

Mozi in English Translations and Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography

Zelei Lian 2306368

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Introduction

Early China texts, i.e. canonical and foundational texts produced from the historical period conventionally named Early China, encapsulating the long stretches of time from the earliest times to the end of the Han Dynasty in 220 CE, are the cornerstones of Chinese civilization, and are increasingly acknowledged to be an invaluable reservoir of treasure for a globalized world and its audience. Through translation and general studies these texts traverse linguistic boundaries and successive intellectual trends, reaching and enriching alien cultures. The eventful episodes of their reception in the West, with monumental achievements and unfortunate accidents along the way, is worth scrutinizing in order to better understand this cross-cultural communication by charting a diachronic course of their translation and general studies.

The gigantic world of Early China texts and their numerous subterranean interconnecting threads easily intimidate even the most ambitious scholar. In my proposed research I have carefully confined my attention to only one such text, the *Mozi* in its English translations and scholarship.

Mozi, with 71 extant chapters, has seen its influence peaking in the Warring States period (453-221 BCE), and was once considered the arch-rival of its contemporary Confucian teachings. However, it has been largely neglected in the long course of China's intellectual history after Confucianism gained state sanction since the early 2nd century CE. Interest in *Mozi* was revived during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), when important advances were made regarding its serious textual corruption. Together, scholars such as Bi Yuan (1730-1797), Yu Yue (1821-1907) and Sun Yirang (1848-1908) have restored the canonical status of *Mozi* through their

philological investigations and textual restoration.

In the West, *Mozi* was rather late in making it into the intellectual map. The missionaries working in the East, especially the learned Jesuits and some well-educated Methodists were drawn to the work for one of its core tenets of “universal love”, a concept they found useful in preaching Christian love. It is no wonder that when first translated into English, it was the triplet of chapters dealing with “Universal Love” that were first rendered. From the 20th century, Sinologists began systematic investigation of the textual aspects of *Mozi* and exploration of its historical contextualization, yielding important translations and studies. Comparativists, from the perspective of ancient science, warfare, religion, ethics, philosophy and so on also find it a treasure trove. In fact, when the West went looking for the Eastern Philosophy in the late 19th and early 20th century, *Mozi* was often proposed as a great early proposer of the so-called utilitarianism. The ensuing debates have in general enriched our understanding of what the text is or is not. In more recent decades, interest in *Mozi* has reached a new height, confirmed by the outpouring of monographs, conference papers, workshops and translations.

This annotated bibliography aims to draw the contours of the reception of *Mozi* in the English language, leaving the vast troves of materials in Chinese, French and German for other bibliographical projects. It is divided into translations and general studies. In the translation section, a scheme of historical periodization is applied. At first, I considered a partial/complete translation division, but later decide to reject it because the superficial binary does not really help readers gain any sight into its historical evolution and significance. As a result, I propose a division of translations in three historical epochs: **Missionary translations** (19th century), **Sinological translations** (early 20th century- present), **Globalized translations** (1960s-present). These periods are generally historically successive. By making them distinct I wish to draw attention to their distinctive features. The missionary translations are influenced by religious interest in that they tend to deal with only the religious chapters in *Mozi*. Sinological translation is by far the dominant thread, in that these translations tend to be by-products of Sinological research (two translations are indeed originally part of doctoral theses). These are the most richly annotated translations but can be

off-putting for the general audience. The Globalized translations are ones that promote *Mozi* to a larger audience who are generally not Sinologically initiated. They tend to follow the Penguin Classics style in offering a learned introduction followed by the translated text uninterrupted by dense footnotes. These differences are not hard and fast rules and the boundaries are fuzzy in some cases. But overall I maintain the criteria to best tease out the historical and intellectual backgrounds in which different translations are immersed.

For the English scholarship on *Mozi*, due to word limit I only enumerate the most original and seminal, dividing them by subject, i.e. the richly various perspectives different groups of scholars have approached *Mozi* over time. This I believe would be a more rewarding way to classify than to simply divide them into books, anthologies, and articles. The subjects consist of three distinct strands: **Philology**, which deals with the investigation of the textual matters; **Religion**, which deals with Mohist concepts relating to ghosts, heavenly love and punishment; **Ethics, Politics and Philosophy**, which as a group attracts the most attention, and their being grouped together reflects the conflation of these ideas in the text itself that are hardly distinguishable; **Warfare, Logic, and Science**, which while seemingly unrelated, actually relates to the more technical and scientific materials of *Mozi*.

