shrine, Eastern Han dynasty, late second century CE, ink on paper, h. 157.4 cm, w. 138.4 cm. Princeton University Art Museum,

In a passage typical for early Chinese texts, the *Huainanzi* describes the liberation of the people from the yoke of nature—i.e. excessive warmth, coldness, wetness, and other natural calamities that may haunt humans—as a result of the development of weaving:

Bo Yu began to make clothes. Silk and hemp he spun into yarn. With [one] hand he held the warps and with his fingers he lifted them. When it was finished, he [had made] a net and gauze. Later generations made looms and sword beaters, warp beams and cloth beams. Therewith they made its use easier and enabled the people to hide their form and handle the cold with it. (*HNZ* 13.2)

伯余之初作衣也，綫麻索縷，手經指挂，其成猶網羅。後世為之機杼勝複以便其用，而民得以揜形御寒。<sup>397</sup>

The *Huainanzi* depicts in this short story the invention of advanced weaving technologies as the outcome of the discovery of woven clothes by the sage Bo Yu 伯余, a legendary minister at the Yellow Emperor's court that frequently is attributed with the creation of weaving. This narrative is one of a set of various etiological myths prevalent throughout early China that explain the existence of sericulture and weaving.<sup>398</sup> By claiming that “later generations made looms and

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Princeton, NJ. For the rubbing, see Cary Y. Liu, Michael Nylan, and Anthony Barbieri-Low eds., *Recarving China's Past*, p. 170. For a discussion of the Wu Family Shrine, see Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

<sup>397</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 422

<sup>398</sup> Beyond the account on Bo Yu, there are several narratives in early China that associate the invention of weaving with diverse figures. One of these myths claims that Leizu 嫫祖 of the Xiling 西陵 clan, the wife of the Yellow Emperor that in later periods would become a silkworm deity, developed the cultivation of silkworms and the production of silks. Sometimes these stories attributed the discovery of sericulture to the Yellow Emperor himself so that several accounts apparently situated this important technological discovery within his court. For a short summary of several of these myths on the birth of sericulture including the myth of the Horse-headed Maiden (Matou niang 馬頭娘), see Peng Hao, “Sericulture and Silk Weaving from Antiquity

sword beaters, warp beams and cloth beams” (後世為之機杼勝複), Liu An’s text seems to point towards the production of more advanced looms and other weaving technologies during the early Western Han dynasty (see figure 12). Thus, it is very likely that the production of silk fabrics had achieved an incredibly high technological standard and cultural importance during the Warring States period and the early Han dynasty unmet by any other culture at that time. In fact, the rise of the literary trope of silk clothes as a symbol for the cultural superiority of the people of the Middle Kingdoms in early Chinese texts seems to reflect their technological advancement in sericulture and weaving, as we will see in chapter 3.3.

This phenomenon of using silks and fabrics as markers for civilizational ranks and hierarchies is also reflected in their utilization in rituals and ceremonies. Already during the Shang dynasty, fabrics occupied the same practical and symbolical space as bronzes, which were used in ancestral worship. As Angela Sheng describes the function of silks, “textiles in China were prized less for their beauty than for their designation of status, rank, authority, and wealth.”<sup>399</sup> Thus, silks pointed towards and expressed societal organization and hierarchy during the Shang dynasty. In other words, they played an important role in the religio-political

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to the Zhou Dynasty,” *Chinese Silks*, Dieter Kuhn ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 68-71.

<sup>399</sup> Angela Sheng, “Why Ancient Silk is Still Gold: Issues in Chinese Textile History,” *Ars Orientalis* 29 (1999): 161-162

system and the rulers' construction of power and governance via rituals during the Shang.<sup>400</sup>

### The Process of Weaving and its Materiality

The common mode of weaving during the late Warring States period and the Han dynasty was the warp-faced compound tabby (*jingxianhua jiawei jing erchong pingwen* 經顯花夾維經二重平紋), a weaving technique unique to the Middle Kingdoms at that time that preserved its predominance until the Tang dynasty (618-907).<sup>401</sup> The tabby is sometimes also called a plain weave since its threads move alternately one up and one down (see figures 13 and 14).

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<sup>400</sup> See Shelagh Vainker, *Chinese Silk: A Cultural History*, pp. 24-26.

<sup>401</sup> According to Dieter Kuhn, “the dominance of the warp in early Chinese weaves may have had to do with the nature of the continuous length of the silk threads, which were generally several hundred meters long [...]. The warp was technically the dominant thread system for the weaving process, so the horizontal loom—equipped with a warp beam that stored the very long silk warp—made optimal use of the material quality of the protein fiber. In contrast, spun wool, linen, and cotton were better suited for weft on looms, which explains the comparatively short length of the warp on the early pegged-out horizontal looms of the Near East and the vertical looms in Europe. In short, the distinct qualities of the raw materials and of the various looms led to the differences in weave-patterning techniques.” (Dieter Kuhn, “Reading the Magnificence of Ancient and Medieval Chinese Silks,” p. 25)

For a discussion of silks with weft effects during the Warring States period and their disappearance during the Han dynasty, see Angela Sheng, “The Disappearance of Silk Weaves with Weft Effects in Early China,” *Chinese Science* 12 (1995): 41-76. In fact, I’d like to suggest that the dominance and perseverance of the warp-faced compound tabby might not only be found in technological reasons or matters of production. It might also be rooted in the prevalent cosmological importance of the warp, silk’s ritualistic function, and weaving’s association with order.



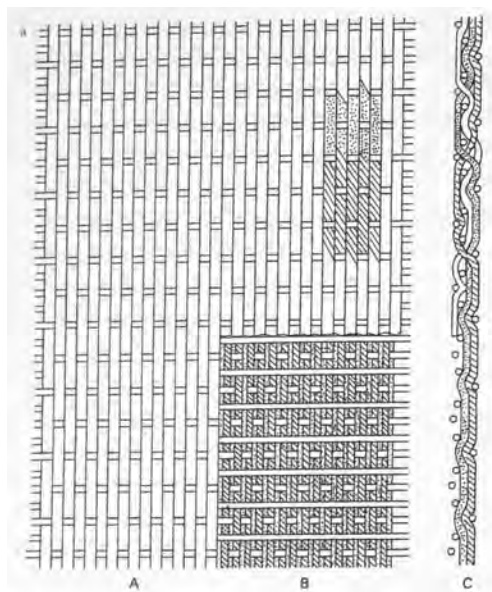


Figure 13: Diagram of Warp-faced Compound Tabby<sup>402</sup>

Contrary to the weft-faced compound tabby (*weixianhua hanxin weierchong pingwen* 緯顯花含心緯二重平紋) that was prevalent in any other part of the world (see figure 14), the warp-faced brocades generated patterns by foregrounding the warp thread (see figure 13).

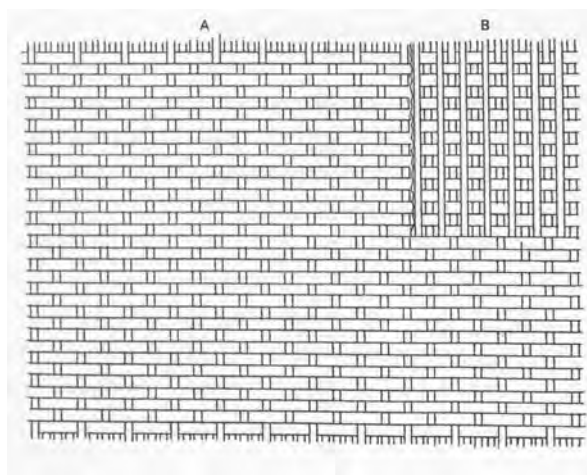


Figure 14: Diagram of Weft-faced Compound Tabby<sup>403</sup>

<sup>402</sup>

Dieter Kuhn, "Reading the Magnificence of Ancient and Medieval Chinese Silks," p. 28

Dorothy K. Burnham defined this Chinese weaving technique during the late Warring States period and early Han dynasty as

a warp-patterned weave with complementary warps of two or more series in one weft. Alternate picks serve to separate the series of warp ends so that only one appears on the face, while the others are kept to the reverse. The remaining picks bind the warp ends. The ground and pattern are formed simultaneously, and the entire surface is covered by warp floats, which hide the weft. If the binding of the warp ends is in tabby, the construction is called warp-faced compound tabby.<sup>404</sup>

As we can see in her depiction, the weaver of a warp-faced fabric produces a silk by laterally inserting the weft into the (often varicolored) warp threads. In so doing the weft accentuates singular threads of the warp that run lengthwise across the loom creating a vertical weaving pattern as reflected in the close-up picture of the Han dynasty “Brocade of Peace and Happiness” (“Anle xiu” 安樂繡) from tomb 8 at Niya 泥雅, Minfeng 民豐 County, Xinjiang 新疆 province (see figure 15). In so doing, the warp-faced compound tabby effectively hides the weft threads as a side effect of the fabric’s patterning emphasizing the warp as the centerpiece of the weaving process.

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<sup>403</sup> Dieter Kuhn, “Reading the Magnificence of Ancient and Medieval Chinese Silks,” p. 28

<sup>404</sup> Dorothy K. Burnham, *Warp and Weft: A Textile Terminology* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1980), p. 172



Figure 15: Close up of the “Brocade of Peace and Happiness” (“Anle xiu” 安樂繡)<sup>405</sup>

This importance of the warp thread for the production of early Chinese fabrics is clearly reflected in traditional explanations of the term *jing* 經. As Xu Shen’s *Shuowen jiezi* from the late first or early second century CE claims, “the warp (*jing*) is weaving” (經：織也).<sup>406</sup> This utilization of the warp (*jing*) as a synecdochal image for the entire weaving process is seemingly

<sup>405</sup> “Brocade of Peace and Happiness” (“Anle xiu” 安樂繡), Han dynasty, 36 cm wide, warp vertical; 176 warps per cm, 20 wefts per cm. Excavated from tomb 8 at Niya 泥雅, Minfeng 民豐 County, Xinjiang 新疆 province in 1995. Xinjiang Institute Of Cultural Relics and Archeology, Urumqi. For a discussion of the “Brocade of Peace and Happiness,” see Li Wenying, “Silk Artistry of the Qin, Han, Wei, and Jin Dynasties,” *Chinese Silks*, Dieter Kuhn ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 115-166.

<sup>406</sup> Xu Shen ed., *Shuowen jiezi*, p. 271b

based on the fact that the vertical warp threads built the backbone of fabrics and were the very ground on which patterns (*wen* 文) appeared in early China. Consequently, early Chinese attributed a significant role to the warp and its verticality, as we will see below in our discussions of the ordering powers of fabrics and their relationship to writing and canonical texts (*jing*).<sup>407</sup>

However, before we start discussing this connection, let's take a look at Wang Yi's early Eastern Han "Rhapsody on Weaving Women" in order to further work out some of the image fields of weaving during the Han. In this literary piece, we find an elaborate illustration of a drawloom and the process of weaving that may help us work out aspects that some people in the early imperial period apparently associated with the production of silks beyond its technological specificity.

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Interestingly, this association of the warp with weaving seemed to have disappeared during the Tang dynasty when weft-faced fabrics became increasingly popular and when the association of *jing* with canonical texts had been fully lexicalized. See Angela Sheng, "The Disappearance of Silk Weaves," pp. 41-76.

### 3.2 Weaving and the Universe

As is well known, the early Chinese sky had been inhabited by a celestial deity called the Weaving Maiden (Zhinü 織女), which was thought to house in the star Vega.<sup>408</sup> She appears, for example, in the poem “Great East” (“Dadong” 大東) of the *Shijing* (Mao 203) that Wang Yi refers to in his rhapsody below.<sup>409</sup> Later versions of this myth narrate the story of a maiden that toils herself working a loom in order to produce celestial robes out of cloudy silk. In that sense, we find an association of weaving with the sky in this myth that parallels the cocoon of a silkworm with the clouds around the Weaving Maiden’s domicile in the sky.<sup>410</sup>

This connection between early Chinese understandings of weaving and the cosmos clearly manifested in the vocabulary that texts used to depict celestial phenomena. As mentioned in

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<sup>408</sup> “In view of the pervasiveness of the cordage and weaving motifs in cosmology it is surely not happenstance that it is precisely the bright star Vega and not some other that came to be identified as the *Weaving Maid* (*zhi nü*), since it is that very star that plays the pivotal role in marking this all-important alignment—the *Weaving Maid’s Pendant* (*zhi nü zhi ji*). The myth about the *Weaving Maid* star’s tryst arose from this astro-calendrical role.” (David W. Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China: Conforming Earth to Heaven* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 376)

<sup>409</sup> “In Heaven there is the Han river (i.e. the milky way). It supervises us with light. It crawls to the Weaving Maiden that passes through seven stages all day.”  
維天有漢、監亦有光。跂彼織女、終日七襄。(Kong Yingda 孔穎達 ed., *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義, *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, Ruan Yuan 阮元 ed. (Taipei: Yiwen yinshu guan yinhang 藝文印書館印行, 2001): 2.440a)

<sup>410</sup> For a discussion of the myths of the Weaving Maiden, see Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction*, pp. 165-167.

my introduction, Edward Schafer pointed already to the close relationship between “traditional Chinese vocabulary of basic features of the cosmos [and] the language of threads, textiles, weaving, cords, and nets.”<sup>411</sup> Such an astronomical understanding of weaving, which seems to be mirrored in the mythological stories about Zhinü and diverse Daoist practices such as “Walking the [Dipper] Top-Cord” (*bugang* 步綱) or visual illustrations of star constellations as knotted net-ropes (*gangji* 綱紀),<sup>412</sup> appears prominently in Wang Yi’s rhapsody (see figure 16).

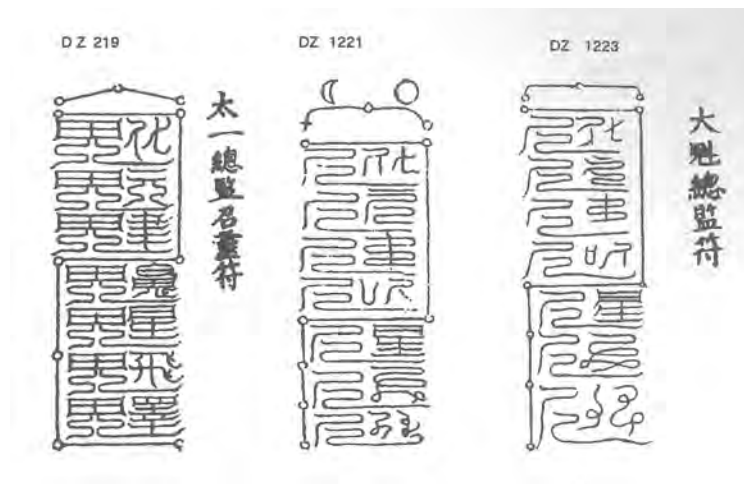


Figure 16: Three Versions of the *Spirit Talisman of Summoning Taiyi's Supervisor General*<sup>413</sup>

<sup>411</sup> For the quotation from Edward H. Schafer’s *Pacing the Void*, see page 22.

<sup>412</sup> For a discussion of the utilization of weaving terminology in early Chinese understandings of the sky, see David W. Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, pp. 364-382. For a discussion of the practice of *bugang*, see Poul Andersen, “The Practice of *Bugang*,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 5 (1989): 15-53. For a discussion of the visual illustrations of star constellations in the writing of *fu* in form of dots connected by a line, see Monika Drexler, *Daoistische Schriftmagie: Interpretationen zu den Schriftamuletten Fu im Daozang* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994), pp. 85-95.

<sup>413</sup> Monika Drexler, *Daoistische Schriftmagie*, p. 191

Despite their different looks, the three *Spirit Talisman of Summoning Taiyi's Supervisor General* (*Taiyi zongjian*

This poetic piece, which Wang Yi—a native of the famous silk city Yicheng 宜城 in Hubei 湖北 province—might have written while holding the position of palace attendant (*shizhong* 侍中) between 126-144 CE, explicates the process of weaving, as well as the creation and set up of a loom in cosmic terms. In order to fully work out the cosmological basis of his illustration of the drawloom, I present here the main part of the rhapsody, which is of major interest for my argument about the cosmological underpinnings of weaving in the early imperial period.

### “The Rhapsody on Weaving Women” (“Jifu fu” 機婦賦)

素樸醇一	The simple and uncarved block, pure and united <sup>414</sup>	?jit	質部
野處穴臧	In the fields it dwelt, in the caves it hid away	tsaŋ	陽部
上自太始	It soared up from the Ultimate Beginning <sup>415</sup>	hrjəŋx	之部

*zhao lingfu* 太一總監召靈符) basically consist of the same elements: On top, we find a depiction of the Three Terraces (*santai* 三台), a star constellation of six stars (two stars per *tai*) beneath the bowl of the Big Dipper (*beidou* 北斗) that was thought to have the powers to avert calamity and to heal beings—and optionally the sun and moon completing the Three Luminaries (*sanguang* 三光). Below this first layer, we find the Big Dipper that encloses the hidden scripture of the *fu*. Each enclosed character consists of a calligraphic version of the radical “demon” (*gui* 鬼) and another character. For an example of the representation of the Big Dipper in such a top-cord style, see page 166.

<sup>414</sup> For a reference to the uncarved block (*pu* 樸), see footnote 366.

<sup>415</sup> The *Huainanzi*'s chapter on “Heavenly Patterns” (*HNZ* 3.1.) begins with a brief depiction of the Ultimate Beginning (*taizhao* 太昭), which I interpret as an alternate title for *taishi*. It depicts this stage as a primordial chaos before anything with form had been created: “When Heaven and Earth were yet unformed, all was ascending and flying, diving and delving. Thus it was called Ultimate Beginning. Ultimate Beginning produced Nebulous Void. Nebulous Void produced space-time; space-time produced *qi*.” (天墜未形，馮馮翼翼

下說羲皇	And went down to explain [weaving] to Augustlord [Fu] Xi	<i>gwan</i>	陽部
帝軒龍躍	The thearch aloft and the dragon jumping up	<i>rakw</i>	藥部
庶業是昌	The court ladies' occupation, oh so bright	<i>thjan</i>	陽部
俯覃聖恩	Bending down they spread the sage's kindness	<i>ʔən</i>	文部
仰覽三光	Facing upward they watched the Three Luminaries <sup>416</sup>	<i>kwan</i>	陽部
“悟彼織女	“Awakening the weaving maiden	<i>rjagx</i>	魚部
終日七襄”	That passes through seven stages all day” <sup>417</sup>	<i>fsjan</i>	陽部
爰制布帛	They regulated, then, the cottons and silks	<i>brak</i>	魚部
始垂衣裳	And began to hang down clothes and dresses	<i>djan</i>	陽部
於是取衡山之孤桐	Hence, they obtained <i>gutong</i> -trees of Hengshan	<i>duŋ</i>	東部
南岳之洪樟	And the vast camphor of the Southern peak	<i>tjan</i>	陽部
結靈根於盤石	They joined the spirit root with a great rock	<i>djiak</i>	魚部
託九層於岩傍	And entrusted the nine layers with a stone	<i>ban</i>	陽部
性條暢以端直	With the thread, they smoothly straighten it	<i>drjak</i>	之部
貫雲表而剖倉	They thread through the cloudy surface, carefully storing it	<i>tshan</i>	陽部
儀鳳晨鳴翔其上	Delicate phoenixes calling out in the morning hover above it	<i>djanx</i>	陽部
怪獸羣萃而陸梁	Extraordinary beasts flock and assemble all over the place	<i>ljan</i>	陽部
於是乃命匠人	Hence, they ordered the carpenter/craftsman	<i>njin</i>	真部
潛江奮驤	To forcefully dash ahead [like] hidden rivers	<i>sjan</i>	陽部
踰五嶺	They climbed above the Five Peaks	<i>ljij</i>	耕部
越九岡	[And] surpassed the nine crests	<i>kan</i>	陽部
斬伐剖析	They went on a punitive expedition to fell trees	<i>sik</i>	佳部
擬度短長	And estimated their length	<i>trjanx</i>	陽部
勝復迴轉	Warp-beam and cloth-beam revolve and turn <sup>418</sup>	<i>trjuanx</i>	元部

，洞洞瀾瀾，故曰太昭。道始生虛廓，虛廓生宇宙，宇宙生氣; Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 79)

<sup>416</sup> The Three Luminaries (*sanguang* 三光) refer to the sun, the moon, and the stars [sometimes also the Big Dipper (*beidou*) instead]. See Poul Andersen, “Lu Shizong,” *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Fabrizio Pregadio ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 716.

<sup>417</sup> This is a citation from the *Shijing* (*Mao* 203) mentioned above that includes a reference to the Weaving Maiden. See Kong Yingda ed., *Maoshi zhengyi*, 2.440a.



剋像乾形	Their carvings are in image of heavenly <i>qian</i> -forms <sup>419</sup>	<i>gin</i> 耕部
大匡淡泊	The big framework is light and calm <sup>420</sup>	<i>bak</i> 魚部
擬短則川平	Compared to the short [parts] it is a peaceful river	<i>bjian</i> 元部
光為日月	The shafts/luminaries are the sun and moon <sup>421</sup>	<i>njuat</i> 祭部
蓋取昭明	For they obtain brilliance and brightness	<i>mjian</i> 陽部
三軸列布	The three round-beams set the cloth in order	<i>pagh</i> 魚部
上法太星	Above they model after [the three] terraces of [six] stars <sup>422</sup>	<i>sin</i> 耕部
兩驥齊首	The two steeds with their heads even	<i>hrjagwx</i> 幽部
儼若將征	appear to be soldiers setting out on a campaign <sup>423</sup>	<i>trjagx</i> 之部
方圓綺錯	Square and round, beautiful and elegant <sup>424</sup>	<i>tshagh</i> 魚部
微妙窮奇	fine and profound, extremely remarkable	<i>kjar</i> 歌部
蟲禽品獸	Insects, birds, things, and beasts	<i>hrjagwh</i> 幽部
物有其宜	All beings have their proper place on it <sup>425</sup>	<i>njjar</i> 歌部
兔耳踞伏	The Rabbit Ears crouch and bend down	<i>bjagh</i> 之部
若安若危	Partly leisurely and partly cautious	<i>njjar</i> 歌部
猛犬相守	The Fierce Dogs guard each other	<i>hrjagwx</i> 幽部
竄身匿蹄	Running away, their bodies hide their paws	<i>dig</i> 佳部
高樓雙峙	The high double-posted tower stands tall	<i>drjagx</i> 之部

<sup>418</sup> Revolving and turning alludes to the motionless movements of the Way. See my discussion of the wheel on pages 167-181.

<sup>419</sup> *Qian*-forms refer to the *Yijing*'s first trigram, which represents full *yang* and Heaven.

<sup>420</sup> Gao You uses the same expression in relationship to *wuwei* in its description of the *Huainanzi*. It seems as if *danbo* alludes to the non-active actions of the Way. For my discussion of Gao You's preface, see pages 99-108.

<sup>421</sup> The passage plays here with the meaning of *guang* 光 as rays and its variation loom shaft (*kuang* 紃).

<sup>422</sup> I follow here Dieter Kuhn's reading of *taixing* 太星 as *santai liuxing* 三台六星.

<sup>423</sup> For a discussion of military imagery and weaving in the *Shijing*, see pages 266-269.

<sup>424</sup> The expression square and round (*fangyuan* 方圓) often refers to the iconic illustration of Heaven and Earth. See my discussion on pages 161-164.

<sup>425</sup> Dieter Kuhn interprets the animal names as references to parts of the loom. In my opinion, there is no need to fixate the meaning of the animal imagery by translating these terms with their English counterparts since one would lose the natural and cosmic imagery that permeates the entire rhapsody.

下臨清池	Facing down, there is a clear pond	<i>dar</i>	歌部
遊魚銜餌	Roaming fish swallow bait	<i>njagh</i>	之部
灑灑其陂	Splashing and merging with its pool	<i>pjiar</i>	歌部
鹿盧並起	The Deer Vessel also rises	<i>khjagx</i>	之部
織繳俱垂	The fine [harness cords] all hang down	<i>djar</i>	歌部
宛若星圖	Like a chart of the stars	<i>pjiagx</i>	之部
屈膝推移	Bending and kneeling it moves back and forth	<i>rar</i>	歌部
一往一來	Once going, once coming	<i>lag</i>	之部
匪勞匪疲	Neither tiring nor exhausting	<i>bjiar</i>	歌部
於是暮春代謝	Hence, during spring's seasonal change <sup>426</sup>	<i>rjiagh</i>	魚部
朱明達時	In vermilion brightness progressed the season	<i>djag</i>	之部
蠶人告訖	The Silkworm People announced the end	<i>kjat</i>	微部
舍罷獻絲	Stopping and closing the offering of silk	<i>sjag</i>	之部
或黃或白	Either yellow or white	<i>brak</i>	魚部
密蠋凝脂	The secret scorpion congeals to grease	<i>krjid</i>	脂部
纖纖靜女	Fine, slender, chaste women	<i>nrjagx</i>	魚部
經之絡之	They warped it and enmeshed it	<i>tjag</i>	之部
爾乃窈窕淑媛	Thus, they were graceful and refined, then	<i>gwjanh</i>	元部
美色貞怡	Beautifully pleasant and content	<i>ræg</i>	之部
解鳴佩	They untied the girdle jades	<i>bəgh</i>	之部
釋羅衣	Released the silken clothes	<i>?jad</i>	微部
披花幕	Opened the flowery curtain	<i>mak</i>	魚部
登神機	Ascended the Spirit Machine	<i>kjid</i>	脂部
乘輕杼	Rode airily the loom	<i>drjagx</i>	魚部
覽床帷	And observed the chassis only	<i>rwjid</i>	微部
動搖多容	Moving and swaying many forms	<i>grjun</i>	東部
俯仰生姿 <sup>427</sup>	Up and down, they brought to life innate beauty	<i>tsjid</i>	脂部

<sup>426</sup> The last month of spring (*muchun* 暮春) marks the seasonal change (*daixie* 代謝) from spring to summer.

