

# Chapter 1

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## The Wang Bi Recension of the *Laozi*

### INTRODUCTION

Since<sup>1</sup> early Tang times, the *Laozi* was transmitted mainly over two commentaries, those of Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) and Heshang gong 河上公. Most Tang excerpts, such as those included in the *Qunshu zhiyao* 群書治要 by Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643), on steles, and in manuscripts, are based on the Heshang gong text or, rather, on various Heshang gong texts.<sup>2</sup> By the early Tang, however, some scholars attempted to promote the Wang Bi text and *Commentary*, with Lu Deming 陸德明 (556–627), Fu Yi 傅奕 (554–639) and others making efforts to preserve it from distortions by the competing Heshang gong text. Lu Deming considered the latter text a fake, writing “Heshang (’s readings) are not those of the *Laozi*.”<sup>3</sup>

Despite these efforts, the Heshang gong commentary continued to dominate and had practically replaced the Wang Bi version by the Song dynasty. During the Song, Lu Deming’s efforts were taken up by scholars such as Fan Yinguan 范應元, who published an edition explicitly comparing the various versions then circulating in an attempt to preserve the “old text.”<sup>4</sup>

In recent decades, Professor Rao Zongyi (Jao Tsung-i) has published, along with an extensive commentary, two Dunhuang manuscripts of parts of the *Laozi*. The Suo Dan 索統 manuscript, Chapters 51–81, is dated c.e. 270 and is closely linked to the Heshang gong text, while the second, the Xiang Er 想爾 manuscript, which contains the first part of the *Laozi*, is dated by various scholars anywhere between the second and fifth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

Both of these manuscripts derive from the Celestial Master lineage of Taoism. The 1973 discovery of two *Laozi* manuscripts, in Mawangdui 馬王堆, near Changsha, both from tombs dating from the first decades of the Former Han, has in the main confirmed the stability of the *Laozi* text at that early date.<sup>6</sup> A 1993 discovery of three batches of *Laozi* segments in Chu 楚 script on bamboo slips in Guodiancun 郭店村 tomb No. 1 near Jingmen 荊門 in Hubei, dated by the editors to the “middle of the Zhan-guo period,” around 300 B.C.E., has now been published.<sup>7</sup> The Guodian texts, again, are rather close to the Mawangdui versions, coming as they do from the Chu area.

These finds allow us to trace the history of the *Laozi* with greater precision and have confirmed readings in quotations from the *Laozi* in some pre-Qin, Qin, and Former Han texts. Some readings, however, have not been confirmed, and we have reason to assume that the Guodian and Mawangdui manuscripts belong to one among several textual lineages existing alongside each other.

These discoveries have come on the heels of textual studies by Yao Nai 姚鼐 (1732–1815) and Xu Dachun 徐大椿 (1693–1771), and more recently, Ma Xulun 馬敘倫 (1884–1970), who have all resumed the hearty denunciation of the Heshang gong text as a Taoist fake and have established the “Wang Bi version” as the “standard text.”<sup>8</sup> This “Wang Bi standard text,” however, is far from secure. The earliest available copies go back to Ming-dynasty editions, the earliest actual edition (in the *Zhengtong Daozang*) to the mid-Ming (1445). Scholars have noted discrepancies between quotations from the main text given in Wang Bi’s *Commentary* and the very *Laozi* text to which this *Commentary* is attached. Ma Xulun mentioned this as early as 1924.<sup>9</sup> Similar comments have been made by D. C. Lau and William Boltz, but the “Wang Bi version” continues to be used and even translated.<sup>10</sup>

It is odd, too, that Hatano Tarō 波多野太郎 did not consider the problems of Wang Bi’s *Laozi* text in his monumental compilation of the variant readings for the Wang Bi *Commentary*, and even the edition of Wang Bi’s works by Lou Yulie 樓宇烈 never questions the *Laozi* text printed over current editions of Wang Bi’s *Commentary*.<sup>11</sup>

As far as I know, the only scholar to have seriously worked at reconstructing the Wang Bi *Laozi* is Shima Kuniō 島邦男. His *Rōshi kōsei* (1973) has the great advantage of having been published before the Mawangdui manuscripts became known. This provides an independent check on the accuracy of his assumptions and conjectures. Sadly, the work basically went unnoticed at the time in the flurry after the Mawangdui discovery, and Lou Yulie did not make use of it for his Wang Bi edition.<sup>12</sup>

## THE PROBLEM

There are various versions of the *textus receptus* of the *Laozi* text of Wang Bi, the oldest reproduced in the *Zhengtong Daozang*. These texts show only slight deviations, however, in all received versions of this Wang Bi *Laozi*, which will be referred to here as *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus*, there is a conflict between the *Laozi* text used in the *Commentary* and the text printed above that *Commentary*.<sup>13</sup>

This conflict appears in the following forms:

1. In his commentaries, Wang Bi frequently quotes the *Laozi* with formulae such as “that is why [the *Laozi*] says,” or simply, “that is why.” There are cases where the subsequent quotation deviates from the *Laozi* text printed immediately above this commentary. One such example is found in *Laozi* 6:

*Wang Bi Laozi Receptus*: 是謂天地 根  
*Wang Bi Comm.*: 故謂 " "之 "

2. Wang Bi quotes one *Laozi* passage in his commentary to a different *Laozi* passage, with differences between *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* and the wording in this commentary.

*Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* (2.2): 聖人處無爲之事  
*Wang Bi Comm.* (on 17.1): " "居 " " " "

3. Wang Bi quotes the *Laozi* in his other writings, in words that differ from those in the received text of the Wang Bi *Laozi*. One such example comes from his *Commentary to the Zhouyi* (*Zhouyi zhu* 周易注).<sup>14</sup>

*Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* (58.6): 人之迷 其日固 久  
*Zhouyi zhu*: " " "也 " " "已 "矣

4. Wang Bi's *Commentary* uses elements of the *Laozi* that imply wording in the main text different from the wording in the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus*.

*Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* (1.2): 無名天地之始  
*Wang Bi Comm.*: 道以無名無形始成萬物  
*Wang Bi Comm.* (on 21.7): 以無名閱萬物之始

The expression *tiandi* 天地 of the received text of the *Laozi* neither occurs in the commentary to the passage itself nor in the reference to it in the commentary on Chapter 21. Both comments suggest, instead, that *wanwu* 萬物 was the reading in the *Wang Bi Laozi*. That sloppy quoting by Wang Bi accounts for these differences should be dismissed for two reasons. First, the readings suggested by the *Commentary* and the other texts by Wang Bi find strong support in the available “old manuscripts,” including the Guodian and Mawangdui. Second, the philosophical authority of the text in the eyes of Wang Bi, who obviously took the exact wording very seriously, would seem to preclude sloppy quoting. We are thus left with the following preliminary conclusions: first, the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* is not identical to the *Laozi* text actually used by Wang Bi, the *Wang Bi Laozi*; second, another *Laozi* text has been superimposed over Wang Bi’s *Commentary*, while the *Commentary* itself has not been changed to conform. That this reflects careless editing has to be dismissed as well. The extreme importance that the different traditions attached to “their” versions as being uniquely true and authoritative would seem to preclude this possibility, but why was the *Wang Bi Commentary* not changed? The only explanation seems to be that it had an authority of its own. While the *Laozi* text was adapted to fit the dominant school, Wang Bi retained his credentials as a philosopher in his own right, the text of his *Commentary* remaining untouched. Obviously, we are now called upon to reconstruct the *Wang Bi Laozi*, to try to figure out how the changes in the received text came about, and to establish the *Wang Bi Laozi* in its proper position within the *stemma codicum*.