Mozi in English Translations

Missionary Translations

Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics: With a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena and Copious Indexes*, 2nd edn, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon House, 1893-95)

[James Legge, the pioneer and giant of Victorian Sinology, translated three chapters of *Mozi* in this ambitiously monumental work while a missionary living in Hong Kong. The choice of these three particular chapters in its second volume, “Universal Love I-III”, not only reflects his interest as a missionary-scholar-Sinological Orientalist-Religious Comparativist—he finds *Mozi*’s concept of “universal love” conducive to preaching the

Christian idea of love in the East—it also marks the beginning of translations and general studies of *Mozi* in the West. Its Victorian style feels dated but remains an important reference of these three chapters. His introduction to *Mozi*, however, is largely superseded by later scholarship.]

Sinological Translations

Mei, Yi-pao, *The Ethical and Political Works of Motse: Translated from the Original Chinese Text*, Probsthain's Oriental Series, Vol XIX (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1929; various reprints)

[The first substantial English translation of the *Mozi* by an eminent *Mozi* specialist, coming out of his PhD dissertation “Motse: The Neglected Rival of Confucius” at Harvard University. It focuses on the ethical and political chapters (31 out of 71 extant chapters) and remains influential today.]

Graham, Angus, *Mo-tzu: Later Mohist Logic, Ethics, and Science* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003; first published in 1978)

[The first philosophical translation of *Mozi*. Its translation layout of these chapters is different from others in that it adopts a unique reconstructed sequence, which is now generally considered unfounded.]

Yates, Robin, D. S., ‘The City Under Siege: Technology and Organization as Seen in the Reconstructed Text of the Military Chapters of Mo-tzu’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1980), pp. 614-35

[The first and most influential English translation of the difficult military chapters of *Mozi* as part of the author's doctoral dissertation.]

Knoblock, John and Jeffrey Riegel, *Mozi: A Study and Translation of the Ethical and Political Writings*, China Research Monograph 68 (Berkeley: University of California, 2013)

[A richly annotated translation of 36 core chapters of *Mozi*. Since its publishing it is

widely acclaimed for its academic rigour that is embedded in its rendering of difficult terms. It also provides the most detailed translation notes.]

Fraser, Chris, *The Essential Mòzǐ: Ethical, Political, and Dialectical Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

[The most recent abridged translation of *Mozi* focusing on its more philosophical chapters. The translation is accessible and compact, with a very helpful glossary explicating key philosophical terms.]

Globalized Translations

Watson, Burton, *Mo Tzu: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963)

[An elegant translation of 13 chapters considered the essence of *Mozi*, in parallel text in English and Chinese. It may be credited the first translation of *Mozi* that takes the book and its ideas beyond the small Sinology circle and draws attention from general readership.]

Mozi, trans. by Wang, Rongpei 汪榕培 and Wang, Hong 王宏, Library of Chinese Classics (Changsha: Hunan renmin, 2006) [Also includes a translation into Modern Chinese by Zhou Caizhu 周才珠 and Qi Ruiduan 齊瑞端.]

[The first complete English translation of *Mozi* published in mainland China, largely unknown in the West and seldom referenced. It is included in the controversial Library of Chinese Classics, which is often criticized as a behemoth vanity project bankrolled by the Chinese government and is widely believed to be ill executed. This translation is seriously blemished by not providing any translation notes.]

Johnston, Ian, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010)

[The first and most popular complete translation of *Mozi* in the West with extensive explanatory notes. Its forte lies in its comprehensiveness rather than its scholarly depth,

which is often questioned in academic reviews. In 2013 this translation is reprinted in the Penguin Classics series as *The Book of Master Mo*, making it by far the most famous and accessible translation of *Mozi*.]

Mozi in English Scholarship

Philology

Back, Youngsun, 'Reconstructing Mozi's *jian'ai* 兼愛', *Philosophy East and West*, 67 (2017), 1092-1117

Defoort, Carine, 'Are the Three 'Jian ai' Chapters about Universal Love', in *The Mozi as an Evolving Text*, ed. by Carine Defoort and Nicholas Standaert (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 35-67

Defoort, Carine, 'The Growing Scope of *jian* 兼: Differences Between Chapters 14, 15 and 16 of the *Mozi*', *Orien Extremus*, 45 (2005), 119-40

Desmet, Karen, 'The Growth of Compounds in the Core Chapters of the *Mozi*', *Orien Extremus*, 45 (2006): 99-118

Meyer, Andrew, 'Only the Human Way May Be Followed': Reading the Guodian Manuscripts against the *Mozi*', *Early China*, 37 (2014), 471-517

[This article heralds and represents a new approach to tackle the textual issues, i.e. to read it against the growing number of manuscripts in bamboo strips unearthed in recent decades.]

Meyer, Andrew, 'What Made Mo Di A Master: Exploring the Construction of a Category in Warring States Sources', *Toung'pao*, 101 (2015), 271-97

Religion

Ding, Sixin, 'A Study on the Dating of the *Mozi* Dialogues and the Mohist View of Ghosts and Spirits', *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, 42 (2011), 39-87

Gibas, Piotr, 'Mozi and the Ghosts: The Concept of ming 明 in Mozi's "Ming gui" 明鬼', *Early China*, 40 (2017), 89-123.

