

***Lu Jia's New Discourses: A Political Manifesto from the Early Han Dynasty.*** Translated by Paul R. Goldin and Elisa Levi Sabattini. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. 134. \$83.00.

The *Xinyu* 新語 is a tract on good rulership written by Lu Jia 陸賈 (c. 228–140 B.C.E.), probably in the first decade of the 2nd century B.C.E. The text was commissioned by Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 202–195 B.C.E.), the first of the Han emperors, who wanted to learn why Qin had failed and why he had succeeded. This notably makes the *Xinyu* the first single-authored monograph in Chinese history. The book is quite short—about three-fourth of the *Lunyu*. The earliest extant integral editions are from the Ming dynasty.

The philosophy expounded in *Xinyu* shows similarities with that elaborated in *Xunzi* 荀子, but there is also influence from the *Daode jing* 道德經. Lu Jia's book contains a quotation from the *Guliang* 穀梁 commentary to the *Chunqiu* 春秋, a commentary usually regarded as having been put to writing only later, plus a number of passages that clearly rely on the text we know as the *Lunyu*, the history of which has been discussed intensely in recent years. It also has the earliest mention of the Five Classics and contains references to writings that appear to be apocrypha, generally understood to have come from a later date. It shows opposition to the quest for eternal life, a quest which is described in terms otherwise only known from later texts. These many “firsts” have given rise to doubts about the authenticity of the book, though this is not discussed in the introduction to this new translation.

The *Xinyu* was first translated into English by Mei-kao Ku 辜美高 in 1988 as *A Chinese Mirror for Magistrates: The Hsin-yü of Lu Chia*.<sup>1</sup> Ku made a thorough study of the *Xinyu* editions, but the English-speaking world was in need of a more precise translation, and this new bilingual edition, handsomely produced by Brill, is in a number of respects an improvement to Ku's translation.<sup>2</sup>

Elisa Levi Sabattini has authored a number of papers on *Xunzi* and early Han philosophy and in 2012 published an Italian translation of *Xinyu* as *Nuovi*

---

<sup>1</sup> Mei-kao Ku, *A Chinese Mirror for Magistrates: The Hsin-yü of Lu Chia* (Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> The francophone world has an excellent bilingual edition, prepared by Béatrice L'Haridon and Stéphane Feuillas, in *Lu Jia: Nouveaux discours*. Bibliothèque chinoise 11 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012). This review will not make comparisons between the different translations.

*argomenti: Un trattato politico della Cina antica.*<sup>3</sup> Paul Rakita Goldin has for more than three decades written on early Chinese philosophy and culture; his papers include a study on “Xunzi and Early Han Philosophy” in 2007,<sup>4</sup> in which he discusses Lu Jia’s debt to Xunzi, translating extended passages from the *Xinyu*.

Goldin and Sabattini state that they base their translation on the *Xinyu* edition by Wang Liqi 王利器 (1912–1998), *Xinyu jiaozhu* 新語校注, published in 1986 by Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局 in the series *Xinbian zhuzi jicheng* 新編諸子集成. This is the standard edition of the *Xinyu*; I will discuss the relationship between the text edition Goldin and Sabattini provide and Wang’s edition below.

I must admit not to have read any *Xinyu* before and I was happy to make amends while preparing this review. Based on my reading I wish to submit some notes made by a student of classical Chinese who was puzzled by a number of passages in the translation they offer. The *Xinyu* is not in the best shape textually and Lu Jia often expresses himself rhapsodically, so my comments are only meant as queries seeking to understand what he might have meant more than two thousand years ago.

\* \* \*

The translation contains a number of passages that are likely to make a reader pause. The advantage of providing a parallel text is that it enables the reader to compare the translation to the original in detail. In the present case, this comparison turns up surprising results, including infelicitous renderings, shortcomings in the text edition provided, and a disjoint between text edition and translation. In the following I will take up some of the translations that, I believe, call for discussion.

We read that “It is the nature of Heaven and Earth and a categorical [truth] of the Myriad Things” (p. 85; brackets in original) that the people will rally around a ruler who embraces virtue, whereas they will fear a ruler who relies on punishments. This is rendered from 天地之性，萬物之類，懷德者眾歸之，恃刑者民畏之. The translation of 萬物之類 as “a categorical [truth] of the Myriad Things” is surprising. There is talk about categories in the passage, that is true, but hardly of any truths, let alone categorical ones. My humdrum translation of this passage reads “According to the nature of Heaven and Earth and according to the

---

<sup>3</sup> Elisa Levi Sabattini, *Nuovi argomenti: Un trattato politico della Cina antica* (Venice: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 2012) (not seen).

<sup>4</sup> Paul R. Goldin, “Xunzi and Early Han Philosophy,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 67.1 (Jun. 2007): 135–66.

different categories of the myriad things, the multitudes of the people will rally around [a ruler] who embraces virtue, whereas they will fear one who relies on [physical] punishments.”

We hear that “One who applies heavy punishments has a troubled heart” (刑重者則心煩), and then, as a translation of 事眾者則身勞, that “one who [demands] much *corvée* labor makes tired bodies” (p. 87; brackets in original). However, the two sentences are obviously parallel and both concern the welfare of the ruler. I would suggest something like: “those who apply heavy punishments will have a troubled heart; those whose affairs are numerous will become fatigued.”

We read about the “lake of wine” (p. 103) 酒池, in which the dissolute Zhou 紂 cavorted in boats, and after that a 糟丘 is mentioned which offered a splendid view of the landscape. This last expression has been rendered as “mounds of grain,” mounds on which the tyrant presumably would (attempt to) stand in order to gaze afar. Here the most common meaning of the character 糟 is more relevant: it refers to lees or dregs, i.e., the congealed residues from wine (or rather, beer) production. This also fits in nicely with the “pond of wine,” both elements being associated with the all-night drinking bouts that this last ruler of the Shang was renowned for.