<sup>427</sup> Wang Yi 王逸, "Jifu fu" 機婦賦, *Quan Hanfu* 全漢賦, Fei Zhen'gang 費振剛, Hu Shuangbao 胡雙寶, and Zong Minghua 宗明華 ed. (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 1993), pp. 514-516

Dieter Kuhn focused in his partial translation and interpretation of Wang Yi's *fu* on its (technical) depiction of a loom that fills the second part of the rhapsody. According to his interpretation, the majority of the rhapsody's animal-like terminology refers to specific parts of a loom: the two steeds (*liangji* 兩驥) refer to the two fork-shaped heads (*lichazi* 立叉子) of the swing-frame (*woniuzi* 臥牛子 or *mianniumu* 眠牛木); the rabbit ears (*tuer* 兔耳) are the bearings of the cloth-beam; the fierce dogs (*mengquan* 猛犬) are the two swing arms of the loom; or the deer vessel (*lulu* 鹿盧) is a revolving pattern axle. Especially the mentioning of "the high double-posted tower standing tall" (*gaolou shuangzhi* 高樓雙峙) served him as evidence that some sort of drawback loom with tower must have existed during the early Eastern Han dynasty. Thus, Dieter Kuhn used Wang Yi's rhapsody as a quasi-historical document that may illuminate and inform our knowledge of weaving technologies that existed during the Eastern Han dynasty.

However, the poem is not only rife with animal imagery reflecting technological aspects of weaving tools prevalent at this time.<sup>428</sup> As any reader of the entire piece realizes, it is also

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Rhymes are marked according to Li Fanggui's 李方桂 (1902-1987) reconstruction of ancient Chinese pronunciations (*shanggu yin* 上古音). Parts of this translation are based on Dieter Kuhn's rendering of the "Jifu fu." For his discussion and partial translation that focuses on the rhapsody's illustration of textile technologies, see Dieter Kuhn, "Silk Weaving in Ancient China," pp. 97-102.

<sup>428</sup>

In fact, it is interesting that Dieter Kuhn does not reflect upon the reasons behind the

abundant with terminology related to celestial bodies, as well as allusions to cosmic journeys. Similar to texts such as the *Elegies of Chu's* (*Chuci* 楚辭) “Far Roaming” (“Yuanyou” 遠遊) or Sima Xiangru’s 司馬相如 (179-117 BCE) “Rhapsody on the Shanglin [Imperial Parks]” (“Shanglin fu” 上林賦), it narrates a trip through the universe—a common feature of Han rhapsodies.<sup>429</sup> The text moves from the origins of the world, represented in the uncarved block (*pu* 樸) and the Ultimate Beginning (*taishi* 太始), via the sky and Heaven, illustrated by the Three Luminaries (*sanguang* 三光) and the Weaving Maiden (*Zhinü* 織女), to Hengshan 衡山—the Southern Peak (*Nanyue* 南嶽)—and the human realm. By narrating such a journey from the origin of the universe to the realm of the Myriad Beings, the rhapsody illustrates weaving and its accompanied tools as a cosmic product that had been revealed to Fu Xi (*xia shuo* Xi

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technological terminologies’ references to animals. As we will see below, Wang Yi depicts the loom as a universe explaining in some sense his use of images of animals. Like the Myriad Beings populating the world, he construes the technological parts as the inhabitants of the microcosmic loom.

<sup>429</sup> For the original text of “Far Roaming,” see Wang Yi 王逸 and Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 eds., “Yuanyou” 遠遊, *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1983), pp. 163-75. For a translation of “Yuanyou,” see Stephen Owen ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), pp. 176-181. For the original text of the “Rhapsody on the Shanglin [Imperial Parks],” see Xiao Tong 蕭統 ed., *Wenxuan* 文選 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshu guan 藝文印書館, 1959), pp. 83a-87b. For a translation of Sima Xiangru’s “Shanglin fu,” see David Knechtges trans., *Wenxuan or Selections of Refined Literature: Volume Two: Rhapsodies on Sacrifices, Hunting, Travel, Sightseeing, Palaces and Halls, Rivers and Seas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 73-114. For discussion of the epideictic features of Han rhapsodies, see David Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.-A.D. 18)* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 1-43 and Gong Kechang, *Studies on the Han Fu*, David Knechtges trans. (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1997), pp. 80-92.

*huang* 下說羲皇) and subsequently his court ladies.<sup>430</sup> Consequently, Wang Yi seems to associate the production of fabrics and the setup of the drawloom directly with the genesis of the entire universe, an aspect Dieter Kuhn brushed off with only a few sentences in his interpretation.<sup>431</sup>

After the explication of the relationship between weaving and the cosmos and the illustration of the technology's primordial origin, the rhapsody continues to visualize how the court of Fu Xi built the first looms. In this vision, auspicious omens such as delicate phoenixes (*yifeng* 儀鳳) and extraordinary beasts (*guaishou* 怪獸), i.e. auspicious animals that frequently appear on designs of silks during the Han dynasty,<sup>432</sup> accompany the production marking the realization of this technology as a miraculous (*miao* 秒) and sagely act.<sup>433</sup> As part of the loom's

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<sup>430</sup> As we may see in the passage from the *Lüshi chunqiu*, most cultural inventions were perceived to be sagely acts. See pages 263-264. In fact, most of the cultural inventions were construed as cosmic revelations. For the example of agriculture as a revelation from the cosmos to Hou Ji 后稷, see the poem "Giving Birth to the People" ("Shengmin" 生民; Mao 245) in Kong Yingda ed., *Maoshi zhengyi*, 2.591b-594a.

<sup>431</sup> Wang Yi's interpretive move to associate the loom with Heaven might be informed by the trope of the Heavenly Mechanisms (*tianji* 天機) that keep beings and the world running as reflected in texts like the *Zhuangzi*. For passages in the *Zhuangzi* that discuss the Heavenly Mechanisms as movers of living beings, see the chapters "Great Ancestral Master" ("Dazongshi" 大宗師) and "The Floods of Autumn" ("Qiushui" 秋水) in Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.103 and 3.261-262.

<sup>432</sup> For examples of such silks from the Warring States period and Han Dynasty that display various auspicious animal motifs, see Dieter Kuhn ed., *Chinese Silks*, pp. 94-95, 98-99, 102-111, 122-123, 138, 148-153, 160, and 165.

<sup>433</sup> Dong Zhongshu, for example, wrote in his *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*

construction, the text claims that carpenters—a figure possibly associated with the literary trope of liminal characters such as woodcutters (*fengzi* 樵子) in early Chinese literature on ascendancy seekers (*xianren* 仙人)—would gather materials from all under Heaven (*tianxia* 天下) by saying that they “climbed above the Five Peaks” (*yu wu yue* 踰五嶺) and “surpassed the nine crests” (*yue jiu gang* 越九岡).<sup>434</sup> In that sense, Wang Yi depicts both the revelation and the production of looms as acts that include and pervade the entire universe.

This cosmic understanding is directly reflected in the workings and parts of the loom that the carpenters apparently produced. As Dieter Kuhn observed, “the operation of the loom is

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(*Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露), “When the Five Emperors and Three Kings governed, [...] Heaven sent down sweet dew on their behalf. Vermillion grasses came to life; sweet springs issued forth; winds and rains were timely; excellent millet flourished. The male and female phoenix and the *qilin* wandered in the suburbs.” (Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major trans., *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, pp. 132-133)

五帝三王之治天下[...]天為之下甘露，朱草生，醴泉出，風寸時，嘉禾興，鳳凰麒麟游於郊。(Liu Dianjue et al. eds., *Chunqiu fanlu zhuzi syoyin*, pp. 14-15)

For a discussion of extraordinary animals as portents of (dynastic) change, see Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 165-238 and Tiziana Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China: Han, Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties* (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2001), pp. 25-112. For a famous example of such a cosmic response that foreshadows the exitus of a sage in form of the appearance of a *qilin* 麒麟 prior to Kongzi’s death, see footnote 154. For a pictorial representation of this scene, see Julia K. Murray, “Illustrations of the Life of Confucius: Their Evolution, Functions, and Significance in Late Ming China,” *Artibus Asiae* 57.1/2 (1997): 101.

<sup>434</sup>

For a discussion of the trope of the woodcutter, see James Crump, *Songs from Xanadu: Studies in Mongol-dynasty Song-poetry (san-ch’ü)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), pp. 81-99. For an example of a carpenter in the *Zhuangzi*’s “Understanding Life” (“Dasheng”) chapter that performs the practice of *wuwei* before “entering the mountainous forests to observe the natural disposition of Heaven” (入山林，觀天性) and gather materials for a bellstand, see Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.289-290.

often rendered in terms taken from astronomy. Thus the rhapsody relates the Three Luminaries (*sanguang* 三光), sun, moon, and stars”<sup>435</sup> not only to its production and the revelation of the technology but also to the loom itself: “the shafts/lights are the sun and moon” (*guang wei ri yue* 光為日月) and “the three round-beams [...] model after the three terraces of the [six] stars” (三軸[...]上法太星).<sup>436</sup> Moreover, the loom’s carvings resemble *qian*-forms (*ke xiang qianxing* 剋像乾形) clearly referring to trigram Nr. 1 in the *Yijing* that represents full *yang* and Heaven. The *Classic of Changes* and its “Tuan Commentary” (“Tuan Zhuan” 象傳) explicate *qian* as follows:

*Qian* is the origin and prosperity, benefitting divination. [The “Tuan Zhuan” says:] Great is the beginning of *qian*. The Myriad Beings it helps to begin and then it unites Heaven. The clouds are moving and rain is distributed [due to it]. Things and beings flow in form, [and it] greatly shines from beginning to the end. The Six Roles each season come to completion; each season [*qian*] mounts the six dragons in order to ride Heaven. The way of *qian* is transformation. For each it straightens out birth and the last call, protecting and merging great harmony. Only then it is benefitting divination. Head comes out of all beings; the myriad countries all are peaceful.

乾：元亨，利貞。[象傳曰：]大哉乾元，萬物資始，乃統天。雲行雨施，品物流形。大明始終，六位時成，時乘六龍以御天。乾道變化，各正性命，保合大和，乃利貞。首出庶物，萬國咸寧。<sup>437</sup>

The *Yijing* depicts in this passage the first hexagram in four characters as origin and prosperity (*yuan heng* 元亨) and as benefits and divination (*li zhen* 利貞). The “Tuan Commentary”

<sup>435</sup> Dieter Kuhn, “Silk Weaving in Ancient China,” p. 99

<sup>436</sup> Dieter Kuhn, “Silk Weaving in Ancient China,” p. 99

<sup>437</sup> Kong Yingda ed., *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.8a-10b

interprets this terse illustration of the hexagram in terms of an ordering faculty that keeps the universe turning. The *qian* trigram according to the “Tuan zhuan” helps the Myriad Beings to exist and unites Heaven. It organizes the weather and the seasons and in that sense expresses the Way and her transforming and creative powers. It seems as if Wang Yi refers here in his depiction of the loom exactly to the transformative and ordering powers that the “Tuan Commentary” attributes to *qian*. Like the hexagram that according to the “Commentary” moves the clouds, distributes rain, and keeps the seasons running while transforming the Myriad Beings, the loom would create a fabric by transforming silken raw material into a woven pattern evoking associations to Zhinü’s production of celestial robes out of cloud cocoons.

In addition, we have seen in Dieter Kuhn’s discussion that the rhapsody does not only utilize the celestial but also the animal world to illustrate parts of the loom. By using celestial and terrestrial beings for its poetic depiction of the loom, Wang Yi apparently intends to construe this technology as a replication of the entire cosmos, of Heaven and Earth (*tiandi* 天地). Thus, we may conclude that the myth of Zhinü, Wang Yi’s rhapsody, and the *Huainanzi*’s construction of the sage and the Way as weavers (see chapter 2.3) all reflect a vision of cosmic processes as acts of weaving that seems to be prevalent during the early imperial period.



### 3.3 Weaving, Ordering, and the Sages' Discovery of Fabrics

Frequently, early Chinese texts evoke ideas of politics, order, and taxonomization in their illustrations of weaving.<sup>438</sup> As we have seen in the history of weaving, silks and fabrics often served as markers that define and order ranks and roles during rituals in the Shang dynasty.<sup>439</sup>

This association of weaving and fabrics with ordering apparently prevailed well into the Warring States period and the Han dynasty.<sup>440</sup> Bret Hinsch explains this apparent continuity with the

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<sup>438</sup> “*Wenzhang* is not the words themselves, but a quality of both order and brilliance that distinguishes them from other, ordinary verbal expressions. Wherever the term *wenzhang* means something concrete – that is, beyond a “refined” or “patterned” appearance in general – in Warring States writings, it relates to ritual forms (including a well-ordered way of speaking), and in particular to textile ornament and military/ritual insignia on pennants and blazons.” (Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transition of *Wen* in Early China,” *T’oung Pao* 87.1/3 (2001): 56-57)

<sup>439</sup> For an elaborate discussion of the ways in which fabrics and their ornamentation reflect ranks and social status in early China, see Martin Powers, *Pattern and Person: Ornament, Society, and Self in Classical China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 1-159. For my passage on silks and fabrics as markers of ranks in the Shang dynasty, see pages 240-241.

<sup>440</sup> The *Record of Rites*’ (*Liji* 禮記) chapter on “Ritual Tools” (“Liqi” 禮器) contains following passage that clearly reflects the importance of clothes as a way to reflect and manifest social rank:

“In ritual there is that which uses patterns to express rank: the Son of Heaven [wears] the dragon patterned ceremonial dress; the lords [wear] the black and white patterned sacrificial robes; the great men [wear] the black and green patterned sacrificial robes; the soldiers/officials (*shi*) [wear] dark dresses with light-red under-garments. [...] This is that through which patterns make ranks.”

禮有以文為貴者：天子龍袞，諸侯黼，大夫黻，士玄衣纁裳 [...] 此以文為貴也。(Kong Yingda ed., *Liji zhushu*, 5.455b)

For further discussions of clothes as an expression of social rank, see the “Jade-bead Pendants” (“Yuzao” 玉藻) chapter in Kong Yingda ed., *Liji zhushu*, 5.543a-574b. For the importance of colored garments such as bluegreen (*qing* 青), red (*zhu* 朱), yellow (*huang* 黃), white (*bai* 白), and black (*hei* 黑) in relationship to the Emperor’s

help of the cultural importance various texts attributed to silken products. He argues that early Chinese historical writings commonly contrasted the silk wearing sphere of the Middle Kingdoms to fur- or sky-clad “barbarian” tribes at the peripheries of the empire:

cloth making was an important cultural symbol heavily laden with meaning. Not only was it used to construct virtuous female identity, but it was also seen more broadly as a distinguishing characteristic of civilization in general. According to legend, textile technology was bestowed upon the Chinese by the mythic Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝) and his consort Leizu 嫫祖 as one of the earliest steps on the path to civilization. Accordingly, the historians of early China saw the ability to make cloth from hemp and silk as a primary distinction between civilized [and well-ordered, ann. by the author] people and savages.<sup>441</sup>

According to Hinsch’s analysis, early Chinese texts used weaving and the production of clothes as a marker for civility and societal order. While the “chaotic,” “uncivilized,” and peripheral “barbarian” tribes are illustrated as not having developed the technological skills to produce appropriate and fitting clothes for the naturally naked humans, early Chinese texts mention several cultural heroes that had already liberated the population of the Middle Kingdoms from this stage of “animal-like” living.

Besides very few texts such as the *Zhuangzi* and the *Huainanzi* that generally depict the

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“Monthly Ordinances” (“Yueling” 月令), see Kong Yingda ed., *Liji zhushu*, 5.285a, 5.306b, 5.322a, 5.323b, and 5.341a. For a discussion of clothes as an expression of proper ritualistic behavior and virtue, see chapter 10 of the *Analects* in Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 ed., *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1954), 1.208-219.

<sup>441</sup> Bret Hinsch “Textiles and Female Virtue in Early Imperial Chinese Historical Writing,” *Nan Nü* 5.2 (2003): 182

creation of technologies as a problematic alienation away from a virtuous, primordial age (*zhide zhi shi* 至德之世), these celebratory narratives of cultural heroes and their inventions permeated several late Warring States and Han dynasty texts.<sup>442</sup> In the chapter on “Verbalizing Transgressions” (“Ciguo” 辭過) from the *Mozi*, a text posthumously attributed to Mo Di 墨翟 (fl. late fifth century BCE), we find such a specimen. It illustrates the sagely development of houses, clothes, cooking, transportation, and monogamy as ways to liberate humans from the dangers of wilderness. Regarding clothes and the production of fabric, the chapter specifically states:

At the time when they did not know how to make clothes, people of the past were clad in furs and carried hay. In winter, the clothes were not light but warm. In the summer they were not light but cool. The sagely kings thought that they would not fit the disposition (*qing*) of the people. Therefore, he taught women to spin silk and hemp and to weave cloth and linen in order to make clothing for the people. [...] The sages made their clothes just to fit their stature and size, and not for the purpose of pleasing the senses or to dazzle the common people. In that age, [...] the people had sufficient means of livelihood in their home to meet drought or flood, dearth or famine. Why? Since they understood the needs of self-support and paid little attention to external appearance. So, the people

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For passages in the *Zhuangzi* that criticize the invention of human technologies and virtues such as benevolence (*ren* 仁) and righteousness (*yi* 義), see parts of the chapters “Horses' Hoofs” (“Mati” 馬蹄), “The Way of Heaven” (“Tiandao” 天道), “The Floods of Autumn” (“Qiushui” 秋水), and “Robber Zhi” (“Dao Zhi” 盜跖) in Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.149-154, 3.212-214, 3.259-261, and 3.426-433. For a discussion of the *Huainanzi*'s critical stance towards the invention of technologies by the sages and the degeneracy of human history, see Michael J. Puett, “Sages, Creation, and the End of History in the *Huainanzi*,” pp. 269-277. For a discussion of the *Zhuangzi*'s vision on wilderness as the ideal of human rulership, see Tobias Benedikt Zürn, “Agricultural Imagery, Governance, and (De-)Cultivation in the *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*,” forthcoming.

were frugal and orderly and the ruler was thrifty and easily supported. [...] The present rulers are quite different from this when they make their clothes. [...] They violently rob people's wealth of clothes and foods in order to have elaborately embroidered and gorgeous garments. [...] Women are employed to make the embroidery and men to do the carving and therewith make the dresses for the body. [...] Their making of clothes is not for the body. It is all made to look pretty. Therewith, the people will be licentious, devious, and hard to govern. The nobility will be extravagant, wasteful and will hardly be persuaded. [...] If one wants the kingdom to be without chaos, it cannot be achieved, then. If the rulers sincerely desire order in all under Heaven and hate it to be in disorder, they cannot do without regulating the making of clothes.

古之民，未知為衣服時，衣皮帶芟，冬則不輕而溫，夏則不輕而清。聖王以為不中人之情，故作誨婦人治絲麻，楮布絹，以為民衣。[...]聖人之為衣服，適身體和肌膚而足矣。非榮耳目而觀愚民也。當是之時，[...]民衣食之財，家足以待旱水凶饑者，何也？得其所以自養之情，而不感於外也。是以此民儉而易治，其君用財節而易贍也。[...]當今之主，其為衣服則與此異矣 [...]暴奪民衣食之財，以為錦繡文采靡曼之衣，[...]女工作文采，男工作刻鏤，以為身服，[...]其為衣服非為身體，皆為觀好，是以此民淫僻而難治，其君奢侈而難諫也。[...]欲國無亂，不可得也。君實欲天下之治而惡其亂，當為衣服不可不節。<sup>443</sup>

The passage describes the technology of making fabrics as one way to free society from the harms caused by the weather. While people of the old who did not know how to make clothes were suffering under heat and cold in the summer or winter, the sagely invention of silken and linen garment provided the people with the means to be fittingly and properly dressed—i.e. efficiently for the season and appropriately for social interactions.<sup>444</sup> In that sense, the *Mozi* presents here weaving as part of a sequence of cultural goods that brought civilization and order to the Middle Kingdoms.

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<sup>443</sup> Sun Yirang ed., *Mozi jiangsu*, 4.18-20

<sup>444</sup> For a passage in the *Liji* that discusses the appropriateness of clothing and its relationship to moral behavior, see the chapter “Long Dress” (“Shenyi” 深衣) in Kong Yingda ed., *Liji zhushu*, 5.963a-965a.

However, the *Mozi* mentions weaving and the other four inventions of houses, cooking, transportation, and monogamy not only to emphasize the importance of implementing the technologies of former cultural heroes and to hail their development. It introduces these examples as a means to criticize contemporaneous elites' exuberance in the production of goods. According to the *Mozi's* depiction, the present rulers (*dangjin zhi zhu* 當今之主) indulged in their houses, cooking, carts, clothes, and the hoarding of women in palaces. Thereby, they deprived their population of women and excessively labored the masses to produce objects furnished with luxurious and unnecessary ornamentations (暴奪民衣食之財，以為錦繡文采靡曼之衣). In so doing, the *Mozi* argues that the ruling class would lead the empire into chaos and distress despite the cultural technologies' generally positive effect on social order (欲國無亂，不可得也). Consequently, we may summarize that the passage construes these technologies including the production of fabrics as a distinguishing characteristic of civilization and a well-ordered state. However, only if the rulers do not exploit the resources for their own lavish life-style and regulate the making of clothes (當為衣服不可不節) and of other cultural goods, the technologies developed by the cultural heroes of the past will be able to effect order and guarantee a harmonious society. In short, the *Mozi* proposes that even a society with all these sagely technologies still depends on the exemplary

character and behavior of the ruler since her/his governing ways impact the entire social fabric.<sup>445</sup>

During the end of the Warring States period, Lü Buwei 呂不韋 and his workshop presented in their *Spring and Autumn of Mister Lü* (*Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋) a similar vision of weaving as an ordering activity. The chapter “On Examining Divisions of Responsibility” (“Shenfenlan” 審分覽), for example, contains a passage that illustrates a clear correlation between politics and weaving. It presents a sequence of technologies developed by former cultural heroes that a sagely ruler would have to implement in order to govern all under Heaven. It states:

Da Nao created the sixty-days-cycle (*jiazi*). Qian Ru created the [auspicious] *poushou* [day that initiated a seventy-six-year period]. Rong Cheng created the calendar. Xi He created divination according to the Sun/day. Shang Yi created divination according to the Moon/month. Hou Yi created divination according to the Sui Star/year. Hu Cao created clothes. Yi Yi created the bow. Zhu Rong created the market. Yi Di created wines. Gao Yuan created houses. Yu Xu created boats. Bo Yi created wells. Chi Yi created the mortar. Cheng Ya created the carts. Han Ai created carriages. Wang Bing created farm cows. Shi Huang created charts. The *Wu*-practitioner with the surname Peng created medicine. The *Wu*-practitioner with the surname Xian created divination sticks. These are the twenty officials through which the sage orders all under Heaven.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> By calling for “Restrain in Expenditures” (“Jieyong” 節用) and “Regulation of Funerals” (“Jiezan” 節葬), the *Mozi* clearly represents one end of the discussion on ornamentation and lavishness of objects and technologies during the Warring States period. Because of Mo Di’s critical stance towards any extravagance, it becomes evident that ornamentation apparently played an important role in the political order and governance during that time.

<sup>446</sup> This translation is loosely based on John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel trans., *The Annals of*

大橈作甲子，黔如作虜首，容成作麻，羲和作占日，尚儀作占月，后益作占歲，胡曹作衣，夷羿作弓，祝融作市，儀狄作酒，高元作室，虞姁作舟，伯益作井，赤冀作臼，乘雅作駕，寒哀作御，王冰作服牛，史皇作圖，巫彭作醫，巫咸作筮，此二十官者，聖人之所以治天下也。<sup>447</sup>

This sequence, in which the *Lüshi Chunqiu* squarely situates the production of clothing and fabrics, moves from the observation of the sky via the production of agricultural and ritualistic goods to geomantic practices. It claims that all of these twenty technologies developed by twenty cultural heroes need to be implemented in a sagely rulership in order to govern all under Heaven (聖人之所以治天下也). Consequently, the *Lüshi Chunqiu* apparently also attributes an important political and ordering faculty to the production of fabrics and clothes.<sup>448</sup>

This discourse claiming that fabrics and political order are intricately related issues clearly manifested in the specific usage of the term warp (*jing* 經) and its variations in early Chinese texts. As Mark Edward Lewis remarks in his *Writing and Authority in Early China*,<sup>449</sup>

Virtually all the characters containing the element *jing* 經 indicate the central element running through something or holding it together, with the associated sense of “strong” and “unbending.” *Jing* in the sense of “warp [of a fabric]” is only a particular version of the broader, overarching

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*Lü Buwei*, p. 420.

<sup>447</sup> Gao You ed., *Lüshi chunqiu*, 6.206

<sup>448</sup> This association clearly manifested, for example, in an inscription commissioned by the first Emperor of the Qin (Qinshi Huangdi). It states that women’s labor—most likely referring to weaving of fabrics—signifies a well-ordered state. For a discussion of the inscription, see Wu Fuzhu 吳福助, *Qinshihuang keshi kao* 秦始皇刻石考 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chuban she 文史哲出版社, 1994), p. 54.