## WANG BI’S ORIGINAL RECENSION OF THE *LAOZI*

Since it is possible that Wang Bi’s *Laozi* differed greatly from all known *Laozi* texts, we will have to secure a fair number of firm readings of the *Wang Bi Laozi* before looking at other versions of the *Laozi* text. For evidence about the *Wang Bi Laozi*, we will draw on the following sources:

1. Wang Bi’s quotations from the *Laozi* in his *Commentary* and other writings (with the provision that these might have problems in their transmission);
2. Inferences based on the wording in Wang Bi’s *Commentary*;
3. Quotations of *Laozi* passages with Wang’s commentary in pre-Tang and perhaps early Tang texts, on the assumption that in these cases the wording of the *Wang Bi Laozi* was used;

4. Explicit statements by Lu Deming in his *Laozi Daodejing yinyi* about the readings of the “Wang Bi text” available to him (a text, however, that might already have undergone some changes);<sup>15</sup> and
5. Explicit statements by Fan Yingyuan in his *Laozi Daodejing guben jizhu*, relating his Wang Bi *Laozi* manuscript to one or several “Old Manuscript(s).”

These are listed in a decreasing degree of reliability, however, the reliability of the external sources (quotations and explicit statements about the Wang Bi text) can be enhanced if they coincide with the internal evidence in many places.

In seventy-nine passages, the wording in Wang Bi’s *Commentary* deviates from the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* (see Appendix A). In all but one, the reading suggested by the *Commentary* also can be found in the Guodian and Mawangdui manuscripts, texts such as the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, *Wenzi* 文子, or *Zhangguo ce* 戰國策, dated manuscripts such as the Suo Dan manuscript of c.E. 270, or the pre-Tang Xiang Er manuscript from Dunhuang, or the “Old Manuscripts” on which Fu Yi 傅奕 (554–639) and Fan Yingyuan based their own editions. In short, it can be assumed that these readings represent the text of the *Laozi* known to Wang Bi.

On the basis of these confirmed readings, we can proceed to check on the reliability of the other sources for the reconstruction of the *Wang Bi Laozi*. There are hundreds of phonetic glosses by Lu Deming, but only three deviate from the readings common to all strands of the received tradition. In those three cases, the deviant reading is corroborated by either Fu Yi’s or Fan Yingyuan’s “Old Manuscript” or by Wang Bi’s own commentary.<sup>16</sup>

A number of Lu Deming’s readings have to be discarded, however, because strong evidence supports other readings for the *Wang Bi Laozi*. It is apparent that Lu’s text had already undergone some changes. Furthermore, as noted by Hatano Tarō, the difference between quotations of Lu Deming given in Fan Yingyuan’s *Laozi Daodejing guben jizhu* and the *textus receptus* of Lu Deming’s *Laozi Daodejing yinyi* indicates that the latter text also has been tampered with.<sup>17</sup>

In forty-seven places, Fan Yingyuan provides information about the relationship of the “Old Manuscript(s)” available to him with the *Wang Bi Laozi* in his hands (see Appendix B). We do not know the exact origin of Fan’s “Old Manuscript” or the criteria that prompted him to mark the differences and coincidences in those places but not in others. From his remarks, we learn that the Wang Bi *Laozi* recension in his hands agreed with his “Old Manuscript” in all but three places; in each case, the deviation concerns only one character.<sup>18</sup>

The best extant version of the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* differs from the reading given by Fan in no less than thirty-seven places. In twenty cases (2.4, 10.4, 19.1, 20.5, 20.9, 21.6, 28.7, 34.4, 35.3, 38.2, 38.2, 41.15, 42.2, 45.2, 48.3, 49.4, 51.4, 57.3, 59.2, and 65.4) Wang Bi's own comments reveal unequivocally the original reading of the *Wang Bi Laozi*. In thirteen of these twenty cases, the reading given by Fan for his *Wang Bi Laozi* is the original one, while the received text is corrupt. In three cases (19.1, 42.2, and 65.4), both Fan's text and the received text are wrong. In only four cases is the received text supported by internal evidence (20.5, 20.9, 21.6, and 45.2). Indirect summaries by Wang Bi of the *Laozi*'s wording permit educated guesses about his text. These reveal twelve more places where Fan's *Wang Bi Laozi* is superior to the received text (see Appendix B). In the remaining places, there is either no clear evidence, or Fan's reading is improbable. We can conclude that the *Wang Bi Laozi* recension in Fan's hands was rather close to the original: twenty-five out of thirty-two verifiable places favor the reading in Fan's text. As for the quotations in late-Han and early-medieval material, they mostly occur in other commentaries such as Zhang Zhan's 張湛 (fourth century) *Commentary on the Liezi* 列子注, Li Shan's 李善 (d. 689) *Commentary on the Wenxuan* 文選注, or Yan Shigu's 顏師古 (581–645) *Commentary on the Hanshu* 漢書注. No unified conclusion can be reached about them, since some date from a period when the original Wang Bi text was already undergoing changes. Their readings can be accepted only if strongly buttressed by internal and supporting evidence. Shima Kuniō has collected many of these explicit quotations, however, such citations often are not explicit, so locating them can be a matter of serendipity.

We now have a great number of authenticated specifications of the *Wang Bi Laozi*. The high incidence of deviance from the received text suggests that it should be abandoned as the basis for a reconstruction of the *Wang Bi Laozi* if we find another text or textual family where the coincidence with authenticated passages of the *Wang Bi Laozi* is substantially higher. We can already conclude from the differences between the *Wang Bi Laozi* and Lu Deming's *Wang Bi Laozi*, and the even greater difference in Fan Yingyuan's *Wang Bi Laozi*, that the *Wang Bi Laozi* gradually has been superseded by other readings. A second question follows from this conclusion. Is there a text or group of texts that can be identified as having gradually superseded the *Wang Bi Laozi*? We can state from the outset that we do not have a text identical to the *Wang Bi Laozi* Urtext in all authenticated passages to use as a replacement for the received text. Furthermore, there is no extant text other than that including Wang Bi's *Commentary* that is identical to the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus*. This excludes the possibility that, at some point, a completely different *Laozi*

text had been superimposed over the old Wang Bi *Commentary*. Things are, as usual, messy. Where can we find the closest approximation to the *Wang Bi Laozi*?