We read that Lord Zhuang of Lu 魯莊公 was a wastrel and that he “repaired useless objects” (p. 89) in order to endear his womenfolk. This is the translation of 繕不用之好. But did the Lu ruler repair broken things and how can this serve as testimony to his wastefulness? I would prefer to read 繕 here as “to make ready, to provide,” which gives coherence to the passage: the Lu lord simply “provided useless dainties” to his female entourage.

Also, 是故天下所以傾覆也 is translated as “this is why the world is upside-down” (p. 83). 傾覆 means “to overturn, to collapse”—the rise of what is low to the top is not current in this expression. Perhaps this is better rendered as “because of this the empire was toppled.”

Much of *Xinyu* is unsurprisingly concerned with the Way. Lu Jia shows himself to be an heir to Xunzi when he argues, using a long series of similes, that it does not matter where ideas come from, only that they work: books do not have to be written by students of Confucius and prescriptions do not have to be written out by the legendary doctor, Bian Que 扁鵲. After we are told this, we read: “One who combines things [effectively] is meritorious and can be taken as model, [because] he weighs his actions according to his generation” (p. 41; brackets in original). On the facing page we see: 合之者善，可以為法，因世而權行. I would suggest that 合 is here “to tally with” and the first part says that those ideas that tally with the Way are good and can be taken as a model. The last part draws on the idea that institutions vary over time and states, as I read it, that Way-conforming ideas can be practiced on an ad hoc basis according to current circumstances.

Lu Jia quotes a lost passage from the *Guliang* commentary, 仁者以治親，義者以利尊。 This comes out as “Humanity is used to govern those who are close. Righteousness is used to benefit those who are honorable” (p. 35). Are we to understand that the ruler, when choosing the right approach to govern those that are close to him, opts for humanity because it does the job better than anything else? And are we to understand that the ruler locates someone who is honourable and then confers righteousness on him? Of course, 仁者 and 義者 can mean “humanity” and “righteousness,” but the more common usage is to refer to a category of people, “those who are humane” and “the righteous.” These are then subjects for 親 “to be close” and 尊 “to be honoured.” If we go by the maxim that all Chinese philosophy is about the right way of ruling, we can perhaps smuggle in “the ruler” and render this as “the humane are drawn close [by the ruler] by means of [his] good governance; the righteous are made honourable [by the ruler] by means of the benefits [he bestows on them].”

In a long passage dealing with Confucius, after lauding him for cleaving to the Way in the face of adversity, *Xinyu* tells of his relation with a certain text. This text is not named, but as Tang Yan 唐晏 (1857–1920) and Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848–1908) write, in notes rendered in Wang Liqi’s commentary, the passage concerns how Confucius edited the *Chunqiu* (修春秋). The *Xinyu* passage points out that the text “ordered the beginnings and ends” (序終始), that is, sequenced chronologically the affairs of the twelve Lu lords, and states that Confucius “asserted governance over past event retrospectively” (追治去事); before continuing to Confucius’s editorship of the remaining Six Arts, it even introduces the idea that the *Chunqiu* was written in order “to rectify the age to come” (正來世). This is all in the best of early Han *Chunqiu* traditions. *Xinyu* says that after Confucius realized that he would not succeed in persuading any regional lord, he started working on the text in question, but in the translation this narrative begins with “[He/They].” The disciples have been mentioned beforehand, but do Goldin and Sabattini wish to open up the possibility that they participated in the authoring/editing of the *Chunqiu*? In their introduction, Goldin and Sabattini state that “There is no sign, . . . that Lu Jia subscribed to a later cliché about the *Springs and Autumns*: that the chronicle was composed by Confucius himself” (pp. 6–7). This is not just a cliché: it is a major tenet of early Han thought and Goldin and Sabattini may disagree with Tang Yan and Sun Yirang, but after reading the interpretation of these two Chinese scholars they can hardly categorically deny that Lu Jia may have expressed this idea. At the close of the passage concerning Confucius and the classics we read: 乃天道之所立，大義之所行也。 This is rendered as “establishing the Way of Heaven and practicing great righteousness” (p. 103). This fails to adequately address the grammar of the

passage. The subject is clearly the classics as a corpus of texts and the idea expressed here is that these works are established *by* the Way of Heaven and are a putting-into-effect *of* Great Righteousness. This is a crucial issue in the ongoing discussion of the Han understanding of the classics, but Goldin and Sabattini to not alert the reader to the contribution of the *Xinyu* has to be noted here.

We read that “Lord Huan of Qi was fond of sex with women” (p. 55). I would not be surprised if that was a true statement, but the Chinese simply reads 齊桓公好婦人之色, and this refers only to the lord’s penchant for good-looking women and not directly to anything he did with them.

Goldin and Sabattini claim that “*Xiang xian* 相銜 literally means ‘holding each other in the mouth’” (p. 59, n. 3). Well, 銜 *can* mean “to hold in the mouth,” but that is something extremely difficult to do on a reciprocal basis. Lu Jia could, of course, be writing nonsense here, but this word also regularly means “to link up, to join together,” and that is at least something people are apt to do with each other and this sense is moreover copiously attested. The passage in question, 邪曲之相銜, I would suggest translating simply as “that the crooked join together.”

嘉樂不野合 is rendered as “auspicious music is not suitable for the wilderness” (p. 61), but 合 here means “to assemble”; an orchestra of this kind is not convened in the wilderness, only at court.

We read that 恢恢者何所不容, but this is translated as “there are things that [even] one who is broad-minded does not tolerate” (p. 47; brackets in original). If the line had read 恢恢者有所不容, it would have fitted what the translators write. There is a difference between an assertion and a question used rhetorically: “What cannot be tolerated by one who is broad-minded?” here meaning “there is nothing that cannot be tolerated by a broad-minded person.”