<sup>449</sup> For another discussion of the term *jing*, see Yen-zen Tsai, “*Ching* and *Chuan*: Towards Defining the Confucian Scriptures in Han China (206 BCE-220 CE),” Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1992, pp. 24-57.

meaning. [...] *jing* 經 applied to space indicated making divisions to create order and equity in what would otherwise be chaos. This use of *jing* 經 to indicate dividing lines that establish order or create structure is closely related to its sense as the warp of a fabric.<sup>450</sup>

In Mark Edward Lewis' understanding, early Chinese usages of the term *jing* apparently refer to a fabric's construction of well-ordered patterns via the warp's dividing lines. This idea is important since the Han dynasty is known for its warp-faced compound tabby in which the warp—and not the weft—produces the patterning of a fabric, as we have seen above.<sup>451</sup> Thus, early usages of the character *jing* as a term “to create order and equity” replicate the vision derived from the process of weaving that only the prior setting up of a warp would finally result in and display a harmonious pattern.<sup>452</sup>

Such an understanding of *jing* as an ordering procedure also crystallized in the literary trope of “setting up warps and camps” (*jingying* 經營), an idea that Wang Yi apparently alluded

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<sup>450</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, pp. 297-298

<sup>451</sup> For a brief description of the technique of weaving and its hiding of the weft, see the glossary in Dieter Kuhn ed., *Chinese Silks* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 523.

<sup>452</sup> In my opinion, such a vision of *jing* as the ordering of the world is reflected in the myth of Yu the Great (Da Yu 大禹). As part of controlling the flood, Yu compartmentalized the Middle Kingdoms into Nine Provinces (*jiuzhou* 九州) that later would be abstracted into a grid-like structure demarcating the boundaries of the world (*jingjie* 經界) by Zou Yan 鄒衍 (ca. 305-240 BCE). In other words, Yu established a grid-like or weave-like organization of the Middle Kingdoms and the cosmos in order to pacify these spaces for his people. For a discussion of early Chinese flood myths and their relationship with cosmogonies and the creation of human space by Yu the Great, see Mark Edward Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp. 21-48. For a discussion of the spatial organization of the Middle Kingdoms into the Nine Provinces, see Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, pp. 245-260.



to in his “Rhapsody on Weaving Women” above when he writes, “the two steeds with their heads even/appear to be soldiers setting out on a campaign” (兩驥齊首/儼若將征). The compound *jingying* that several writings from the late Warring States period and early Han dynasty including the *Huainanzi* frequently employ,<sup>453</sup> very likely first manifested in the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), which repeatedly utilizes sericultural and weaving imagery.<sup>454</sup> Several poems in the collection such as “The Jiang and Han [Rivers]” (“Jiang Han” 江漢), “Numinous Platform” (“Ling Tai” 靈臺), “Why is the Grass not Yellow?” (“He cao bu huang” 何草不黃), and “Northern Mountain” (“Bei Shan” 北山) contain the phrase “establishing and managing the Four Quarters” (*jingying sifang* 經營四方). All of them refer to this sentence in instances when they narrate either how soldiers or officials toil themselves for a kingdom or they create a scenario in which an official or an army has already been successful in achieving control and order.<sup>455</sup> Thus, the phrase replicates a twofold usage of soldiers and officials in its imagery that

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<sup>453</sup> The *Huainanzi*, for example, uses variations of this expression. In chapter thirteen (*HNZ* 13.12) “Boundless Discourses” (“Fanlun” 汎論) appears the phrase “rulers that establish and manage ten thousand chariots” (經營萬乘之主; see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 445). Chapter one (*HNZ* 1.4) “Originating the Way” (“Yuandao” 原道) slightly alters it to “establishing and managing the Four Quarters” (*jingying siyu* 經營四隅; see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 9).

<sup>454</sup> For a brief discussion of sericultural imagery in the *Shijing*, see Shelagh Vainker, *Chinese Silk: A Cultural History*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>455</sup> The poem “Jiang Han” from the “Greater Odes” (“Daya” 大雅) section of the *Shijing*, for example, reads as follows:

juxtaposes two actions that later would become associated with civil (*wen* 文) and martial occupations (*wu* 武): the setting up of a warp and/via the establishment of camps.<sup>456</sup>

David W. Pankenier, in fact, argues that the expression *jingying* might not only refer to a literary trope but rather depict the concrete aligning and delimiting of space prior to the construction of a new capital or any other ritualistic structure by astronomers:

In the context of city building, *jing* and *ying* refer to the use of stretched cords to establish the orientation, alignment, and *enceinte* of the pounded-earth footings for the walls and buildings to come. [...] It is worth pointing out here that the same terms derived from the delimiting of physical space are also used figuratively in the broader sense of “rectifying and encompassing” the kingdom as a whole and even in cosmogony. [...] Deploying the “order and delimit” figure to describe the political process of incorporation of new territories into the kingdom—pacification, establishment of boundaries and divisions, promulgation of the royal order initiation of taxation—is particularly apt, since it recapitulates on a macro level the functional use of the binome *jing ying*, to delineate consecrated space on formerly profane ground.<sup>457</sup>

Pankenier suggests that the expression of establishing and managing the Four Quarters as it

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“[Like] the Jiang and Han [rivers] rushing floods; the martial men do sparkle and shine; the setup of a thread of camps in the Four Quarters; we report their completions to the king; The Four Quarters are already at peace; the kingdom is greatly stable; in time there will be no strife; [now] the king’s heart may receive some rest.”

江漢湯湯、武夫洸洸。經營四方、告成于王。四方既平、王國庶定。時靡有爭、王心載寧。(Kong Yingda ed., *Maoshi zhengyi*, 2.685)

<sup>456</sup> This relationship between conquers and the establishment of (ritual) space may be seen in the stories about King Wu of Zhou 周武王 (trad. r. ca. 1046-1043 BCE). He organized or perhaps wove the world together by first conquering the Shang dynasty and then by canonizing the Emperors of the Five Quarters (*wu fang zhi di* 五方之帝). For a discussion of King Wu’s conquers to provide territorial order, see Mark Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare*, pp. 73-83. For a discussion of the role of hunting and violent rites as ways to reorganize and recalibrate cosmic order, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 137-164.

<sup>457</sup> David W. Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, p. 126

appears in the *Shijing* may in fact have had a practical origin in the preparation of sacrificial and ritualistic areas. Thus, *jingying*, which refers to weaving as an ordering process, does also depict the general organization, orientation, and ordering of (ritual) space in early China.

The image of weaving as a process of ordering became such a commonplace idea that the *Conversations in the White Tiger [Hall]* (*Bohutong* 白虎通) whose compilation had traditionally been attributed to Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE) incorporated a closely related version of this image of weaving (*jingwei*) in its partial illustration of the Five Relationships (*wulun* 五倫), a staple of early *ru*-ist communal theory. It refers to a woven net (*jigang* 紀綱) in order to depict social strata:

The three top-cords (*gang*) of a net, what are they called? They are called the ruler and the official; father and son; husband and wife. The six main threads (*ji*), they are called all the various fathers; the older and younger brothers; the clansmen; all the maternal uncles; the teachers; the friends. Therefore, the ruler is the top-cord for the official, the father is the top-cord for the son, [and] the husband is the top-cord for his wife.

三綱者何謂也？謂君臣、父子、夫婦也。六紀者，謂諸父、兄弟、族人、諸舅、師長、朋友也。故君為臣綱，父為子綱，夫為妻綱。<sup>458</sup>

In this passage, the *Bohutong* effectively transplants into its conceptualization of the social body the image of weaving/knotting as an ordering faculty that we had encountered in distinct forms in the *Huainanzi* in chapter 2.3 and in the *Mozi*, the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, and the *Shijing*

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Ban Gu 班固 ed., *Bohu tongyi* 白虎通義, *Yingyin wenyuan ge siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan 台灣商務印書館, 1983): 850.50b

above.<sup>459</sup> It describes the basic set up of the nucleus family and the relationship between the ruler and his subjects as a woven fabric in which the socially higher position (*shang* 上) adopts the guiding and stabilizing role of a net's top-cord (*gang*) for its subordinates (*xia* 下).<sup>460</sup> It argues that society may only achieve order and structure if those below follow the lead of the rulers, fathers, and husbands and connect with their guidance.

But texts such as the *Bohutong* did not only describe the social fabric in weaving terms. In an episode from the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* (*Lienüzhuan* 烈女傳), we encounter in

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<sup>459</sup> According to David W. Pankenier, “By far the most important figure of speech in this regard is *gang ji*, “bring regular order to; govern.” The compound is made up of *gang*, “cord forming the selvedge of a net or textile; and by extension control, maintain in order, direct,” and *ji*. The meaning of *ji* comes from the process of silk production. A crucial step in unwinding the silk from the boiled cocoon is first to find the head-end of the thread. Once that is done the thread can be unwound from the softened cocoon and reeled up smoothly and easily. Similarly, the individual warp threads (*ji*) need to be individually tied onto the loom before beginning to weave. From this, *ji*, “thread-end,” acquired the extended meanings of “to straighten out, put in order,” its most common usage in pre-Qin literature. Later it also came to mean “keep time, temporal record (annals), period of years, sequential, stringing.” (David W. Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, p. 365)

<sup>460</sup> Interestingly, the *Mozi* takes on the image of dyeing in its chapter “On Dyeing” (“Suoran” 所染) to discuss how the socially higher position may be corrupted and coloured by their subordinates and officials. It argues that the wise and careful choice of officials has a stronger impact on the organization of an empire than any form of administration or control of the officers (*zhiguan* 治官) since officials work like dye that change the color of a ruler (“If the [dye] in which one dips [a fabric] changes, its color will also change” 所入者變，其色亦變). In that sense, we may understand this chapter as a play on the idea that weaving—i.e. organizing and controlling the subordinates—is enough to provide order to the empire as we find it in several of the writings above. The *Mozi*'s “Suoran” chapter argues that although a fabric—i.e. the state and/or ruler—might provide general guidance and order, it may only be without “stains” if the dyeing of a fabric—i.e. the officials of the ruler and state—is good. See Sun Yirang ed., *Mozi jiangou*, 4.6-11.

the account on Jing Jiang 敬姜 of the Ji 季 lineage an interesting utilization of the loom as an image to illustrate the workings of the state and governance. In this story, Jing Jiang explains to her son Wen Bo 文伯 who became the prime minister (*xiang* 相) of Lu 魯 how to rule with the help of weaving terminology:

When Wenbo served as [prime] minister in Lu, Jing Jiang told him, “I will tell you how the essentials of ruling a country can be found in [the art of weaving]: everything depends upon the warp! The ‘temple’ is the means by which the crooked is made straight. It must be strong. The temple can therefore be thought of as the general. The reed is the means by which one makes uniform what is irregular and brings into line the unruly. Therefore the reed can be thought of as the director. The ‘hairpin’ is the means by which one organizes the coarse and dense fibers [that have become entangled]. The hairpin can therefore be thought of as the capital grandee. That which can maintain connection without losing control of [the threads] moving inward and those moving outward is the batten. The batten can be thought of as the great envoy. That which pushes and goes out and which pulls and comes back is the heddles. The heddles can be thought of as the commander of the populace within the passes. That which manages [the threads] in numbers great and small is the warp-spacing reed. The warp-spacing reed can be thought of as the clerk of the capital. That which fulfills a key role, travels a long way, is exact, upright, and firm is the cloth-beam. The cloth-beam can be thought of as the prime minister. That which unrolls without limit is the warp-beam. The warp-beam can be thought of as the Three Excellencies.” Wenbo bowed twice and received her teaching.<sup>461</sup>

文伯相魯。敬姜謂之曰：「吾語汝，治國之要，盡在經矣。夫幅者，所以正曲枉也，不可不彊，故幅可以為將。畫者，所以均不均、服不服也，故畫可以為正。物者，所以治蕪與莫也，故物可以為都大夫。持交而不失，出入不絕者，拊也。拊可以為大行人也。推而往，引而來者，綜也。綜可以為關內之師。主多少之數者，均也。均可以為內史。服重任，行遠道，正直而固者，軸也。軸可以為相。舒而無窮者，摘也。摘可以為三公。」文伯再拜受教。<sup>462</sup>

<sup>461</sup> Anne Behnke Kinney trans., *Exemplary Women of Early China: The Lienü Zhuan of Liu Xiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 13

<sup>462</sup> Wang Zhaoyuan 王照圓 ed., *Lienüzhuàn bǔzhù* 列女傳補注, *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, Wang Niansun 王念孫 ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1995-1999):

The entire passage is rife of weaving terms. It uses the organization and workings of the loom to depict the running of the empire. Similar to my analysis above, it claims that the warp is the most important and ordering faculty of both the loom and governance. Thus, it reflects the *Huainanzi's* illustration of the sagely ruler as a warp that we have encountered in chapter 2.3. Moreover, each post in the governance is likened to a part of the loom to illustrate how each official needs to fulfill her/his role in order to make the state apparatus work. Hence, it seems as if this story from the *Lienüzhuan* strongly reflects the way in which visions of ordering, governance, and weaving intersected in the minds of not only Liu An and his workshop but also of various other writers from the Han dynasty.

Unsurprisingly then, the image of weaving as a practice of ordering did not only manifest in political discourses and texts. In fact, it became implemented in Han governance and *realpolitik*. For example, it crystallized in the institutionalization of the Weaving Room (*zhishi* 織室), a studio of high court ladies that produced silks and other fabrics to be used at court rituals. This tradition that Emperor Gaozu 漢高祖 (256-195 BCE) most likely implemented during his reign, was an amalgamation of the east and west workshops of the Qin dynasty and

had apparently been built according to records included in the *Zhouli* and the *Liji*.<sup>463</sup> Moreover, as Dieter Kuhn mentions, imperial “Sacrifices to the Silkworm Spirit were documented starting in Shang times,”<sup>464</sup> proving that sericulture played indeed a significant religio-political role in early China.<sup>465</sup> Thus, various early Chinese texts, as well as the imperial court during the Western Han dynasty perceived weaving to be a way of establishing and creating order.

Accordingly, we may summarize that early Chinese discourses on social and political organization as recorded in the *Huainanzi*, *Lüshi Chunqiu*, *Mozi*, *Shijing*, *Bohutong* or *Lienüzhuan* frequently envision the empire and its core unit of the family in terms of a well-ordered fabric. They purport that only if the guiding threads, which took on the form of technologies, military occupations, or virtuous behavior according to one’s social and gender role in the discussed examples, function properly, a harmonious patterning of the social fabric

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<sup>463</sup> “When the Han was founded, its rulers decided to institutionalize the existing ideal of palace ladies industriously making cloth to ritualistically demonstrate their virtue. It seems that from the earliest part of Emperor Han Gaozu’s 漢高祖 reign (202-195 BCE), the palace had a Weaving Room. This workshop continued into the reign of Gaozu’s son and heir Emperor Hui 漢惠帝 (r. 195-188 BCE) and went on to become a standard part of Han dynasty palace life.” (Bret Hinsch, “Textiles and Female Virtue in Early Imperial Chinese Historical Writing,” p. 192)

For another brief discussion of the Weaving Room, see Shelagh Vainker, *Chinese Silk: A Cultural History*, pp. 44-47.

<sup>464</sup> Dieter Kuhn, “Reading the Magnificence of Ancient and Medieval Chinese Silks,” p. 6

<sup>465</sup> The later installment of sacrifices to the altar of the First Sericulturist (*xiancan tan* 先蠶壇), i.e. the Yellow Emperor, during the Northern Qi period (550-577 CE) further substantiates the claim that ideas of weaving prominently starred in erstwhile understandings of politics.

will appear and remain stable.<sup>466</sup> Consequently, we may conclude that the image fields of weaving in early China apparently consisted at least of the following four aspects:

- 1) Woven patterns (*wen*) appeared vertically through the warp.
- 2) The cosmos revealed the technique of weaving to the sages/weaving as a cosmic act.
- 3) Weaving was perceived to have an ordering capacity.
- 4) Rulers ritualistically implemented fabrics and weaving in their governance.

As we will see in the following chapter, the practice of writing evoked similar associations in early Chinese writers paving in my opinion the way for a parallel reading of the two processes of weaving and writing during the Han Dynasty.

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For a discussion of such an understanding of the nucleus family in gendered terms, see Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, pp. 104-118.



#### 4. THE IMAGE FIELDS OF WRITING

*WRITINGS ARE THE GREAT BUSINESS OF WEAVING TOGETHER A KINGDOM—CAO PI (187-226 CE)*<sup>467</sup>

*THE POWER OF WRITTEN PATTERNS IS INDEED GREAT. THEY ARE BORN TOGETHER WITH HEAVEN AND EARTH. [...] THE TWO PLACES OF QIAN AND KUN ARE SOLELY REGULATED BY [THESE] PATTERNED WORDS. THE PATTERNS OF WORDS ARE INDEED THE HEART OF HEAVEN AND EARTH—LIU XIE (FL. LATE 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CE)*<sup>468</sup>

In the last chapter, I analyzed some of the image fields of weaving that served as the backdrop for several early Chinese discussions of governance and the cosmos amongst others. I showcased that at least four aspects were frequently attributed to weaving: (1) that woven patterns are created on a vertical axis; (2) that the universe revealed the cosmic act of weaving to the sages; (3) that weaving is related and has the power to order; and (4) that weaving and woven products played a significant role in the religio-political system of the Han.

When we turn our focus to early depictions of writing we surprisingly find out that this cultural technology had been situated in contexts quite similar to what we encountered in our discussion of the image fields of weaving above. As we will see in this chapter, writing was also thought to produce textual patterns (*wen*) on a vertical axis, had been revealed to the sages, is

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<sup>467</sup> 蓋文章經國之大業。 (Liu Dianjue 劉殿爵 (D. C. Lau) et al. eds., *Cao Pi ji zhuzi suoyin* 曹丕集逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2000), p. 68)

<sup>468</sup> 文之為德也大矣，與天地并生者。 (Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong*, 109.3a)

similarly related to (cosmic) order, and had also been utilized in ritual and politics as a means to organize the empire. In the next pages, I will therefore follow a pattern similar to the one laid out in chapter 3 to work out some of the image fields of writing and to highlight some of the parallels that early Chinese texts construed between weaving and writing. This vision of writing and weaving as parallel activities during the late Warring States and early imperial period resulted in an *imaginaire* of writing as weaving during the Western Han dynasty that in my opinion may explain the *Huainanzi's* intertextual design.

#### **4.1 The Early History and Process of Writing**

Just like weaving, writing too has a long history of ritual applications in early China. In fact, it seems as if writing emerged in an explicitly ritualistic context in which the mere transmission of information was only one of many (non-)discursive functions. Scholars such as David Keightley or Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, for example, have argued that the earliest evidence of a Chinese writing system may be found in the oracle bone inscriptions on scapula and turtle shells during the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600-1046 BCE).<sup>469</sup> Tsien wrote in his influential *Written on Bamboo & Silk:*

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<sup>469</sup> For two scholarly examples that clearly see the beginning of the Chinese script in the Shang oracle bone inscriptions, see David Keightley, "Marks and Labels: Early Writing in Neolithic and Shang China," *Archeology of Asia*, Miriam T. Starck ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 177-201 and Robert W.

*The Beginnings of Chinese Books & Inscriptions that*

The earliest known Chinese documents that we have examples of in the original form are written or incised on animal bones and tortoise shells. They are primarily records of the later portion of the Shang or Yin dynasty (ca. 1300-1046 B.C.), and represent perhaps a part of the royal archives produced more than three thousand years ago.<sup>470</sup>

According to Tsien's analysis, the archeological finds at sites such as the former capital of the Shang at Yinxu 殷墟 near Anyang 安陽, Henan 河南, mark the earliest historical data for a full script in China.

As is not surprising, such a dating of the emergence of the Chinese script has been a very contested field and has ignited a lot of controversy, largely because of several archeological finds that problematize Tsien's rather late date and because of the political, historical, and nationalistic power an earlier dating of the Chinese script would generate.<sup>471</sup> First evidence for some sort of written signs or glyphs, for example, may be dated back to at least 6000 BCE. Archeologists have unearthed some plastrons inscribed with single glyphs at the Peiligang 裴李

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Bagley, "Anyang Writing and the Origin of the Chinese Writing System," *The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process*, S. D. Houston ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 190-249.

<sup>470</sup> Tsuen-Hsuein Tsien, *Written on Bamboo & Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books & Inscriptions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 19

<sup>471</sup> For a discussion of the central role of and varying positions towards language in Chinese nationalistic movements since the late nineteenth century, see Guo Yingjie, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Search for National Identity under Reform* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 91-108.

崗 site in Xinzheng 新鄭 county, Henan.<sup>472</sup> In addition, several scholars have been working on archeological finds at Jiahu 賈湖, Wuyang 舞陽 county, Henan, which unearthed archaic oracle bones with marks. According to Paola Demattè,

Based on stratigraphic periodization and associated carbon dates, these early bone graphs have been dated to c. 5500 BC. However, the three graphs show a mixture of writing forms from oracle bones to modern block script, to unintelligible. Other, less clearly defined, marks on bones have also come to light at Jiahu, though it is questionable whether they are man-made or the result of depositional events. The presence of this collection of signs on bones has been taken by some scholars to be proof of incipient writing activities [...]. Others are rather skeptical of the evidendence and the early date proposed for the origins of writing and suggest other interpretations.<sup>473</sup>

As Demattè mentions, there is evidence for an early utilization of signs and glyphs in China.

However, their existence does not suffice at this moment to create a scientifically verifiable connection between these early signs and the writing system that we find in Shang dynasty oracle bone inscriptions about 4000 years later despite the fact that some glyphs display a remarkable resemblance to characters utilized during the Shang dynasty.<sup>474</sup> Because of the large time gap and small sample size of signs extant from these periods, it apparently depends

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<sup>472</sup> See David W. Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, p. 185

<sup>473</sup> Paola Demattè, “The Origins of Chinese Writing: the Neolithic Evidence,” *Cambridge Archeological Journal* 20.2 (2010): 213

<sup>474</sup> According to Li Xueqin et al., archeologists unearthed fourteen fragments of tortoise shell and bones at Jiahu that contained eleven signs—nine on tortoise shells and two on bones. Li Xueqin et al. suggest that at least four of these signs fairly resemble characters from the Yinxu inscriptions from the Shang dynasty. See Li Xueqin et. al, “The Earliest Writing? Sign Use in the 7<sup>th</sup> Millennium BC at Jiahu, China,” *Antiquity* 77 (2003): 37-38.

rather on one's preconceived understanding of the rise of language in human civilization and one's position on the potential existence of a continuity in Chinese history that spans over several thousand years whether one accepts these early glyphs at Jiahu and other places as predecessors of the Chinese script.<sup>475</sup>

The situation changes, however, once we reach the late Neolithic period. At various sites attributed to the Longshan 龍山 culture (ca. 3000-2000 BCE), archeologists unearthed shards of pottery that contain painted glyphs of varying complexity. The find of a pottery shard at Taosi 陶寺, Xiangfen 襄汾 county, Shanxi 山西, is of particular interest. As Li Xueqin 李學勤 et al. wrote, archeologists found

a flat pot from the late stage of Longshan Culture, at Taosi, Xiangfen (Shanxi Province) [who] is brush painted with the red sign 文 which is identical to the modern character “wen.” In the Erligang, an early phase of the Shang dynasty, pottery signs begin to approach, ever more closely, YinXu script [i.e. the script of the oracle bone inscriptions, ann. by the author].<sup>476</sup>

Li Xueqin and his colleagues who perpetuate a vision of a rather continuous development of the Chinese script from Jiahu via Taosi to the Shang oracle bone inscriptions argue that such pottery

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<sup>475</sup> This is reflected in the fact that the majority of Chinese scholars support a vision of a historical continuity in China while non-Chinese scholars seem to favor a later date for the Chinese script. For voices that consider these early glyphs as a predecessor of the Chinese writing system, see Gao Ming 高明, *Gu taowen huibian* 古陶文彙編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1990) and Li Xueqin et. al, “The Earliest Writing?,” pp. 31-44. For another critical voice regarding such a long history of early Chinese writing beyond Bagley and Keightley, see William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Development of the Chinese Writing System* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1994).

<sup>476</sup> Li Xueqin et al., “The Earliest Writing?,” p. 39.

shards suggest that at least in the late Neolithic period, some glyphs had already cemented a conventional form that spread over the Dawenkou 大汶口 (ca. 4100-2600 BCE) and Liangzhu 良渚 (ca. 3400-2250 BCE) cultures and, therefore, might have been part of a larger writing system.<sup>477</sup> In addition, these shards of pottery were most likely used during ancestral worship and, therefore, affirm the impression created by the oracle bone inscriptions that the Chinese script was inherently linked to ritual performances in early China.<sup>478</sup>

Because of this clear relationship between ritual and writing, David W. Pankenier has recently also argued for an origin of the Chinese script in astronomy. Instead of focusing on unearthed glyphs and signs as the sole evidence for a Chinese script, he based his own assessment largely on the analysis of non-conventional writing systems such as the knotting cords (*gang ji* 綱紀). Unfortunately, there is no archeological evidence of this predecessor of the script in early China due to the perishable materials that were used for its production. However, its invention is traditionally attributed to Fu Xi 伏羲 or Shennong 神農 and

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<sup>477</sup> “The finding of common characters in two culture areas, Liangzhu and Dawenkou, also suggests that by this period certain signs had become conventional and were understood over a wide area. These observations suggest that the fully-developed writing system at Shang period Yinxu was preceded by at least two millennia of sign-use on pottery from which it may partially have been drawn.” (Li Xueqin et al., “The Earliest Writing?,” p. 40)

<sup>478</sup> For a discussion of the role of script in “shamanistic” practices of the Shang, see K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 44-94.

commonly construed as the very recording and “writing” system in early Chinese texts that preceded and later had been supplanted by the script as we will see in chapter 4.2.<sup>479</sup> On the basis of a trans-cultural comparison of these early Chinese knotted cord systems of which we have no extant specimen with Andean knotting cords (*kipu*), Pankenier argued “it is likely that it was calendrical astronomy that lent impetus to the development of writing in China and prefigured its application to other forms of record keeping that emerged later, including Shang divinations in which we see a mature written language fully formed.”<sup>480</sup> In other words, Pankenier intends to push the date of the rise of a Chinese writing system earlier by widening our logocentric definition of a script and including what he calls visuographic recordings. Moreover, his research further confirms the close connection between the development of the script, weaving, and astro-calendrical or ritual practices in early China.

