

oracle bone inscriptions, down to the files and regulations of early imperial times, indicates that systematic instruction in literacy was mainly restricted to professional groups closely associated with the state, such as members of divination workshops, scribes and government clerks. Western Zhou elites may have maintained their own, lineage-centred, textual traditions but, as Cook points out, it appears that only with the break-up of the Zhou order did textual competence become more common outside of state and elite lineage structures. As a result, the political rhetoricians and court poets of the late Warring States and early imperial periods entered the stage. Finally, with the growing administrative demands on both officials and commoners, basic literacy percolated through the lower orders as village headmen, soldiers, artisans and, possibly, women from ordinary backgrounds were forced to keep registers, read lists, or sign their names. By then, writing had turned into a force for cultural cohesion but also, as Barbieri-Low emphasizes with Lévi-Strauss, into something much darker: a tool for governmental control.

As both the amount of available archaeological evidence and the analytical sophistication brought to bear on it are increasing, such narratives about the spread of literacy will remain open to revision. Smith, for instance, cautiously points out that even though the practice inscriptions can be taken to support the hypothesis of a narrowly restricted scribal literacy in Shang China, competing hypotheses of more widespread literacy are far from being refuted. And as Richter argues, the study of manuscripts is likely to be dominated by highly technical research for years to come, so any generalization about uses and functions of writing should at present be treated as preliminary. In the meantime, it is to be hoped that this fascinating and carefully edited volume will not only be consulted by specialists but also attract more students to one of the most fertile areas of research in Chinese studies.

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RONNIE LITTLEJOHN and JEFFREY DIPPMMANN (eds):

Riding the Wind with Liezi: New Perspectives on the Daoist Classic.

(SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture.), vii, 264 pp. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011. ISBN 978 1 4384 3455 1.

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“Lieh-tzu is not the only Chinese philosophical text of disputed date, but it is perhaps the most important”, wrote A.C. Graham in his seminal article “The date and composition of the Lieh-tzu” (*Asia Major* 8/2, 1960–61, 139–98). Scholarship on the *Liezi* has not substantially advanced: since Graham wrote those lines over fifty years ago, the *Liezi* has continued to be neglected. *Riding the Wind with Liezi* aims to fill this gap by presenting a collection of twelve essays that re-engage the *Liezi* from different points of view and try “to find overlooked dimensions of Daoist philosophy” as Roger Ames writes in his introduction. As the ambitious subtitle promises us *New Perspectives on the Daoist Classic* we shall discuss the kind of perspectives presented and where their innovative contribution lies. For this purpose the essays may be divided into those which try to locate the *Liezi* by contextualizing the text historically and philosophically on the one hand and those who locate the text by identifying themes in it that are well known from the fields of early Daoism or early Chinese philosophy on the other. A fundamental difference with regard to

two basic assumptions about unity and diversity in the *Liezi* text and the Daoist tradition divide the perspectives and analytical approaches of the essays in the book.

Although most of the articles in one way or another refer to A.C. Graham as the authoritative voice on the *Liezi*, few follow Graham's differentiation between those passages from earlier texts (of pre-Qin and Han provenance) that have been copied into the *Liezi* and make up a quarter of the whole text, the non-Daoist hedonist Yang Zhu chapter and the fatalist Endeavour and Destiny chapter, and the rest of the text which Graham finds coherent and Daoist. May Sim in her comparison of Liezi's Daoism with Epictetus's Stoicism, John Berthrong in his discussion of themes of process and transformations in the *Liezi*, Thomas Michael in his analysis of *Liezi*'s reformed cosmogony, Philip J. Ivanhoe in his exploration of the theme of unselfconsciousness in the *Liezi*, Jeffrey Dippmann in his examination of how the *Liezi* re-reads the *Zhuangzi*, Jeffrey L. Richey in his contribution on the self as machine in the *Liezi*, Robin R. Wang in his interpretation of Yinyang as the emergent structure in the *Liezi* and David Jones in his analysis of *Liezi* passages that "speak to the question of death and death's relation to life" all try to point out particular features of the text as a whole and thereby reconstruct a unified position of the text based on selected passages. Other authors start from a different assumption. Livia Kohn differentiates two distinct positions on the body in the *Liezi* which she locates in certain chapters and links to different Daoist traditions. Ronnie Littlejohn and Erin M. Cline both provide an analysis only of specific parts of the *Liezi* which they compare with the earlier texts of *Zhuangzi* and *Laozi*. Littlejohn only focuses on the part which he thinks has been copied into the *Liezi* from the *Zhuangzi*, he is thus interested in the *Zhuangzi* rather than in the *Liezi* text.