故道無廢而不興，器無毀而不治 is translated as “Hence, the Way is never defunct and inoperative, its instruments never ruined or disordered” (p. 75). This equates 無 and 不 and it misses the point of the passage, that for a ruler who acts in harmony with the universe, “there is no Way which is discarded and does not get upheld again; there is no implement which is destroyed and is not fixed again.”

We see the same problem in 仁無隱而不著，無幽而不彰者. This is rendered as “humanity is never concealed so that it be imperceptible, never sequestered so that it be unrevealed” (p. 29), but I would suggest instead “there is not that which is hidden which humanity does not make manifest; there is not that which is obscure which humanity does not make clear.” The grammatical pattern is quite common; Goldin and Sabattini render it correctly elsewhere (pp. 59, 113).

察於利而愾於道者，眾之所謀也；果於力而寡於義者，兵之所圖也 is translated into “Perceptivity toward profit and blindness to the Way is the counsel

of the multitudes. Placing stock in power and deprecating righteousness is the strategy of a foot soldier” (p. 105). Do the common people advocate the ruler to be perceptive towards profit and blind to the Way? Do ordinary foot soldiers engage in strategical thought, and, if they do, why would they deprecate righteousness? There are two textual problems here. A minor problem is the understanding of the parallel 察 and 果. To be perceptive is something positive and 察 is here probably more negative—“to be exacting and unremitting.” 果 is also not putative, but expressive of “to be resolute,” but here with a negative tone “to be relentless.” The major problem is how to understand the grammar of the parallel 眾之所謀 and 兵之所圖. These are nominalizations of 眾謀之 and 兵圖之 and 謀 and 圖 should here be treated as synonyms meaning “to scheme against, to plot against” (“the multitudes/soldiers lay plans against him”). So: “One who is exacting when it comes to making a profit (is someone who) will be schemed against by the multitudes; one who is relentless when it comes to his use of power (is someone who) will be plotted against with military might.”

The innocent question 何以言之 occurs three times in *Xinyu*, each time translated as “Why do I say this?” (pp. 51, 77, 107). This translation misses the point that on each occurrence, Lu Jia first makes a general two-verse statement, then asks 何以言之, then presents a lengthy illustration of the general statement by means of concrete examples. In one place, Lu Jia enunciates the principle that the good in people has to be recognized by the world in order to have effect. He then asks 何以言之, and he could have answered it with a “吾以木言之,” for in the following rhapsody he illustrates the principle by a long list of cases where wood and trees stand for people and their qualities. Elsewhere he could have written “吾以舜、周公言之,” for the exempla he uses concern these sages. The question 何以言之 literally means “by means of what can I expound this?” The question looks forward, being the rhetor’s question to himself: which of a number of possible illustrations should I now use for my exposition of the general principle?

分土地之所宜 is rendered as “in order to distribute lands properly” (p. 23), but one would like to ask how 宜 at the end of the sentence can modify 分 at its beginning. The theme of the passage is well known: the passage does not hold that the land is distributed to the populace, as Goldin and Sabattini have it, but that the sages made studies of the suitability of the land for different kinds of produce, as is also explained in the note supplied by Wang Liqi.

仁者壽長 is rendered as “one who is humane will have a long life as a leader” (p. 35). 長 is here not “leader,” but means “long” and Lu Jia here simply professes that the good are bound to have a long life.

\* \* \*

The prevalence of parallelism in *Xinyu* serves a translator with many clues; either two passages mirror each other or they contrast, often on the level of words, and words are then used in overlapping or contrasting senses.

聖賢與道合，愚者與禍同, we are told, means “the sagacious and talented conform to the Way; the foolish are alike in meeting with disaster” (p. 39). Here 合 and 同 should be treated as synonyms, indeed as a single word, 合同, which has rhetorically been split up in two. One should try instead with “sages and wisemen concur with approaches which conform to the Way, whereas the foolish agree with approaches that are calamitous.” This is a case where Lu Jia’s penchant for parallelism makes him stretch the meaning of the words (同, in this case), something which often happens in rhymed passages (however, rhymes are not marked in any way in this edition).

Goldin and Sabattini render 辯為智者通，書為曉者傳 as “the wise are conversant with various modes of argument; documents are transmitted by those who are perceptive” (p. 41). The couplet follows a long list of identically constructed sentences and it is followed by an additional one. Since the sentences are parallel in the Chinese, one would expect them to be so in the English version as well. But clearly both sentences have passivization with 為 and should be translated as such. The wise are not “conversant” with anything, but “arguments are communicated (and gain an audience) (辯通) by those who are wise, and books are transmitted (and gain a readership) (書傳) by those who understand them.” The message that the good needs external support in order to prevail runs through the whole chapter and these sentences do not form an exception.

We read that “Some make plans for distant things and neglect what is nearby; others are led to the frontier and the road comes to an end” (p. 43). This translates 或圖遠而失近，或道塞而路窮. The expression 道塞 occurs in, for example, *Shiji* 史記, *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 where it means “the Way is blocked,” a constant theme in early Chinese thought. The parallelism between the two sentences here does not apply to individual words, so though 圖 is a verb, this does not make 道 a verb, but 圖遠 parallels 道塞 on the level of expressions (the same goes for 失近 and 路窮). There is therefore no reason to force a verbal sense on 道 (reading it as “to lead”)—and if people were led to the frontiers, a particle would surely be required between 道 and 塞. 路窮 occurs elsewhere in the literal sense “the road ends,” but may also refer to one’s aspirations coming to nothing—probably Lu Jia here plays with both concrete and abstract senses of 道 and 路. “Some make far-reaching plans but fail in what is close at hand; for others the way is blocked and their path goes no further.”