[Refers to "Gui shen zhi ming" 鬼神之明, the distinguishing between gods and ghosts]

Li, Yong, 'The Divine Command Theory of Mozi', *Asian Philosophy*, 16 (2006), 237-45

Standaert, Nicolas, 'Heaven as a Standard', in *The Mozi as an Evolving Text*, ed. by Carine Defoort and Nicholas Standaert (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 237-69

Ethics, Politics, and Philosophy

Brown, Miranda, 'Mozi's Remaking of Ancient Authority', in *The Mozi as an Evolving Text*, ed. by Carine Defoort and Nicholas Standaert (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 143-74

Chiu, Wai Wai, 'Assessment of li 利 in the *Mencius* and the *Mozi*', *Dao*, 15 (2014): 199-214

Defoort, Carine, 'The Gradual Growth of the Mohist Core Philosophy: Tracing Fixed Formulations in the *Mozi*', *Monumenta Serica*, 64 (2016), 1-22

Goldin, Paul R., *The Art of Chinese Philosophy: Eight Classical Texts and How to Read Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020)

[Contains excellent summary of *Mozi*'s philosophical merits against the background of ancient Chinese philosophical tradition]

Graham, Angus, *Mo-tzu: Later Mohist Logic, Ethics, and Science* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003; first published in 1978)

[Ground-breaking study that put *Mozi* firmly on the philosophical map. It still informs and foregrounds current debates over its philosophical merits.]

Hao, Changchi, 'Is Mozi a Utilitarian Philosopher?', *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, 1 (2006), 382-400

Hemmingsen, Michael, 'The Tension Between Divine Command Theory and Utilitarianism in Mozi and George Berkeley: A Comparison', *Philosophy East and West*, 70 (2020), 740-56

Johnson, Daniel M., 'Mozi's Moral Theory: Breaking the Hermeneutical Stalemate', *Philosophy East and West*, 61 (2011), 347-64

Knoblock, John and Jeffrey Riegel, *Mozi: A Study and Translation of the Ethical and Political Writings*, China Research Monograph 68 (Berkeley: University of California, 2013)

[Excluding Chapters 41-45 and 52-71.]

Li, Bin, 'Insights into the *Mozi* and Their Implications for the Study of Contemporary International Relations', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2 (2009), 421-54

Loy, Huichieh, 'Justification and Debate: Thoughts on Moist Moral Epistemology', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 35 (2008), 455-71

Lu, Xiufen, 'Understandings Mozi's Foundations of Morality: A Comparative Perspective', *Asian Philosophy*, 16 (2006), 123-34

Nylan, Michael, 'Kongzi and Mozi, the Classicists (Ru 儒) and the Mohists (Mo 墨) in Classical-Era Thinking', *Oriens Extremus*, 48 (2009), 1-20

Suzuki, Yumi, 'Moral Falsity in the Eyes of the Superhuman: The Cases of Socrates and Mozi', *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, 12 (2017), 515-32

Thompson, Kirill, 'Mozi's Teaching of *jianai* (Impartial Regard): A Lesson for the Twenty-First Century', *Philosophy East and West*, 64 (2014), 838-55

Warfare, Logic and Science

Flanagan, Owen, 'Moral Contagion and Logical Persuasion in the *Mozi*', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 35 (2008), 473-91

Fraser, Chris, 'The *Mozi* and Just War Theory in Pre-Han Thought', *Journal of Chinese Military History*, 5 (2016), 135-75

Johnston, Ian, 'The *Gongsun Longzi*: A Translation and an Analysis of Its Relationship to Later Mohist Writings', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 31 (2004), 271-95

[Compares the logical argumentation between the works of Master Mo and Master Gongsun Long]

Kurtz, Joachim, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic* (Leiden: Brill, 2011)

[Provides comprehensive discussion of *Mozi*'s recording of ancient Chinese logic]

Martzloff, Jean-Claude, *Astronomy and Calendars—The Other Chinese Mathematics: 104 BC-AD 1644* (Berlin: Springer, 2016)

[Extensively discusses mathematical and astronomic materials in *Mozi*]

Pankenier, David W., 'Mozi and the Dates of Xia, Shang, and Zhou: A Research Note.' *Early China*, 9 (1983), 175-83

[Pioneering research making use of the astronomic data recorded in *Mozi* to corroborate historical periodization.]

Tanaka, Tan, 'The Construction of City Walls in the Chapters on the Defense of Cities in the *Mozi*', *Memoirs of Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, 56 (1998), 1-48