Although it is still debatable and in need of further research whether the existence of Neolithic signs allows us to construe an earlier, pre-historic emergence of a Chinese writing

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<sup>479</sup> The *Commentary on the Appended Phrases* (*Xici zhuan*) mentions such a history of writing that attributes an ordering power to the script: “In the remote past, they knotted cords and ordered [therewith]. The sages of later ages changed this and used writings and tallies. Using these, the Hundred Officials were ordered and the myriad people were inspected for they had obtained them from [the hexagram] *guai* [i.e. the hexagram related to the court and jurisdiction].”

上古結繩而治，後世聖人易之以書契，百官以治，萬民以察，蓋取諸夬。(Kong Yingda ed., *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.168b)

<sup>480</sup> David W. Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, p. 161

system in form of characters or knots as the examples above show, we may at least draw two preliminary conclusions from scholars' analyses of these early sources:

- 1) Chinese writing exists at least since the middle of the second millennium BCE.
- 2) Whatever position we take in dating the rise of a writing system in China, there is an underlying pattern between all these different utilizations of glyphs and script on oracle bones, bronzes and potteries, as well as the knotting cords: they all suggest that writing predominantly had a ritualistic or religio-political function in early China.<sup>481</sup>

### **The Process of Writing and its Materiality**

As we have seen, the majority of script and glyphs in this early period have been found on media such as bones, potteries, bronzes, or stones that strongly suggest a ritualistic function.<sup>482</sup>

Obviously, this pattern does neither mean that people in the Shang dynasty didn't use less firm

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<sup>481</sup> "Usage in all three Neolithic contexts indicates that the graphs were connected to ritual performance. The significance of the ceremonies is not discernible, but at least formally these activities bear some similarity to early dynastic practices of ancestral veneration in which writing played a role." (Paola Demattè, "The Origins of Chinese Writing," p. 223)

<sup>482</sup> "Ancient writings in China were used for communication not only among human beings but also between human beings and spirits. In fact, communication with spirits was probably even more important to the early development of written records." (Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, p. 4)



and durable materials for writings nor that writings only had a ritualistic function since our vision is strongly informed by the varying durability of the excavated objects.<sup>483</sup> It only suggests scriptures on bamboo and other perishable materials that might have contained more mundane functions like the list of weapons from the Eastern Han dynasty below (see figure X) didn't survive until today. As Tsien claims,

The origin of using bamboo or wood for writing in China is uncertain, but the practice is evidently very old. Although no books made of bamboo or wood from before the Warring States period (468-221 B.C) are extant today, ancient inscriptions and literary records indicate that they were probably the earliest form of Chinese books. The character *ce* [冊] for book [...], which represents the picture of a bundle of tablets bound with two lines of cords, was already used in connection with sacrifice in the bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty. This character and a related word *dian* [典] (document or archive), which depicts a book placed respectfully on a table, are found more frequently in bronze inscriptions of the Zhou dynasty.<sup>484</sup>

Tsien suggests that the occurrence and shape of the characters *ce* and *dian* in bronze inscriptions points towards the existence of bamboo and wooden “books” during the Shang dynasty.<sup>485</sup> However, Tsien’s proposition unfortunately remains speculative due to a lack of

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<sup>483</sup> “In later periods, texts such as ritual manuals, calendars, official regulations or lists of funerary goods are mostly written on wooden or bamboo slips. So it is reasonable to suspect that the Shang people may also have had some sort of documents written on wooden slips, and that they may not have survived, due to the perishable nature of the materials used for such writing.” (Nicholas Postgate, Wang Tao, and Toby Wilkinson, “The Evidence for Early Writing: Utilitarian or Ceremonial,” *Antiquity* 69 (1995): 475)

<sup>484</sup> Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, p. 97

<sup>485</sup> Tsien seems to be very pre-occupied with the importance of “books” and their cultural significance. In my opinion, there is very little won by arguing that early Chinese scrolls and other forms of written materials are books. In fact, such terms evoke a host of culturally specific assumptions (authorship,

material evidence from the Shang period. Despite the possibility that many more writings on perishable materials existed during the Shang period, it still seems to me as if the majority of writings from this period were probably produced within a ritualistic context.<sup>486</sup>

When we move from the Shang dynasty to the late Warring States period and early Han dynasty, this paucity of evidence of less durable writing materials ends. From the late Warring States period on, we have proof that in addition to the materials mentioned in the previous section early Chinese were using perishable materials such as bamboo, wooden plates, or silk to produce writings.<sup>487</sup> Moreover, while the early sources from the Shang dynasty have been rather short textual pieces, we find in these excavated bamboo and silk scrolls the first

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coherence, textual unity, reading practices, etc.) that are in my opinion problematic and non-indigenous to early China.

<sup>486</sup> “In the Shang case, I conceive of the inscriptions as a form of conspicuous cultural capital, in which the Shang elites invested considerable labour resources to produce artifacts whose overwhelming value was ritual. And I would suggest that, with the possible exception of the “display inscriptions” discussed above—and even they may have been “displayed” for the spirits not for humans—the only regular, human audience that eventually read the graphs on a regular basis, and then only as they produced them, is likely to have been the engravers, and, presumably, the officers whose job it was to make sure that the records written in the diviners’ notebooks were faithfully incised into the bones.” (David Keightley, “Marks and Labels,” pp. 194-195)

<sup>487</sup> The *Huainanzi*, for example, uses the expression “to engrave in metal and stone” (*lou jinshi* 鏤金石) and “to write on bamboo and silk” (*shu zhubo* 書竹帛) in its second chapter (*HNZ* 2.7) as synecdoches to depict media that had been used to generate “texts.” See Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 57.

instances of elaborate textual units.<sup>488</sup>

A prominent aspect of these early texts is the vertical orientation of their script. Despite the fact that this orientation already appears on Shang bronzes and oracle bones (see figure 17), it had often been associated with the material constraints provided by bamboo slips.<sup>489</sup> In fact, Chinese may be written in almost any direction without losing its meaning since characters build a self-contained semantic unit. That being said, however, the preferred direction of writings remained from the top down and from right to left until recently. As we will see in the example below, this verticality of the writing process through which the patterns and meanings of a text unfold clearly manifested in Liu Xi's lexicographical definition of writing in terms of weaving.

However, before we continue with the discussion of the image fields of writing during the late Warring States and early imperial period, let's first dwell for a moment on the materiality

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<sup>488</sup> For a discussion of the content and organization of oracle bone inscriptions, see Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, pp. 31-35.

<sup>489</sup> As Tsien emphatically claims, "Bamboo and wood were the earliest materials used for books and documents in China and had a strong and far-reaching impact on Chinese culture. Not only does the traditional style of writing from top to bottom result from the narrow surface of bamboo, but even many terms used today relating to the format and page layout of books derive from the early use of bamboo and wood for documents." (Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, p. 96) Although it is far from clear whether the verticality of writing developed because of the material constraints set by bamboo, it is important to realize that such a vision permeates later texts like Lu Ji's 陸機 (261-303 CE) *Rhapsody on Written Patterns* (*Wenfu* 文賦).

of early Chinese scriptures and particularly on the setup of a bamboo scroll. Since the production of silks was a very expensive procedure up until the late Warring States period, a typical text in the third and fourth century BCE was probably written on a scroll of interlinked bamboo slips or wooden boards that had been woven together with two or more threads similar to a rattan fence (see figure 17). Writers generally applied ink directly on the surface of prepared bamboo slips or wooden plates creating on their vertical orientation written patterns.

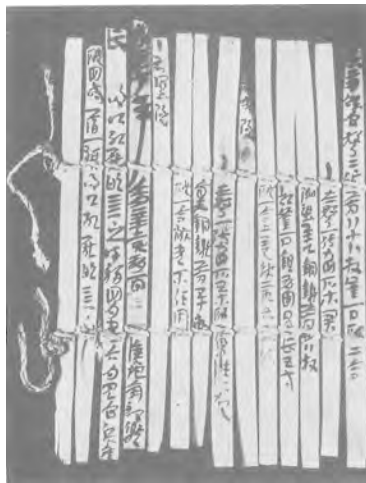


Figure 17: Wooden Tablets Bound together by Two Hemp Threads (Eastern Han dynasty)<sup>490</sup>

As it turns out, the preparation of bamboo slips for writing was quite an elaborate procedure.

According to Tsien, writings on bamboo

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<sup>490</sup> “Inventory list of weapons,” Eastern Han dynasty, written in 93-95 CE, 122 cm wide, seventy-seven tablets strung together by two lines of hemp threads, each tablet is 23 x 1.3 cm. Discovered 1930 in Juyan 居延, Inner Mongolia 內蒙古. Academia Sinica (Zhongyang yanjiu yuan 中央研究院), Taipei. For a discussion of the tablet, see Lao Gan 勞幹, *Juyan Han jian kaoshi* 居延漢簡考釋 (Chongqing: Academia Sinica (Zhongyang yanjiu yuan 中央研究院), 1943-44) and Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, pp. 106-108.

Were not made on the outer circle of the stem but rather on the under surface after the green skin was scraped off, although sometimes the inner side of the stem was also used for writing. The stem was first cut into cylinders of a certain length. These were then split into tablets of a certain width. The raw tablets, however, were not ready for writing until they had been treated and cured. This process was called *shaqing*, or “killing the green.” After the external covering of green skin was scraped off, the tablets were dried over the fire to prevent quick decay.<sup>491</sup>

Because of this lengthy procedure to prepare bamboo slips, writing was a rather labor intensive and costly practice during the Warring States period. Moreover, it suggests that texts were quite heavy, space consuming, and precious objects at the time as I calculated in the case of the *Huainanzi* in chapter 1.2.

During the same period, writers also utilized silk fabrics to produce texts. However, it seems as if the production of silk was still so expensive that such fabrics were reserved for sacred texts.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, p. 114

<sup>492</sup> As Tsien claims, “although writing on silk was mentioned in pre-Qin literature, its use seemed to have been limited to important and sacred documents.” (Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, p. 130)

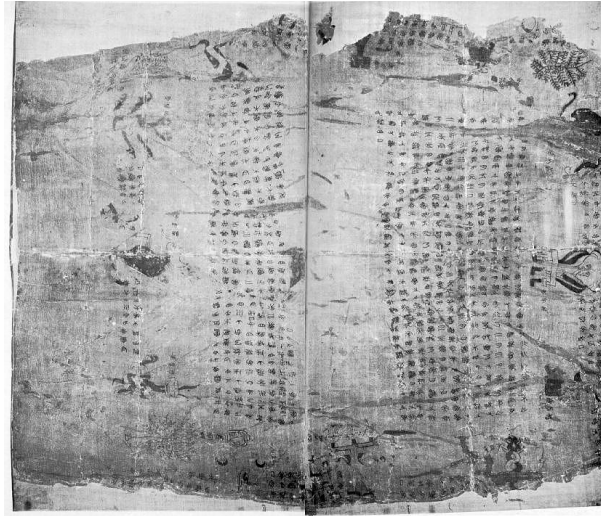


Figure 18: *Chu Silk Manuscript (Chuboshu 楚帛書)*, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery<sup>493</sup>

The sacrality of silk scriptures, for example, may clearly be seen in the famous *Chu Silk Manuscript (Chu boshu 楚帛書)* that is housed in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington D.C today (see figure 18). This image-text resembles a cosmographer (*shi* 式) that diviners used to calculate the stars. As Li Ling writes,

The *Chu Silk Manuscript* is ringed by pictures of twelve gods representing the months. Each side represents a season, and each god is accompanied by a corresponding text of do's and don'ts for that month (much like the "Yueling" or "Monthly Rules" chapter of the *Liji*). In the four corners of the manuscript are pictures of trees, which represent the pillars holding up Heaven mentioned in section B in the translation below. In the center of the manuscript, instead of Grand Unity or the Northern Dipper [as it would be typical for a *shi*, ann. by the author] is the main text. The main text is divided into two larger sections, one twice as long as the other and each written upside-down relative to the

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*Chu Silk Manuscript (Chuboshu 楚帛書)*, late fourth century BCE, ink and color on silk, h. 38 cm, w. 47 cm. Discovered in 1942 by tomb robbers in Zidanku 子彈庫, Changsha 長沙, Hunan 湖南. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington D.C. For the image of the *Chu Silk Manuscript*, see Li Ling and Constance A. Cook, "Translation of the Chu Silk Manuscript," *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, Constance A. Cook and John S. Major eds. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), p. 171.

other.<sup>494</sup>

According to Li's analysis, the entire manuscript is loaded with references to cosmic order and visual and textual representations of deities suggesting that this silken text from probably the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE had indeed been used within a religious or astro-calendrical context.

This almost restricted use of silk for written, "sacred" scriptures changed during the late Warring States period. In the third and second century BCE, silk became increasingly popular as a writing material. While silks had been used as a writing surface much earlier, it is only with the developments in silk production and weaving technologies during this time as discussed in chapter 3 that such fabrics became much more accessible to the literate population. This development in weaving technologies led to a wider dissemination of silk as a medium for writings as reflected in the *Mawangdui Silk Manuscripts* (*Mawangdui boshu* 馬王堆帛書) from the early second century BCE that contain medical, historical, and other texts.<sup>495</sup> Interestingly, this wider dissemination of silk as a writing surface also crystallized in the terminology that bibliographers at the imperial library used to catalogue scriptures. The increasing appearance of the character "scrolls" (*juan* 卷) rather than "chapters" (*pian* 篇) as measures for texts in bibliographical sources during and after the Han dynasty supports Tsien's claim for a

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<sup>494</sup> Li Ling and Constance A. Cook, "Translation of the Chu Silk Manuscript," p. 172

<sup>495</sup> For a discussion of the rise of silk as the preferred medium for valuable texts, see Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, pp. 126-131.

transformation of writing technologies.<sup>496</sup>

This change from bamboo to silk as the preferred medium continued until the third or fourth century CE, far beyond the early development of paper that had been traditionally attributed to Cai Lun 蔡倫 (50-121 CE).<sup>497</sup> In that sense, we may assume that the Han seems to mark an important period in this development of writing materials in which the dominance of bamboo and other firm and wooden surfaces slowly veined and writers increasingly switched to softer, woven fabrics as their material of choice.

After this brief survey, we may summarize that despite the existence of bronze and stone inscriptions during the Han dynasty, it seems as if writers' experience of writing was mainly informed by the materiality of bamboo slips and silk rolls in the Warring States and early

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<sup>496</sup> A quick glance at two bibliographical treatises supports in my opinion this development. While the *Hanshu* "Yiwenzhi" reflects a clear separation between bamboo scrolls (*pian*) that appear 515 times and silk scrolls (*juan*) that appear 192 times, the *[Historical] Writings of the Sui* (*Suishu* 隋書) "Treatise on Canonical and Other Texts" ("Jingji zhi" 經籍志) mainly uses the term scroll as a measure word for texts (*pian* = 98x and *juan* = 3,847x) suggesting that either the Sui largely housed silk scrolls in their imperial library or that the occurrence of silk scrolls had become such a common phenomenon that there was no need to linguistically separate these two media in the bibliographical treatise, anymore.

<sup>497</sup> The *Eastern Observatory's Records of the Han* (*Dongguan Han ji* 東觀漢記), a text from the Eastern Han dynasty, mentions:  
 "Cai Lun, [...] concocted the idea of using bark, tattered cloths, and fish nets to make paper."  
 蔡倫[...]造意用樹皮及敝布、魚網作紙。(Liu Zhen 劉珍 ed., *Dongguan Hanji* 東觀漢記, *Yingyin wenyuan ge siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan 台灣商務印書館, 1983): 370.199b)



imperial period.<sup>498</sup> Besides the significant differences in production, structure, form, and tactile quality of the materials, which might have led to the “Record of the Literature [of Artistic Writings’]” (“Yiwenzhi” 藝文志) usage of distinct terms for bamboo and silk scrolls, both materials also shared two important commonalities. First, both needed to be prepared, refined, and dried before they could be utilized as resources for writing and weaving, respectively. After the bamboo slips had been prepared and dried, early Chinese were able to apply ink on their surface in order to create written patterns. In the same vein, silkworm cocoons needed to be dried and prepared so they may be woven into fabrics that sometimes also served as a surface for writing. In addition, both weaving and writing were vertical processes that create patterns with the help of the prepared and refined materials of silk and bamboo. Consequently, writers apparently perceived these two materials as related media as the *Mozi*’s and *Hanfei Zi*’s wide usage of the expressions “the bamboo and silk of writings” (*shu zhi zhubo* 書之竹帛), “writing [their deeds] on bamboo and silk” (*shu [qishi] yu zhu bo* 書[其事]於竹帛), “transmit ordering principles on bamboo and silk” (*qili yu zhubo* 寄理於竹帛) and other usages of the

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For an early imperial example of stone inscriptions, see Martin Kern’s analysis of Qinshi Huangdi’s steles on the Five Marchmounts (*wuyue* 五嶽) and their relationship to the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 sacrifices as a way to control imperial space in Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch’in Shih-huang*, pp. 106-118.

synechdoche *zhubo* suggest.<sup>499</sup> In other words, writers of the Warring States period and Han dynasty clearly associated and grouped together the practice of writing with bamboo slips and woven fabrics, materials on which patterns would be worked out on their vertical axis.

#### **4.2 The Sagely Discovery of Writing and the Ordering of the Universe**

Writers in early China did not only perceive the processes and materiality of writing and weaving as related activities. They also construed both of them as discoveries that the cosmos revealed to the sages. Texts from the Warring States period and the Han dynasty readily incorporated mythological stories that commonly associated sages with the invention of important cultural technologies. According to the account from the *Lüshi Chunqiu* in chapter 3.3, Hu Cao developed the technology of making clothes. As we will see in the following examples, the invention of the script and the trigrams were likewise perceived to be discoveries revealed to sagely cultural heroes. In fact, several texts mention that the sages Fu Xi 伏羲 and Cang Jie 倉頡 derived the trigrams and the writing system from cosmic patterns. Hence, it seems as if the association of writing with ritualistic and astro-calendrical practices during the Shang and earlier periods had left its marks on the Warring States and Han narratives about the

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<sup>499</sup> See Sun Yirang ed., *Mozi jiangou*, 4.41, 4.75, 4.127-128, 4.135, 4.147, 4.171, 4.174, 4.268, and 4.284 and Wang Xianshen ed., *Han Feizi jijie*, 5.147.

sagely discovery of the script. As a result, early Chinese texts present a vision of the genesis of writing within cosmic procedures that is quite similar to Wang Yi's illustration of the revelation and production of the loom in chapter 3.2. In other words, it seems as if early Chinese associated both the discovery of weaving and writing with sages and their observation and ordering of the cosmos.

For example, let's consider the *Xici Commentary* (*Xici zhuan* 繫詞傳) to the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), one of the most iconic texts throughout Chinese history. The commentary remarks, "since the [*Classic of*] *Changes* is modeled after Heaven and Earth, it can fill in the Way of Heaven and Earth with green threads/tassel" (易與天地準，故能彌綸天地之道).<sup>500</sup> This brief explanation of the powers of the *Yijing* raises a question: why does it use in this description the expression "to fill in with bluegreen threads/tassels" (*milun* 彌綸) to explicate a text? The subcommentary explains this puzzle in following terms: "[the character] *mi* means to fill cracks and repair and unite. [The character] *lun* means to set up a warp line and guide and lead" (彌謂彌縫補合。綸謂經綸牽引). Apparently, the *Xici Commentary* reads a weaving image into the *Yijing* that the subcommentary interprets in terms of governance and order. If we follow this line of interpretation, the *Yijing* as a weaving texture would be able to

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Kong Yingda ed., *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.147a

administer and guide Heaven and Earth, i.e. the entire universe. Thus, the natural origination of the trigrams and script apparently was thought to imbue textual fabrics such as the *Classic of Changes* with the power to organize and control the empire and the world at large.<sup>501</sup>

Such a universal understanding does not only underlie the *Xici's* illustration of the *Yijing* but also the majority of early Chinese conceptualizations of writing and the script.<sup>502</sup> As Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer summarized this tendency,

The conception of the [Chinese] script's origin from nature implied that all writings are in the broadest sense similar to cosmic order. Likewise, it led to the conclusion that literature expresses this order and, furthermore, that the cultivation of literature would impact the orderliness of the world in return. Accordingly, [this conception] explains the intricate relationship between literature and politics in China from its beginnings until nowadays, as well as the importance ascribed to

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<sup>501</sup> This idea reappears in the Eastern Han weft-writings, which purported a vision of texts as powerful objects that are detrimental to the governance of the empire. According to Gil Raz, "Whether administrative charts and registers in the pre-imperial period were talismans possessing intrinsic magical power, as suggested by Lewis, remains debatable. However, by the late Han, the charts and registers had transcended the pragmatic symbolism of office holdings, and had become emblems of power. This is best demonstrated by examining the role of charts in the weft texts in which the authority of the ruler is fully dependent on the texts he possesses, and the attitude towards these charts in contemporary texts. (Gil Raz, *The Emergence of Daoism*, p. 132)

<sup>502</sup> Xu Bing's 徐冰 (born 1955) landscripts may serve here as a contemporary example that still displays this perception of a close relationship between the universe (*dao*) and the written character, albeit in an aestheticized form. Xu creates entire landscapes out of Chinese characters so that the object and its depiction in language form a unity. For a discussion of Xu Bing's landscripts, see part two and especially Xu Bing's essay on his landscript series in Shelagh Vainker, Xu Bing, Judith Goldman, and Peter D. McDonald, *Landscape/Landscript: Nature as Language in the Art of Xu Bing* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2013), pp. 116-147.

calligraphy as an expression of a writer's personhood and her/his connection to cosmic order.<sup>503</sup>

Schmidt-Glintzer claims that writers of the Middle Kingdoms perceived texts to be correspondents to natural orders that originated from signs and patterns through which the world expresses its own workings.<sup>504</sup> Writing and literature, in that sense, were not only a way to communicate information to another person. Given writing and literature's origin in the orderly functioning of the world, which was thought to imbue them with the power to "impact the orderliness of the world," they became elementary aspects of governance in early China.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> "Dieses Verständnis von der Natürlichkeit der Schrift legte den Gedanken nahe, dass es sich bei allem Geschriebenen um etwas der Weltordnung im weitesten Sinne Entsprechendes handeln müsse, und führte zu dem Schluss, dass Literatur der Ausdruck eben dieser jeweiligen Ordnung sei und darüber hinaus die Pflege der Literatur auf die Ordnung der Welt zurückwirke. Daraus erklärt sich die von den Anfängen bis in unsere Tage in China feststellbare unmittelbare Beziehung zwischen Literatur und Politik, aber auch die Bedeutung, welche man der Handschrift als Ausdruck der Persönlichkeit und ihrer Beziehung zur Weltordnung beimaß." (Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, "Eine Schrift die keiner kennt: Ostasiatische Schriftzeichen und das "Alphabet der Bitternis" – Bemerkungen zum Traum von einer Begriffsschrift," *Buchstaben der Welt, Welt der Buchstaben*, Ryôtsuke Ôhashi and Martin Roussel eds. (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2014), p. 104)

<sup>504</sup> For a discussion of "the concept of literature as a manifestation of the principle of the universe," see James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 16-62.

<sup>505</sup> A similar vision of texts as directly affecting order in the audience may be found in the "Great Preface" ("Da Xu" 大序) to the *Shijing*'s first poem "Osprey" ("Guanju" 關雎). It states regarding the "Airs" ("Feng" 風) that "the "Airs" are "influence/wind" and "teaching." With wind they move them. With teaching they transform them" (風，風也，教也。風以動之，教以化之). For the passage, see Kong Yingda ed., *Maoshi zhengyi*, 2.12b. As Stephen Owen summarizes this idea of an educational effect attributed to the *Shijing*'s poems: "When people read and recite the Kuan-chü, not only do they recognize the values (*chih*) of King Wen's consort in forming the ideal marriage, but their own responses are also shaped by the values represented. The poems of the *Book of Songs* were meant to give paradigmatic expression to human feeling; and

This ordering faculty of writings is clearly reflected and crystallized in Xu Shen's preface to *The Commenting Patterned Signs and Analyzing Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字), which contains an interesting passage that refers to the *Xici Commentary* of the *Yijing*.<sup>506</sup> This narrative unit typical for early Chinese texts presents a chronology of three successive developments of cultural technologies that peaks in the production of the script:<sup>507</sup>

(1) In the past, when Bao Xi ruled as king of all under Heaven, he faced upwards observing the signs in the sky and faced downwards observing the regularities in the earth. He looked at the patterns of birds and beasts and their adaptations of the earth. Getting close, he took from the body. Going afar, he took from the things. Then he began to make the eight trigrams of the *Yijing* in order to pass on the constitutions and images.

(2) Later, when Shennong made knots in ropes to direct and regulate activities, all kinds of trades and professions were multiplied, and then artificial and refined things sprouted and grew.

(3) Cang Jie, scribe for the Yellow Emperor, on looking at the tracks of the feet of birds and animals, realized that the patterns and forms were distinguishable so he started to create writing and tallies with it. All kinds of professions were regulated with it, and all people were kept under scrutiny with it. This he probably took from [the hexagram] *guai*. "*Guai*: exhibit in the royal court" – means the patterns show education and enlightenment to the king's court. "Thus the noble man bestows benefits on his subordinates. If one is virtuous, one is cautious." When Cang Jie first created writing,

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those who learned and recited the *Songs* would naturally internalize correct values. Thus through the dissemination of this poem, "the relations between husband and wife are made correct" [(先王以是經夫婦); lit. "the kings of the past with this wove together husband and wife"]." (Stephen Owen ed. and trans., *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 39)

<sup>506</sup> For the parallel passage in the *Xici zhuan*, see Kong Yingda ed., *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.166b-167a.