The debate about the Mawangdui and now the Guodian manuscripts has practically obliterated the fact that the search for the “old” and true *Laozi* has been going on for some time. To the natural decay of books written on bamboo strips or silk, to the fires periodically destroying entire private or imperial libraries, to the worms happily feeding on the newly discovered repository for culture’s written products, namely, paper, was added time and again the official destruction of books. Since the destruction during the Qin, this has continuously received unfavorable comments and has spurred and legitimized official and private efforts at book retrieval. Throughout Chinese history, scholars and rich and mighty men have chased and occasionally produced “old manuscripts.” Of Prince Liu De 劉德 (d. 128 B.C.E.), Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) wrote:

He honed his scholarship, was well versed in olden times, and sought truth from facts. When he received a good book from the common folk, he would inevitably make a fair copy for them while keeping the original, and would add presents of gold and cloth to attract them. The effect of this was that people from all directions who were versed in the arts did not consider a thousand miles too far [to come to him], and sometimes there were those who had old books from their forefathers which they often would proffer to the prince. Therefore, he got hold of a great many books, as many in fact as the Han Court itself. At the time, Liu An 劉安, the Prince of Huainan, was also fond of books, but what he attracted were for the most part empty babblers. The books that came into Prince Liu De’s possession were all pre-Qin books in the old scripts. For the likes of the *Zhouguan* 周官, the *Shangshu* 尚書, the *Li* 禮, the *Liji* 禮記, the *Mengzi* 孟子 and the *Laozi*, he had all the classical texts, the transmissions (*zhuan* 傳), the explanations (*shuo* 說), and the records (*ji* 記), and what the seventy disciples [of Confucius] had to say [about them].<sup>19</sup>

We have no further record of his pre-Qin *Laozi* text that must have predated the Mawangdui manuscripts. Seven centuries later, Fu Yi was a fervent collector of *Laozi* manuscripts, eventually publishing his own *Daodejing guben* 道德經古本, a critical conflation of those that he had perused. He also wrote a short history of the discovery of these texts and their transmission. Although this is lost, it forms, along with Lu Xisheng’s

陸希聲 (late ninth century) preface to his *Daode zhenjing zhuàn* 道德真經傳, the basis of Xie Shouhao's 謝守灝 *Hunyuan shengji* 混元聖紀, with a preface dated in the third month of 1191.<sup>20</sup> The excerpt given there of Fu Yi's report about the various *Laozi* manuscripts he had seen and perused is again quoted from Xie Shouhao in Peng Si's 彭耜 (fl. 1229) *Daode zhenjing jizhu zashuo* 道德真經集註雜說. Peng Si seems to have had a better version of Xie Shouhao's text than that preserved in the Daozang, and he furthermore indicates that in his version Xie Shouhao mentioned the source from which he had taken this quotation, namely, Du Guangting's 杜廣庭 (850–933) now lost *The Precious Record of Lord Lao*, (*Laojun baolu* 老君寶錄).<sup>21</sup> I shall make use of Peng's text. What survives of Fu Yi's report deserves a translation in full.<sup>22</sup>

Fu Yi of the Tang [dynasty] has carefully examined all manuscripts [of the *Laozi*] and has investigated the number of characters [each of them] had, and he said: "As to the Xiang Yu 項羽 (-202 B.C.E.) Concubine Manuscript, a man from Pengcheng [city in Shandong], who opened the tomb of a concubine of Xiang Yu's in the 5th year of the era *wuping* 武平 of [Northern] Qi [i. e. 574] found it. As to the Anqiu Wangzhi 安丘望之 [fl. 30 B.C.E.]<sup>23</sup> Manuscript [Xie Shouhao writes Wang An Qiu Zhi 望安丘之 here], [i. e. a *Laozi* text with a commentary by Anqiu Wangzhi], it came into the possession of the Daoist Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 (363–448) during the *taibe* 太和 era of the [Northern] Wei (477–500).<sup>24</sup> As for the Heshang zhangren 河上丈人 Manuscript [i.e., the manuscript over the commentary by Heshang zhangren], the retired scholar from [Northern] Qi, Qiu Yue 仇嶽, handed it down.

These three manuscripts all have 5,722 characters and are related to [the *Laozi* text which forms the basis of] the Hanfeizi 韓非子 chapter "Yu Lao" 喻老. Furthermore, there is also the Luoyang Official Manuscript (*guanben* 官本) with 5,635 characters. As for Wang Bi Manuscripts, there is one with 5,683 characters and one with 5,610. As for Heshang gong 河上公 Manuscripts, there is one with 5,355 [Xie Shouhao: 5,555] characters and one with 5,090 characters. The [manuscripts transmitted over] the various commentaries all have greater or lesser differences, but as time went on, each [school] believed only in [the manuscript] handed down [by their own people], or they mixed them up with manuscripts from other people. Therefore, there are errors and mistakes, and there is no unity.



In the *Shiji* 史記, Sima Qian 司馬遷 says that Laozi published a book that talks about the meaning of Dao and De, and has “five thousand plus words” (*wuqian yu yan* 五千餘言).<sup>25</sup> “Five thousand plus” means more than five thousand but less than six thousand. When the Daoists today say that the *Laozi* is a text with “five thousand characters,” they refer to the general volume 大數 [but not to the text’s having exactly 5,000 characters].<sup>26</sup>

Fu Yi’s account shows that the endeavor to find the “original” *Laozi* has a long history. We do not know the exact basis of his own “Old MS” edition, but it is probable that it is an attempt to establish a critical text through the comparison with the seven “old MSS” that he managed to peruse. Lu Deming operated in much the same vein. His effort to establish the correct reading of the *Laozi* assumed that the notation in the manuscripts before the reform of writing was largely phonetic and that, given the large number of loan graphs in old manuscripts, the meaning would only become clear once the reading had been established. In his own (badly corrupted) notes, he refers to the *Laozi* texts given over different commentators, and also to a *Laozi* text on bamboo slips, *jian wen* 簡文, which must have been a Han or even a pre-Han dynasty manuscript.<sup>27</sup> Editors such as Fu Yi also made efforts to stabilize the text. Evidence of this attempt is to be found in the notation, in the Mawangdui B manuscript, of the number of characters in each of the two *pian* 篇.

Fu Yi read and compared these seven manuscripts, counting their characters in the process. The discovery of the Mawangdui manuscripts indicated that, at least since Qin-dynasty efforts at cutting off certain textual traditions altogether, the statement of the number of characters the copied text contained was a device both to enhance textual stability and to define textual lineage. The number of characters indicated to which kind of lineage a given manuscript belonged. *More sinico*, Fu Yi’s narrative sequence gives us a chronological order for the writing (not the discovery or copy) of these manuscripts. The Xiang Yu Concubine Manuscript must be the oldest, as Xiang Yu died in 202 B.C.E. and must have still been alive for the concubine to receive such a lavish tomb. At least one of the texts from this tomb, a *Guwen Xiaojing* 古文孝經 manuscript survived to the early Song, where it formed one of the sources of reference for Xia Song’s 夏竦 (985–1051) *Guwen sisheng yun* 古文四聲韻, a work completed in 1044 that provided under standard characters the forms in which they were written in a variety of old manuscripts and inscriptions.<sup>28</sup> Sadly, no work has hitherto been done on the texts in old script used in early Song handbooks

