Ostasien

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Lu Jia 陸賈 (c. 228–140 BCE) is triply renowned as an author. First, he coined on of the most famous sayings in China's long history: "You have attained the world from horseback, but can you govern it from horseback too?" This statement—meant to encourage the founder of the Han 漢 dynasty, Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 202–195 BCE), to give up his uncouth ways of a conqueror and adopt refined culture—can be considered the common motto of Chinese literati for millennia thereafter. Second, he is the first known author of a historical work, the *Springs and Autumns of Chu and Han* (*Chu Han chunqiu* 楚漢春秋), which narrated the story of the civil war spanning the years from the collapse of the Qin 秦 dynasty in 207 BCE to the establishment of the Han in 202 BCE. Before this, historical works had no identifiable authors (these authors were retroactively assigned to earlier works during the Han dynasty).[1] Lu Jia should be honored as the first known man of letters who dared to summarize the events of the recent past, making a modest start for Imperial China's glorious historiographic tradition.[2] And third, he is the author of the first political-philosophical treatise, the *New Discourses* (*Xin yu* 新語), for which we can say with certainty who composed it, when, and why.

This latter point requires an explanation. Lu Jia was neither the first nor the most influential thinker in early China. Actually, he was born in the waning years of the Warring States period (Zhanguo 戰國, 453–221 BCE), the single most productive age in the history of Chinese philosophy. Dozens of the texts that survived from that age are routinely named after their putative author. However, none of these so-called Masters' (*zi* 子) texts was prepared from the start in its current shape. Rather, most of them were put together by the Han-period (206/202 BCE-220 CE) editors. These texts may well contain original sayings or essays by the Master, but also manifold additions by the Master's disciples and followers that accrued for generations. The precise dating of each of the chapters and shorter segments contained in the texts that bear a Master's name is hotly debated, and the context of their creation is anybody's guess.[3] In contrast, the date and the reasons for the creation of the *New Discourses* are well known. They were produced by Lu Jia in direct response to Liu Bang's request to explain why Qin lost the empire whereas Han had attained it. This account, if correct, not only makes the *New Discourses* into "one of the oldest single-authored works in Chinese history" (p. 6), but also allows a full understanding of the political and intellectual context of its formation.

Liu Bang's question was a tough one. How to come to terms with Qin's brief (221–207 BCE) but highly consequential reign became the focal point of ideological debates for generations. On the one hand, Qin was a story of great success. Its unification of "All-under-Heaven" (*tianxia* 天下, in this context referring to the entire known world) had fulfilled aspirations of generations of statesmen and thinkers throughout the fragmented and war-torn Chinese world, who shared the belief: "Stability is in unity."[4] On the other hand, Qin's was a ruthless and oppressive regime, particularly toward the members of the intellectual elite. Moreover, this regime did not outlive its founder by much, having been wiped out by a popular rebellion of unprecedented scope and ferocity. Lu Jia hoped that the Han would discard the Qin model and adopt a different mode of rule, akin to the one advocated by the followers of Confucius for generations. The ideal was that a clear-sighted and morally upright monarch

1 The earliest tradition of authorship of a historical work was identifying Confucius 孔子 (551–479 BCE) as either an author (which is surely false) or an editor (which is possible, even if unverifiable) of the canonical *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) of the state of Lu 魯. The founder of China's imperial historiography, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–90 BCE) provides names of other putative authors of earlier historical works, most notable the *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳) on the *Annals* and a few later texts that were based on it.

2 The *Springs and Autumns of Chu and Han* did not survive the vicissitudes of history, but served as one of the major sources for Sima Qian's account of the rise of the Han dynasty.

3 The first text that was designed from the beginning as a book was a multi-authored project run under the auspices of the Qin strongman, Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (d. 235 BCE). The encyclopedic *Springs and Autumns of Sire Lü* (*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋) were expected to provide a blueprint for the soon-to-be-established universal empire under Qin's aegis. See more in John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, *The Annals of Lü Buwei*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, pp. 27–55.

4 The statement of an influential follower of Confucius, Mengzi 孟子 (ca. 380–304 BCE), cited from *Mengzi* 1.5. See more in Yuri Pines, "'The One that Pervades All' in Ancient Chinese Political Thought: Origins of 'The Great Unity' Paradigm." *T'oung Pao* 86.4–5 (2000), pp. 280–324.

should preside over intellectually and morally cultivated officials, who would imbue morality and compliance in the populace at large. The Warring States period Confucians, most notably Mengzi 孟子 (ca. 380–304 BCE) and Xunzi 荀子 (d. after 238 BCE), insisted that only a moral leader would be able to unify All-under-Heaven.[5] Yet after the Qin precedent, this argument was no longer feasible. Lu Jia had to rethink how to convince Liu Bang of the advantages of moral rule.