<sup>507</sup> The long-lasting impact of this narrative of technological and cultural inventions as the hallmark of Chinese civilization may be seen in the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics that staged a sequence of short narratives about China's technological achievements. See Zhang Yimou, *Opening Ceremony of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad DVD* (Beijing: BOCOG, 2008).

he probably imitated the forms according to their categories; so they were called patterns. Later, when the writings were increased by combining the forms and phonetics, the results were called characters. Patterns are the root of the sign of things. Characters mean reproduction and gradual increase. When they are written on bamboo and silk they are called writings. Writings are such. Up to the time of the Five Emperors and Three Kings, writing changed into various styles. Of the seventy-two eras in which altars were made [or alternatively in which Feng sacrifices were performed] on Mount Tai, none had the same style.

- (1) 古者庖羲氏之王天下也，仰則觀象於天，俯則觀法於地，視鳥獸之文與地之宜，近取諸身，遠取諸物；於是始作《易》八卦，以垂憲象。
- (2) 及神農氏，結繩為治，而統其事。庶業其繁，飾偽萌生。
- (3) 黃帝之史倉頡，見鳥獸蹄迹之跡，知分理之可相別異也，初造書契。百工以乂，萬品以察，蓋取諸夬。「夬，揚于王庭」，言文者，宣教明化於王者朝廷，「君子所以施祿及下，居德則忌」也。倉頡之初作書，蓋依類象形，故謂之文。其後形聲相益，即謂之字。文者，物象之本；字者，言孳乳而寢多也。著於竹帛謂之書。書者，如也。以迄五帝三王之世，改易殊體，封于泰山者七十有二代，靡有同焉。<sup>508</sup>

It seems as if Xu Shen creates in this passage a chronological development of the script. At the first stage, Fu Xi derived the trigrams (*ba gua* 八卦) from nature and therewith allowed communication between Heaven and the human realm. At the second stage, Shennong invented a knotting system (*jiesheng* 結繩) that would enable humans to communicate over distance conducting trades and professions in a more effective manner. Finally, this sequence ends in Cang Jie's discovery of the script in form of writing and tallies (*shuqi* 書契) that he derived from bird and animal tracks and that would allow better control of the populace. In other words, Xu Shen depicts writing as a technology similar to the knotting cords mentioned

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Xu Shen ed., *Shuowen jiezi*, p. 314b

by David W. Pankenier above and the *Yijing's* trigrams that the sages had deduced from the natural world and that, therefore, stand in close proximity to the cosmos and its motions.

However, Xu Shen does not only create a history of writing systems at the beginning of the passage depicting the cultural technologies of eight trigrams, knotting cords, and the script as similar inventions derived from the universe. The sequence, in fact, seems to display a hierarchy as reflected in the increasing amount Xu Shen spends to elucidate each stage.<sup>509</sup> While the development of the trigrams (fifty characters) and knotting cords (twenty characters) are explicated in rather short terms, the invention of writings (145 characters) takes over more than two thirds of the entire passage. In so doing, the three stages of discoveries seem to create a hierarchy of importance between the three distinct sign systems. The preface apparently reflects Xu Shen's high valuation of the written script, a fact that does not surprise if we consider the *Shuowen jiezi's* focus on the analysis of written patterns (*wen* 文) and characters (*zi* 字).

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As Roland Barthes claims about narratives in general, "There can be no doubt that narrative is a hierarchy of instances. To understand a narrative is not only to follow the process of the story, it is also to recognize in it certain "stages," to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative "thread" on an implicitly vertical axis; to read (to hear) a narrative is not only to pass from one word to the next, but also to pass from one level to the next." (Roland Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, Richard Howard trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), p. 102) In other words, he asserts that narratives necessarily present an unequal, rhythmic, and hierarchical development of its units producing distinct emphases and importance on each part.



This passage from Xu Shen's preface, in fact, emphasizes an ordering quality or power of the invented sign systems highlighting their effect on the universe. While under Shennong "all kinds of trades and professions were multiplied, and then artificial and refined things sprouted and grew" (庶業其繁，飾偽萌生), Cang Jie's script made possible "that all kinds of professions were regulated with it, and all people were kept under scrutiny with it" (百工以乂，萬品以察). Surprisingly, Xu Shen does not mention any ordering effects for the *Yijing* and its trigrams as the *Xici commentary* suggested above. If we consider the long history of reading canonical texts such as the *Classic of Changes* as efficacious scriptures, however, we may assume that there was no need to emphasize the trigrams' effects on the world.<sup>510</sup> In that sense, the myth relates the development of these three cultural technologies with the governance of the world, an idea we have already encountered in the examples of weaving above. Moreover, similar to weaving and the development of advanced tools such as the loom that enabled people to replace furs

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J. J. M. de Groot, for example, mentions that people in Fujian at the end of the nineteenth century used classical texts to cure diseases: "A copy, fragment or leaf of a classical work is a mighty charm, which may be placed with advantage on sickbeds. Especially protective is the *Shujing*, in the main because of its section entitled *Hongfan*, the *Great Plan*, which among the classical rescripts of the world stands first as its oldest collection given to the Great Yu by Heaven itself in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century BCE." (J. J. M. De Groot, *The Religious System of China: Its Ancient Forms, Evolution, History and Present Aspect, Manners, Custom and Social Institutions Connected Therewith* (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing, 1976): 6.1011)

For a discussion of the *Yijing*'s early reception as an efficacious text, see Richard J. Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos*, pp. 1-88.

and other coarse clothes the mythological narrative illustrates writing as a technology that allowed the sages to replace the earlier technology of knotting cords with a more efficient form of human communication, political organization, and governance.<sup>511</sup>

Such stories that connect the etiological myths of Fu Xi's discovery of the trigrams with Cang Jie's derivation of the Chinese characters from the tracks of birds and beasts appear in various texts including the *Huainanzi*.<sup>512</sup> Traditionally, several Warring States and Han texts shared similar versions of this myth and commonly attributed the creation of the trigrams,

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<sup>511</sup> In my interpretation, script was only thought to have replaced and surpassed the knotting cord system and not the eight trigrams. Interestingly, this technological advancement also met opposition mostly by early Daoist texts like the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, which construe script and human language as an estrangement from the Dao—from a less “defined” form of a heavenly or pre-celestial (*xiantian*) scripture (trigram) to a more human or post-celestial (*houtian*) form of language that denominates and fixes (*ding* 定) meanings on the constantly transforming beings. *Laozi* 80, for example states, “Let the people return to knotted cords and use them” (使民復結繩而用之; Wang Bi ed., *Laozi zhu*, 3.47) while the *Zhuangzi* argues with the famous Pipes of Heaven (*tianlai* 天籟), Earth (*dilai* 地籟), and Humanity (*renlai* 人籟) anecdote in the “Qiwulun” chapter (see Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.21-25) that human language is inherently incomplete and limited. In the later Daoist tradition, we find a similar sentiment towards human script and language. Amulets, for example, are commonly written in a more “hidden” and more powerful (*yinde* 陰德) celestial script (*tianshu* 天書) whose characters were thought to be legible only by gods, ghosts, and spirits. For discussions of Daoist amulets (*fu* 符) and efficacious writings, see Monika Drexler, *Daoistische Schriftmagie*, pp. 1-22, Gil Raz, *The Emergence of Daoism*, pp. 127-176, and Shu-Wei Hsieh, “Writing from Heaven: Celestial Writing in Six Dynasties Daoism,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 2005.

<sup>512</sup> Fu Xi as a paradigmatic sagely ruler plays a prominent role throughout the entire *Huainanzi*. For a mentioning of the myth of Fu Xi as the inventor of the trigrams (*HNZ* 21.3), see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 707. For a mentioning of the myth of Cang Jie in the *Huainanzi* (*HNZ* 8.5, 19.5 and 20.12), see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 252, 646, and 673.

which function as the basis for the *Classic of Changes*, with the legendary ruler and divine figure Fu Xi, as well as the development of the script with Cang Jie, the four-eyed astronomer at the court of the Yellow Emperor. In these narratives, the sages developed images (*xiang* 象) and characters (*zi* 字) by closely observing and emulating the workings of the cosmos as mentioned above in Xu Shen's account.<sup>513</sup> In other words, these mythical narratives did not depict the two sages as inventors in the sense of a *creatio ex nihilo* that plays such an important role in a Christian and European cultural historical context. Rather they created a scenario—similar to the case of weaving in Wang Yi's rhapsody—in which the Dao revealed the script through natural processes in Heaven and on Earth “reducing” the sages to the mere role of transmitters of the Way's call.<sup>514</sup> Consequently, Birgit Mersmann aptly claims about the “invention of the

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<sup>513</sup> *HNZ* 16.78, for example, contains a narrative about the creation of Chinese characters out of bird tracks relating the idea of writing directly to divination practices and the cosmos. It states, “See a bird scratching and understand how to write characters.”

見鳥跡而知著書。 (Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 538)

Considering the eminence of the mythological narrative that Cang Jie 倉頡 developed the Chinese writing system throughout the *Huainanzi*, it is very likely that this story about the invention of the script from the cosmos and its heavenly patterns in fact refers to Cang Jie. For a discussion of the myth of Fu Xi, see Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction*, pp. 44-47. For a brief discussion of the myth of Cang Jie in juxtaposition to Fuxi, see William G. Boltz, *The Origin and the Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, pp. 130-138.

<sup>514</sup> Such an understanding of sageliness crystallized, for example, in the *Lunyu*'s famous saying attributed to Kongzi in which he states: “I transmit but do not create; I trust and highly esteem the ancients, [and] humbly compare myself with my Old Peng (Pengzu).” 述而不作，信而好古，竊比於我老彭。 (Liu Baonan

script” as presented in Chinese mythology that “characters weren’t invented but found. They let themselves be found in nature; or, in other words, they are given by nature. As primordial phenomena inscribed in nature, humans had only to recognize them as such.”<sup>515</sup> In other words, the technology of writing was thought to be a cosmic revelation to the sages, a vision of scriptures’ sacrality that is also prevalent throughout later Daoist movements.<sup>516</sup>

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ed., *Lunyu zhengyi*, 1.134)

<sup>515</sup> The extended original version of the translated passage from Birgit Mersmann runs as follows: “Die Genese der chinesischen Schrift/zeichen—ich möchte bewusst nicht von Schriftschöpfung sprechen—ereignet sich als natürlicher Semioseprozess. Auch wenn sich die Ausformung einer Schrift im linguistisch aufgeklärten Verständnis immer als künstliche Schriftentwicklung vollzieht, die chinesischen Legenden der Schriftentstehung legen, trotz der Existenz von Schrifterfinderfiguren, ein anderes Modell nahe, nämlich das einer natürlichen Genese der Schrift/zeichen. Dies impliziert eine tiefere schriftsemiotische Bedeutung, die weit reichende Konsequenzen für den Umgang mit Schrift als Bildzeich(nung)en hat. Schriftzeichen werden nicht erfunden, sondern gefunden. Sie lassen sich in der Natur vorfinden; oder anders formuliert: sie sind von Natur aus gegeben. Als der Natur eingeschriebene, primordiale müssen sie nur als solche erkannt werden.” (Birgit Mersmann, “Schriftzeichen-Bilder: Chinesische Semigraphen zwischen Naturalisierung und Kulturalität,” *Bild – Macht – Schrift: Schriftkulturen in bildkritischer Perspektive*, Antonio Loprieno, Carsten Knigge Salis, and Birgit Mersmann eds. (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2011), p. 200)

<sup>516</sup> As mentioned before, the “Xiang’er” commentary presents the *Laozi* as a revealed text (see footnote 173). Let me briefly provide another example of a later text that was thought to be revealed and imbued with the powers of the cosmos/Heaven. The *Scripture of Salvation* (*Duren jing* 度人經) was thought to be a revealed and efficacious text from the fifth century CE that contains divine language made out of *brahmā*-pneuma (*fanqi* 梵氣) manifesting “the primordial Dao in its creative aspect.” (Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, pp. 373-438)

Thus, several early Daoist texts seem to continue this idea of writings as cosmic revelations to the sages well into the Six Dynasties period that gained prominence during the Han dynasty and particularly in the production of weft-writings (*chenwei* 讖緯). For a discussion of *chenwei*-texts, see Gil Raz, *The Emergence of Daoism*, pp. 127-176.

In later writings on the purpose and function of literature, this association of writings with the cosmos and political order became explicitated. For example, Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-225 CE) famously claimed that “writings (*wenzhang*) are the great business of weaving together a kingdom” (蓋文章經國之大業) directly referring to the topic of this chapter: the perceived parallel between weaving, writing, and the ordering of all under Heaven.<sup>517</sup> In addition, the discourse of a natural genesis of the script clearly manifested in some of the terms that depict “genres” and calligraphic styles such as grass-script (*caoshu* 草書), cloud-script (*yunshu* 雲書), heavenly scriptures (*tianshu* 天書), bird-writings (*niaoshu* 鳥書), or bird-traces (*niaoji* 鳥跡).<sup>518</sup> In other words, we seem to deal here with image fields that correlate the processes of writing, weaving as in Cao Pi’s case, and ordering with the motions and structure of the cosmos.<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> For the reference to this text, see footnote 467.

<sup>518</sup> “One of the most interesting styles is the bird script, in which a decorative bird sign is affixed to the ordinary characters, or the individual strokes of a character are written in the form of bird feathers. One variation of this style is a form in which one or two bird signs are added to ordinary characters. Another variation is that in which the bird signs are combined with the regular strokes of a character. [...] Most of the inscriptions written in different styles of bird script are found from the Warring States period.” (Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk* *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, pp. 49-50)

For a discussion of heavenly scriptures (*tianshu*), see Hsieh Shu-Wei, “Writing from Heaven. For a brief discussion of “Birds in Heavenly Scripts,” see Susan Shih-Shan Huang, *Picturing the True Form*, pp. 154-164.

<sup>519</sup> Both Martin Kern and Chow Tse-Tsung’s readings of early Chinese conceptualizations of writing, which we will consider more closely in chapter 5.1, also support this observation. As Martin Kern

Beyond such cultural manifestations of the image fields of writing, texts played an important role in the governance of the early imperial period. In addition to its basic function as a medium for communication and debate as reflected in texts such as the *Bohutong* or the *Discourses on Salt and Iron* (*Yantielun* 鹽鐵論), scriptures also concretely took on a political role in form of exchanges of gifts, the organization of knowledge, and the incorporation and control of regions.<sup>520</sup> For the purpose of this dissertation, let me only briefly mention the examples of the imperial library and imperially commissioned texts to substantiate the importance of scriptures within the religio-political context of the Han dynasty.

As already mentioned in chapter 2, the unification of all under Heaven under the Qin and the Han triggered the creation of new textual forms that attempted to incorporate cosmic structures in their design. This close link between the early empires and the production of all-encompassing texts, however, did not only result in texts like the *Huainanzi* or the *Lüshi*

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remarks, “in Warring States and then Qin and Han times—*wen* becomes heavily laden with cosmological meaning and related to a great variety of changing and accumulating cultural practices.” (Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon,” p. 44)

For an in-depth discussion of the connection between early Chinese understandings of writing and the cosmos, see Chow Tse-Tsung, “Ancient Chinese Views on Literature, the *Tao*, and their Relationship,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 1 (1979): 3-29.

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For a discussion of the role of scriptures as part of the incorporation of regions, see Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang*, pp. 50-118. For the passages from the *Hanshu* that illustrate the *Huainanzi* as a gift to Emperor Wu, see pages 76-83.

*chunqiu*. Several emperors during the Han dynasty also established imperial libraries to control and house the textual productions of all under Heaven and their own reconstructions of earlier texts at the center of the empire. The Han dynasty, for example, witnessed several editorial endeavors to reconstruct pre-Han texts that probably had been lost during the regional wars at the end of the Zhou period. As Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien remarked,

Systematic, large-scale recovery of ancient works was not begun, however, until the reign of Emperor Wu (r. 140-87 B.C.), who “set plans for restoring books and appointed officers for transcribing them, including even works of various philosophers and the commentaries, all to be stored in the imperial library.” [...] Now for the first time in Chinese history, a centralized imperial library was established where a wide range of materials was systematically collected and administered.<sup>521</sup>

This interest in collecting and controlling the textual past during Emperor Wu’s reign clearly manifested in the recovery of sometimes lost ancient classics, the construction of imperial libraries, and the later creation of the imperial “Record of the Literature [of Artistic Writings]” under Ban Gu in the first century CE.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>521</sup> Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, p. 14

<sup>522</sup> As Mark Edward Lewis succinctly writes, “The appearance of the library, a documented and categorized collection that aims to cover and define some field of writing, represents a major step in the evolving relationship between men and text. [...] It is the product of a world where works are seen as traces of a vanished or vanishing era that must be maintained through *active* scholarly work. [...] A large-scale effort was undertaken to retrieve and restore lost manuscripts, which became the center of scholarly debate and criticism.” (Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, pp. 325-326) For a discussion of the role of imperial libraries in Han China, see Wu Kuang-Ts’ing, “Libraries and Book-Collecting in China before the Invention of Printing,” *T’ien Hsia Monthly* 5.3 (1937): 237-260.

Moreover, the courts commissioned new textual projects to codify and collect the “knowledge” of the time.<sup>523</sup> On the one hand, lexicographical works such as the *Approaching the Correct [Names]* (*Erya* 爾雅), the *Commenting Patterned Signs and Analyzing Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字), and the *Explanations of Denominations* (*Shiming* 釋名) had probably been commissioned to textually realize the Confucian ideal of rectifying and taxonomizing the denominations (*zhengming* 正名) throughout all under Heaven.<sup>524</sup> On the other hand, texts like the *Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經) enshrined according to Paul Unschuld various compilations from the Han that contained the contemporaneous knowledge of the physical body and medical practices in a comprehensive way.<sup>525</sup> The imperial court apparently was willing to invest a large amount of resources for the production, control, and preservation of such texts. In other words, writing did

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<sup>523</sup> I have put the term knowledge in quotation marks since I am not fully convinced that knowledge was necessarily the main interest in producing texts such as lexicographical works or the medical texts. As I argue for the *Huainanzi*, I am obviously convinced that such universal, cosmicized texts might have had a more active function than the mere preservation and collection of knowledge.

<sup>524</sup> Marc Winter argues that Xu Shen might have produced the *Shuowen jiezi* as a means to linguistically harmonize the new text/old text controversy in the Eastern Han—not unlike the commentaries that were rectifying the meanings of classics. See Marc Winter, “...Und Cang Jie erfand die Schrift:” *Ein Handbuch für den Gebrauch des Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (Bern: Peter Lang: 1998), pp. 185-235.

<sup>525</sup> For a discussion of the *Basic Questions of the Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic* (*Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問) as a later compilation of Han medical texts, see Paul U. Unschuld, *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 9. For a discussion of the *Spirit Pivot of the Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic* (*Huangdi neijing lingshu* 黃帝內經靈樞), see Paul U. Unschuld, *Huang Di Nei Jing Ling Shu: The Ancient Classic on Needle Therapy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), pp. 11-16.



indeed play an important and very concrete role in early imperial politics and governance.

Hence, we may summarize that it seems as if both weaving and writing were perceived to be practices that share several commonalities during the early imperial period:

- 1) Both were discovered and directly derived from the cosmos by sages.
- 2) Both were producing woven and written patterns on a vertical axis.
- 3) Both were thought to induce order or have an ordering effect on the world.
- 4) Both were utilized in the governance of all under Heaven.

In the next chapter, we will see how this parallel construction of weaving and writing manifested in the idea that these two processes do not only share commonalities, but also function similarly. I will argue that the *imaginaire* of writing as weaving that Liu Xi finally explicated in the third century CE existed already during the Western Han and, therefore, may serve as the very context through which we may observe the *Huainanzi's* intertextual design.

**5. THE IMAGINAIRE OF WRITING AS WEAVING AND INTERTEXTUAL PRACTICE IN THE**  
**HUAINANZI**

*WHAT KIND OF CRITICISM, OF COMMENTARY ON THE ARTS, IS DESIRABLE TODAY? FOR I AM NOT SAYING THAT WORKS OF ART ARE INEFFABLE, THAT THEY CANNOT BE DESCRIBED AND PARAPHRASED. THEY CAN BE. THE QUESTION IS HOW. WHAT WOULD CRITICISM LOOK LIKE THAT WOULD SERVE THE WORK OF ART, NOT USURP ITS PLACE? WHAT IS NEEDED, FIRST, IS MORE ATTENTION TO FORM IN ART. IF EXCESSIVE STRESS ON CONTENT PROVOKES THE ARROGANCE OF INTERPRETATION, MORE EXTENDED AND MORE THOROUGH DESCRIPTIONS OF FORM WOULD SILENCE. WHAT IS NEEDED IS A VOCABULARY—A DESCRIPTIVE, RATHER THAN PRESCRIPTIVE, VOCABULARY—FOR FORMS. THE BEST CRITICISM, AND IT IS UNCOMMON, IS OF THIS SORT THAT DISSOLVES CONSIDERATIONS OF CONTENT INTO THOSE OF FORM—SUSAN SONTAG (1933-2004)*<sup>526</sup>

In this chapter, I engage in the development and outcome of the idea prevalent during the Warring States period and early Han dynasty that writing and weaving share important aspects as laid out in chapters 3 and 4. I will engage more concretely with the question of why early Chinese developed a terminology for textual genres that clearly referred to the process of weaving. In the previous two chapters, we have seen that there is quite some overlap in the ways early Chinese texts construed the cultural significance, function, process, and development of writing and weaving. In the following chapter, I will capitalize on these observations by situating the *Huainanzi* within this context of a perceived parallel between several of the image fields of writing and weaving. As a result of this parallel construction of weaving and writing, I will suggest that there existed an *imaginaire* during this time that goes

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Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, p. 12

far beyond a mere understanding of weaving as a lexicalized metaphor for writing, an idea that became common in later periods.<sup>527</sup> Instead, I propose that the *Huainanzi's* intertextual design and writing strategy of incorporating a large number of textual traces from previous scriptures points towards a practice and poetics of writing as weaving prevalent during the early Western Han. It seems as if this practice of writing as weaving later culminated in Liu Xi's famous paralleling of woven fabrics and written texts in his *Explaining Denominations* (*Shiming* 釋名). In Stephen Owen's words, I want to unearth that the *Huainanzi* "has an implicit poetics that relates in some way to an explicit [later] poetics (if one has developed in the civilization); and that relation becomes part of a [piece's textuality]."<sup>528</sup> Hence, I suggest that the *Huainanzi's* intertextual design may be better understood as an early expression of the *imaginaire* of writing as weaving that became explicitly verbalized in the third century CE. Instead of being "a miscellaneous compilation of all schools of thought [...] [that] lacks unity" as Fung Yu-lan claimed or a literary abnormality of little philosophical value according to Wing-Tsit Chan, this new contextualization of the *Huainanzi's* intertextuality infuses Liu An's textual behemoth then

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<sup>527</sup> The term lexicalized metaphor describes a metaphorical expression that has made its way in everyday parlance in such a way that an audience does not realize anymore that originally the expression had been a metaphor. Terms like heartache or the later usage of the character *wen* for writings belong to this literary figure.

<sup>528</sup> Stephen Owen ed. and trans., *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, p. 4

with a fascinating logic and meaningfulness.<sup>529</sup> Seen from this point of view, it seems as if the *Huainanzi* via its intertextual writing practice partially realizes or crystallizes the homological relationship between the Way, the sage, and the text. In other words, the text's intertextual writing practice functions as the *Huainanzi's* literary means to partially embody the Way (*tidao*).

### **5.1 The Imaginaire of Writing as Weaving**

Images of weaving play a prominent role in early Chinese conceptualizations of writing. Regarding the use of the term pattern (*wen* 文 or *wenzhang* 文章), which would take on the lexicalized meaning of a written text some time around the late first century BCE, Martin Kern remarks that

*wenzhang* is – according to the early commentaries – a compound denoting two different textile patterns for ritual use: *wen* is explained as the pattern of azure and red, *zhang* as one of red and white. Whether or not we accept this rather specific explanation, in these passages – as well as in many other texts, as we shall see – *wenzhang* clearly refers to some kind of textile ornament.<sup>530</sup>

As Kern mentions in this passage, the term *wenzhang* that later texts often use to depict scriptures apparently has its origins in textiles and their ornamentation. He claims that such fabrics displaying various patterns and insignia were commonly used within a ritualistic and/or

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<sup>529</sup>

Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy Volume I*, p. 395

<sup>530</sup>

Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon,” p. 54

political context in early China demarcating the various ranks of the people involved.<sup>531</sup> Thus *wen*, a term that had been predominantly used after the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 CE) to collectively depict writings and culturality as a whole, originally may not have connoted any form of text, at all.<sup>532</sup>

Not surprisingly, then, we find exactly such an explication of *wen* as textual patterns in Liu Xi's *Shiming*, a slightly later lexicographical work than the sources Kern discusses in his article. In that sense, Liu Xi affirms Kern's claim that some time in the first century BCE *wen* would take on the meaning of a text. However, in his definition of *wen* Liu Xi clearly picks up images derived from the process of weaving alluding to the term's previous connotations as a textile pattern. It states:

Regarding the patterned writings (*wen*): one assembles and collects many varicolored silks in order to make embroidered brocade. One [also] assembles and collects many characters in order to make

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<sup>531</sup> For my references to discussions of silks and fabrics as markers for ranks and social status, see footnote 439. For passages in the *Analects* that directly pair patterns with rites with the help of variations of the expression “broad studying in written patterns and restraining by using rites” (博學於文，約之以禮) or “patterning them by using rites and music” (*wen zhi yi liyue* 文之以禮樂), see Liu Baonan ed., *Lunyu zhengyi*, 1.130, 1.182, 1.274, and 1.307.

<sup>532</sup> “In the course of the Eastern Zhou, ‘writing’ had assumed a great variety of forms, including charts (*tu* 圖) and inscriptions, but it still was but one aspect of *wen*, and certainly not the central one. The situation had changed by Eastern Han times, however: now *wen*, beyond the universally applicable “criss-cross pattern,” predominantly meant ‘writing’ and ‘writings,’ ‘script’ and ‘scriptures,’ and in particular the written composition as an emblem of civil achievement.” (Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon,” p. 46)

phrased righteousness/meanings as it is with the patterned brocades.