身在衡門之裏，志圖八極之表 is translated as “His body was located in a rough-hewn dwelling, but his aspiration was to draft a chart of the Eight Directions” (p. 67). This sentence also applies parallelism, so 裏 and 表 are parallel, as are 在 and 圖. The meaning surely is: “While his body was within a shabby house, his aspirations made plans reaching beyond the eight extremities.”

行之於小，顯之於大 is offered as “they practiced it with little and displayed it to many” (p. 67). I would suggest trying out with “they practiced it in unimportant matters and it showed itself in important matters” (孝 is the topic here).

君子見惡於外，則知變於內矣 is rendered as “If the noble man sees wickedness on the outside, he knows how to change the inside” (p. 119), but the sentences are parallel and 變 is a noun, so “if the noble man sees wickedness on the outside, he recognises treason on the inside.”

上訣是非於天文，其次定狐疑於世務 is rendered as “Above all, he decides right and wrong by means of the celestial patterns; then he resolves doubts about worldly responsibilities” (p. 117). Perhaps rendering all these parallels in Chinese as parallels in English is repetitive, but then other measures have to be taken to remedy this. Here “doubts are resolved *by reference to* worldly affairs,” not *about* them.

We read in *Xinyu* that 湯以七十里之封，升帝王之位；周公自立三公之官，比德於五帝三王. The first half is rendered as “Tang held a territory of seventy *li* [square, but] ascended to the position of Emperor,” which is fine. For the last half we have “the Duke of Zhou established himself in the office of one of the Three Dukes” (p. 107; brackets in original), 自 being viewed as a reflexive pronoun, where its parallel 以 is rightly translated as a coverb. However, the Duke of Zhou did not establish himself, but was properly appointed; Wang Liqi also points to a passage elsewhere in *Xinyu* where 自 occurs in a comparable context as the coverb “from.” Both 以 and 自 could here be rendered as “with point of departure in” or “based on.”

治末者調其本，端其影者正其形 is rendered as “One who regulates the ‘branches’ attunes them in accordance with the ‘roots’; one who seeks the source of a shadow looks properly at the body [that produces it]” (p. 43; brackets in original). Here 治 and 端 occur in tandem and the best approach is to find some common ground between them, especially as Wang Liqi conveniently alerts us to a parallel in *Xunzi* with 治影者 (“one who adjusts his shadow”). Surely the meaning is closer to “Who seeks to order dependent matters regulates their underlying causes; who seeks to make his shadow upright rectifies his form.”

地封五嶽，畫四瀆，規洿澤 becomes “Earth agglomerates the Five Peaks, delineates the Four Rivers, circumscribes lakes and marshes” (p. 21), but while it is true that 封 can mean “to pile up” (thus “agglomerate”), also in connection with



mountains, the three verbs are here used synonymously as “to border off,” this being the semantic field they hold in common.

Attested compounds can be split up over parallels. 苞之以六合，羅之以紀綱 is translated as “covers them in the Six Directions like a calyx; reticulates them with guidelines (i.e. cosmic laws)” (p. 21). However, 苞羅 (包羅) is a common compound meaning “to encompass”—when split up, each component stands for the compound as a whole and the challenge for the translator is to find two synonyms for one word—or simply use one word. A start would be “the Way embraces all living things with Six Dimensions and encompasses them with Cosmic Guidelines.”

We read that certain trees are not valued when they grow in certain places, but this is “not because their beauty is not excellent or their timber and power not extraordinary” (p. 79), which renders 德美非不相絕也，才力非不相懸也. Behind this lies the compound 懸絕 which means “to contrast drastically,” so the translation should read something like “this is not because their beauty or their material differ widely.”

Parallelism may split apart compounds, but there is no reason not to render synonym compounds as single words. Thus, 喘息 is rendered as “breathe, rest” (p. 23), when “breathe” would be sufficient. It is also best to view 蟲 and 獸 as “animals” *tout court* in 行蟲走獸, not as “insects and wild beasts” (p. 23), especially as Wang Liqi teaches us that 蟲 is a general appellation for animals (凡動物皆謂之蟲).

The couplet 技巧橫出，用意各殊 is rendered as “Dexterity and artfulness appeared everywhere, and [people] used divergent ideas” (p. 27; brackets in original). Let us note that the compound 技巧 is evidenced in quite a number of early texts. Goldin and Sabattini split it up, but recognize that it forms the subject of the sentence. 用意 is also a compound, though its first appearance may be in *Xinyu*. “Intent” is one way to render this word here which likewise functions as subject, and “the goals of each person differed” might be a candidate for a translation.

\* \* \*

I also note a number of individual words that I would suggest translating otherwise.

The word “deplorable” is used to render the word 謬 (pp. 105, 117), but the normal translation as “erroneous” is surely to be preferred.

世 is translated as “a society,” or “societies” (pp. 63, 71, 109, 111, 117), as in “Yao and Shun flourished and governed their societies” 舜、禹因盛而治世 (p. 117; the sage emperors differ, but the translators offer no explanation). The

standard translation “the world, the times” may be a little unimaginative, but until we have an argument showing that the Chinese of Lu Jia’s time were capable of imagining that there was more than one 世 at a time, I think we should avoid translating this word as “society.”

We read that “blood relatives are intimate through humanity” (p. 33), as a rendering of 骨肉以仁親. I think “close” or “affectionate” has less unsettling ramifications as a translation of 親 than “intimate.”

A full verb gets rendered as a preposition when 調心在己 is translated as “Attuning your heart within yourself” (p. 69), where “depends on oneself” is a better candidate for 在己.

It is said that “the court will become complaisant” (p. 33) if righteousness predominates, translating 朝廷以義便便, but 便便 is an expression which means “well-ordered.”

