

Comment: As is explained in n. 15, p. 179, this section refers to a house with a double-eave roof, or a double roof. Therefore, the word *chong* 重 should not be read *zhong*.

善溝者水漱之，善防者水淫之。(l. -19, p. 125)

A favoring ditch is scouring by its own water, and a favoring dike is consolidated by the sediment brought against it. (l. -5, p. 103)

Comment: The terms *shan gou zhe* 善溝者 and *shan fang zhe* 善防者 refer to craftsmen and should be read as those who are the best in building ditches and dikes, respectively. One does not describe a well-built ditch as a *shan gou (zhe)*.

8. Preservation of the rhetorical structure, if possible.

凡相符，欲生而搏；同搏，欲重；同重，節欲疏；同疏，欲栗。(l. 15, p. 124)

In general, when choosing the arrow shaft, it should be natural circular. If so, one asks the shaft to be heavy. Then, one asks for the shaft with the long distance between the nodes. Furthermore, one asks the shaft to be maroon-featured. (l. -4, p. 80)

Comments: Naturally circular? What is “maroon-featured”? Note 17, p. 174, suggests that the wood of a good arrow shaft should have the color of chestnut and that wood of such a color would be firm. The sentence structured 同 X . . . , 欲 Y . . . should be translated as “in selecting an arrow shaft, if two have the same feature X, one would choose the one with feature Y.” For example, between shafts of equal weight, one would choose the one that has the longest section without a knot.

是故規之以眡其圓也，萬之以眡其匡也，. . . . 故可規、可萬、可水、可縣、可量、可權也，謂之國工。(l. 22, p. 121)

Therefore, when the wheel is under final tests, the wheelwrights have to:

Use a pair of compasses to verify its roundness.

Use a trueness-modulator to verify its trueness. . . .

Wheels satisfying all the tests mentioned above, the compass and the trueness-modulator, buoyancy and suspension, measurement by volume and measurement by weight, are considered to be the work of the royal craftsmen. (l. -1, p. 20 to l. 13, p. 21)

Comments: The translation adds a new line (“when the wheel is under final tests”). It also removes the expressiveness of the six phrases *ke gui*, *ke ju*, . . . , etc. and replaces them by three incongruent pairs of terms. Note 24 (p. 152) introduces the notion of trueness-modulator to check if the wheel is conforming to a pre-made wheel model, without mentioning that the notion of *ju* 萬 (or equivalently 矩) can simply mean to check for squareness (*kuang* 匡)—e.g., to see if the wheel is round enough to be an inscribed circle of a square.

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The Wenzhi: Creativity and Intertextuality in Early Chinese Philosophy. By PAUL VAN ELS. Studies in the History of Chinese Texts, vol. 9. Leiden: BRILL, 2018. Pp. xiv + 233. \$108, €90.

The *Wenzi* 文子 is a paragon of the understudied text, of which there are so many in the broad field of classical Chinese letters. Although it was revered for many centuries and in many quarters as a repository of ultimate wisdom, it is rarely utilized as a source in present-day scholarship even in China or Japan, much less in Europe and America. Paul van Els would change that situation. He fashioned his recent monograph both as a resource for those interested in exploring the *Wenzi*, and as an extended argument for its value as an object and implement of study, and has succeeded significantly in both regards.

The *Wenzi* poses more than the usual quantity of conundrums for present-day interpreters. Conventional lore attributes it to a disciple of Laozi 老子 and thus deems it a “Daoist” text, and its rhetorical

and ideological properties superficially bear out such characterizations. But testimony to corroborate this lore cannot be found before Former Han (206 BCE–8 CE) times, and the legend of “Master Wen” himself is problematically anachronistic. (Wenzi is said to have advised “King Ping” 平王, but, as van Els notes, the only Zhou monarch of that title reigned from 770–720 BCE, at least a century before the putative author of the *Laozi* would have been born [pp. 47–52].) Moreover, the text as we have it today shares eighty percent of its content with the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. It has thus been common in recent centuries to dismiss the *Wenzi* as either a forgery or a wholly derivative text (or both).

The status of the text was further complicated by the discovery in 1973 of a Han-era tomb in Dingzhou 定州, Hebei, from which was recovered a partial and fragmentary manuscript, titled *Wenzi*, that shares material with the transmitted text of the same name. Although this lent more credence to the “authenticity” of the *Wenzi*, most scholars were unable to examine the full text of the bamboo slips until their publication in 1995. Even after this material was made available, however, the relationship of the archaeologically recovered text to its transmitted namesake is beset by so many complicated questions that few scholars have braved a robust exploration of the *Wenzi* as a whole.

Paul van Els’s study is thus a welcome and valuable contribution. There are many variables in play whenever anyone engages the field of *Wenzi*-studies, and van Els has succeeded admirably in navigating these complexities lucidly and incisively. His examination of the evidence is systematic and well reasoned, his judgments are sound and well supported.