that set out to provide help and guidance in the reading of old inscriptions and manuscripts to the rapidly growing number of scholars and officials fascinated with the “authentic” traces of China’s past. Among the twelve “old texts” listed in the preface to Guo Zhongshu’s 郭忠恕 (tenth century) *Han jian* 汗簡 as having been used by him, there is an “old *Laozi*” 古老子 or rather “*Laozi* in the old script,” but I have not been able to locate a direct quotation from this *Laozi* edition in his work.<sup>29</sup> This is different with Xia Song’s 夏竦 (985–1051) *Guwen sisheng yun*, a book that used the *Han jian* and many new materials.<sup>30</sup> Xia makes use of two old *Laozi* manuscripts, namely, a “*Laozi* in old script,” 古文老子, and a *Daode jing* but does not seem to have had access to the *Laozi* manuscript from the tomb of Xiang Yu’s concubine.<sup>31</sup> In his preface, Xia talks about the texts in old script, their discovery and transmission. Since the Wei and Jin dynasties the capacity to read these texts all but disappeared. However, among a few devotees, the interest and skill were preserved, as well as some texts. The son of Li Yangbing 李陽冰 (ca. 713–ca. 785), a relative of Li Bo’s and a poet as well as seal script specialist in his own right,<sup>32</sup> had a *Xiaojing* 孝經 and another text in the old script in his family possession. Obviously unable to read it, he gave it to none other than Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824), but at this time Han Yu had not discovered his interest in rediscovering the “authentic” pre-Buddhist China and, seemingly unable to read it, he brought it to the attention of Master Gui 歸公 (Gui Deng? 登) who “loved antiquity and was able to understand it.” The manuscript therefore was bequeathed to him. While nothing about the origin of Xia’s “*Laozi* in the old script” is known, he details some of the transmission of the *Daode jing* in two *juan* written with lacquer on bamboo strips, a *qishu* 漆書, to which he had access. It had been in the possession of another great specialist in old script, the Heavenly Master Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647–735). A copy of this manuscript from the hands of another Taoist was stored on Tiantai shan and eventually retrieved during the Song dynasty’s efforts to assemble reliable texts so that Xia had access to it.<sup>33</sup> Sadly, we still lack a critical study of these two texts, or rather of the individual characters quoted from them in Xia Song’s book. It is possible that Fan Yingyuan’s “Old MS” had a connection to either of these two texts.

We return to Fu Yi’s list. The Xiang Yu Concubine Manuscript, it should be remembered, is thus older than both Mawangdui manuscripts, which date from the first decades of the second century B.C.E. Next comes a surprising lacuna in Fu Yi’s holdings, namely, the absence of a Zhuang Zun 莊遵 (= Yan Zun 嚴遵) manuscript, the original of which would have predated his next manuscript, the late first century B.C.E. Anqiu Wangzhi manuscript that ended up in the hands of the famous Daoist Kou Qianzhi of the Northern Wei. The text here has an impossible era name. The *taihe*

太和 era began in 477, but Kou had died in 448. It must be the era *yanhe* 延和 (432–435) or *taiping* 太平 (440) under Taiwu di.<sup>34</sup> The Heshang zhangren manuscript first surfaced after the founding of the Northern Qi in 550. As it is mentioned before Wang Bi, Fu Yi dates this text into the later Han dynasty. He rejects the link between a Heshang zhangren of the Zhanguo period mentioned in the *Shiji*<sup>35</sup> and this text, which had been made by the Liang dynasty book catalogue.<sup>36</sup> Fu Yi noted the closeness of the three oldest manuscripts in his hands to the version used in the *Hanfeizi*. Their identical number of characters (5,722) points to a surprisingly high degree of standardization but is not close enough to the aggregate number given for the two parts of the *Laozi* in Mawangdui B, namely, 3,041 plus 2,426 = 5,467, to warrant an argument that the Mawangdui manuscripts represent a text close to these three manuscripts.

The Luoyang Official Manuscript again is mentioned before Wang Bi. As Luoyang was the capital of the Later Han dynasty, this Luoyang Official Manuscript must have been an uncommented Laozi manuscript from the Later Han imperial library. The Wang Bi texts come next, followed by the youngest and last of the manuscripts worthy of any consideration, that of Heshang gong. Here again, Fu Yi rejects the Liang dynasty book catalogue that dates this commentary to the time of the Han emperor Wen 文 (red. 179–156 B.C.E.).<sup>37</sup>

Since Fu Yi counted the number of characters in the Heshang zhangren manuscripts, and thus must have read them, it can be inferred that he saw a substantial difference both in age and structure between the Heshang zhangren and the Heshang gong manuscripts. The criticism voiced in the last section evidently refers to Ge Xuan's 葛玄 (164–244) actual reduction of the *Laozi* to exactly 5,000 characters, which Fu Yi considers an all too verbatim reading of the remark by Sima Qian. Fu Yi's own "Guben" or "Old Manuscript" does not fit any of the numbers mentioned above. Without further evidence, we have to assume that he tried to arrive at a critical edition using all available early manuscripts at his disposal, and that he chose the best corroborated reading. The same is true for Fan Yingyuan. We know nothing of the origin of his "Old Manuscript(s)," but its relationship to Fu Yi's is so close that one must treat them like Shima Kuniō, as closely related members of a single family of texts. They are even more closely related than the Mawangdui A and B manuscripts. The "Old Manuscripts" of Fu and Fan differ from each other in about 100 places, but their common deviations from other extant texts are substantially higher.

Of extant texts, we have a fair number to consider in reconstructing a new *Wang Bi Laozi*. First, the two Mawangdui manuscripts from the early Han, closely linked, show more deviations from other known texts

than against each other. In many cases, the Guodian texts support their reading. Next, Zhuang (Yan) Zun's 莊 (嚴) 遵 *Laozi zhu* 老子注, a work lost since the Tang, is preserved only in quotations. Zhuang (Yan) Zun, who lived at the end of the Former Han, also wrote a *Laozi zbigui* 老子指歸, which, except for the first six chapters, is preserved in the Zhengtong Daozang under the title *Daode zhenjing zbigui* 道德真經指歸.<sup>38</sup> This text has been little studied and often has been regarded as a fake, however, Shima Kuniō shows convincingly that many of the readings of the *Laozi* inserted in the *Laozi zbigui* are matched by other early evidence. In fact, he took the readings from *Laozi zbigui* for the second part of the *Laozi* as the basis of his own critical edition against which he defines the deviations of the other manuscripts.<sup>39</sup> Third is the *Xiang Er Commentary* 想爾注 to the *Laozi*, a Dunhuang manuscript, first mentioned by Lu Deming, who says that one tradition claims that it was written by Zhang Lu 張魯 (d. 216) of the Celestial Master school. In this regard, the *Maoshan zhi* 茅山誌, by Liu Dabin 劉大彬 of the Tang dynasty, preserves a lengthy quote from Tao Hongjing's 陶宏景 (456–535) *Dengzhen yinju* 登真隱訣:

The Hermit says: “As for the *Daodejing* by Laozi there is the old manuscript of Zhang Zhennan 張鎮南 handcopied by the Master of the Dark, the Immortal Yang 楊. “Zhennan” refers to [Zhang Lu 張陸], the third generation descendant of the Han-dynasty Heavenly Master [Zhang] Lu [張] 魯. [Zhang Lu 張陸] was appointed General of Zhennan by Wudi of the Wei dynasty [i.e., Cao Cao 曹操]. That this, the so-called “5,000 text,” *wuqian wen* 五千文, has 5,000 characters, is based on counting the internally [transmitted] classic, *neijing* 內經, of the Master by Inheritance [i.e., Zhang Lu] with its 4,999 characters. The one [character] missing is in the formular “30 spokes . . .” 三十輻 that should be written [with one character less as] 卅輻. One should follow the abbreviated form, not the standard form. The adherents [of the Celestial Master school] do not preserve this authentic form [of the *Laozi*]; today [they] transmit a text in 5,000 characters as the standard text. It has a first and a second *pian*, and no divisions into *zhang*.<sup>40</sup>