Goldin and Sabattini explain the meaning of 沖 in 道沖, an expression well-known from *Daode jing*. In a note we read that “Here *chong* 沖 seems to function as *zhong* 盅” (p. 43, n. 13). A reader who looks up 盅 in a dictionary will learn that it refers to a cup without a handle—which is hardly the “function” of 沖 anywhere. An explanation pointing out that 盅 is a variant for 沖 in *Daode jing* could have been offered, but even this would hardly add to our understanding of the *Xinyu* passage.

We read that after Confucius had reprimanded the Duke of Qi at the meeting at Jiagu 夾谷, his state “never attacked the heart of Lu” (p. 63). This renders 無乘魯之心. The “heart of Lu” is not a constituent of the sentence—Qi did not have any intention (無 . . . 心) of attacking Lu (乘魯).

鮑丘伯 (also known as 浮丘伯) is introduced as “Baoqiu (an obscure student of Xunzi)” (p. 81). Indeed, he was not famous, though Lu Jia thought him better qualified than Li Si 李斯. The text continues with 而不錄於世, which is translated as “[his talents] were not recorded by his contemporaries” (p. 81; brackets in original), but this is not why next to nothing is known of him. 錄 here means (as pointed out by Wang Liqi) “to be employed.”

The translation of 承聖人之後 we are offered is quite involved, “He succeeded to [a position appropriate to] a descendant of the sage (i.e. his ancestor the Duke of Zhou)” (p. 95; brackets in original), but 承 . . . 之後 simply means “to succeed to.”

持一概以等萬民 is rendered as “he grasps a single trowel to level the myriad people” (p. 95), but 概 here means something akin to “a rule” one can hold onto.

垂於萬代 is rendered as “have been suspended [as a model] for generations” (p. 29; brackets in original), but 垂 regularly means “to hand down, to transmit,” as it does here.

\* \* \*

Goldin and Sabattini write in their introduction that “The Chinese text below is furnished with editorial notes (a, b, c, etc.) wherever we depart from Wang Liqi, with succinct explanations” (p. 16). This is not a correct description of the text edition we are presented with.

Wang Liqi’s edition is quite solid and for a translation like this, it is surely not required that a new edition be established *ab novo*. However, one should note the approach taken by the translators has some drawbacks.

First of all, it hides from the reader the fact that it is only after hundreds of emendations that Wang Liqi, building on the previous work of Song Xiangfeng 宋翔鳳 (1777–1860) and Tang Yan, arrives at his fairly readable edition. Presenting all the text-critical details once again, with additional adjustments, would make a quite unwieldy publication. Goldin and Sabattini present a brief text history, but do not address the problem that the integral Ming editions, which serve as the base for our text, are very shaky indeed, large passages being close to gibberish. The *Xinyu* was not a text in the centre of the Confucian heritage and so did not have a secure transmission over the centuries—moreover, the Ming scholars who publicized the text felt free to fill in lacunae and rewrite passages without textual warrant.

A second drawback of this approach is that it neglects work done on the text that was not consulted by Wang Liqi as well as work that was published after he finished his book in 1983. One would expect an academic edition to cover all available text-critical works. There are only some ten contributions of this kind on *Xinyu* and I do not believe it is unreasonable to expect that these had been consulted.

All we have left from the old philosophers, historians, and poets are these strings of characters. As the study of excavated manuscripts has matured, we have learned that we should exercise the utmost care when dealing with the testimony that we wish to interpret. The same, of course, holds for transmitted texts.

The misgivings I have with the text provided in this publication are that: 1) the text does not render faithfully the text established by Wang Liqi, 2) notes are not provided when the Wang Liqi edition is departed from, 3) the translation does not agree with the text provided, and 4) some of the emendations are doubtful.

\* \* \*

First some minor matters.

There is one outright mistake, when Goldin and Sabattini write 傳 for 傳 (but translate correctly as “to apply,” pp. 26–27). Since this has happened time and again in the transmission of early Chinese texts, perhaps we can excuse this.

It is standard practice to normalize characters that differ in form only, but the question is always how far to go (or what exactly “form” is). In most contexts the substitutions the translators make are perfectly defensible; however, I believe many will disagree when the translators occasionally write 棄 for 弃 and 于 for 於. There remain a number of doubtful cases: is it advisable to write 絃 for 弦, 鴈 for 雁, 銜 for 銜, 脩 for 修, or 疏 for 疏? I would say no, but opinions may differ.

More important is the question of the improvements of Wang Liqi’s text that Goldin and Sabattini propose.

Measured by time spent ruminating, our biggest textual problem has been whether to follow the variants in *Qunshu zhiyao*. Chinese commentators tend to place great stock in them, but we are not always convinced of their superiority. Generally, when considering variants and proposed emendations, we have taken care to avoid the specious and undisciplined practice of adopting whichever one seems most pleasing, and accordingly we have passed over many variants that we admire. (p. 16)

This reviewer gains the impression from reading this passage that Goldin and Sabattini have studied the textual evidence closely, but consider the evidence presented by *Qunshu zhiyao* 群書治要 to be somewhat unreliable, and that they diverge from it on several, well-considered, occasions, all furnished with pertinent explanations. However, this does not agree with the edition they present in their book.

Wang Liqi, in more than two hundred instances, follows *Qunshu zhiyao*, mostly in the absence of any supporting evidence. *Qunshu zhiyao* covers roughly a quarter of the whole text and if it had rendered all of the text, we could expect that it to have given rise to many more emendations. When the *Qunshu zhiyao* came to light in the late eighteenth century, after having been preserved for centuries in Japan, it exerted a profound influence on the textual criticism of *Xinyu*, making it possible to correct many passages in the Ming editions that are clearly corrupt and to fill out lacunae in them.

Challenging the extensive testimony of the *Qunshu zhiyao* would be an interesting exercise, but in just *three* of the more than two hundred instances where Wang Liqi follows *Qunshu zhiyao* do Goldin and Sabattini deviate from him.

