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**Review of 何志華 = Ho Che Wah (2004) 《文子》著作年代新證  
= The new evidence pointing to the date of the Wenzhi**  
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Ho Che Wah 何志華. 《文子》著作年代新證 (The new evidence pointing to the date of the *Wenzi*). Hong Kong: CHANT, Institute of Chinese Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2004. xii, 207 pp. Paperback U.S. \$12.00, ISBN 962-633-028-7.

The *Wenzi* (Master Wen) purports to be the creation of a disciple of Laozi, the alleged founder of Daoism. Since the Tang dynasty, scholars have noted elements in the text that could not have been written at the time when Laozi and *Wenzi* were supposed to have lived. Hence, they have rejected the traditional account of its creation and branded the text a forgery. The *Wenzi* was thenceforth transmitted at the periphery of the Chinese politico-philosophical discourse, appreciated by no more than a handful of scholars who still believed in its authenticity. The discovery of a fragmentary bamboo *Wenzi* manuscript in a Han dynasty tomb near Dingzhou (Hebei Province) in 1973 refueled interest in the *Wenzi*, leading to a deluge of publications, mainly in Chinese. The work under review is the latest book-length publication in *Wenzi* studies and a controversial yet important contribution to the field.

Ho Che Wah, the author of this new book, is a professor of Chinese language and literature at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Project Officer of the popular Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series, published by the same university. With five articles on the *Wenzi* to his name, he is also one of the most active scholars in the field of *Wenzi* studies. Based in Hong Kong, Ho is not bound by the parameters of the two major *Wenzi* discourses, in China and Taiwan. In his book, he displays a thorough awareness of *Wenzi*-related publications from both sides of the Taiwan Strait, but takes issue with dominant opinions.

This book, an edited collection of articles previously published in various academic journals, mainly discusses the dating of the *Wenzi*. This has been a controversial topic since the Tang dynasty, when scholars first questioned the authenticity of the text, and even more so since the Dingzhou discovery in 1973. Most scholars nowadays agree that there exist two versions of the text: an Ancient *Wenzi* and a Received *Wenzi*. There is a growing consensus among scholars for seeing the two versions as distinct texts, but no agreement on their respective dates.

The Ancient *Wenzi*, with the Dingzhou manuscript as its only known copy to date, is the *Urtext* of the *Wenzi*. Dates now given for its original creation range from the mid-Warring States era to the Former Han dynasty. In the whirl of excitement following the Dingzhou discovery, some scholars saw evidence in the bamboo manuscript for the authenticity of the *Wenzi*. They labeled it an “authentic pre-Qin work that already circulated at the beginning of the Han”—a label that has been parroted in numerous publications since, though no one has offered

convincing evidence for it. Following publication of the bamboo manuscript's transcript in the journal *Wenwu* (Cultural Relics) in 1995, a growing number of scholars became convinced that the text is not older than the Han dynasty. Based on textual evidence, they claim that the *Wenzi* was created during the early stages of the Former Han, perhaps under Emperor Gaozu (r. 202–195 B.C.E.) and no later than Emperor Jing (r. 157–141 B.C.E.). Ho proposes another scenario. Textual links that he discovered between some Dingzhou *Wenzi* bamboo strips and the *Huainanzi* lead him to suggest that the *Wenzi*'s provenance possibly postdates the latter, which was presented to Emperor Wu in 139 B.C.E. Ho also notes a textual variation between the Dingzhou manuscript and the received *Wenzi*, perhaps the result of a taboo observance. One bamboo strip contains the graph *bu* 不, where the received text writes *fu* 弗 instead. This potentially indicates that the text was conceived during or after the reign of Emperor Zhao (r. 87–74 B.C.E.), whose personal name, Liu Fuling 劉弗陵, is avoided. Ho therefore concludes that the text may have been created close to the time when the manuscript was consigned to the darkness of the tomb, in 55 B.C.E.

