



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Lao-tse, the Book of Tao, The Wisdom of China and India by Lin Yutang

Review by: Chan Wing-tsit

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Koran: only its use as a liturgical text in a language other than Arabic is forbidden by the Islamic religious law. On page 530 the no less old mistake which identifies Persia and the Shi'ite heresy is repeated.

These and other examples which might be added are only minor flaws in an impressive mass of information, for the industrious assembling and shifting of which the author deserves full appreciation. It is the more to be regretted that the positive results of so much labor are, as a whole,

desperately scanty. In a way, the most beneficial effect of Kroeber's work may be to show that there is "no evidence of any true law in the phenomena dealt with" (p. 761) and "the prosecution of historical study merely by the piecing together or weighing of culture-historical items is insufficient for full understanding of what happened" (p. 449). The author himself appears to be aware of the importance of this negative statement.

G. LEVI DELLA VIDA

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Laotse, the Book of Tao, translated by LIN YUTANG.
New York: *The Wisdom of China and India*,
RANDOM HOUSE, 1942, pp. 579-624.

There are four English versions of the *Tao-tê Ching* made by the Chinese. I have reviewed in this *Journal* (LXI, 4) the versions by Ch'ü Ta-kao (*Tao Tê Ching*, 1937) and by John C. H. Wu (*Lao Tzū's The Tao and Its Virtue*, in the *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, 1939, pp. 401-23, and 1940, pp. 66-99, the version used in Herrymon Maurer's popular dramatization of Lao Tzū on the basis of tradition). A third translation is by Au-young Sum Nung (*Lao Tzū's tao teh king, the Bible of Taoism*, 1938). The present review concerns the fourth, the latest of them all.

Nothing needs to be said about Dr. Lin's brilliant style. His translation not only makes provocative philosophy, but also fascinating literature. Because he is an enthusiast for the Taoist philosophy of life, he gives the translation the personal conviction that makes it inviting and challenging. It is inevitable that an enthusiast should see more Taoism in the text than there really is. Thus *chih chih* 知止 (know where to stop) is rendered as "know where to stop for repose" (ch. 31). *Tao chih tsai t'ien-hsia, yu ch'uan-ku chih yü Chiang-hai* 道之在天下猶川谷之于江海 is explained in a footnote as "rivers seeking repose in the sea" (ch. 32). And *wu i kuan ch'i fu* 吾以觀其復 (I see thereby their return) is translated as "I watch them fall back to their repose" (16).

We see in this translation Dr. Lin the Taoist enthusiast rather than Dr. Lin the philologist, a top-notch philologist though he is. In the first place, he takes too much liberty in the translation of many words, making his version perhaps too

interpretative. "Obscurity" for *ju* 辱 (disgrace, 28), "wise" for *ming* 明 (enlightenment, 19), "check thy selfishness, curtail thy desires" for *shao ssü kua yü* 少私寡欲 (minimize selfishness; reduce desires, 19), "yield" for *ch'ü* 曲 (bent, 22), "helping people" for *chiu jen* 救人 (saving people, 27), "be purified of their thoughts and desires" for *wu chih wu yü* 無知無欲 (free from knowledge and desire, 3), "by many words is wit exhausted" for *to yen shu ch'ung* 多言數窮 (much talk always fails in due course, 5), "regards his body as accidental" for *wai ch'i shên* 外其身 (puts himself outside, or, away, 7), etc. are interpretations rather than translations. In the second place, he puts the entire book in verse form, whereas only part of the original is in verse form. Thirdly, certain words, used in the text to give necessary shades of meaning or force, are not translated. The word *huo* 或 in both 24 and 31 has the meaning of "on occasion." Neither Dr. Lin nor any previous translator has translated it. The word *yen* 焉 in 17 is intended to convey the sense "it is only when . . ." This is ignored in the translation. Fourthly, the rendering of certain terms is questionable. *T'ien hsia* 天下 in 48 has the meaning of "empire" and should not have been rendered "world." *Ch'ü t'ien hsia* 取天下 in 48 and 57 is not exactly "conquering the world" or "win the world" but "govern the empire." *Lien* 廉 is not translated in 58 in the sense of cutting, as it should, but in the sense of integrity. To use "love" for both *jên* 仁 and *tz'ü* 慈 is to ignore the distinction between love in general and parental love in particular. "Unemployed" for *wei chao* 未兆 (20) needs explanation. "Turmoil submerged" for *t'ung ch'i ch'ên* 同其塵 (one with dust, 4) is inaccurate.