They add 至如 before 秦二世之時 (p. 58) in Wang Liqi’s edition, though Wang deletes them on the evidence of both *Qunshu zhiyao* and *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Wang, pp. 75–76).

They add 昔 before 人有與曾子同姓名者 (p. 60) though it is absent in *Qunshu zhiyao*.

They write 曾、閔之賢 (p. 118) and translate it as “the worthy conduct of Zeng and Min” (p. 119), but Wang Liqi, following *Qunshu zhiyao*, has 質 “guilelessness” (Wang, p. 171–72).

The first two cases are, of course, of no material importance to our understanding of the text, but in none of these cases do Goldin and Sabattini mark this by the note they announce.

Curiously, there are instances where Goldin and Sabattini *accept* a *Qunshu zhiyao* variant that Wang Liqi sees no reason to adopt.

Disagreeing with Wang Liqi, Goldin and Sabattini normalize 形 to 刑 in the *Xinyu* passage 夫刑重者則心煩 (p. 86; following the provided edition), as they explain. In fact, 形 is a well-known, extremely common graphic variant of 刑, and here *Qunshu zhiyao* has the *lectio facillior* 刑, which Wang Liqi does not introduce into his edition (Wang, p. 118).

Goldin and Sabattini prefer 城 to 域 in the 畏之則去其域 (p. 84). We read that if the people have a ruler they are in fear of, they “will abandon his cities” (p. 85). Here, without acknowledgement, Goldin and Sabattini again follow the *Qunshu zhiyao* which here has 城.

\* \* \*

There are a large number of cases in which the translation does not fit the text provided, but is based upon other editions.

Several of these cases are related to *Qunshu zhiyao*.

We, thus, see the translation diverging from the text edition provided when 不可以離度 (p. 106) is translated as “he cannot depart from the Way” (p. 107), where the Ming editions have 道 and *Qunshu zhiyao* has 度. If Goldin and Sabattini believe the *Qunshu zhiyao* is wrong, they should say so and emend their edition accordingly.

The translation “ministers are committed to being trustworthy” (p. 107) would be fine, if the text had read 臣篤於信 (p. 106), but Wang Liqi (and the text edition provided) has 臣篤於義, based on *Qunshu zhiyao* (Wang, p. 152), whereas the translators must be looking at one of the Ming editions. The same thing happens immediately after, when the translation skips a 昔 (p. 107).

The translation of 是以明者可以致遠，否者可以失近 (p. 112) as “Therefore, one who is enlightened can draw the distant to him; one who is base can [lose] those who are close to him” (p. 113; brackets in original) only makes sense if one checks other editions. Here *Qunshu zhiyao* reads 否 where the Ming editions have 鄙, and the Ming editions do not have a lacuna for the 失 that *Qunshu zhiyao* has (which presumably explains the brackets).

未有不法聖道而為賢者也 (p. 118–20) is translated by “there is no one who models himself on the sages or acts like a worthy” (p. 119)—which is exactly the opposite meaning. The 不 supplied from *Qunshu zhiyao* appears in the accompanying text, but Goldin and Sabattini must have the uncorrected Ming edition before their eyes.

There are a considerable number of cases that are not related to the *Qunshu zhiyao* where Goldin and Sabattini clearly work from an edition of the text that is both different from the one they provide and from Wang Liqi’s edition.

Anyone can see that “crows do not cry at night” (p. 87) cannot translate the 雞不夜鳴 (p. 86) provided by Goldin and Sabattini. The difference is explained by the fact that the variant 烏 occurs in Ming editions, but the text they provide still has 雞 and they do not add any note to explain this odd situation.

The same goes for 行善者則百姓悅 (p. 112), translated as “If you practice good, then the birds and beasts will be delighted” (p. 113); again, Wang Liqi’s edition, as well as that provided by Goldin and Sabattini, follow *Qunshu zhiyao* in having 百姓 here (Wang, p. 160–61), but the translation clearly is based on the Ming edition which reads 鳥獸. A note could perhaps clear up which is the better reading, but there is none.

The whole phrase 眾人之所是非 is not translated at all, though it occurs in the accompanying edition (p. 60)—as Song Xiangfeng notes, it is missing from some editions, so Goldin and Sabattini are probably following one of them without informing us about this.

Immediately following this we read 雖賢智不敢自畢 (p. 60), and when this is translated as “even true sages do not dare to feel secure” (p. 61), the reason is that 安 occurs instead of 畢 in a Ming edition (according to a marginal note in *Qunshu zhiyao*, 畢 should here be interpreted as 必).

飾之衆 (p. 80) is translated as “those who laud them [are] crafty” (p. 81; my brackets), for Ming editions have 巧 whereas Wang Liqi’s edition (and Goldin and Sabattini’s) follows *Qunshu zhiyao* and has 衆 (Wang, p. 108–9).

為臣者不思稷、契 (p. 118) is rendered as “Those who are ministers are not guided by [Lord] Millet and Xie” (p. 119; brackets in original), the reason being that 師 occurs instead of 思 in some editions.

捐珠玉於五湖之淵 (p. 36) is translated as “[Yu] threw gems and jade into the abyss of the Five Lakes” (p. 37; brackets in original), which is of course fine, if Goldin and Sabattini have an argument showing that 禹 has mistakenly been left out or is understood here, but the occurrence here is likely because the character occurs in the Ming editions. In a note, Goldin and Sabattini quote a parallel *Huainanzi* passage (p. 37, n. 4), but this also lacks any mention of Yu (as do several other parallels quoted in Wang Liqi’s commentary, see Wang, p. 41, n. 11).