Lu Jia's solution is twofold. One is resort to history, from which he picks examples that prove his points, including the fall of Qin, and ignores those that do not work nicely for him, such as Qin's initial success. This very common method of utilizing history to promote one's ideas was derisively discarded by Qin, whose prime-minister, Li Si 李斯 (d. 208 BCE), infamously promised to execute those who "use the past to reject the present" together with their family members.[6] Lu Jia restores the validity of historical argumentation, but it seems that he is aware of its limits. Thus, on some occasions, he utilizes the examples of legendary and semi-legendary paragons to show that morality works in politics; but elsewhere he insists that instead of going to the remote past, one should focus on more recent (and more easily verifiable) events (chapter 2, sections 2.1–2.3). Perhaps Lu Jia realized that historical examples alone would not suffice to persuade Liu Bang. Hence, he resorts to another argument: the morally upright political and social order is sanctioned by Heaven, whose will the ruler should follow. This argument would have most far-reaching impact on China's intellectual trajectory.

In early Chinese thought as formulated during the Western Zhou period 西周 (ca. 1046–771 BCE), Heaven was conceptualized as the supreme deity in charge of human affairs, the grantor (or withdrawer) of the Mandate without which a dynasty would not survive. This theory was never fully discarded, but by the Warring States period it had lost much of its appeal. Heaven was reconceptualized by many thinkers as an impartial natural order, whose mysteries should be comprehended but which is not concerned directly with human activities. These ideas were most clearly pronounced in the œuvres of Xunzi, a singularly influential thinker to whom Lu Jia is deeply indebted. Yet Lu Jia departs from Xunzi on two crucial points. First, he identifies the moral way of "humanity and righteousness" (*ren yi* 仁義) as directly mandated by Heaven (chapter 1). Heaven is restored therewith to the position of the guardian of the moral order. Second, as Goldin and Levi Sabattini aptly note (pp. 12–13), Lu Jia critically modifies Xunzi's views by adding the concept of human resonance with Heaven. "Bad government breeds bad *qi*, bad *qi* breeds disasters and abnormalities" (section 11.3, p. 109). This idea, which was conducive to the eventual outburst of the Han "omenology," was also the first step toward restoring the place of Heaven as the pivot of political, social, and ultimately religious order. As developed by such thinkers as Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 195–115 BCE) and his followers, Lu Jia's ideas would evolve into a powerful metaphysical stipulation of China's imperial order.[7]

Lu Jia was neither China's deepest nor most original thinker, but he played an important role as a transitional figure from the world of thought of the Warring States period to that of the imperial age. As such, his ideas deserve utmost attention and it is not surprising that his treatise has been translated into most European languages (see the list on p. 15).[8] This collaboration between Elisa Levi Sabattini (who previously translated the *New Discourses* into Italian) and Paul R. Goldin has resulted in an excellent new translation. Three points make it particularly laudable. First, the translators skillfully succeed in preserving the laconism of the Chinese original, allowing the reader to feel something of the text's style and not just its content. Second, their transparent and fully justifiable emendations of the text made it more easily understandable than the original itself. For instance, in the crucial section of chapter 1 (1.2), Lu Jia speaks of how Heaven arranges the world, but the subject (Heaven) is omitted. It is tempting to translate the passage as a depiction of reality as such, but this would be wrong: actually it is Heaven that "suspends sun and moon, arranges stars and constellations, … rears and bears the multitude of living things" (p. 21), and so forth. By adding the subject [Heaven] in square brackets, the translators do their readers a great service. Third, Goldin and Sabattini often grasp the implicit and not just

5 See, e. g., *Mengzi* 1.5, 7.3, 14.13; *Xunzi* 15 ("Yi bing" 議兵) *et saepe*.
6 *Shiji* 6.255.

7 For proliferations of omens under the Han dynasty, see Martin Kern, "Religious Anxiety and Political Interest in Western Han Omen Interpretation: The Case of the Han Wudi Period (141–87 B.C.)", *Studies in Chinese History* 10 (2000), pp. 1–31; Cai Liang, "The Hermeneutics of Omens: The Bankruptcy of Moral Cosmology in Western Han China (206 BCE–8 CE)", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25.3 (2015), pp. 439–459. For the oeuvres of Dong Zhongshu and his followers, see Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major (trans.), *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn, Attributed to Dong Zhongshu*. New York: Columbia University Press 2016.
8 In addition to that list, one may mention that four out of twelve chapters of the *New Discourses* were translated into Russian by Ye. P. Sinitsyn, in Древнекитайская философия: эпоха Хань, comp. Yan Khinshun, ed. V.G. Burov. Moscow: Nauka, 1990, pp. 79–90.

the explicit message of the text. Take, for instance, the depiction of the famous diplomat Su Qin 蘇秦 (d. 284 BCE), who used "different speeches in each state and different ideas with each interlocutor" (p. 93). This translation is not immediately obvious from the Chinese text but it grasps perfectly Su Qin's notorious ability to twist his arguments and change recommendations so as to benefit himself personally rather than advancing any higher goal. Goldin and Levi Sabattini should be congratulated for this thoughtful translation.