On the other hand, Dr. Lin surpasses all previous translators, European or Chinese, in having brought out the true meaning of certain difficult words. The translation of *wu wei* 無爲 as non-interference (3, 64) is a masterpiece, for in most cases *wu wei* in the *Tao-tê Ching* simply means *laissez-faire*, and former translations such as "inaction," "inactivity," "non-assertion," etc. are misleading. "Is in accord with Nature" for *nai t'ien* 乃天 (16) is excellent. "Reveal the simple self" for *chien su* 見素 is much more correct than Waley's "give them simplicity to look at" or Carus' "show thyself simple" (19). Both Waley and Carus are wrong in their interpretation of *tzü* 資 in ch. 27, whereas Dr. Lin's translation

"lesson" is exactly what the original means. Dr. Lin is absolutely correct in repeatedly insisting that *hsü* 虛 (16) means humility instead of "emptiness" used in most previous translations.

Perhaps both the strength and the weakness of Dr. Lin's translation consists in making the *Tao-tê Ching* entirely consistent and perfectly clear. Certain passages of the book are admittedly obscure and inconsistent and might as well be left that way. On the other hand, in bringing out the true meaning of many chapters, Dr. Lin makes the *Tao-tê Ching* a living classic, which it really is.

CHAN WING-TSIT

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

China. By A. G. WENLEY and JOHN A. POPE. Pp. vi + 86. Washington, D. C.: THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION (War Background Studies No. 20), 1944.

The authors are to be congratulated for this brief and illuminating story of China. With material carefully drawn from both Chinese and Western writers, the account is factual, impartial, smooth, and interesting. Besides the text, there are 25 well-selected and beautiful plates, ten very fascinating drawings, tables of provinces and historical periods, a very handy chronological chart devoted chiefly to cultural developments, and a short but excellent bibliography. The book is the best general account of China that has appeared in English so far. It should be extensively circulated and widely read.

Perhaps too much of the book is devoted to physical geography, which takes up 28 of 77 pages of the text, while only one page is given to religion and almost none to the economic life of the people. Nevertheless, the brief text covers a variety of subjects—language, history, the examination system, foreign contacts, European trade, treaties and concessions, China's part in World War II, social organization and government, education, art, and "the Chinese mind." The treatment of all these subjects is objective, instructive, to the point, and based on good authority. The section on cultural contacts with the West is particularly fine. The section on art is rich both in information and in interpretation. In a space of eight pages, the

reader will get some intelligent understanding of Chinese ceramics, calligraphy, painting, bronze, cloisonné, stone carving, jade, lacquer, embroidery, music, etc. The section on "the Chinese mind" includes religion, Neo-Confucianism, and science. It is praiseworthy that in such a short account of China, the authors felt the necessity of including Neo-Confucianism. Knowledge of this intellectual movement of the last millennium is indispensable to the understanding of the Chinese mind, and yet most writers on China seem to be unaware of its existence. The discussion on Chinese music, short but penetrative, should serve to dispel the nonsense about Chinese music both in the average Western mind and in books by Van Aalst and others. Altogether, the book is very much worth reading, by everybody.

However, the book is not entirely free from faults. The importance of the pictographic element in Chinese calligraphy is exaggerated. Chinese calligraphers have always treated the art primarily as one of lines, without the slightest attention to the pictographic origin of characters. Architecture is omitted entirely. *Litchi* (26, 42) is better spelled *li-chih*, and *Fan-yü* (figs. 4, 7; p. 26) obviously mispronunciation for *P'an-yü*. It is wrong to say that "Mo-tzū, Mencius, Hsüntzū, and Han Fei-tzū are the leading names of the Confucian school" (72). Mo-tzū was the founder of Mohism and Han Fei-tzū the leader of the Legalist School, both bitter opponents of Confucianism. The T'ai-p'ing Rebellion started from Kwangsi province, not Kweichow (46). China