The second basic assumption – that the *Liezi* can be explained as part of a unified and coherent tradition of early Daoist or Chinese philosophy – underlies the essay by Berthrong, who identifies motifs of transformation in the *Liezi* with motifs found in *Yijing* and correlative philosophy, *Zhuangzi* and *Laozi* to such a degree that the *Liezi* appears as a mere derivative of these earlier texts without its own characteristics. Ivanhoe uses *Liezi* as one among other examples to introduce the theme of unselfconsciousness, the main focus of his interest. Wang takes the *Liezi* to illuminate a general principle of Chinese trinary thinking; and Jones repeatedly emphasizes that positions on life and death taken in the *Liezi* are the same as in other Daoist texts. In contrast, the other authors try to focus on the difference between *Liezi* and earlier Daoist texts. Littlejohn and Dippmann both point out differences between the *Zhuangzi* passages of the *Liezi* and the transmitted *Zhuangzi*, providing different hypotheses for these deviations. While Littlejohn interprets them as traces of an earlier *Zhuangzi* text transmitted in the *Liezi*, Dippmann explains them as deliberate changes added to the text by later editors to advocate their pursuit of immortality in the milieu of religious Daoism in southern China. Sim restricts her comparison strictly to the *Liezi* text, Michael regards the *Liezi* as a modified extension of *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi* and as a reform work, Kohn relates different strands of the *Liezi* to different Daoist traditions, Richey sees the *Liezi* as a "record of Taoist engagement with competing Buddhist ideas and practices in early medieval China", and Cline analyses the differences in the concept of *wuwei* between the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi* and one passage in the *Liezi*.

Most of the contributions discuss the *Liezi* out of historical context. Only Michael, Dippmann, Kohn and Richey try to locate the text in its fourth-century CE social and intellectual context, explaining its philosophy as a response to apocryphal *weishu*, religious Daoism, *yangsheng* practices or Buddhism. Tim Barrett approaches the *Liezi* from the perspective of reception history, providing a 1,000 year long history of commentarial readings of the *Liezi* in China.

Reading through the contributions it is striking that a number of text passages from the *Liezi* are taken up in several essays as evidence for various, sometimes quite diverging, arguments and analytical approaches. Apart from Dippmann, who once refers to the other editor Littlejohn's diverging interpretation of the same phenomenon, we do not find any cross-references to, or discussions of, diverging interpretations of the same passages, which indicates that the authors were not aware of each other's research. We hope that this rich new contribution to *Liezi* studies will inspire further scholars to engage in a discussion with the various new perspectives on the *Liezi* presented in this publication.

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PETER LORGE (ed.):

Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.

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This book is a collection of seven articles on the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, a less than popular period for historians of imperial China. Two factors largely explain the neglect: first, the limited number of source materials, especially compared with the abundance of official documents and private texts from the Tang and Song dynasties, increases the difficulty of inquiry. Second, the Five Dynasties era is relatively short and multi-polar to the point of impeding the sort of analytic patterns that appeal to most historians. Even though the Tang–Song transition has drawn some recent attention, the period between the two dynasties is usually considered anomalous or irrelevant.

Peter Lorge targets this book at the academic reader, the introduction and concluding chapter emphasizing the importance and meaning of the Five Dynasties period. These two chapters successfully demonstrate that what we identify today as Song culture had evolved gradually by integrating northern and southern elements, while showing how the lack of central authority produced momentum to create a new culture with local traits.

The remaining six articles cover various topics, but fall roughly into three categories. Naomi Standen and Johannes Kurz separately discuss the historical evaluation of political figures: Zhao Dejun in the north and Han Xizai in the south. Traditional historians criticized Zhao for disloyalty to the state, while Han was seen as a talented and ambitious official whose aims were thwarted by material distractions. Standen and Kurz both criticize later historians for imposing their own values on these men, while failing to appreciate the circumstances under which they lived and made critical choices.

Hugh Clark and Ruth Mostern write about local politics, although they employ different approaches. By analysing the origins of new leaders in the southern regimes, Clark demonstrates that the upheaval of the late Tang produced circumstances that empowered scoundrels to vie for political power. In as much as their primary concern was personal benefit, such leaders were not the sort of Robin Hood nobles that some writers allege. Mostern analyses local administration by describing the gradual transition from a highly militarized Tang system to the