The Xiang Er manuscript does write the 三十 in *Laozi* 11 in the form 卅, but it certainly had more than 5,000 characters in its *Laozi* text. The hand-copied manuscript by Yang Xi 楊羲 (active between 326 and 335 on Maoshan) seems to be the antecedent of the version in 5,000 characters commonly associated with Ge Xuan 葛玄. Finally, there is the Heshang

gong *Commentary* with its own *Laozi* text or texts. Quotations from the Heshang gong recension indicate that this, too, was a textual family with a variety of readings. Shima Kuniō cites two new pieces of evidence to prove that the Heshang gong *Commentary* must have been written in the fifth century. First, he finds the first verbatim quote in Tao Hongjing's 陶弘景 (452–536) writings. Second, its readings of the characters *che* 徹 and *hui* 恢, written in most *Laozi* manuscripts as *che* 徹 and *tan* 惓, respectively, link the text to the *Laozi jiangshu* 老子講述 by King Wu 武 (464–549) of the Liang.<sup>41</sup> Since he also has discovered loans in the Heshang gong *Commentary* from the *Commentary* of Gu Huan 顧歡 (fl. late fifth century), he concludes that it was written “late in the Six Dynasties period,” which would coincide with the dating implied in Fu Yi's narrative.<sup>42</sup> “This,” he writes, “is proof that the Heshang gong manuscript is not an old manuscript.”<sup>43</sup>

However, in his *Rōshi kōsei* 老子校正 Shima Kuniō seems unaware of the Suo Dan manuscript, published in 1955. As noted by Rao Zongyi, this dated manuscript supports many of the singular readings of the Heshang gong recension.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, Shima Kuniō does not mention an indirect quotation (albeit of a passage not found in the extant Heshang gong *Commentary*) in Gao You's 高誘 (late second century) *Commentary to the Huainanzi*.<sup>45</sup> He also fails to mention a quotation that occurs in Xie Zong's 謝宗 (d. c.e. 243) *Commentary to Zhang Heng's* 張衡 *Dongjing fu* 東京賦, included in the *Wenxuan*.<sup>46</sup> It must be added, however, that the reliability of this commentary is open to question, since it contains a quotation from Guo Pu's 郭璞 (276–324) *Commentary on the Erya* 爾雅, a text written about sixty years after Xie Zong's death.<sup>47</sup> Whatever the final verdict on the Heshang gong *Laozi*, its prominent role during the Tang makes it a candidate for the text or group of texts that gradually superseded the *Wang Bi Laozi*.

Based on the certified elements of the *Wang Bi Laozi* on the one hand, and the authenticated old versions of the *Laozi*, on the other hand, we shall look for complete texts to replace the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* as a basis for the *Wang Bi Laozi*. As shown in Appendix B, the *Wang Bi Laozi* in the hands of Fan Yingyuan closely resembled his own “Old Manuscript,” coinciding in forty-four out of the forty-seven places where he provides information. The “Old Manuscript” of Fan Yingyuan also is closely linked to Fu Yi's “Old Manuscript.” Given the ongoing hunt for old manuscripts, there is no reason to believe that the texts used by these two were younger than the Mawangdui manuscripts. The Peking editors of the Mawangdui manuscripts recognized the strong affinity between them and Fu Yi's “Old Manuscript,” and they provided a synoptic version, juxtaposing Mawang-

dui A, Mawangdui B and Fu Yi's "Old MS," but not the much more popular *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus*.<sup>48</sup> Strangely enough, Gao Ming's 高明 otherwise very careful reedition of the Mawangdui manuscripts does not follow this practice but goes back to an uncritically accepted *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* as a reference text to compare the Mawangdui manuscripts.<sup>49</sup>

Together, the two "Old Manuscripts" differ from the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* in about 300 places, but they differ from the Heshang gong tradition even more. Therefore, I think that we can assume that the two "Old Manuscripts" together represent a text much closer than the *Receptus* to the *Wang Bi Laozi*. Of the approximately 100 deviations between the two "Old Manuscripts," internal evidence indicates the preferable reading in about sixty places, about half for each side. The three or four cases where the *Wang Bi Laozi* deviates from both "Old Manuscripts" are listed by Lu Deming and Fan Yingyuan.

The *Wang Bi Laozi* is approximately "in the middle" of the two "Old Manuscripts," the three forming a very close textual family. They share a number of deviations against the Guodian and the Mawangdui manuscripts; however, these were written at a time when the connection between written characters and words was still highly unstable. A comparison even between these two sets of texts shows an increasing stability of this word/character relationship.<sup>50</sup> Both texts, therefore, show only moderate interest in the accuracy of the written word. They operate on the assumption that reading largely means identifying spoken words from the graphs. As long as they achieve this goal, all graphs are legitimate, whether operating through a phonetic loan such as 又 for 有, or a graphic variant. Writing stabilized only during the following generations, and the number of written characters with such stabilized connections to words grew dramatically. Some of the thrill coming with this "new medium" can be seen in the plethora of new written characters paraded through the *fu*-poetry of the Han. Due to this instability of the written word, the number of deviations between the "Old MSS" edited (and standardized) by Fu Yi and Fan Yingyuan against the Guodian and Mawangdui manuscripts is extremely high; once these phonetic and graphic variants are eliminated, the common elements dominate. The "Old MSS" and the two Mawangdui manuscripts have many fewer deviations from each other than jointly from the Heshang gong tradition.

Shima Kuniō has not made explicit the principles that he followed in reconstructing his *Wang Bi Laozi*. He constructs a textual family for the *Wang Bi Laozi* based on the text over the *Daozang* Wang Bi edition and other core pieces of the *textus receptus*. As I have shown, the substantial changes wrought on this *Laozi* version make it a weak candidate for the

base text of the *Wang Bi Laozi*. In fact, the textual family to which the *Wang Bi Laozi* belongs has two close members, the “Old MSS” of Fu Yi and Fan Yingyuan, and two more distant members, the Mawangdui manuscripts, with the Guodian manuscripts being further relatives. In his editing work, however, Shima Kuniō pays less attention to the textual family than to the specific evidence at hand: he uses (1) internal evidence from Wang Bi’s commentary (in which his contribution is greatest), and (2) external evidence from what he variously calls a “Later Han text” or a “Han Wei text.” This second “text” is reconstructed on the basis of quotations from other texts of the period as well as from other *Laozi* versions that he believes circulated at the time. While his references to Zhuang (Yan) Zun, in particular, lend some substance to this reconstruction, two points seem to contradict it. First, the various schools and traditions disputed the authenticity of each other’s *Laozi*. These schools often formed fairly cohesive and exclusive intellectual communities; it is probable that at any given time different *Laozi* texts existed in different schools and regions without crossings paths or influencing each other. Second, neither the Zhuang (Yan) Zun nor the Xiang Er and Suo Dan manuscripts (nor, for that matter, the Heshang gong version) are supported by the internal evidence of Wang Bi’s commentary as serious candidates for the original *Wang Bi Laozi*. On the other hand, the “critical editions” by Fu and Fan on the basis of “Old Texts” fulfill this requirement, even though put together much later. By constructing a textual family for the *Wang Bi Laozi* that does not qualify for this role, Shima Kuniō deprived himself of the fruits of his own labor, because he allowed himself to change this *receptus* only in those places where he had clear and particular proof and never questioned the *receptus* as a whole.