The Received *Wenzi* is loosely based on the Ancient *Wenzi*, but also includes numerous passages from other treatises, most notably the *Huainanzi*. The major revision of the *Wenzi* that led to the received text is traditionally thought to have taken place in the third or fourth century C.E. Crucial in dating the Received *Wenzi* is Gao You's commentary to the *Huainanzi*. Related passages in the Received *Wenzi* and *Huainanzi* are usually rather similar, though there exist quite a number of textual variations. Interestingly, the *Wenzi* often contains the variant graph that is suggested in the commentary to the *Huainanzi* by the renowned scholar Gao You, who lived at the end of the Latter Han dynasty. In other words, when a *Huainanzi* passage contains the dialectal or rare graph *x* and Gao You explains *x* as *y*, the *Wenzi* in the borrowed passage will write graph *y*. *Communis opinio* holds that the editor of the *Wenzi* relied on Gao You's comments when incorporating passages from the *Huainanzi*. The historical order in this view is: *Huainanzi* (ca. 139 B.C.E.) → Gao You (ca. 212 C.E.) → Received *Wenzi*. Ho diverges from the established view and argues for a different order: *Huainanzi* (ca. 139 B.C.E.) → Received *Wenzi* → Gao You (ca. 212 C.E.).

In Ho's view, Gao You was an erudite, meticulous, and somewhat mechanical *literatus*. Thoroughly familiar with a wide range of sources, Gao employs these for his glosses. A typical Gao You comment would be "graph *x* equals *y* because text so-and-so here writes *y*." Ho's unorthodox argument is that Gao You had the Received *Wenzi* at his disposal, along with many other texts. Aware of the variations between *Huainanzi* and Received *Wenzi*, he used the latter when providing glosses to the former. Interestingly, Ho also notes that Gao You in his commentary to the *Lüshi chunqiu* occasionally writes "The *Laozi* says. . ." followed by a quotation that appears not in the received *Laozi* but in passages explicitly attributed to *Laozi* in the Received *Wenzi*. Hence, whereas Gao You appears to quote the *Laozi*,

in actual fact he may be quoting a passage attributed to Laozi in the Received *Wenzi*. This substantiates Ho's claim that the Received *Wenzi* already existed by the time that Gao You wrote his commentaries.

Some arguments in Ho's work invoke questions. For instance, is the aforementioned graphical variation between bamboo manuscript and Received *Wenzi* the result of taboo observance, or is one negation (不) replaced by another (弗) due to changed linguistic preferences? And if the change is indeed the result of taboo observance, does this one instance provide ground for dating the Ancient *Wenzi* to the reign of Emperor Zhao? Also, if Gao You indeed used the Received *Wenzi* when glossing the *Huainanzi*, then why does his commentary explicitly cite no less than sixteen classical works, but mention the *Wenzi* not a single time?

Conclusions in this book often come in a tentative manner, indicating that its author is careful not to present his claims as undisputable fact. Indeed, Ho Che Wah is not likely to find a large hearing, for his conclusions diametrically oppose accepted truths. Yet for this very reason his book deserves to be read. Ho invites his readers to investigate hitherto unexplored possibilities, and he challenges those who disagree with his conclusions to furnish their own views with convincing evidence. As a book based on meticulous research and a stimulus to further discussion, this work is a valuable contribution to *Wenzi* studies.

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Peter Ho, Jacob Eyferth, and Eduard B. Vermeer, editors. *Rural Development in Transitional China: The New Agriculture*. London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004. 309 pp. Paperback \$37.95, ISBN 0-7146-8432-5.

The dramatic changes that have come to rural China have been no less remarkable than the widely recognized economic, social, and cultural forces that have transformed China's urban areas. The authors of this very welcome edited volume believe that "the past two decades in China have witnessed the fastest change ever and anywhere of a rural economy and society" (p. 2). Few scholars interested in economic development and social change would argue with this assessment, and there are many lessons to be learned from rural China's experiences.