文者，會集眾綵以成錦繡，會集眾字以成辭義，如文繡然也。<sup>533</sup>

Liu Xi's definition of *wen* explicitly considers the process of accumulating and linking various characters (*zhongzi* 眾字) into sentences (*ciyi* 辭義) as being equivalent to linking varicolored silk threads (*zhongcai* 眾綵) into an embroidered warp-faced brocade (*jinxiu* 錦繡). Like a weaver collecting strands of silk to warp and woof them in a mounted loom (see figure 20), an author would assemble words and write them down on bamboo slips (see figure 19). In that sense, Liu Xi explicitly correlates the processes of weaving and writing whose overlapping image fields I have analyzed in chapters 3 and 4. Since a text establishes order via the concerted installment of words on vertical bamboo slips, it displays the same logic and motion as weaving in which the organized, horizontal assemblage and connection of silk threads on the vertical warps leads to embroidered brocade.<sup>534</sup> Thus, we may summarize that Liu Xi, as well as many of the earlier texts discussed in the last two chapters, apparently considered the two processes of writing and weaving as parallel activities that share the important quality of being vertical procedures.

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<sup>533</sup> Liu Xi 劉熙, *Shiming* 釋名, *Yingyin wenyuan ge siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan 台灣商務印書館, 1983): 221.399b

<sup>534</sup> It is important to keep in mind that writing and reading like the weaving process and its moving of the heddle (*zong* 綜) in a loom moves vertically and horizontally, from the upper right corner down to the left. In that sense, it seems as if the *wen* of a text only appears properly via the processes of writing and its re-enactment in the performance of reading.



Figure 19 (to the left): Bamboo Slips, *Laws of Yarrow Divination (Shifa 筮法)*<sup>535</sup>

Figure 20 (to the right): Close up of the “Brocade of Peace and Happiness” (“Anle xiu” 安樂繡)<sup>536</sup>

This account raises an important question: what happened in between the production of Liu Xi’s *Shiming* in which *wen* clearly refers to both written and woven patterns and the earlier accounts Martin Kern discusses in which *wen* evidently signifies an ornamented fabric? A comprehensive study of early uses of *wenzhang* is beyond the scope of the current project; however, this development from *wen* as a textile to *wen* as a written textual fabric that happened sometime between the Western and Eastern Han dynasty bears important

<sup>535</sup> *Laws of Yarrow Divination (Shifa 筮法)*, front side, slips 32-63, ink on bamboo, Warring States period, Qinghua University, Beijing. For the image of the slips, see Li Xueqin 李學勤 ed., *Qinghua daxue cang zhanguo zhujian 清華大學藏戰國竹簡*, 肆上冊 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju 中西書局, 2010), pp. 4-5. I would like to thank Cai Yuqian 蔡雨錢 and Du Heng who informed me of the *Shifa*’s imagetext.

<sup>536</sup> “Brocade of Peace and Happiness” (“Anle xiu” 安樂繡), Han dynasty, 36 cm wide, warp vertical; 176 warps per cm, 20 wefts per cm. Excavated from tomb 8 at Niya 泥雅, Minfeng 民豐 County, Xinjiang 新疆 province in 1995. Xinjiang Institute Of Cultural Relics and Archeology, Urumqi. For a discussion of the “Brocade of Peace and Happiness,” see Li Wenying, “Silk Artistry of the Qin, Han, Wei, and Jin Dynasties,” pp. 115-166.

consequences for my concerns with the *Huainanzi's* intertextual design. It reflects a semantic transformation, a paradigmatic shift that points towards the existence of a new *imaginaire* during the Han dynasty. Apparently, some time during the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE – 9 CE), early Chinese writers started to connect and merge the processes of writing and weaving whose parallel construction we analyzed in chapters 3 and 4 and whose concrete formulation we just encountered in Liu Xi's explication of textual patterns as being similar (*ru* 如) to woven fabrics.<sup>537</sup> In other words, the obvious alternation in the perception of the term *wen* from a fabric to a written text seems to mark the genesis of an *imaginaire* of writing as weaving during this time as reflected by Liu Xi and other scholars' perception of important commonalities between these two activities that later culminated in the lexicalization of *wen* as a text—which, of course, has long become the predominant meaning.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Xu Shen's 許慎 (ca. 58-147 CE) *Commenting Patterned Signs and Analyzing Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字) also reflects the idea that *wen* are some sort of (textual) fabric, only with the difference that it associates the writing and drawing of criss-crossing strokes with woven patterns: “*Wen* are elegant drawings that are in image of intercrossing patterns. All categories of *wen* follow this woven-like pattern.”

文：錯畫也。象交文。凡文之屬皆从文。(Xu Shen ed., *Shuowen jiezi*, p. 185a)

<sup>538</sup> Martin Kern asserts that the understanding of *wen* as writing successively overshadowed its earlier connotations as a fabric, insignia, or any kind of ritual form and ornament (see Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon,” p. 61). We will see that the *Huainanzi* employs a similar vision of writing as weaving suggesting that this *imaginaire* was already fully at work during Emperor Wu's 漢武帝 reign (156-87 BCE, r. 141-87 BCE). In that sense, I claim that the *Huainanzi* is an example of an early stage of this



The existence of such an *imaginaire* of writing as weaving during the Han dynasty may be further substantiated by the specific coinages of terminologies for textual genres during this period such as the aforementioned textual patterns (*wen* 文), canonical texts (*jing* 經), “weft-writings” (*weishu* 緯書), records (*ji* 紀 or *ji* 記), and many more. In that sense, it seems as if the *imaginaire* of writing as weaving crystallized in the specific terminology used by early Chinese texts to depict some of the most important literary genres.

In addition to such terminological manifestations of the *imaginaire*, there are two contemporaneous material developments during the Western Han dynasty that may partially explain the semantic change of the term *wen*: as mentioned above in chapter 4.1, silk as a medium for written texts gained prominence during the third and second century BCE.<sup>539</sup> Prior

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development in which the transition of *wen* into writings has not been stated explicitly, yet. Moreover, I argue that Liu An’s scripture effectively realizes in its own design and intertextual practice (the weaving in of textual traces from the past) the connection between processes of weaving, writing, ritual form, and the cosmos as we find it in early Chinese literary thought. For a discussion of imitation poetry in the Six Dynasties period (220 – 589 CE) and an understanding of writing as an intertextual brocade, see Nicholas Williams, “The Brocade of Words: Imitation Poetry and Poetics in the Six Dynasties,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 2010, pp. 40-59.

<sup>539</sup>

Hans van Ess uses a similar argument on the widespread use of silks. However, he utilizes it to explain the *Huainanzi*’s more complex, argumentative style: “Technical factors, such as a more widespread use of silk or precursors of paper, may have aided this process of refinement which must have taken place during the first half of the second century B.C.—although it should have been perfectly possible to make long arguments on bamboo-strips, too.” (Hans van Ess, “Argument and Persuasion in the First Chapter of *Huainanzi* and its Use of Particles,” *Oriens Extremus* 45 (2005/2006): 255)

to the late Warring States period (475 – 221 BCE), the majority of texts had been written on wooden, bamboo, or other firm materials. In itself, this change in material culture and association of silks with writing already establishes a firm bridge between the seemingly disparate aspects of *wen* as “fabric” and as “text.” Secondly, the editorial projects of the Western Han dynasty apparently faced the problem of sometimes literally weaving together comprehensive versions of texts out of remnants of possibly disjointed bamboo slips due to the vast destructions during the Warring States period as mentioned in chapter 4.2. In that sense, it is quite possible that—in addition to the parallels between several of the image fields of weaving and writing—the process of recollecting and assembling texts from the Zhou dynasty, as well as the practical weaving together of bamboo scrolls out of individual slips evoked and cemented writing’s association with the process of weaving.<sup>540</sup> These points suggest that the second or first century BCE might indeed mark the genesis of the *imaginaire* and practice of writing as weaving that in my opinion informed the transition from *wen* as a fabric to its lexicalized meaning as a text.<sup>541</sup> Writers of the Han dynasty clearly perceived their acts of

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<sup>540</sup> For a discussion of the utilization of bamboo and wood as materials for the production of books and the binding of scrolls, see Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, pp. 96-125.

<sup>541</sup> William Boltz suggests an idea similar to the practice of writing as weaving and to the “Wenfu’s” roaming of the groves of literature despite the fact that he does not use the weaving or roaming terminology to depict the intertextual texture of early Chinese texts: “pre-Han texts tend to be structurally

writing in terms of the process of weaving.<sup>542</sup> In the following, we will see that the *Huainanzi* seems to elaborate on this marriage of the processes of weaving and writing by actualizing the *imaginaire* in its intertextual practice and design.<sup>543</sup>

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composites. [...] If we think of the act of composing texts as in significant part the act of selecting and assembling passages from a reservoir of so-called textual building blocks, this then amounts to an editorial process and presumes a doctrinal or similarly purposeful motivation.” (William G. Boltz, “The Composite Nature of Early Chinese Texts,” p. 59)

<sup>542</sup> In the future, it would be worthwhile exploring whether the prevalence of intertextual writing practices in early China may truly be considered to be the reason for this terminological development.

<sup>543</sup> Since we do not have enough credible materials about the *Huainanzi* and its production, it is obviously impossible to fully prove that Liu An and his workshop in fact produced the text and had such a vision of writing as weaving in mind. Nonetheless, I am convinced that the cultural context of a parallel understanding of writing and weaving during the Western Han dynasty enables us to better and more sympathetically explain the *Huainanzi*'s extraordinary production and intertextual design than any other historical or political contextualization of Liu An's text, thus far. In this vision, intertextual writing is a means to connect and weave together the past and the present, as well as the various manifestations of the Way in this world.

## 5.2 The *Huainanzi*'s Weaving in of Textual Traces

Turning our focus again to the text of the *Huainanzi*, we encounter the same image of writings as woven fabrics we faced in Liu Xi's definition of *wen*.<sup>544</sup> As discussed in chapter 2.3, the beginning of the "Summary of the Essentials" chapters depicts Liu An's text indeed as a tapestry and net:

Now, these writings and discourses we have created and composed are a means to knot a net of the Way and its Power and weave a tapestry of humankind and its affairs. Soaring up it investigates Heaven, descending it measures Earth, being in the middle it connects all lines. Although it is not able to draw out fully the core and abilities of the Profound Mystery, its opulence is enough to observe the end and beginning. It gathers and sums up everything, yet its words do not chop and separate the Pure and Unhewn and do not differentiate the Great Ancestor. We are afraid about the confusion of people. Being confused one does not understand it. Therefore, numerous are the words we have composed and extensive are the illustrations we have provided. Again we fear that people will depart from the root and draw near to the branches. Thus, if we speak of the Way, yet not of affairs, then there is nothing with which one [may] sink and drift with the ages. If we speak of affairs then there is nothing with which one [may] roam and rest with the transformations. (*HNZ* 21.1)

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<sup>544</sup>

I follow here Martin Powers' thoughts regarding the use of later texts to discuss earlier phenomena. He raises the question: "If your ornament antedates your text by a century or more, how many inferences can you draw? The answer, surprisingly, is not zero. It is widely recognized that works written down in the fourth and third centuries B.C. may contain material of earlier date. If one is concerned with macro style, a text need not be contemporaneous with an ornament in order to illuminate its logic. It will be sufficient if the text preserves period terms, categories, and arguments from the time when the macro style was in vogue." (Martin Powers, *Pattern and Person*, p. 47)

In my case, I do not want to claim that the ideas in the *Shiming* are the same as we find them in earlier texts. However, since similar associations re-appear in the *Huainanzi* and other texts of the early imperial period, it is important to recognize that the *imaginaire* correlating the processes of writing with weaving, ordering, and the Dao seems to have manifested various disguises throughout texts from the Han and Six Dynasties period.

夫作為書論者，所以紀綱道德，經緯人事，上考之天，下揆之地，中通諸理，雖未能抽引玄妙之中才，繁然足以觀終始矣。總要舉凡，而語不剖判純樸，靡散大宗，懼為人之昏昏然弗能知也；故多為之辭，博為之說，又恐人之離本就末也。故言道而不言事，則無以與世浮沉；言事而不言道，則無以與化遊息。<sup>545</sup>

This long passage, which precedes the “Yaolüe’s” second section about the titles and specific summaries of each chapter, illustrates a general purpose for the *Huainanzi*. It lays out several of the functions the author(s) of this chapter (presumably Liu An and his court erudites) attributed to the text. On the one hand, it apologizes for the *Huainanzi*’s magnitude claiming that it was necessary to accumulate that many words on such a wide range of topics in order to avoid any dissection and limitation of the Great Ancestor [i.e. either the Grand One (Taiyi 太一 or 太乙) or the Dao] while, at the same time, preventing humans’ distractions from it.<sup>546</sup> Only if the text contains everything, it will be able to sink and drift with the generations and roam or rest with the transformations, meaning that it will be able to respond to the various ages and the Myriad Beings. On the other hand, it provides a rather explicit and vivid depiction of what the *Huainanzi* supposedly does; namely, it asserts that it serves as a textual fabric whose knots

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<sup>545</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 700

<sup>546</sup> Although *dazong* refers in the *Liji* and other texts to an official post in the Office of Heaven (*tianguan* 天官), I interpret it rather in the direction of the *Zhuangzi*’s chapter title “Great Ancestral Master” as an expression for the ineffable Way and its heavenly manifestation in Taiyi. For the *Liji* passage, see Kong Yingda ed., *Liji zhushu*, 5.81a. For a *Zhuangzi* passage that uses the term *dazong* to refer to the Way, see the beginning of the chapter “Tiandao” in Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.206. For a similar passage in the *Huainanzi*, see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 28.

make a net out of the powers of the Way (*jigang daode* 紀綱道德) and weaves a tapestry out of the deeds of human beings (*jingwei renshi* 經緯人事). Thus, the passage presents the *Huainanzi* as an utterly comprehensive texture that connects instead of dissects.<sup>547</sup>

Within this context of an illustration of the text's construction, it uses the terms *jingwei* and *jigang* in a verbal sense meaning a process of weaving and connecting that the scripture apparently was thought to perform. Consequently, this passage apparently does not use the compound *jingwei* as a noun to depict the *Huainanzi* as a canonical text as it would have been typical in later periods.<sup>548</sup> It rather seems as if the "Yaolüe" refers here to the rich *imaginaire* of writing as weaving and its idea of threading together and connecting varicoloured silk threads that we encountered in Liu Xi's definition of woven and textual patterns (*wen*).

The "Yaolüe's" illustration of the *Huainanzi* as a weaving texture at such a prominent

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<sup>547</sup> Interestingly, the Romans developed a similar vision about the relationship between writing and weaving. This fact is reflected in our modern words text and texture, which are based on the Latin word for fabric (*textus* or *textura*): "As is well known, *textus* comes from *texo*, 'I weave,' and means 'fabric,' connection, coherence. Starting with this metaphor, Quintilian uses the term *textus* for the interconnections between words (*verborum*), the structure and coherence of speech." (Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, p. 101) For a discussion of the (metaphorical) intersection of writing and weaving in the European classical period, see John Scheid and Jesper Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric*, Carol Volk trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 109-156.

<sup>548</sup> For a discussion of the development of the canonization of the *Five Classics* (*wujing* 五經) during the Han dynasty, see Yen-zen Tsai, "Ching and Chuan: Towards Defining the Confucian Scriptures in Han China (206 BCE-220 CE)," pp. 87-118 and Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 16-51.

position raises questions regarding the scripture's function and form. How and for what reason does Liu An's text evoke the image of weaving in the beginning of the last chapter that according to Martin Kern and the team of the *Huainanzi* translation project was meant to function as a summary performed during the text's presentation to Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (156-87 BCE, r. 141-87 BCE)?<sup>549</sup> And what does it mean for a text to connect and weave together? I am convinced that the intertextual writing practice of Liu An's text and its resulting "eclectic" design, in fact, actualize the weaving strategy of, in the text's own words, "knotting a net of the Way and its Power and weaving a tapestry of humankind and its affairs." Similar to Liu Xi's illustration of writing as an assemblage of verbal threads, I suggest that the *Huainanzi* literally weaves together textual traces (*ji* 跡) of the workings of the way, as well as records (*ji* 記) of the deeds (*shi* 事) and words (*yan* 言) of previous writers and sagely kings.<sup>550</sup> In other

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<sup>549</sup> For a brief discussion of the "Yaolüe" as a performative text presented at the court of Emperor Wu, see footnote 142.

<sup>550</sup> We'll see in the "Yaolüe's" depictions of the "Daoying" chapter below that the *Huainanzi* understands its textual parallels to pre-Han writings as traces of the remote past (*wanggu zhi ji* 往古之跡). Moreover, it is interesting that the term trace became attributed both to a collection of saying and narratives about Gongsun Long, titled "The Storehouse of Traces" ("Jifu" 跡府), and to a pictorial narrative that depicts the deeds of Kongzi, titled *Charts of the Sage's Traces* (*Shengji tu* 聖跡圖). In that sense, this much later production still reflects the idea that traces refer to words and deeds of sages. For a discussion of the term trace and its relationship to textual remnants of words and deeds of the past, see Tobias Benedikt Zürn, "Traces of the Ancients in the *Huainanzi*," forthcoming, which is based on a presentation held at the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Daoist Studies, Boston, May 29<sup>th</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup> 2014. For a discussion of the *Shengji tu*, see Julia K.

words, I propose that we may read and understand the *Huainanzi's* intertextual design and writing practice through the cultural context of a perceived parallel between writing and weaving during the early imperial period.

In order to visualize the *Huainanzi's* technique of arraying textual threads from the past, let's consider some eye-opening passages from Liu An's text. Since in the following examples I want to emphasize the *Huainanzi's* structure and design, the chapter presents these passages merely from a visual viewpoint. The parts written in black color refer here to portions of the text that have no parallels in any other extant pre-Han source. The varicolored sections, however, mark phrases, i.e. textual threads, that the *Huainanzi* shares with other pre-Han writings.<sup>551</sup>

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Murray, "Illustrations of the Life of Confucius," pp. 73-134, Julia K. Murray, "Varied Views of the Sage: Illustrated Narratives of the Life of Confucius," *On Sacred Ground: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Formation of the Temple of Confucius*, Thomas Wilson ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 222-264, and Eugene Wang, "The Rhetoric of Book Illustrations," *Treasures of the Yenching: The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Exhibit Catalogue of the Harvard-Yenching Library*, Patrick Hanan ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard-Yenching Library, 2003) pp. 207-214.

<sup>551</sup>

In this dissertation I avoid terms such as "borrowing" or "quotation" that scholars regularly use to depict intertextual relationships and that evoke a one-directional, influencing, and/or legal relationship between two texts. The reason for this decision is twofold. First, the textual historical situation in early China is very unclear due to the high probability that several texts simultaneously circulated in various oral and textual versions throughout the kingdoms. Therefore, it is, in my opinion, impossible to clarify, which texts did in fact "borrow" from which texts. In particular, the fact that most extant texts had not been canonized or had received a fixed textual form until the late Han dynasty substantiates this issue. Second, these terms reflect a very specific



In the most obviously “intertextual” chapter of the entire scripture, titled “Resonances of the Way(s)” (“Daoying” 道應), we find, for example, following passage:

(Laozi 10), (HNZ 12.7)
「齧缺問道於被衣，被衣曰：「正女形，壹女視，天和將至。攝女知，正女度，神將來舍。德將來附若美，而道將為女居。憇乎若新生之犢，而無求其故。」言未卒，齧缺繼以讎夷。被衣行歌而去，曰：「形若槁骸，心如死灰。直實不知，以故自持。墨墨恢恢，無心可與謀。彼何人哉！」」
(Zhuangzi “Zhibeiyou”) 故老子曰：「明白四達。能無以知乎！」

Figure 21: Passage from the “Daoying” Chapter that Employs a Trace from the *Zhuangzi* and the *Laozi*<sup>552</sup>

As we can see in this example, the “Daoying” literally pairs textual threads from the pre-Han period, in this case two that we nowadays may find in the extant *Zhuangzi* (red) and *Laozi* (green). The passage connects these two fragments with the help of a simple “Therefore, Laozi says” (*gu Laozi yue* 故老子曰). Note that the *Huainanzi* does not provide any explanation or further clue regarding the specific purpose(s) behind the pairing of these two textual fragments. However, its assembling of passages reflects some of the *Huainanzi*’s own statements regarding the “Resonances of the Way(s)” (“Daoying” 道應) chapter. On its function and form, the “Yaolüe” claims:

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Eurocentric concern with authorship and copyright that did not exist during the Han dynasty. For scholarly work that discusses the process of canonization, see footnote 548.

<sup>552</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 382-383

“Resonances of the Way(s)”<sup>553</sup>

- 1) grasps and plucks out the footprints of fulfilled deeds, pursues and penetratingly observes the traces of bygone antiquity,
- 2) inspects the alternations of bad and good fortune, benefit and harm, investigates and proves them with/against the techniques of Lao-Zhuang,
- 3) and matches, thereby, the strategic dispositions of gain and loss.

《道應》者，

- |                                  |       |       |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1) 攬掇遂事之蹤 (A)，追觀往古之跡 (B)，        | tsjun | tsjak |
| 2) 察禍福利害之反 (A)，考驗乎老莊之術 (B)，      | pjanx | drjət |
| 3) 而以合得失之勢者也 (C)。 <sup>554</sup> |       |       |

This passage from the “Yaolüe” uses a parallel style (xx 之 y) to delineate the composition of the “Daoying.” It suggests with its *zhe ... zhe ye* 者...者也-structure that everything that follows the title (*daoying zhe* 道應者) does describe the “workings” of the chapter (i.e. the text). According to this depiction, the “Daoying” chapter would create an effect, a matching or combination (*he* 合) of the strategic dispositions of gain and loss (*deshi zhi shi* 得失之勢).<sup>555</sup>

<sup>553</sup> I decided to translate 道應者 as a reference to the chapter's title since this structure reappears throughout the entire summary of the chapters in rhapsodic forms (*fu* 賦) in the “Yaolüe.” Therefore, it seems as if the “Yaolüe” describes the functions, form, and workings of the text rather than a person who is versed in performing a resonating of the dao(s) (*daoying zhe*).

<sup>554</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 704

<sup>555</sup> In my opinion, the phrase *daoying zhe* 道應者 may refer to both the resonating of human actions with the movements of the Way and the mutual interaction of various teachings (*dao* 道). In other words, it may also denominate the results of what happens when one brings various *dao* in a resonating relationship. In this reading, each of the fragments would represent a partial aspect of the Way. Each teaching would be a (human) trace of the traceless Way. As such, these teachings would be prone to respond to both the Way and other things or discourses of a similar category (*lei* 類). Thus, the “Daoying” chapter would use these

The “Yaolüe” depicts this process of a matching or unification as a sequence of five central themes. The first four describe an operation of collecting, evaluating, and examining footprints and traces, terms that the *Huainanzi* and later historical writings often use to depict records (*ji* 記) and other textual fragments.<sup>556</sup> It develops this procedure in two parallel steps (two six and two seven character lines). First, it gathers two different forms of tracks: footprints of fulfilled actions (*suishi zhi zong* 遂事之蹤) and traces of bygone antiquity (*wangu zhi ji* 往古之跡). In a second step, it inspects these footprints of fulfilled actions and their alternations of bad and good fortune, benefit and harm (*huofu lihai zhi fan* 禍福利害之反) and examines them together with the techniques of Lao-Zhuang (*laozhuang zhi shu* 老莊之術). It is significant that these techniques are said to be related to the traces of bygone antiquity that were thought to

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partial manifestations or human interpretations of the Dao to evoke resonating effects by connecting and combining textual fragments from various distinct teachings (*dao*).

<sup>556</sup> Prior to the *Huainanzi*, texts rarely employed the term trace (*ji* 跡). Only with the *Huainanzi*, the *Shiji*, and the *Hanshu*, the term trace gained more importance and appeared more frequently in early Chinese writings. Thus, it seems as if discourses on the role and function of (textual) traces developed within the context of court scribes and astrologers (*shi* 史) and their observation and interaction with the world and its texts. As mentioned in footnote 512 and 513, texts from the Han and pre-Han apparently saw a close relationship between tracks and writings. In fact, Cang Jie 倉頡 was thought to develop the basic Chinese characters from bird tracks (*niaoji* 鳥跡). *HNZ* 16.78, for example, contains a narrative about the creation of Chinese characters out of bird tracks that explicitly associates the trace with writings. Considering the eminence of the mythological narrative that Cang Jie derived the Chinese characters from such bird tracks and bearing in mind that the trace became strongly associated with the stroke of a brush (*biji* 筆跡) in the Six Dynasties, the understanding of *ji* as writings is little surprising.

carry or embody aspects and fragments of the *Laozhuang zhi shu*. Thus, the passage creates an ABAB structure that underlies the entire first part of the “Yaolüe’s” depiction of the “Daoying” chapter, an impression that the sonic associations of the last characters in the first (*tsjuŋ* and *pjanx*) and second part (*tsjak* and *drjat*) of each line reinforce.<sup>557</sup>

In addition, the passage clearly separates the first four lines that describe the twofold setup and form of the chapter from the last segment by the word “and” (*er* 而). This last aspect specifies the consequence of the previous process as signaled by the term “by doing this” (*yi* 以). In fact, the structure of the passage (ABABC) and the increasing number of characters per line (two six, two seven, and one eight character line) suggest that the “Daoying” chapter’s procedure of choosing and evaluating two different traces of the past culminates in a unitary end: the matching of the strategic dispositions of gain and loss.