Goldin and Sabattini make use of the work of the Qing textual critics Sun Yirang and Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821–1907) and this probably explains why “head and feet were carried out separately” (p. 61) after the Jester Shi 優施 had been executed by Confucius at the meeting at Jiagu 夾谷. The text reads “首足異門而出” (p. 60) and one would expect 門 to figure transparently in the English rendering. It does not, but this probably boils down to the occurrence in some editions of 河 instead of 門. This 河 is taken by Yu Yue to be a mistake for 何 with the same meaning as 荷, thus “a load.” 異門 then becomes “separate loads,” possibly leading to Goldin and Sabattini’s “to carry separately.” While I believe this is a plausible emendation, it conflicts with the text provided and is not explained by a note.

以仁義正 (p. 118) is translated as “be transformed by means of ritual and righteousness” (p. 119), probably because the Ming editions have 以禮義化.

Where Wang Liqi has 有為 (Wang, p. 59), Goldin and Sabattini have 有為者 (p. 50); where Wang has 而非懷道 (Wang, p. 96), they have 非謂懷道 (p. 72), unexplained.

未有 . . . 讓行而爭路者也 (p. 54) hardly rhymes with “There have never been cases where superiors were humane and inferiors villainous” (p. 55), but the reader of this review will by now have figured out that this is probably because some editions read quite differently, here 未有 . . . 上義而下爭者也.

There are similar problems with lacunae. In “they can be triflingly toyed with” (p. 97), Goldin and Sabattini manage to translate the lacuna in 可□斲 (p. 96)—one edition here has 小 and this must serve as explanation of their “triflingly.” The same happens when they translate the lacuna in 則陰不□□陽 (p. 116) with “invade” and the lacuna in 彗星揚□□ with “brightly” (both p. 117). Goldin and Sabattini insert 人事之 as an “attested variant” in place of a lacuna (p. 114), but, as Wang Liqi notes, these are conjectural additions (臆補) and thus only “attest” to the creativity of the Ming editors (Wang, p. 167, n. 12).

Since fairly reliable electronic versions of Wang Liqi’s text and commentary are freely available on the Internet, it should not involve too much work simply to proofread one of these and present us with a reliable text edition.

\* \* \*

Some of the emendations made by Goldin and Sabattini appear doubtful to me.

They alter 性 to 生 in 五穀養性 (p. 36), ostensibly “following the commentary of Wang Liqi.” However, when Wang Liqi, using standard philological vocabulary, writes that “「性」讀為「生」” (Wang, p. 40, n. 7), he is offering his opinion on how the character is to be *interpreted* in this context. As readers of early philosophical texts will know, 養性 and 養生 both frequently occur, even within the same text,

so there is nothing odd about 養性 that calls for emendation. Wang Liqi's remark offers no warrant to emend the text; he even adds that the two characters could be read for each other generally (通讀), so the equivalence works both ways.

Another case is 顛, which Jiao Xun 焦循 (1763–1820) regards as a loan (假借) for 鎮. This fact Goldin and Sabattini regard as warrant for writing 鎮 instead of the 顛 that all transmissions of the *Xinyu* agree on (p. 46). Yu Yue, on the other hand, holds that it “should be read as” (當讀為) the character 填. Either way, if we were to alter ancient texts according to the hypotheses various scholars have concerning loan characters, and not just take these equivalences as potentially useful hints to guide our *interpretation* of them, we would completely corrupt the tradition and render impossible any serious study of ancient texts.

Purportedly “following the commentary of Wang Liqi” (p. 78), Goldin and Sabattini also emend 斲 to 塗, but what Wang Liqi does is, on the basis of a number of quotations, to note that 塗 is a “vulgar form” (俗字), whereas 斲 is an “ancient form” (古文) (Wang, p. 106, n. 43). Wang nowhere advocates emending the character 斲.

Wang Liqi suggests interpreting the expression 統地 in light of the expression 統物 that occurs later in the same chapter, but this does not justify “Reading *wu* 物 for *di* 地, following the commentary of Wang Liqi” (p. 26). Wang Liqi merely gives a hint about how we are to interpret the unusual expression 統地 (Wang, p. 25, n. 9) and this cannot serve as warrant for emending.

\* \* \*

Goldin and Sabattini often emend a character to a character that is interchangeable with it.

Thus, 由 is wantonly discarded in favour of 猶 (p. 70), though Wang Liqi points out that they could be used for each other (古通) and that he will not even bother noting this as a variant (後不復出) (Wang, p. 94, n. 3). The same goes for 采 which Goldin and Sabattini emend to 採 (p. 74), and 縣 which is emended to 懸 (p. 24).

Guan Zhong 管仲 “would issue a single policy, and the territorial lords would imitate it” (p. 95). Wang Liqi's edition reads 出一政而諸侯靡 (Wang, p. 132), but Goldin and Sabattini wish to read 摩 for 靡 (p. 94). No textual warrant for this exists, to my knowledge, and 靡 is perfectly intelligible in this context, with glosses like 順從 and copious attestations in the early literature, so there is no reason to emend it.

In the expression 陽生雷電 (“*Yang* produces thunder and lightning” [p. 21]), perfectly understandable as it is, 生 is emended to 出 solely on the basis of “the attested variant” (p. 20) in the Tang encyclopaedia *Yilin* 意林; it is certainly



possible that graphical corruption is at play in *Yilin* and that the original character was 生.

The character 衡 in 持衡 (“sustaining the Vertical Alliance” [p. 93]) is emended to 橫, “Reading the attested variant *heng* 橫 for *heng* 衡” (p. 92), but as Song Xiangfeng notes the two are exchangeable (通), so the change does not amount to much.

歷 is discarded in favour of the “attested” 曆 (p. 110), though, as Wang Liqi notes, they are exchangeable (Wang, p. 159, n. 3).

In 要環佩 (p. 104) “to wear jade ornaments around one’s waist,” 要 is rejected in favour of the unattested 腰, a late character representing the original meaning of 要.