His work consists of two major parts. In the first section of the book van Els examines the Dingzhou *Wenzi*. He argues persuasively that, although its perspective is in certain respects comparable to that of the *Huainanzi*, it was not derivative of the former text, but was a different and original work. At the same time, although its general outlook aligns with common interpretations of the *Dao de jing* 道德經, it was not written by a disciple of Laozi, but was a product of the Han era. The Dingzhou-*Wenzi* thus evinces the existence of a proto-*Wenzi* that was at the foundation of all later “Wenzi” lore but has since been lost. Paul van Els enjoins us to distinguish between that proto-*Wenzi* and the present-day transmitted text, which he labels the “received *Wenzi*.” Although they are embedded in a common body of lore, the proto-*Wenzi* and received *Wenzi* are effectively two different texts, and should be treated as such in scholarship.

The latter section of van Els’s monograph is devoted to the received *Wenzi*, which he demonstrates was composed by a later editor, using portions of the proto-*Wenzi* in combination with large sections drawn from the *Huainanzi*. This, of course, raises the question of what would motivate such a composition, an inquiry into which van Els ventures only provisionally. But he does argue persuasively that we may be confident of two determinations: 1) the *Huainanzi* is the source for the received *Wenzi* and not vice versa; 2) the received *Wenzi* was produced in its current form some time between the early third and early fourth centuries CE. Given that the Dingzhou manuscript contains material that does not appear in the received *Wenzi*, van Els infers that the proto-*Wenzi* may already have been largely lost (surviving only in fragmentary form) by the time the received *Wenzi* was constructed. This condition, indeed, may have provided the requisite opportunity for the editor of the received *Wenzi* to appropriate *Wenzi* lore to the service of a new text.

The monograph concludes with a survey of the reception of the *Wenzi* from medieval times through the present day, analyzing this process into three phases. The first was a period of “reverence” that peaked during the reign of the Tang Emperor Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (r. 712–756), when the text was canonized as a “true scripture” 真經. The second phase was one of “rejection,” in which scholars (largely from the Southern Song onwards) decried the *Wenzi* as a forgery. The last phase, “reevaluation,” began with the discovery of the Dingzhou manuscript in 1973.

Paul van Els’s book will no doubt be a seminal work consulted by anyone working on or with the *Wenzi* for many years to come. His unpacking of the many complex philological questions surrounding the text is surpassingly clear, and he provides an ample springboard from which scholars can make confident, versatile, and effective use of the *Wenzi* as a source. His survey of the reception-history and secondary literature surrounding the *Wenzi* will likewise be of inestimable aid to scholars moving forward.

My strongest criticism of van Els concerns his seventh chapter, that on the philosophy of the received *Wenzi*. One of his key arguments for the relevance of the *Wenzi* is his claim that the text

preserves a unique philosophical voice. I would concur with that judgment, but would argue that more needs to be done to put the text into its concrete historical context, in order to recover its distinctive rhetoric and logic.

Paul van Els's analysis largely hinges on the "Daoist" nature of the text. For example, he posits that the deliberate interventions of the editor included adding supplementary quotations from the *Laozi* and searching for source material beyond the *Huainanzi* in order to make the text "more Daoist" (pp. 143–48). In presenting this interpretation van Els concedes that "it is difficult to determine precisely why the received *Wenzi*" was made "more Daoist" in this way (p. 157).

I would argue that the phenomena van Els observes provide us with a better read on the editor's agenda than van Els himself recognizes. More concrete inferences about the purpose and significance of the text could be drawn if different questions were asked. In this regard "how Daoist is this text?" serves poorly, as it is anachronistic. Debates between "Confucianism" and "Daoism" were powerful drivers of elite discourse during the Former Han, but the situation had become much more complicated by the Period of Division (220–589) during which, as van Els shows, the received *Wenzi* was constructed. In early medieval times the *Laozi* was appropriated and intensively utilized by disparate constituencies across the progressively more complex cultural terrain of the former Han empire. Among these different tendencies, the "Mysterious Learning" (*xuan xue* 玄學) movement, which became supremely influential among court literati of Han-successor regimes, is arguably the most important for understanding the discursive forces that motivated the production of the received *Wenzi*.

As Erik Zürcher has shown (*The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, 3rd ed. [Leiden: Brill, 2007], 46, 87–92), the label "Neo-Daoism" was a misnomer when applied to the Mysterious Learning movement. Mysterious Learning was initiated by Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) to build an interpretive edifice upon the foundation of the *Dao de jing* (and later the *Zhuangzi* 莊子), for the purpose of generating new and persuasive readings of the "Confucian" canon. Mysterious Learning thus blurred the boundaries between "Confucianism" and "Daoism" in ways that obviate the usefulness of these categories for analyzing much of the textual production of the early medieval era (Zürcher translated *xuanxue* as "Dark Learning"). This is the context in which we should situate the received *Wenzi*. In a milieu increasingly shaped by Mysterious Learning, a text attributable to a disciple of Laozi could be very useful toward fixing meanings and controlling readings. Much of what van Els presents in his analysis suggests that something like this impulse to control the legacy of Laozi and the *Dao de jing* within the broader field of Mysterious Learning scholarship motivated the production of the received *Wenzi*.