Unfortunately, the “Yaolüe” leaves us in the dark regarding the purposes of such a matching of textual traces so that a clear evaluation of this writing technique is still impossible

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According to Li Fanggui’s reconstruction of ancient Chinese pronunciations (*shanggu yin* 上古音), there is a sonic association between the endings of the last characters in the first two (i.e. parts A) and the second two (i.e. parts B) parts of each line. The first two end on a nasal coda while the second two have an expositive coda. In that sense, their distinct sonic qualities suggest that the “Yaolüe” does indeed design a parallel structure in which the former and the latter parts create sonic and, as I would argue, semantic relations with each other.

at this moment.<sup>558</sup> That being said, the “Yaolüe’s” illustration at least offers us a vocabulary to depict the “Daoying” chapter’s concrete style. After having grasped and plucked out two traces from the *Zhuangzi* and the *Laozi*, it proves or examines (*kaoyan* 考驗) these textual fragments of the techniques of Lao-Zhuang against each other allowing us to draw the conclusion that the “Yaolüe” apparently considers textual fragments to be traces of Laozi and Zhuangzi’s words.<sup>559</sup>

This pattern of assembling traces from pre-Han texts without further investigating their relationship appears regularly throughout the entire chapter. Out of fifty-five passages in the

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Sarah A. Queen conversely situates the “Daoying” chapter’s intertextual practice squarely within the assumed socio-cultural context that the *Huainanzi* had been written to educate the young Emperor Wu about rulership. She argues in the introduction to her translation of this chapter that the matching of anecdotes and fragments in the “Daoying” chapter was meant to illustrate “the manner in which the Way may be known to the ruler and be used to ensure the success and prosperity of his reign. [...] The combination of illustrative anecdote and apposite citation created a mix of didactic principles (in chapter 21, called the “techniques of Lao-Zhuang”) that the compilers of chapter 12 saw as instrumental to a ruler’s success.” (Harold D. Roth et al. trans., *The Huainanzi*, pp. 429-430)

Interestingly, she does neither explain in this short introduction what concrete argumentative or educative purposes the mere combination of textual passages from the *Laozi* with passages from other early Chinese texts fulfils nor how this relates to the “Yaolüe’s” statement that the “Daoying” chapter “matches the strategic dispositions of gain and loss.” In that sense, her argument seems to be based on a presumed notion of early Chinese texts as philosophical writings rather than a specific discussion of the *Huainanzi*’s intertextual practice and its purposes. For a further discussion of the “Daoying” chapter as a text of philosophical argumentation, see Sarah A. Queen, “The Creation and Domestication of the Techniques of Lao-Zhuang: Anecdotal Narrative and Philosophical Argumentation in *Huainanzi* 12,” *Asia Major*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 21.1 (2008): 201-247.

<sup>559</sup>

The *Zhuangzi* contains a similar illustration of the words of the sages as remnants or traces. However, it uses in the chapter “The Way of Heaven” (“Tiandao” 天道) this image critically and sarcastically by calling their words “rotten bones or dregs of the ancients” (*guren zhi zaopo* 古人之糟粕 or 古人之糟魄). See Guo Qingfan ed., *Zhuangzi jishi*, 3.217-218.

“Daoying,” twenty follow exactly the same design.<sup>560</sup> They connect parts of textual fragments from pre-Han writings that we also find recorded in *Mister Lü's Spring and Autumn* (*Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋), the *Liezi* 列子 (if one accepts it as a text that includes Han and pre-Han materials), *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, *Yanzi's Spring and Autumn* (*Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋), and again the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 with short sayings from the *Laozi* 老子, *Zhuangzi*, *Shenzi* 慎子 and *Guanzi* 管子 (see figure 22).<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>560</sup> The following chapters follow this design of solely matching *Laozi* passages with a textual trace from another pre-Han text: *HNZ* 12.1, 12.5, 12.7, 12.8, 12.9, 12.10, 12.12, 12.14, 12.16, 12.19, 12.24, 12.27, 12.32, 12.33, 12.38, 12.42, 12.44, 12.47, 12.52, and 12.55 (see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 378-379, 381-391, 394, 397, 400, 403, 406, 411-412, and 416-420). Most of the other examples either have another sentence interspersed at some point of the passage that is not included in the extant sources or consist of smaller textual fragments suggesting that this passage contains a fraction that just might be lost in the extant texts. In that sense, it seems as if the pattern of two textual fragments from the pre-Han linked together without any further comment with the help of the saying “*gu laozi yue*” or an equivalent introduction builds the basic structure of the entire chapter.

<sup>561</sup> As mentioned in the footnote above, the “Daoying” chapter generally introduces the second part of each passage, a *Laozi* fragment, with the words “Therefore Laozi says:” (*gu Laozi yue*). In rare cases the chapter uses other introductory sentences: *HNZ* 12.4 employs “this is what Lao Dan means with” (此老聃之所調; see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 381); 12.12, 12.25, 12.26 just say “Laozi says:” (*Laozi yue* 老子曰; see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 388 and 394-397); and 12.30 just mentions a “therefore” (*gu* 故; see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 399). There are also three instances in which the “Daoying” chapter refers to a passage attributed to *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (12.41; see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 405-406), *Shenzi* 慎子 (12.49; see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 413-414), and *Guanzi* 管子 (12.50; see Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 414). It introduces these three passages respectively with “Therefore Zhuangzi says:” (*gu Zhuangzi yue* 故莊子曰), “Therefore Shenzi says:” (*gu Shenzi yue* 故慎子曰), and “this is what Guanzi means with” (*ci suowei guanzi* 此所謂管子). Nonetheless, these exemptions do not weaken the impression that the majority of the “Daoying” chapter follows a strict structure that connects a

魏武侯問于李克曰：『吳之所以亡者，何也？』李克對曰：『數戰而數勝。』武侯曰：『數戰數勝，國之福。其獨以亡，何故也？』對曰：『數戰則民疲，數勝則主驕。以驕主使疲民，而國不亡者，天下鮮矣！驕則恣，恣則極物；疲則怨，怨則極慮；上下俱極，吳之亡猶晚矣！夫差之所以自剄於幹遂也。』(Lüshi Chunqiu “Shiwei”) 老子曰：『功成名遂，身退，天之道也。』(Laozi 9), (HNZ 12.13)

王壽負書而行，見徐馮于周，徐馮曰：『事者，應變而動，變生於時，故知時者無常行。書者，言之所出也。言出於知者，知者藏書。』於是王壽乃焚書而舞之。(Hanfeizi “Yulao”) 故老子曰：『多言數窮，不如守中。』(Laozi 5), (HNZ 12.20)

狐丘丈人謂孫叔敖曰：『人有三怨，子知之乎？』孫叔敖曰：『何謂也？』對曰：『爵高者，士妒之；官大者，主惡之；祿厚者，怨處之。』孫叔敖曰：『吾爵益高，吾志益下；吾官益大，吾心益小；吾祿益厚，吾施益博。是以免三怨，可乎？』(Liezi “Shuofu”) 故老子曰：『貴必以賤為本，高必以下為基。』(Laozi 39), (HNZ 12.33)

Figure 22: Passages of the “Daoying” that Employ Traces of the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, *Hanfeizi*, and *Liezi*<sup>562</sup>

Considering that many different versions of these texts were likely circulating during the Han and that many texts disappeared throughout the ages, it is quite possible that the entire “Daoying” chapter followed the same pattern we encountered in the examples above.<sup>563</sup>

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Laozi passage with another pre-Han source via the formula “*gu Laozi yue*.”

<sup>562</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 388-389, 392, and 400

<sup>563</sup> As Roth et al. claim regarding the slight differences between parallel passages from the *Huainanzi* and the *Lüshi chunqiu*, “the compilers of chapter 12 of the *Huainanzi* may have used the *Lüshi chunqiu* as a source of anecdotal literature; the chapter may have used another written source or sources not known to us; or both the *Huainanzi* and the *Lüshi chunqiu* may have drawn from a common oral form.” (Harold D. Roth et al. trans., *The Huainanzi*, p. 436) Consequently, variations of textual resources should not surprise us, particularly since bricolaged forms of writing as displayed in the “Daoying” chapter were rather common phenomena in early China. As William Boltz has shown, many excavated manuscripts seem to be assembled out of textual blocks that frequently appear in the transmitted versions in a different organization or phrasing. See William G. Boltz, “The Composite Nature of Early Chinese Texts,” pp. 50-60. In that sense, the compositional nature of this chapter and the rather consistent employment of two textual fragments combined with a conjunction suggest that the entire chapter might have followed the same pattern.

Such a technique of arraying textual traces from the past by inserting passages from pre-Han texts, however, is not only limited to the twelfth chapter. The *Huainanzi*'s second chapter is no exception to this trend. In fact, it is known for its elaborate references to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子.<sup>564</sup> It contains another interesting case in which Liu An's scripture assembles within a small space several passages we nowadays may find in the extant text attributed to

*Zhuangzi* (see figure 23):

是故聖人托其神於靈府，而歸於萬物之初。『視于冥冥，聽於無聲。冥冥之中，獨見曉焉；寂漠之中，獨有照焉。』(“Tiandi”)其用之也以不用，其不用也而後能用之；『其知也乃不知，其不知也而後能知之也。』(“Xuwugui”)夫天不定，日月無所載；地不定，草木無所植；所立于身者不寧，是非無所形。是故『有真人然後有真知。』(“Dazongshi”)其所持者不明，『庸詎知吾所謂知之非不知歟？』(“Qiwulun”)今夫積惠重厚，累愛襲恩，以聲華嘔符嫗掩萬民百姓，『使知之訢訢然，人樂其性者，仁也。』(“Zaiyou”)『舉大功，立顯名，體君臣，正上下，』(“Ke”)『明親疏，等貴賤，存危國，繼絕世，決挈治煩，興毀宗，立無後者，義也。閉九竅，藏心志，棄聰明，反無識，』(“Dasheng”)『茫然仿佯于塵埃之外，而消搖于無事之業』(“Dasheng”)，含陰吐陽，而萬物同者，德也。是故道散而為德，德溢而為仁義，仁義立而道德廢矣！(HWZ)

Figure 23: Passage from the “Chuzhen” Chapter that Employs Traces of the *Zhuangzi*<sup>565</sup>

As we can see here, the *Huainanzi* seems to incorporate disparate passages from various chapters of the received *Zhuangzi*. In fact, it contains snippets of writings that Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312 CE), the famous commentator and editor of the extant *Zhuangzi* version, would later

<sup>564</sup> Charles Le Blanc counted that the *Huainanzi*'s second chapter includes about 55 passages that also appear in the extant *Zhuangzi*. See Charles Le Blanc, “The Idea of Resonance (*kan-ying*) in the *Huai-nan tzu*,” pp. 137.

<sup>565</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 58-59



assign to two chapters from the “Inner Chapters” (“Neipian” 內篇; namely the “Discourse of Evening out Things” (“Qiwulun” 齊物論) and “Masters of the Great Ancestor” (“Dazongshi” 大宗師)), four chapters from the “Outer Chapters” (“Waipian” 外篇; namely “Heaven and Earth” (Tiandi 天地), “Preserving and Accepting” (“Zaiyou” 在宥), “Incised Meanings” (“Keyi” 刻意) and “Reaching Life” (“Dasheng” 達生)), and, finally, one chapter from the “Miscellaneous Chapters” (“Zapian” 雜篇; namely “Ghostless Xu” (“Xuwugui” 徐無鬼)).

This eclectic writing strategy as we find it in this short passage is not a rarity. In fact, it permeates throughout the *Huainanzi*'s entire second chapter. At the beginning of “Chuzhen,” Liu An's text contains another passage (see figure 24) that incorporates in a rather small space several snippets from the *Zhuangzi*:

『夫大塊載我以形，勞我以生，逸我以老，休我以死。善我生者，乃所以善我死也。夫藏舟於壑，藏山於澤，人謂之固矣。雖然，夜半有力者負而趨，寐者不知，猶有所遁。若藏天下於天下，則無所遁其形矣。物豈可謂無大擢乎？一範人之形而猶喜，若人者，千變萬化而未始有極也。弊而復新，其為樂也，可勝計邪！』(Zhuangzi “Dazongshi”) 譬若『夢為鳥而飛於天，夢為魚而沒於淵。』(Zhuangzi “Dazongshi”) 『方其夢也，不知其夢也；覺而後知其夢也。今將有大覺，然後知今此之為大夢也。』(Zhuangzi “Qiwulun”) 『始吾未生之時，焉知生之為樂也；今吾未死，又焉知死之為不樂也。』(Shenzi “Yiwen”) 昔公牛哀轉病也，七日化為虎。其兄掩戶而入覘之，則虎搏而殺之。是故文章成獸，爪牙移易，志與心變，神與形化。方其為虎也，不知其嘗為人也；方其為人也，不知其且為虎也。二者代謝舛馳，各樂其成形。狡猾鈍悟，是非無端，『孰知其所萌？』(Zhuangzi “Qiwulun”) 夫水向冬則凝而為冰，冰迎春則泮而為水；冰水移易於前後，若周員而趨，孰暇知其所苦樂乎！(HNZ 2.2)

Figure 24: Passage from the “Chuzhen” chapter that Employs Traces from the *Shenzi* and the *Zhuangzi*<sup>566</sup>

Again, we find a similar pattern as in the examples above. This selection includes sometimes-long swaths of texts that we nowadays may find in the chapters “Dazongshi” and “Qiwulun” of the Guo Xiang edition. It weaves these passages including a segment that the *Huainanzi* shares with the *Shenzi* into its fabric creating a highly intertextual or “miscellaneous” texture.<sup>567</sup>

<sup>566</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 46-48

<sup>567</sup> In my opinion, these examples and their consistency suggest that the editors at Liu An’s court might have similarly assembled their textual threads from various pieces or chapters that might have already been associated with Zhuangzi during the early Western Han dynasty. However, such a claim obviously remains within the realm of speculation. For a discussion of the later assemblage of the *Zhuangzi* out of various texts attributed to Zhuangzi and his disciples, see Angus C. Graham ed. and trans., *Chuang-tzŭ*. For an article that discusses the potential loss of passages attributed to Zhuangzi during this early formation of the extant text, see Livia Knaul, “Lost Chuang-Tzu Passages,” pp. 53-79.

Let's observe another section from the *Huainanzi*, a passage from chapter 10 "Profound Precepts" ("Miucheng" 繆稱). It inserts several textual traces from the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, the *Xunzi* 荀子, the *Mengzi* 孟子, and the *Laozi* (see figure 25). The passage goes as follows:

「性者，所受於天也」(*Lüshi Chunqiu*  
 "Dangbing" and "Chenglian")；命者，所遭于  
 時也。「有其材，不遇其世」(*Xunzi* "youzuo")  
 ，天也。太公何力，比干何罪，循性而行指  
 ，「或害或利」(*Laozi* 73)。「求之有道，得  
 之在命」(*Mengzi* "Jinxin shang")。故君子能為  
 善，而不能必其得福；不忍為非，而未能必  
 免其禍。君，根本也；臣，枝葉也。根本不  
 美，枝葉茂者，未之聞也。(HNZ  
 10.77-10.78)

Figure 25: Passage from the "Miucheng" Chapter that Employs Traces of Various Pre-Han Texts<sup>568</sup>

In contrast to the previous example, this time we encounter a passage that does not only contain snippets from more or less one extant text. It also includes traces or, to use Liu Xi's terminology, "assembles and gathers varicolored silks" (*huiji zhongcai* 會集眾綵) that belong to a variety of different traditions. According to the categorization of early Chinese texts into the Hundred Schools, these phrases would be attributed to the Confucian or *ru*-ist (*Mengzi* 孟子 and *Xunzi* 荀子), Daoist (*Laozi*), and miscellaneous (*Lüshi Chunqiu*) schools. In that sense,

<sup>568</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 333-334

Liu An's scripture does indeed connect and relate traces from various writers of the pre-Han period weaving their words together into a unitary whole.<sup>569</sup>

This pattern of inserting textual traces from prior sources into the structure of the *Huainanzi* is a staple of the entire scripture. As Michael Nylan rightfully mentions about the “Quintessential Spirit” (“Jingshen” 精神) chapter, “long—occasionally very long—swaths of text are inserted into the chapter with a bare minimum of particles.”<sup>570</sup> In fact, such a bricolaged writing strategy is a rather common feature of the text as Charles Le Blanc demonstrated in his dissertation on the concept of resonating correspondences (*ganying* 感應) in the *Huainanzi*. Liu An's writing frequently incorporates textual threads from earlier sources without marking them with any particles or explanations. In that sense, the *Huainanzi*, which consists of more than a third of such intertextual references, seems to rigidly weave in textual traces from the past in its own design.<sup>571</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> See for example my discussion of the *Huainanzi* as a chariot wheel in chapter 3.2.

<sup>570</sup> Michael Nylan, “Note on Logical Connectives in the *Huainanzi*,” p. 260

For a discussion of particles—mainly the particle *fu* 夫—and their functions in the *Huainanzi*'s first chapter, see Hans van Ess, “Argument and Persuasion,” pp. 255-270.

<sup>571</sup> By incorporating traces of pre-Han texts in the Liu clan's scripture while excluding any kind of markers for the majority of these interspersed passages as Michael Nylan has observed, the *Huainanzi* effectively eradicates (*mieji* 滅跡), covers up (*yanji* 掩跡), or hides these textual traces (*cangji* 藏跡 and *dunji* 遁跡) in its texture. In the future, I intend to further explore whether the *Huainanzi*'s little use of particles to mark “quotations” may be understood as a literary means to practice *wuwei* since the *Huainanzi* commonly uses

In my opinion, this “syncretic” writing procedure that we have met in several occasions, thus far, resembles, or even mimics the aforementioned process of weaving. Liu An and his workshop apparently integrated traces of pre-Han writers’ words in the *Huainanzi* in order to fashion it as a complex, textual tapestry as explicitly mentioned in the “Yaolüe” chapter. In that sense, it seems as if the *Huainanzi* actualizes and manifests the *imaginaire* of writing as weaving in its intertextual practice and design. Consequently, I suggest that the *Huainanzi*’s intertextual style crystallizes and reflects some of the commonalities between writing and weaving we have discussed in chapters 3 and 4 that might have led to the semantic change of *wen* as a fabric to *wen* as a text.<sup>572</sup> The processes of writing and weaving, which share the ideas that they have a cosmic origin, are vertical procedures, had been discovered by sages, and may produce order if implemented properly in a ritualistic and political context, apparently prepared the ground and paved the way for the emergence of an *imaginaire* with an accompanying practice of writing as weaving during the Western Han that became only verbalized in Liu Xi’s definition, yet, might

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the expressions eradicating, hiding, or covering the traces in *wuwei* as a way to depict the sagely ruler and the actions of the Way. For a discussion of the *Huainanzi*’s conceptualization of *wuwei* as an eradication of traces, see Tobias Benedikt Zürn, “Agricultural Imagery, Governmentality, and (De-)Cultivation in the *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*,” forthcoming.

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For Chow Tse-tsung’s discussion of early Chinese conceptualizations of literature and their relationship with visions of the cosmos, see Chow Tse-Tsung, “Ancient Chinese Views on Literature,” pp. 3-29.

have already been crystallized in the specific production of the *Huainanzi*.<sup>573</sup>

### **5.3 Intermediary Remarks II: Embodying the Way**

As we have seen in the examples above, there is a rich *imaginaire* in early Chinese texts that closely connects ideas of writing, weaving, ordering, and the cosmos. According to my analysis, it appears that the *Huainanzi*'s intertextual design actualizes this perceived parallel between the image fields of writing and weaving in the early imperial period. In so doing, Liu An's text substantiates the existence of such an *imaginaire* during the Western Han dynasty. If we accept the existence of this *imaginaire* during the early imperial period, the *Huainanzi*'s extraordinary design gains new meaning beyond its current evaluation. Instead of being an uninspired collection of pre-Han texts, the *Huainanzi* would in fact partially realize or actualize the homological relationship between the Way, the sage, and the Liu clan's scripture, which I laid out in chapter 2, through its intertextual design and writing practice. Because the Liu clan's scripture weaves the textual traces of the past into its own texture, it would not only describe itself in a metaphorical sense as equivalent to or a representation of the Way. By incorporating

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In contrast to James J. Y. Liu who claims that writing and weaving was mainly perceived to share aesthetic-technical aspects (see James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature*, p. 101), I argue that the processes of writing and weaving, their origins in the universe, as well as their purported ordering powers further explain this parallel.

and weaving together the sayings and records of the Hundred Schools, Liu An's text would purposefully mimic the connecting activity that the *Huainanzi* commonly attributes to the Way and fashion itself as an embodiment of the Dao's structure and powers. In other words, the very intertextual technique that led scholars to dismiss the *Huainanzi* as a text of little value would, in fact, be the very literary tool that enables Liu An's text to be in image (*xiang* 象) of the Way. In that sense, I suggest that similar to the sages' self-divinization that at least is partially triggered by the thearch's performance as a weaver (see chapters 2.3 and 3.3), the writers of the *Huainanzi* might have utilized an intertextual writing practice to cosmicize the Liu clan's scripture and transform it into an embodiment of the Way (*tidao* 體道).

## 6. CONCLUSION: THE *HUAINANZI* AS A PERFORMATIVE TEXT?

*HUMANS WISH TO SEE A LIVING ELEPHANT/IMAGE BUT ARE ONLY RECEIVING THE BONES OF A DEAD ELEPHANT/IMAGE. THEY INVESTIGATE THEIR CHARTS IN ORDER TO ENVISION IT IN A LIVELY [FORM]. THEREFORE, THAT WHICH ALL PEOPLE ENVISION WITH THE MEANING [OF THE CHART], THEY ALL CALL IT AN ELEPHANT/IMAGE. NOWADAYS, ALTHOUGH THE DAO CANNOT BE HEARD OR SEEN [ANYMORE], THE SAGE HOLDS HER APPEARANCE AND WORKINGS [AND] THEREWITH LOCATES AND SEES HER FORM. THEREFORE [THE LAOZI] SAYS: “THE SHAPELESS SHAPE IS AN ELEPHANT/IMAGE OF AN ANIMAL/BEING THAT IS NOT THERE—HANFEIZI (CA. 280-233 BCE)”<sup>574</sup>*

The *Han Feizi*'s “Dissecting the *Lao[zi]*” (“Jie Lao” 解老) chapter raises in its masterful commentary on *Laozi* 14 an issue that strongly resonates with the problem we all face when we try to reconstruct the purposes of early Chinese texts in general and in my case the Liu clan's scripture in particular. Although we wish to see a scripture in its living, socio-historical context and concrete utilizations, we have unfortunately only received the bare bones of a text's formerly vivid and shining presence. Like the Way—the ineffable force and shapeless shape (*wuzhuang zhi zhuang* 無狀之狀) that is active in this world, yet of which we only see her manifestations in the traces of the Myriad Beings' actions—texts reach us in most cases in form

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<sup>574</sup>

人希見生象也，而得死象之骨，案其圖以想其生也，故諸人之所以意想者，皆謂之象也。今道雖不可得聞見，聖人執其見功以處見其形，故曰：「無狀之狀，無物之象。」(Wang Xianshen ed., *Han Feizi jijie*, 5.108)

I would like to thank Professor Mark Csikszentmihalyi who guided me towards this passage from the “Jie Lao” during a walk with his dog Caroline through San Francisco.



of leftovers; often disjointed remnants that are either literally together with dead bodies in tombs or that have been transformed, reworked, lost, and “found” again over generations. Therefore, one may argue that we face a problem similar to the sages who “although the Dao cannot be heard or seen [anymore] [...] hold her appearance and workings [and] therewith locate and see her form.” We modern-day researchers are also culturally, historically, and spatially distanced from our object(s) of observation/desire. We know and understand Han China, its texts, and society only through remnants that provide us with a faint picture of its former brilliance and complex setup. In other words, we scholars like the sages are “doomed” to reconstruct the early imperial period and her scriptures out of the bones of dead elephants/images (*sixiang zhi gu* 死象之骨).

Due to our cultural and historical separation from Han China, our interpretations, therefore, remain inherently provisional and in some sort speculative. Like the sage, we often have no other option than envisioning a full living image (*shengxiang* 生象) of Han China out of the bits and pieces that have been left behind and uncovered. In other words, it is in my opinion impossible to receive a clear picture or “true” account of what has happened in the early imperial period from these remote traces of the past (*wanggu zhi ji* 往古之跡), to use the

*Huainanzi's* own terminology.<sup>575</sup> Is it then possible that we may know anything for real about the past? Some people might consider such an outlook depressing since it questions our often-times positivistic attitude to our human faculty of grasping the past. For the sage, however, the Way's ineffability and "dead image" (*sixiang* 死象) apparently do not result in despair and resignation. On the contrary, the sage takes this situation as an opportunity to reconstruct the Dao through her workings and leftovers in the world. In other words, the "Jie Lao" illustrates the impossibility of knowing the Way not as a limitation of human beings but as a place/space that opens up a chance for transcendence, as an opportunity for us to explore the underlying organization of the cosmos. Hence, the dead bones contain chances rather than limitations to envision that which otherwise cannot be fathomed: the dead elephant's former (*xian* 先) life, form, and activity.

In my dissertation, I attempted the task of reviving such an elephant from its leftovers by describing and exploring the *Huainanzi's* incorporation or embodiment of the actions of the Way in the Liu clan's scripture. I focused on two aspects that had been rather neglected in secondary literature, thus far: the *Huainanzi's* intertextual design and imagery. I used these two aspects of the text as a springboard to delve into the *Huainanzi's* self-depictions. As we have

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<sup>575</sup>

For the passage that talks about the traces of the remote past, see my discussion on pages

322-327.

seen throughout this dissertation, as well as in the *Huainanzi* translation project and Mark Edward Lewis' works, one of the text's most common features is the creation of homological correspondences based on shared properties such as numerical correlations, geographical proximity, or like-ness of form (*xing* 形). In particular, we engaged in homologies and the *Huainanzi's* construction in image and as an embodiment of the Way. In chapter 2, I showcased that the Liu clan's scripture apparently utilizes several images to depict the Way as the source of all beings in the world. With the examples of a tree's root (*ben* 本), a hub (*gu* 轂) or axle (*zhu* 軸) of a chariot wheel, and a weaving texture (*jing* 經, *ji* 紀, *wei* 維, *gang* 綱, etc.), I exemplified that the text seems to employ a shared imagery to depict itself, the sage, and the Way. In other words, I suggested that the producers of the *Huainanzi* might have intended to fashion the Liu clan's scripture in image (*xiang* 象) of the Way and her human manifestation, the sagely ruler.