## SUPERIMPOSITION

Having established a high degree of internal cohesion within the group of texts made up by the *Wang Bi Laozi*, the two “Old Manuscripts” and, less closely, the Mawangdui manuscripts, we shall deal now with the direction in which the *Wang Bi Laozi* was altered. Of the twenty-five places where the original text available to Fan Yingyuan is definitely superior to the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus*, no fewer than twenty-two were changed in favor of the Heshang gong version.<sup>51</sup> Some examples may be cited.

## PARTICLES

*Laozi 19.1*

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	此三者	以爲文	不足
Heshang gong:	" " "	" " "	" "
<i>Wang Bi Comm.:</i>	" " "	" " "	而未足
Old MSS (Fu):	" " "	" " "	" " "也
Old MSS (Fan):	" " "	" " "	不 " "
Guodian A:	"言	" "貞	不 "
Mawangdui A:	此 " "也	" "文	未 "
Mawangdui B:	" " " "	" " "	" "
Xiang Er:	" " "	" " "	" "
Pei Wei 裴頴 (267–300):	" " "	" " "	" " "52

From this it is clear that Wang Bi's *Laozi* must have read 此三者以爲文而未足, coinciding with Fu Yi's "Old Manuscript" as well as in the 未 with the Mawangdui manuscripts. The received text was apparently changed in favor of the Heshang gong text.

*Laozi 48.1*

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	爲學	日益
Heshang gong:	" "	" "
Zhuang (Yan) Zun:	" "	" "
Wang Bi quote in <i>Comm. on Laozi 20.1:</i>	" "者	" "
Old MSS (Fu and Fan):	" " "	" "
Mawangdui B:	" " "	" "
Guodian B:	" " "	" "

The *Wang Bi Laozi* must have read 爲學者日益, coinciding with the two "Old MSS" and the two Mawangdui manuscripts as opposed to the texts of Heshang gong and Zhuang (Yan) Zun (as well as manuscripts from the Xiang Er tradition not cited here).



## TERMS

*Laozi* 1.2

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus</i> :	無名	天地之始
Heshang gong:	" "	" " " "
Xiang Er:	" "	" " "
Old MSS (Fu and Fan):	" "	" " " "
<i>Wang Bi Comm.</i> :	未形無名之時則為萬物之始	
Mawangdui A and B:	無名	萬物之始也
<i>Shiji</i> 史記 127.3220:	無名者	萬物之始也

The *Wang Bi Laozi* must have read 無名萬物之始, supported by the *Commentary*, Mawangdui A and B, and the *Shiji* quotation. The *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* derives from the Heshang gong version, which here is matched by the Suo Dan version and even the two “Old MSS.”

*Laozi* 2.4

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus</i> :	萬物作焉而不辭	
Heshang gong:	" " " " " " "	
<i>Wang Bi</i> quotation on 17.1:	" " " " " "	為始
Old MSS (Fan):	" " " " " " "	" "
Old MSS (Fu):	" " " " " " "	" "
Guodian A:	" " " "	弗 "
Mawangdui B:	" " 昔	" " "

The *Wang Bi Laozi* must have read 萬物作焉而不為始, which involves a substantial change in meaning from that given in the received text. Against the entire family, Wang Bi’s *Laozi* has, however, the 焉.

*Laozi* 20.1

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus</i> :	善之與惡	相去若何
Heshang gong:	" " " "	" "何若
<i>Wang Bi Comm.</i> :	美	" " " "
Old MSS (Fu):	" " " "	" " " "
Old MSS (Fan):	善	" " " "
Xiang Er:	美	" " " "
Mawangdui A and B:	" " " 其	" " " "
Guodian B:	" " " "	" " " "

The *Wang Bi Laozi* must have read 美之與惡相去何若, supported in the *mei*, 美, for *shan*, 善, and the 何若 for 若何 by Fu Yi’s “Old MSS,” the

Guodian B, and the two Mawangdui manuscripts. His commentary predicates the choice between Fu Yi's and Fan Yingyuan's "Old Manuscript."

*Laozi 35.3*

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	道之出口	淡乎其無味
Heshang gong:	" " " "	"兮" " " "
Wang Bi quotation on 23.1:	" " "言	" " " " "也
Old MSS (Fu and Fan):	" " " "	" " " " "
Guodian C:	故 "口口口	"呵" " " " "
Mawangdui A and B:	故 "之出言也曰	" " " " " "
Xiang Er:	" " " "	" "
Suo Dan:	" " " "	" "

The *Wang Bi Laozi* read 道之出言淡兮其無味也, supported in the word 言 *yan* not only by the Wang Bi quotation, the Guodian C, the two "Old MSS," and the two Mawangdui manuscripts, but also by the Xiang Er tradition. The *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* version is derived entirely from the Heshang gong version.

*Laozi 69.2*

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	禍莫大於輕敵輕敵	幾喪吾寶
Heshang gong:	" " " " " " " "	" " " " "
Suo Dan:	" " " " " " " "	" " " " "
<i>Wang Bi Comm.:</i>	欲以取強無敵於天下也..	故曰幾亡吾寶
Old MSS (Fu):	禍莫大於無敵無敵	則幾亡吾寶
Old MSS (Fan):	" " " "輕 "輕 "	" " " " "
Mawangdui A:	馮 "於 "無適無適	斤 " "葆矣
Mawangdui B:	禍 "大 " "敵 "敵	近 " "琛矣

The *Wang Bi Laozi* read 禍莫大於無敵無敵則幾亡吾寶, supported in the characters 無敵, and 亡, by Wang Bi's *Commentary*, by Fu Yi's "Old Manuscript," and by both Mawangdui manuscripts (discounting the writing of 適 for 敵 in the A Manuscript). The change is dramatic in terms of content.

## PHRASE SEQUENCE

*Laozi* 13.6 and 13.7*Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:*

	若可 寄 天下..	若可 託 天下
Heshang gong:	"以 "於 " " ..	"以 "於 " "
<i>Wenzi</i> :	"以 " " " ..	所以托 " " <sup>53</sup>
Wang Bi <i>Comm.</i> :	"以託 " " ..	可以寄 " "
Old MSS (Fu and Fan):		
	則 " " " " "矣..	則 " " " " "矣
Guodian B:	若 " "尾 " " " ..	若 " "迖 " " "
Mawangdui A:	若 " "迖 " " " ..	女 " "寄 " "
Mawangdui B:	若 " "囊 " "口..	" " " " " " "
<i>Zhuangzi</i> 26/11/14f:	則 " "託 " " ..	則 " " " " " "
<i>Huainanzi</i> 12/109/18:		
	焉 " " " " " ..	焉 " " " " " "

The *Wang Bi Laozi* read 則可以託天下 . . . 則可以寄天下. The sequence of the phrases in the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* is that of the Heshang gong version, while the commentary has been left in its original order. The *ke yi*, 可以, in the commentary could be an explanatory elaboration of *ke* 可, but the *yi* 以 is supported by such a wealth of early readings that *ke yi* must be accepted as the reading of the *Wang Bi Laozi*. As for the *ze* 則, Wang Bi's commentary reads in full: 如此乃可以 . . . , so that the *nai* 乃 has to be read as an explanation of logical sequence, forcing us to accept the *ze*, well supported in some early versions.