Why, for example, did the editor(s) of the received *Wenzi* draw so deeply on the *Huainanzi*? As Mysterious Learning evolved, its teachings were adapted to conflicting purposes. Figures like Wang Bi and his patron He Yan 何晏 (196–249) clearly viewed the new scholarship as a support of the project of imperial governance. But authors like Xi Kang 嵇康 (223–262) and Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (ca. 365–427) applied the new idiom of Mysterious Learning toward arguments in favor of withdrawal from politics into gentlemanly eremitism. The *Huainanzi* provided a *Laozi*-centered text that nonetheless affirmed the legitimacy of government and political service. Putting these teachings under the aegis of an "acknowledged" disciple of Laozi himself thus gave authority to the "pro-state" wing of the larger Mysterious Learning movement.

That something like this dynamic was at work is evinced by a source underscored in van Els's analysis: the *Zhonghuangzi* 中黃子. The passage of the received *Wenzi* that sources this material lays out a fifteen-part, three-tiered hierarchical taxonomy of different human types, ranging from the "numinous man" 神人 at the top to the "petty man" 小人 at the bottom (pp. 146–48). Van Els notes that the ranking establishes the superiority of "Daoist" over "Confucian" ideals (Confucian paragons like "the gentlemen" range no higher than the middle tier, while the top tier is comprised of Daoist archetypes). While this may be true, an investigation into the basic structural affinity between this taxonomy and similar intellectual projects of the early medieval era is arguably a more fruitful line of inquiry. Texts like the *Renwu zhi* 人物志 of Liu Shao 劉邵 (ca. 186–ca. 245), for example, articulated similar classifications of ideal human types. This mode of analysis formed the basis for the "Nine Grades" 九品 system by which imperial courts ranked the increasingly status-conscious elites of the Period of Division.

Eremitist proponents of Mysterious Learning, invoking relativistic and socially egalitarian rhetoric to be found in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, adduced the kinds of pretensions embodied in a system such as the “Nine Grade” as justification to avoid the irredeemably corrupt aristocratic society at court. In the face of such challenges, “discovering” a taxonomy like that of the *Zhonghuangzi* in a text attributed to a disciple of Laozi demonstrated that the author of the Great Mystery himself could not have shared the scruples of eremitist polemicists. In other words, the received *Wenzi* “proves” that the *Laozi* cannot be used to denounce the very concept of social hierarchy on principle, a message that would have been very useful to political leaders throughout the medieval era.

This observation is less a criticism of Paul van Els’s monograph than a suggested avenue of study from the point of departure that he provides. As van Els aptly demonstrates, the received *Wenzi* is an early medieval source, and should be placed within that context to facilitate maximally fertile and instructive interpretation. By working through the extraordinarily complex text-historical and philological challenges that the *Wenzi* presents, van Els has provided newly broadened vistas that he and other investigators may fruitfully explore in the study of this valuable and intriguing text.

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The Halberd at Red Cliff: Jian’an and the Three Kingdoms. By XIAOFEI TIAN. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, vol. 108. Cambridge, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY ASIA CENTER, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, 2018. Pp. xvi + 454. \$49.95.

The title of this book makes us expect a study of key events of early medieval Chinese history; and to a certain extent, this is what the book contains in its pages. But once we open it, we find that this is not only a book about the past; it is also about the present: it shows how early medieval materials, through their multiple metamorphoses, have shaped and keep on shaping historical imagination in China. These studies on famous third-century literary topics indeed transgress the arbitrary chronological divisions that historians often impose onto their objects. In principle, the book deals with Jian’an (196–220), the last reign era of the Han dynasty, and with the Three Kingdoms (220–280), the period that formally started after the fall of the Han dynasty; but instead of tying its analysis to this time framework, the book focuses on some of the fragmentary memories that these periods left to posterity: the Bronze Bird Terrace, where Cao Cao’s concubines and entertainers were to be lodged after the death of their lord; the Seven Masters of Jian’an, a group that encompassed the most important literary figures of the early third century; and the battle of the Red Cliff, which marked the beginning of the Three Kingdoms era. “We can only get to know the past in remnants,” claims the author; “and even when we hold an authentic physical object in our hands, tangible as it is, we recognize that it, too, needs a human voice to give it an identity and a story, to articulate what it is, and from whence and where it came” (p. 345). *The Halberd at the Red Cliff* thus follows these remnants in their full chronological scale—and that scale is Chinese history from the third century until today.

Although the early medieval “remnants” that Tian chose for her book are well-known literary topics of the Jian’an era and the Three Kingdoms, widely present in poetry, storytelling, and visual representations, she warns the reader that her focus is not “literary history.” Her focus is community making. From the third century until today, she claims, “the question remains the same, namely, how to construct a community through writing and reading” (p. 8). “Literary” and “artistic” materials indeed have a particular status in Chinese history. In Tian’s learned analyses of literati poetry during the whole imperial period, the reader will be able to see that “aesthetic questions” never remained locked within the boundaries of “literature” and “art.” To understand this, we should bear in mind the social conditions of poetic writing in imperial times: on the one hand, poetry was part of what is called “social aesthetics,” because it displayed the social value of the person who was able to compose a poem; on the other hand, since poetry was a major means of literati communication, its role in shaping the historical