The text has 蘇秦、張儀 (p. 92), but Goldin and Sabattini only render Su Qin’s name in their translation, noting that “The text adds Zhang Yi 張儀 (d. 309 BCE), but commentators have long pointed out that the subsequent descriptions apply to Su Qin only” (p. 93, n. 1). The question is when Zhang Yi’s name was “added.” Are the translators sure that Lu Jia did not make this mistake himself? The same situation occurs when 優旃 (Jester Zhan) is emended to 優施 (Jester Shi), because the former “lived centuries later” (p. 60) than the story he occurs in. We have no assurance that Lu Jia did not make mistakes of this kind, and it *is* his work that is being translated. Elsewhere (p. 112) Goldin and Sabattini recognize that Lu Jia may have committed the anachronism that they correct in the text.

\* \* \*

Some curious situations arise when non-standard characters are discussed.

Wang Liqi has 冪冪, but Goldin and Sabattini render this as 礫礫, because, they claim, the character 冪 is “unattested” (it is in the *Kangxi Dictionary* 康熙字典 and the *Hanyu da zidian* 漢語大字典; even Wang Li’s 王力 student dictionary has it), adding that “Wang Liqi suggests *lei* 礫” (p. 78). Wang Liqi does not: he points to a passage with 礫礫 in another text which he regards as expressing a similar word (文與此相類) (Wang, p. 106, n. 32).

In *Xinyu* we encounter the character 坑 in the expression 九坑. Goldin and Sabattini state that “the original graph (山+亢) is . . . not to be found in dictionaries” (p. 76). This character can be readily found in *Hanyu da zidian*. Goldin and Sabattini write that “Wang Liqi favors *keng* 坑 / 阨, but *hang* 沆 is another possibility” (p. 76). Wang Liqi has a long note in which he explores the possibility that 坑 here refers to a swamp and points out that 坑, 阨, and 沆 also designate a swamp. In *Chuci* 楚辭, there is the expression 九坑 (also written 九阨) and this, Wang suggests, is the same as Lu Jia’s 九坑 (Wang, p. 104, n. 22). The semantic component has been corrupted into 山, that is true, but this is no reason to alter the text transmitted to us.

Any current computer or mobile device is able to render both 冪 and 岷, so there is no reason to resort to graphical algebra when referring to these characters.

\* \* \*

Let us now turn to the notes.

Allusions and other obscurities in the translation will be noted, but, once again, succinctly. In this digital age, one's favorite search engine will normally yield more information than we could reasonably provide at the bottom of the page. (p. 16)

This attitude I find disappointing. Fortunately, the translations of all other early texts that have become standard have taken better care of such important information. Pack and parcel of translations like these are succinct notes guiding the reader to an informed understanding of the meaning of the text.<sup>5</sup>

Goldin and Sabattini do provide notes for some names. However, if one wonders who, for example, 羿 or 契 is or what 干將 is (pp. 68, 44, 118, 40), one is not served this information directly, but only offered a page reference to Birrell's *Chinese Mythology* (pp. 69, 45, 41).<sup>6</sup> Why do Goldin and Sabattini not succinctly summarize what Birrell has found out?

We also hear about Confucius being in dire straits in the border region between Chen 陳 and Cai 蔡, but the reader is only referred to a contribution in a specialist volume and is not offered a few lines to put the *Xinyu* passage into context (p. 101, n. 2). Just before this, the translation introduces us to Duangan Mu 段干木, but the notes do not remind us of what, after all, is thought to be known about him, but brings up only the question whether his name should be construed instead as Duan Ganmu. One is told that the name was "imbued with new significance" under the Tang, since Laozi 老子, the reputed ancestor of the Tang ruling house, was supposed to be born in Duangan (p. 101, n. 1): that is amusing enough, but why not also convey the stories that are relevant to the passage at hand?

\* \* \*

---

<sup>5</sup> One can compare with the amply annotated translation by L'Haridon and Feuillas.

<sup>6</sup> Anne M. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (1993; revised ed., Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

In sum, do not believe Goldin and Sabbatini's translation compares well with the translations of other early Han texts. The text edition they provide is faulty, the translation they offer does not demonstrate a consistent command of the basic structures of literary Chinese, they do not make the requisite study of the meanings of the words they translate, and the notes they serve do not impart the information its readers need in order to understand the text.

JENS ØSTERGAARD PETERSEN

*Independent Scholar*

DOI: 10.29708/JCS.CUHK.202201\_(74).0013

***Kao Gong Ji: The World's Oldest Encyclopaedia of Technologies.*** Translated and commented by Guan Zengjian and Konrad Herrmann. *Technology and Change in History*, 17. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. Xvi + 222. €25.00/\$25.00.

The *Kao gong ji* 考工記 is actually a piece of writing less than ten pages long, but full of technical detail. The translators date it as roughly 475 B.C.E., which is a couple of hundred years earlier than the best current understanding of its date. It appears to be roughly contemporary with what we know about the Greek Archimedes (287–212 B.C.E.). This book contains a complete text (in simplified characters) and translations into Chinese modern vernacular, English, and German, as well as detailed commentaries in English only. The translators provide a ten-page introduction to pertinent history for those reading about China for the first time.

The *Kao gong ji* is no longer complete; six of the twenty-eight chapters, mainly on the manufacture of clothing, are lost. The remaining parts have to do with bronze casting, producing aristocratic war chariots and carriages, tanning leather, making colours and dyeing, polishing jade, making stone chimes, making weapons, producing ceramics, and constructing capital cities. Excavation of artefacts shows that the specifications in the book cover only part of their range. Nevertheless, their rich detail on the procedures of one state make it possible to reproduce carriages, arms, and other artefacts today.

The illustrations and commentaries make up nearly half of the book. They discuss archeological finds, technical and other modern studies in Chinese and other languages, and diagrams that clarify the text.

As usual in Brill publications, there is no stylistic editing. The English version (based, perhaps, on the vernacular Chinese version by Wenren Jun 聞人軍)