*Laozi* 69.1

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	扔無敵執無兵
Heshang gong:	仍 " " " " " "
Suo Dan:	" " " " " "
Wang Bi <i>Comm.</i> :	執 "兵扔 "敵
Zhuang (Yan) Zun:	" " "仍 " "
Old MSS (Fu):	" " " " " "
Mawangdui A and B:	" " "乃 " "
Lu Deming:	扔

The *Wang Bi Laozi* read 執無兵扔無敵, which has been replaced in the received text by the Heshang gong version, unique among all other early manuscripts with the single exception of Fan Yingyuan.

ELIMINATION OF WORDS INVOLVING  
SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN MEANING

*Laozi 20.15*

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	我獨異於人
Heshang gong:	" " " " "
<i>Wang Bi Comm.:</i>	" "欲 " " "
Xiang Er:	" " " " "
Old MSS (Fu and Fan):	吾 " " " " "
Mawangdui A and B:	"欲獨 " " "

The *Wang Bi Laozi* read 我獨欲異於人, again replaced in the received text by the Heshang gong version. The elimination of *yu* 欲 implies a substantial change in the status of “Laozi” (i.e., the person saying “I” in the text). The 我 has to be maintained against the 吾 in the rest of the family, as it is so quoted in Wang’s commentary.

*Laozi 34.3*

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	萬物歸焉而不為主	可名為大
Heshang gong:	" " " " " " " "	故 " " " "矣
<i>Wang Bi Comm.:</i>	" " "之以生而力使不知其所由..	" "於 "矣
Xiang Er:	" " " " "不為主	" " " "
Old MSS (Fu):	" " " "而 "知 "	" " " " "
Old MSS (Fan):	" " " " " " " "	" "為 " "
Mawangdui A:	" " "焉口口 " "	" "於 "
Mawangdui B:	" " "焉 "弗為 "	"命於 "

The *Wang Bi Laozi* read 萬物歸之而不知主可名於大矣, the received text being mainly that of the Heshang gong version. The replacement of *zhi* 知 with *wei* 為 is a fundamental philosophical change and also alters the subject of the phrase. In the Heshang gong version, “he” is not lording it over them (*bu wei zhu*, 不為主); in Wang Bi’s version, the 10,000 kinds of entities remain the subject, and they all render themselves unto

him but do not perceive who or what is their lord. This phrase became a cornerstone for Wang Bi's interpretation of *xuan* 玄 (dark), the aspect of Being that it is the base of all entities, which they are unable to perceive and name.

*Laozi* 39.2

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	其致之
Heshang gong:	" " "
<i>Wang Bi Comm.:</i>	各以其一致此清寧靈盈貞
Zhuang (Yan) Zun:	其致之
Old MSS (Fu and Fan):	" " "一也
Mawangdui A:	"至" "
Mawangdui B:	" " "

The *Wang Bi Laozi* read 其致之一也, his commentary corresponding to the version contained only in the two "Old MSS."

*Laozi* 47.1

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	不出戶 知天下不闚牖 見天道
Heshang gong:	" " " 以 " " " " " " 以 " " "
<i>Wang Bi Comm.:</i>	雖處於今可以知古始故不出戶窺牖而可知
<i>Hanfeizi:</i>	不出於戶可以知天下不窺於牖可以知天道
<i>Huainanzi:</i>	" " " " " " " " " " " " "見" "
Zhuang (Yan) Zun:	" " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "
Old MSS (Fu):	" " " " " " " " " " " " "知" "
Old MSS (Fan):	" " " " " " " " " " " " "見" "
Mawangdui A and B:	" " " " " " " " "規" " " "知" "
Lu Deming:	窺

The *Wang Bi Laozi* read 不出戶可以知天下不窺牖可以知天道, the received text using the Heshang gong version. However, *jian* 見 in the Heshang gong and Zhuang [Yan] Zun versions seems to be supported as an old variant by a *Huainanzi* quotation and Fan Yingyuan.

These examples show the superimposition of elements of the Heshang gong version over the original *Wang Bi Laozi* to form the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus*. The *Wang Bi Laozi* is very close to the two "Old Manuscripts," supported in many cases by the Mawangdui manuscripts or by

early quotations, and sometimes by the *Xiang Er Commentary*. I propose to abandon the *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* altogether as a textual base for the reconstruction of the *Wang Bi Laozi* and to replace it with a conflated version of the two “Old Manuscripts” as the core and the two Mawangdui manuscripts as more distant relatives. The differences between the two “Old MSS” are handled on the basis of available internal or, failing this, external evidence. Preference in the latter case should be given to the Mawangdui manuscripts. Only where there is clear proof that the *Wang Bi Laozi* disagreed with all other members of the same textual family is it necessary to deviate from this rule. An example may be adduced from Laozi 21. *LZWZLL* refers to Wang Bi’s *Laozi weizhi lüeli* 老子微指略例 that is edited and translated in this volume.

*Laozi 21.6*

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	自古及今其名不去
Heshang gong:	" " " " " " " " "
Wang Bi <i>Comm.</i> :	" " " " " " " " "54
Wang Bi in <i>LZWZLL</i> :	" " " " " " " " "
Xiang Er:	" " " " " " " " "
Old MSS (Fu and Fan):	"今 "古 " " " " "
Mawangdui A and B:	" " " " " " " " "

Despite the readings of the “Old Manuscripts” and the Mawangdui manuscripts, the *Wang Bi Laozi* must have read 自古及今其名不去, as confirmed by his own quotations. Unaware of the supporting Wang Bi quotation elsewhere, Shima Kuniō opted for the version of the textual family. There is an occasional later adaptation of Wang Bi’s commentary to the changed main text:

*Laozi 70.2*

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus:</i>	言有宗事有君
Heshang gong:	" " " " " " " "
Suo Dan:	" " " " " " " "
Zhuang (Yan) Zun:	" " " " " " " "
Mawangdui B:	"又 " "又 "
Mawangdui A:	"有君 "有宗
Wang Bi <i>Comm.</i> :	宗萬物之宗君萬物之主
Old MSS (Fu and Fan):	言有宗事有主

The initial *jun* 君 of the second clause of Wang Bi’s commentary ought to be changed to *zhu* 主, so that the phrase 君萬物之主 parallels the structure of the preceding phrase 宗萬物之宗, where the term *zong* 宗 is repeated

twice. That his text had *zhu* instead of *jun* is not only supported by the two “Old Manuscripts” but also by a statement in Wang Bi’s *LZWZLL* which paraphrases the present passage: 言不遠宗 事不失主.<sup>55</sup>

One passage often quoted to determine what “school” the *Laozi* belongs to shows some of the problems in reconstructing the *Wang Bi Laozi*.