In chapters 3-5, I focused on the analysis of the *Huainanzi's* self-illustration as a weaving texture in order to explore whether Liu An's text only "represents" itself in image of the Way. As it turned out, it is indeed very likely that the producers of the Liu clan's scripture attempted to incorporate the practices of weaving in their writing, a process intended to fashion the text as an embodiment of the Way's weaving together of the universe. In other words, similar to the

images of the tree that seems to be reflected in the text's organization of its twenty main chapters and the chariot wheel that apparently relates to the *Huainanzi's* "bringing together of the Ru[ist] and Mo[hist] and harmonizing the Names (*ming*) and Laws (*fa*),"<sup>576</sup> the producers of the Liu clan's scripture might have attempted to actualize the image of weaving in the scripture's intertextual design.

This observation raises a central question regarding the specific form of the *Huainanzi* and its writing practice: what is the purpose of such an attempt to incorporate aspects of the Way within a text's design of this peculiar bone of the *Huainanzi's* corpus? Thus far, scholars would have argued that it serves as a rhetorical device that provides the text with more persuasive powers. Instead of relying solely on an assumption about the function of ornaments and imagery that is based on a Eurocentric division in the fields of rhetoric and philosophy, we fortunately we may once again refer to the *Huainanzi's* own discourse on the sage and embodiment in order to solve this problem since the Liu clan's scripture clearly construed these two entities in homological terms. Let's therefore briefly observe the *Huainanzi's* discussion of what it means to embody the Way in order to flesh out potential reasons for the *Huainanzi's* construction in image and as an embodiment of the Way.

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For my discussion of Ban Gu's depiction of the *zajia*, see pages 13-14.

### Embodying the Dao in the *Huainanzi*

The *Huainanzi* repeatedly proposes that the sagely ruler's most important task is not only to mimic the workings of the universe in its policies. The sage rather needs to embody the formless Way while transforming her/his physique into a form-less (*wuxing* 無形) replica of the central power behind the cosmos.<sup>577</sup> In chapter 2.2 we encountered a lengthy passage from the "Qisu" chapter (*HNZ* 11.15) that claimed that the sage would be able to embody the Way by connecting with the Way (*tong yu dao* 通於道) and rotating with the inexhaustible source (*zhuan wuqiong zhi yuan* 轉無窮之原) so that (s)he would not move in her-/himself (*bu yun yu ji* 不運於己), yet reach a thousand *li* (*zhi qian li* 致千里).<sup>578</sup> What does it then mean for the sage to embody the Way? According to the passage from chapter 11, the sage would join the hub of a wheel—i.e. would establish her-/himself in the center (*li yu zhongyang* 立於中央)—and therewith would be able to perform the same rotating actions that the Way exerts to keep the universe running. In other words, the sage would transform into the hub of the rotating cosmos/empire that organizes the Myriad Beings and Hundred Officials around her/his

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<sup>577</sup> Consequently, the *Huainanzi* contains the most references to an embodiment of the Way (*tidao*) in its chapters on the power of the Way and the sage, i.e. chapters 2 and 10.

<sup>578</sup> For my discussion of the passage, see pages 179-180.

center.<sup>579</sup>

Unfortunately, the passage from the “Qisu” chapter does not explicate in what sense being with the Dao leads to an embodiment of the Way and how this transformation may impact the physique of the sage. The same theme, however, appears in another passage from the thirteenth chapter of the *Huainanzi* that may further illuminate this issue. It states:

The Way of the sages is lenient, yet firm, strict, yet kind, pliant, yet upright, forceful, yet humane. Too much hardness leads to inflexibility; too much softness leads to laxity. Sages properly reside between hardness and softness and thereby obtain the root of the Way. If they accumulate *yin*, they will sink; if they accumulate *yang*, they will fly away. With *yin* and *yang* conjoined, they thereby perfect harmony. [...] Therefore the sages embody her with their bodies. (*HNZ* 13.8)

聖人之道，寬而栗，嚴而溫，柔而直，猛而仁。太剛則折，太柔則卷，聖人正在剛柔之間，乃得道之本。積陰則沉，積陽則飛，陰陽相接，乃能成和。[...]故聖人以身體之。<sup>580</sup>

Regarding the way of the sages, it uses a paradoxical sequence of attributes that is again reminiscent of the rhetorical strategy we found in the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Huainanzi* to depict the Dao above.<sup>581</sup> The passage claims that sages conjoin the qualities of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 by being lenient, yet firm or forceful, yet humane. In other words, the sages have achieved the root of the Way (*de dao zhi ben* 得道之本) so that their bodies function as spaces in which the cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang* may synthesize and melt into a primordial unity.

Despite the fact that the second depiction of *tidao* clearly construes the ruler’s body as the

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<sup>579</sup> For my discussion of the sage as the rotating hub, see pages 179-191.

<sup>580</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 432-433

<sup>581</sup> See footnote 272.

hub of the universe in which the cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang* conjoin (*xiangjie* 相接), we still haven't reached a concrete understanding of what it means to embody the Way. Unfortunately, the two passages do not provide any clue regarding the ways in which such an incarnation concretely alters a person's physique and action. In other words, they leave one interesting and central question unanswered: if the sages use their physique in order to embody such a primordial unity of cosmic forces similar to the Way, how should we concretely imagine the outcomes of such an embodiment? Fortunately, the "Activating the Genuine" chapter provides some clues to this question. At the end of the *Huainanzi's* second chapter, we find an elaborate discussion of self-cultivational techniques that similarly ends on the notion of an embodiment of the Way (*tidao* 體道). Although the passage mentions that it may not solely lie within the powers of human beings to transform into a *dao*-being, it, nonetheless, states explicitly that they may transform into a sagely embodiment of the Way without blemishes if one performs the right practices.<sup>582</sup>

If the spirit has no obstruction and the mind has no burden, if they are pervasively comprehending and minutely penetrating, calm and quiescent and free of tasks, without any congealing or

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<sup>582</sup>

At the end of the *Huainanzi's* chapter two (HNZ 2.14), we find another passage claiming that the realization of an embodiment of the Dao is also dependent on the specific age in which a person lives. Nonetheless, it substantiates the impression that we deal in the *Huainanzi* with a vision of the body as an entity that can be transformed in such a way that it may embody aspects of the Way. See Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 76-77.

stagnancy, attentive in empty stillness, then power and profit cannot lure them; logicians cannot delight them; sounds and colors cannot corrupt them; beauty cannot debauch them; wisdom cannot move them; courage cannot frighten them. This is the way of the True Man. Those who are like this form and forge the Myriad Beings and together with the shaper make humanity. In between Heaven and Earth and inside space-time, they cannot die young and be stopped. Now, those who transformingly give birth do not die and those who transform beings do not transform. [Their] spirits warp through Mount Li and Taihang, yet cannot have difficulties. They enter into the Four Seas and Nine Rivers, yet cannot get wet. They lodge in a small and narrow pass, yet do not fill up. They spread throughout Heaven and Earth, yet do not stretch. If one does not connect with this [i.e. the Way], though your eyes enumerate a group of one thousand sheep, though your ears distinguish the tones of the Eight Winds, your feet perform the “Northern Bank” dance, your hands execute the “Green Waters” rhythm, your wisdom encompasses Heaven and Earth, your brilliance illuminates sun and moon, your disputations unknot linked jewels, your words add luster to jade and stone, these will still be of no aid to governing the world. Tranquility and calmness are that by which one nurtures one’s disposition. Harmony and vacuity are that by which one nurtures one’s Power. When the outside does not disturb the inside then one’s disposition reaches its appropriateness. If the disposition does not move [yet] harmonizes, then one’s Power resides securely in its place. Nurturing life so as to order the age, carrying potency in one’s bosom so as to complete one’s years, this may be called being able to embody the Way. Those who are like this: Their blood and pulse have no sluggishness or stagnation; their Five Storehouse Organs have no diseased *qi*; calamity and good fortune cannot perturb them, blame and praise cannot settle on them like dust; thus they can reach the ultimate. (HNZ 2.12 and 2.13)

若夫神無所掩，心無所載，通洞條達，恬漠無事，無所凝滯，虛寂以待，勢利不能誘也，辯者不能說也，聲色不能淫也，美者不能濫也，智者不能動也，勇者不能恐也，此真人之道也。若然者，陶冶萬物，與造化者為人，天地之間，宇宙之內，莫能夭邊。夫化生者不死，而化物者不化。神經於驪山、太行而不能難，入于四海九江而不能濡，處小隘而不塞，橫扁天地之間而不窳。不通此者，雖目數千羊之群，耳分八風之調，足蹠陽阿之舞，而手會綠水之趨，智終天地，明照日月，辯解連環，澤潤玉石，猶無益於治天下也。靜漠恬澹，所以養性也；和愉虛無，所以養德也。外不滑內，則性得其宜；性不動和，則德安其位。養生以經世，抱德以終年，可謂能體道矣。若然者，血脈無鬱滯，五藏無蔚氣，禍福弗能撓滑，非譽弗能塵垢，故能致其極。<sup>583</sup>

According to this passage, the True Man, another word for the sagely ruler, performs the same



actions that the *Huainanzi* commonly associates with the Way: (s)he “forms and forges the Myriad Beings” (*taoye wanwu* 陶冶萬物);<sup>584</sup> (s)he “enters into the Four Seas and Nine Rivers, yet cannot get wet” (入于四海九江而不能濡);<sup>585</sup> or (s)he “lodges in a small and narrow pass, yet does not fill up. (S)he spreads throughout Heaven and Earth, yet does not crack” (處小隘而不塞，橫局天地之間而不窳).<sup>586</sup> In other words, the sage is apparently not only in image of the Way but achieves the same properties and skills that are typical for the Way when (s)he enters and embodies the Way.

In addition, Liu An and his workshop apparently thought that the performance of practices such as nurturing life (*yangsheng* 養生) or carrying potency in one’s bosom (*baode* 抱德)

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<sup>584</sup> At the beginning of the chapter (*HNZ* 2.1), the *Huainanzi* uses the expression “form and forge the Myriad Beings” in order to depict the first stage out of the Way before “there is nothing” (*youwu* 有無). See Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 45.

<sup>585</sup> The “Yuandao” Chapter depicts the achievement of the Way with the picture of entering water without getting wet: “Therefore, those who achieve the Way are impoverished, yet, not cowed [and] successful, yet, not honored. They reside up high yet do not get stirred. They grasp a full vessel, yet, do not tip it over. They are new, yet, not shiny [and] old, yet, not faded. They enter fire without getting burnt [and] enter water without getting wet.” (*HNZ* 1.19)  
是故得道者，窮而不懼，達而不榮，處高而不機，持盈而不傾，新而不朗，久而不渝，入火不焦，入水不濡。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 39)

<sup>586</sup> As we have seen in chapter 2.2, the “Renjian” states regarding “the Way: place it in front, and [the cart] will not lean forward; place it behind, and [the cart] will not lean backward. It fits inside a *xun* and a *chang*, yet, it does not fill. It spreads over all under Heaven, yet, it does not crack.”  
道者，置之前而不輦，錯之後而不軒，內之尋常而不塞，布之天下而不窳。(Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 586)

would *de facto* alter the physiological condition of the sagely ruler's body: (s)he would achieve superior blood and pulse and indestructible organs literally transcending the constraints of life and death (*shengsi* 生死) and transformation (*hua* 化) like the mother of the Myriad Beings (*wan wu zhi mu* 萬物之母). In other words, a sagely ruler would unshackle all those qualities that separate the Myriad Beings from their mother and thereby generate the power that impacts the transformations of life and death in the world: the sage would become the force that “transformingly gives birth [,yet] does not die and that transforms beings [,yet] does not transform” (化生者不死，而化物者不化).<sup>587</sup>

Another passage from the chapter “Jingshen” explicates this transformation of the ruler into the force that “transformingly gives birth [,yet] does not die and that transforms beings [,yet] does not transform” in terms of being and not-being. In other words, “the sage would use [her/his] non-existence in order to resonate with those that exist” (聖人以無應有; *HNZ* 7.6).<sup>588</sup>

The continuation of this passage makes it clear that the sage transforms her-/himself into a formless (*wuxing* 無形) non-being (*wu* 無) that is able to impact and govern the phenomenal world. It states, “by making the Way their boundary and potency their neighbor, [...] death and

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For an elaborate discussion of these passages and the *Huainanzi*'s concept of embodiment in relationship to the practice of eradicating traces, see Tobias Benedikt Zürn, “Agricultural Imagery, Governance, and (De-)Cultivation in the *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*, forthcoming.

<sup>588</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 226

life do not alter them” (與道為際，與德為鄰[...]死生無變於己). As a result, such sages or True Man are “supreme spirits” (*zhishen* 至神) “whose inborn nature merges with the Way [and] therefore, exist, yet seem to be non-existent; are full, yet seem to be empty” (性合於道也。故有而若無，實而若虛). At the end, the passage depicts the sage as the one who “performs *wuwei* and therewith returns to the uncarved black” (*wuwei fupu* 無為復樸) so that (s)he may “embody the root” (*tiben* 體本).<sup>589</sup>

As we have already seen in chapter 2.2, the *Huainanzi* uses the same vocabulary to illustrate the sagely rulership of Fuxi and Nüwa who apparently grasped the handle of the Way and were able to rotatingly “return to the uncarved block and merge with the Dao by performing *wuwei*” (還反於朴，無為為之而合于道).<sup>590</sup> According to these passages, it seems as if the practice of *wuwei* is the very technique that allows the sage to return to the uncarved block and merge with the Dao. This vision is emphasized by the fact that the *Huainanzi* construes *wuwei* as the very body of the Way. The “Chuzhen” chapter (*HNZ* 2.6) claims, “the ultimate Way is/performs *wuwei*” (*zhidao wuwei* 至道無為).<sup>591</sup> In addition, chapter 9 on the “Arts of Rulership” (*HNZ* 9.10) proclaims, “*wuwei* is the ancestor/root of the Way. Therefore,

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<sup>589</sup> See Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>590</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 2

<sup>591</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 54

achieving the ancestor/root of the Way is to resonate with the [Myriad] Beings without exhaustion” (無為者，道之宗。故得道之宗，應物無窮).<sup>592</sup> Or as the “Quanyan” chapter puts it succinctly and in the most explicit way: “*wuwei* is the body of the Way” (無為者，道之體也).<sup>593</sup>

As a result, we may conclude that the embodiment of the Way first and foremost seems to be the implementation of *wuwei*, which alters the physique of the sage and transforms her/his powers according to the *Huainanzi*. By embodying the Way, the sage would apparently be able to strip off her/his humaneness and bodily form (*xing*) and become a spirit (*shen*) that due to its existence and merging with the Way, a stage prior to the generation of the universe that would later be called pre-celestial (*xiantian*), is capable of fully resonating with the Myriad Beings.<sup>594</sup> Hence, it seems as if the generation of powers (*de* 德) and effects (*ying* 應) rather than knowledge (*zhi* 知) or wisdom (*zhi* 智) is at the heart of the *Huainanzi*'s conceptualization of embodiment.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 278

<sup>593</sup> Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, pp. 482-483

<sup>594</sup> For a reference to my article in which I discuss the physicality of *wuwei* and the transformation of the sagely ruler in a form- and traceless being, see footnote 587.

<sup>595</sup> In fact, one may argue that one of the goals of such an embodiment is to become a being without knowledge (*wuzhi* 無知). *Laozi* 10, for example, enshrined this idea when it construes the baby as the ideal sage.

If we take the *Huainanzi's* construction of the parallel between the Way and the sage seriously, it seems as if (s)he functions as a human manifestation of the Dao in the world. The sage organizes all under Heaven by establishing her-/himself in the center and performing *wuwei*; the sage nurtures all Myriad Beings without asking anything in return; “the sage on the inside cultivates her/his root and does not on the outside decorate her-/himself with branches. (S)he protects her/his semen and spirit and suppresses her/his wisdom and purpose. Quietly, (s)he performs *wuwei* and [therefore] there is nothing undone” (聖人內修其本，而不外飾其末，保其精神，偃其智故。漠然無為，而無不為也; see *HNZ* 1.9 in Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 24). In other words, the sage through her/his *corpus* realizes or actualizes (*zhen* 真) the hidden powers (*yinde* 陰德) of the Way and therewith functions like her receptacle within the universe. Accordingly, like the Way's ordering of the entire universe, the sage would be able to magically make the phenomenal categories of all under Heaven attune to the cosmic order. Or as the “Benjing” chapter formulates its,

In the achieved person's rulership, heart resides with spirit, form and disposition are in tune with each other. (S)he is quiet and embodies the [Way's] powers, moving and (s)he gives order to the connections. Following the disposition of her/his self-so-ness and aligning with the inevitable transformations, (s)he profoundly is without actions (*wuwei*) and all under Heaven is harmonious by itself, quietly is without desires and the people are unhewn by themselves. Without auguring for good omens, the people do not suffer calamities. Without anger and strife, they [are able to] nurture [themselves] sufficiently. Bringing and binding together [all] within the seas, beneficence reached to later generations, [yet] they did not know who had done this. (*HNZ* 8.5)

至人之治也，心與神處，形與性調，靜而體德，動而理通。隨自然之性而緣不得已之化，洞然無為而天下自和，愴然無欲而民自樸，無襍祥而民不夭，不忿爭而養足，兼包海內，澤及後世，不知為之誰何。<sup>596</sup>

Apparently, the sagely ruler was thought to secretly perform [her/his] good deeds (*xing yinde* 行陰德) with the help of *wuwei* and therewith would be capable of harmonizing and ordering all under Heaven to her soundless (*wuyin* 無音) music. In other words, embodying the Way was indeed thought to lead to a realization of powers rather than an accumulation and dissemination of knowledge.

### **The *Huainanzi* as a Resonating Textual Object?**

When we project these observations of the sage as an embodiment of the Way on the case of the *Huainanzi*, a purely discursive function for the Liu clan's scripture becomes increasingly suspect. If Liu An and his workshop truly fashioned the text in image and as an embodiment of the Way as I showcased in the dissertation, wouldn't it be more likely that it would also take on properties similar to the sage? As odd as such an idea may seem to our modern-day rationale, this correlating logic, which the *Huainanzi* repeatedly utilizes in its sequences of homologies, seems to have partially been shared by the "Yaolüe" and Gao You's "Preface" that both employed a vocabulary reminiscent of the Way and her powers to depict the *Huainanzi*. As we

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<sup>596</sup>

Liu Wendian ed., *Huainan honglie jijie*, p. 252

may remember, Gao You claimed that Liu An's text is "light, mild, and non-active (*wuwei*). Stepping into emptiness and maintaining tranquility, it leaves and enters the weaving Way. Putting in words its greatness, it envelops Heaven and carries Earth. Expressing its smallness, then it sinks down into the rootless" (淡泊無為，蹈虛守靜，出入經道。言其大也，則燾天載地。說其細也，則淪於無根). All of these terms and ideas have appeared throughout this dissertation in depictions of the Way. Hence, is it possible that Gao You was still so close to the Han dynasty that he realized the significance behind the *Huainanzi's* extraordinary design that apparently escaped our recent assessments?

Moreover, as I mentioned in chapter 2.2, the "Yaolüe" also utilizes in its last depiction of the *Huainanzi* several terms and images reminiscent of the text's illustrations of the Way and sagely governance: the Liu clan's scripture like the Dao and the sage connects (*tong* 通), measures (*du* 度), merges (*he* 合), gives order (*li* 理), resonates (*ying* 應), and unites (*tong* 統) all under Heaven, all attributes that are closely connected to the practice of *wuwei* in the *Huainanzi*. Is it possible that one of the reasons for Liu An's demonization in the standard histories and his deification in local histories lies exactly in his attempts to secretly exert such good deeds (*xing yinde*) that order the universe with the help of the Liu clan's scripture—a textual object—rather than the power of knowledge and persuasion at court debates as

scholarship until recently presumed?

Unfortunately, the historical data around the kingdom of Huainan and her ruler does not provide enough evidence to fully illuminate this situation. In that sense, my observations in the “Conclusion” remain inherently provisional and speculative at this point. That being said, however, I think I have shown that the *Huainanzi* contains enough discourses that in concert with the text’s highly constructed design provide evidence for an argumentation about a potential ritualistic function of the Liu clan’s scripture beyond its current reading as a collection of philosophical treatises. In my opinion, I didn’t have to push or overinterpret the extant text and its discourses in order to discover that the *Huainanzi* construes the Liu clan’s scripture in image and as an embodiment of the Way. In fact, I have often been more literal in my reading of the *Huainanzi*’s vocabulary like connection (*tong* 通) or weaving (*jing* 經) and its imagery of a tree’s root, hub of a chariot wheel, and weaving than the majority of interpreters over the last decades who often metaphorized its central terms and images.

In addition to being consistent with the *Huainanzi*’s terminology and imagery, my interpretation of the *Huainanzi* as a powerful, *wuwei*-performing textual artifact that resonates with all under Heaven would also fit better into the narrative of Liu An as a connoisseur of the Master of Methods (*fangshi* 方士) and the arts of the Way (*daoshu* 道術) whose “marvellous



methods and extraordinary techniques” (*qifang yishu* 奇方異術) apparently filled the court at Shouchun.<sup>597</sup> This reading of the *Huainanzi* as a performing text would allow us to construct a bridge between the rise of Eastern Han weft-writings (*chenwei* 讖緯) and the production of powerful texts in the early imperial period that is nowadays mainly explained away as an unfortunate result of the Han dynasty’s religious spoilage of pre-Han thought and the introduction of Buddhism. It would illustrate a continuity that reaches from the legendary *River Chart* (*Hetu* 河圖) and *Luo Scripture* (*Luoshu* 洛書) as textual means to order the universe via the implementation of the *Yijing* in politics and the production of image-texts such as the *Chu Silk Manuscript* and the “*Youguantu*” to the *chenwei* texts and later Daoist traditions of amulets (*fu* 符), charts (*tu* 圖), and other powerful scriptures. This continuity, of course, does not mean that these cultural objects functioned the same way. In fact, all of these texts probably had different purposes and belonged to distinct practices that became later summarized under the generalizing terms methods (*fang* 方) and arts (*shu* 術), a field of inquiry that needs to be further explored. However, we may tentatively propose the hypothesis that purely discursive interpretations will not suffice to explain their cosmicized design and functions.

However, as much as I am confident that my reading of the *Huainanzi* as a powerful

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<sup>597</sup>

For the passages on the court at Shouchun and its performances of methods and arts, see chapter 1.2.

textual artifact in image of the Way is capable of explaining the design of the Liu clan's scripture in a more convincing way than previous attempts, my idealtypical interpretation is unable to explain the text's elaborate discussions of important concepts. Why would Liu An include such detailed explanations of the organization of the cosmos or the rulership of all under Heaven if he does not intend to argue for anything or persuade anybody with the Liu clan's scripture? The answer to this question lies in my opinion in what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has termed effects of meaning and effects of presence. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has recently criticized academia's hegemonial focus on meaning and discursive contexts, whose origins he sees in the reformation and Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. According to his analysis, these two events impacted the Humanities so heavily that epistemological concerns about effects of meaning (*Sinneffekte*) started to completely dominate and overshadow any interest in non-interpretive approaches and effects of presence (*Präsenzeffekte*).<sup>598</sup>

My dissertation reconstructed an idealtypically "religious" or "ritualistic" function of the *Huainanzi* that emphasizes effects of presence to counteract the predominance of "philosophical" readings of the text that focus on effects of meaning. As I mentioned in my introduction, I consider these two readings to be idealtypical poles in between which we may

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<sup>598</sup>

See Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning cannot Convey* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2004) pp. 1-50.

somewhere find the concrete function of the *Huainanzi*. In other words, my dissertation has not proven that the Liu clan's scripture was a ritualistic object produced to be used at the court of Liu An or Emperor Wu. But what I have shown in the dissertation is that Liu An's text contains enough evidence to construe a "ritualistic" reading of the *Huainanzi* as an *wuwei*-performing text in image of the Way, which necessitates in my opinion that we have to renegotiate the *Huainanzi*'s function(s) anew. In other words, I think it is irresponsible from now on to presuppose a didactic or any other discursive purpose for Liu An's text without having proven that such an approach in fact may be justified by the text's own reasoning. As a result, I consider my dissertation not as a project that defines and provides final conclusions about the *Huainanzi* and its production. It is rather a beginning or an attempt to complicate our understanding of early Chinese texts and the socio-cultural contexts in which these scriptures had been produced. In that sense, I consider my dissertation to be a project that hopefully may be built upon and that may also be disagreed or rubbed against so that we may further discover some of the disciplinarily informed assumptions that underlie our reconstructions of "living elephants" out of the bones of Han China. Our interpretations of the bones of a dead elephant will never reach the impeccability and complex unity of the living elephant. Nonetheless, we may hope that our inherently flawed perspectives may "contribute to the advance of

knowledge” and perhaps may “in turn be built on” as the late Herrlee Glessner Creel (1905-1995) envisioned.<sup>599</sup> Hence, I truly look forward to all the new renegotiations and assessments of the text and its purpose(s) that will complicate our picture of the Liu clan’s scripture and that will hopefully emerge over the next years.

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“I have no doubt that the time will come, possibly soon, when due either to new material or to a better understanding of old material I will have to recognize that some of them [i.e. my statements about the Shang dynasty] are mistaken. That fact does not worry me. In my opinion it is relatively unimportant whether or not a scholarly work possesses the formal and sometimes negative virtue of impeccability. The vital question is “Does it contribute to the advance of knowledge? Does it continue the process, and can it in turn be built on?” (Herrlee Glessner Creel, *Studies in Early Chinese Culture* (Wakefield, MA: Murray Printing Co., 1948), p. xii)

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