*Laozi* 57.3, 4

<i>Wang Bi Laozi Receptus</i> :	人多伎巧 奇物滋起法令滋彰
Heshang gong:	" " " " " " " " "物 " "
<i>Huainanzi</i> 12/106/5:	" " " " " " " " "令 " "
<i>Shiji</i> 62.3131:	" " " " " " " " " " " "
Zhuang (Yan) Zun:	" " " " " " " " " " " "
<i>Wenzi</i> 1/5/15:	民 "智能 " " " " " " "章
Old MSS (Fu and Fan):	民 "智慧而寡事 " " " " " "
Guodian A:	人 " " 天戡勿慈記 "勿慈 "
Mawangdui A:	人 "知 而何物茲□□□□□
Mawangdui B:	□□□□□□□□□□物茲章
Wang Bi <i>Comm.</i> :	民 "智 "則巧偽生巧偽生則邪事起
Wang Bi in <i>LZWZLL</i> :	息淫在乎去華不在滋章

The reading *fa ling* 法令, shared by the versions given in the *Huainanzi*, *Shiji*, *Wenzi*, and Zhuang Zun directly attacks the Legalists. The Mawangdui manuscripts come from a Legalist milieu and thus do not transmit this version, but the Guodian A also has the reading 法勿 [物]. Wang Bi attacked the legalism of the Wei court. If, however, Wang Bi’s text had the 法令, why should he have missed out on the occasion to attack the concept of running the state by laws? He did not, however, comment on this term at all. The statement in the *LZWZLL* is further evidence that he had a text that had to do with *hua* 華, luxury, and the “beautiful objects,” *fawu* 法物, clearly fit this better. Accordingly, Wang’s text followed the GuodianA/Mawangdui reading and had 民多智慧而邪事滋起法物滋章.

## THE DIVISION INTO ZHANG AND PIAN

Wang Bi read the *Laozi* as divided into *zhang* 章. There are three passages where he refers to a “later” or “earlier” *zhang*.<sup>56</sup> In two of these, the *zhang* referred to is found within the same *pian* 篇 of the current editions, while in the third case the reference is to a *zhang* in the other *pian*.<sup>57</sup> The division into *zhang* also is evident in the Guodian and Mawangdui manuscripts, where it is not only indicated on occasion by dots,<sup>58</sup> but where

the *zhang* are ordered in a sequence different from the received texts but remain intact as units. For the Mawangdui manuscripts this is true for *zhang* 38 (marked by its being the beginning), 39, 41, 40, 42, 66, 80, 81, 67, 79, 1, 21, 24, 22, 23, and 25 (in the sequence in which they appear in the Mawangdui manuscripts). A similar situation prevails in the Guodian manuscripts, however, there are neither numbers nor titles to mark the borders between *zhang*. Their beginnings and endings are marked by stylistic and argumentative features with occasional punctuation. The Tang dynasty stone engraving of the *Laozi* shows this same feature. In his short history of the transmission of the *Laozi*, Xie Shouhao writes:

The manuscripts which are put together today are based on textual links (*wenlian* 文連). [Some] copyists have also given separate headings to each of the 81 *zhang*. But, as with the stanzas of the *Old Poems* where each stanza is separated from the next through its literary cohesion, one can determine the [*Laozi's*] subsections without the need for a separate heading for each *zhang*.<sup>59</sup>

Thus Wang Bi saw the text as consisting of many *zhang*, but it is not clear whether the *zhang* were separated in his edition by any means similar to those employed in the Guodian and Mawangdui manuscripts. It seems that the earlier habit of marking *zhang* and occasionally even phrase limits with dots which we see in the Guodian manuscripts, was gradually discontinued, considered unnecessary for an increasingly “literate”—that is, writing-oriented—elite. Already in the Mawangdui manuscripts there is much less and much more irregular interpunctuation. We might assume that Wang Bi’s text looked more like the *Xiang Er Commentary*, which has no formal separations between the *zhang* or even between the *Laozi* text and the commentary. In the *LZWZLL*, Wang Bi describes each *zhang* (without using the term) as an argumentative unit. This also is evident in his *Commentary*, where he rarely explains the conclusion contained in the last phrase of a *zhang*, since it is deemed to be self-evident.<sup>60</sup>

For the separation of the text into two or more *pian*, the evidence is more complex. Assuming that the internal references to other *zhang* have survived unscathed in Wang Bi’s *Commentary*, his original text evidently did not follow the *del/dao* sequence of the two Mawangdui manuscripts. The received Wang Bi editions come in two *pian* (the four-*pian* arrangement in the *Zhengtong Daozang* is based on the print arrangement of this edition); there is substantial evidence from the early Han on that a textual division into two *pian* was quite common. This could, however, have substantial philosophic and interpretive implications, as the titles given for



the two sections already in the Mawangdui B manuscript indicate; that is, one of the *pian* deals with *dao* 道, the other with *de* 德. Wang Bi does use the term *pian* with regard to the macrostructure of the *Laozi*. In his commentary to *Laozi* 20, he quotes a passage from *Laozi* 48, with the indication that this could be found “in a, or in the, *xia pian* 下篇. In his *LZWZLL* he introduces two quotations from the *Laozi* by saying, “in the *pian* he says”<sup>61</sup> (there is a variant writing for *pian*, namely, *jing* 經, but this would be the only time that Wang Bi referred to the *Laozi* as a *jing*); evidently *pian* here is a plural and refers neither to a first nor second *pian* but rather is used interchangeably with *zhang*. This is confirmed by the fact already mentioned, that one quotation from “a later *zhang*” crosses the traditional *pian* division, the quotation being in *zhang* 28 and the reference to *zhang* 40.

In his *Fushi ji* 酈時記, a work written in 1111, Chao Yuezhi 晁說之 says: “If we can rely on Fu Yi, Wang Bi wrote at the top of his book [the *Laozi*]: ‘The *Daodejing* is not divided into *Dao* and *De* chapters.’”<sup>62</sup> It was on the basis of this note that Dong Sijing 董思靖 (1059–1129) wrote that Wang Bi did not divide the text in this manner,<sup>63</sup> and in the *LZWZLL*, Wang Bi refers to his text simply as *Laozi*, never as “*Daodejing*,” or some similar title. This accords well with his polemical rejection of other *Laozi* interpretations current during his life.

## CONCLUSION

The above evidence suggests the following:

1. The *Laozi* text transmitted over Wang Bi’s commentary is not Wang Bi’s text but rather a text gradually superseded by elements of the Heshang gong text.
2. The *Wang Bi Laozi Receptus* has to be abandoned as a base text for a critical edition of the *Wang Bi Laozi*.
3. Internal textual evidence suggests that the two “Old Manuscripts” of Fu Yi and Fan Yingyuan should be considered most closely affiliated with Wang Bi’s original text, the Mawangdui manuscripts being more distant members of the same textual family and the Guodian manuscripts even more distantly related.
4. A conflated version of the two “Old Manuscripts,” supplemented by the two Mawangdui manuscripts, forms the basic core for a reconstruction of Wang Bi’s recension of the *Laozi*, the *Wang Bi Laozi*.