Naturally, there are some points on which I beg to disagree with the translators. E. g., the word "procedures" for a Chinese term *shu* 術 is problematic; procedures imply regular modes of proceeding, whereas *shu* requires more of ability to adapt to something subtle and less regular.[9] I do understand the translators' dislike of a common "arts" but maybe the equally common "techniques" would still work better. Or take, for instance, translating the much-debated term *shi* 勢 as "circumstances" in the passage "virtue is practiced in accordance with the circumstances" (5.8, p. 65). I think that the Chinese 德因勢而行 refers to "virtue can be implemented only when it relies on positional power." Here a more conventional association of *shi* with power or authority that derives from one's position is more convincing than the authors' solution (which would work nicely elsewhere). These, and a few minor inaccuracies,[10] are the only flaws—overall insignificant—in the otherwise excellent translation.

Quibbles aside, my only criticism is directed not at what the translators did but at what they did not do. Reading their excellent introduction and highly professional footnotes, one cannot but regret their decision to keep both very short. They opted to be succinct because "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 choice is questionable in my eyes. For undergrads or comparatists, who are not used to Chinese terms and names, discerning what is referred to by *qi* 氣, *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, or identifying historical paragons scattered throughout chapter 1 will be very tiresome and time consuming. It is true that information about all these abounds, but it is not always accurate. Nor would lay readers grasp a reference to the *Analects* (p. 69n2), which is provided in Chinese only and is not accompanied by a translation. It seems that the translators from the beginning planned to target professional audience only. This is legitimate but regrettable in my eyes.

Speaking of a professional audience, one could have expected to engage it more, perhaps by providing short introductions to individual chapters, which would highlight interesting aspects of the text without overburdening either a general introduction or the footnotes.[11] Think, for instance, of chapter 1, which contains a long list of innovations in material, social, and cultural life initiated by the sages of the past, but curiously omits the creation of the state. This omission may not be accidental. Whereas in the middle Warring States period there were intensive debates about how and why the primeval stateless society transformed into a state with its apparatus of coercion, bureaucracy, and strongly pronounced hierarchies, these debates had atrophied by the beginning of the imperial period.[12] Why this happened deserves further study; but Lu Jia clearly exemplifies this trend and this merits mentioning. Or take, for instance, Lu Jia's assault on radical recluses in chapter 6.5. It would be useful not only to compare this criticism with similar attacks on hermits by Xunzi and by Xunzi's alleged disciple and intellectual rival, Han Fei 韩非 (d. 233 BCE),[13] but also to remind the reader that elsewhere (section 7.6), Lu Jia laments the fate of "worthies and sages" who fail to find adequate employment and spend their time "secluded in dwellings in the fields" (p. 83). This contrast between Lu Jia's views of righteous and radical hermits could have been highlighted to show the immense

9 Goldin defends the use of "procedures" in his "The Linguistics of Chinese Philosophical Keywords," in Liwei Jiao (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Language and Culture*. London: Routledge (forthcoming).

10 For instance, translating the term *qingshi* 卿士 on p. 79 as two words "high officers and men-of-service," whereas more accurate will be reading this as a compound "high officers." There are also minor inaccuracies in translations of personal appellations; e. g. Zhi Bo (Zhi, the Elder) is translated as the "Earl of Zhi" (p. 29). The latter mistake is fairly common; see more in Yuri Pines, "Names and Titles in Eastern Zhou Texts", *T'oung Pao* 106.3 (2020, 228–234).

11 This method was successfully applied by Stephen Durrant, Li Wai-yee, and David Schaberg in their seminal translation, *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*. Seattle: University of Washington Press 2016. I also followed their lead in my translation, *The Book of Lord Shang: Apologetics of State Power in Early China*. New York: Columbia University Press 2017.

12 See Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2001, pp.92–140; Yuri Pines and Gideon Shelach, "'Using the Past to Serve the Present': Comparative Perspectives on Chinese and Western Theories of the Origins of the State," in Shaul Shaked (ed.), *Genesis and Regeneration: Essays on Conceptions of Origins*. Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Science and Humanities 2005, pp. 127–163.

13 See, e. g., *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1992), III.6: 101 ("Fei shi er zi" 非十二子); *Han Feizi jijie* 韓非子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1998) XVII.44: 401–402 ("Shuo yi" 說疑).

tension around the refusal to serve the ruler in Confucian thought.[14]

It should be reminded at this point that my criticism may well be unfair for the book that is defined as translation rather than translation cum study of the *New Discourses*. Goldin and Levi Sabattini should be congratulated for presenting readers with an excellent translation and introduction to Lu Jia's treatise. There is no doubt that their work will open avenues for further studies of Lu Jia and early Han thought and will allow more students to acquaint themselves with the *New Discourses* and their manifold hidden gems.

14 For discussion about early Chinese tradition of reclusion, see Aat Vervoorn, *Men of the Cliffs and Caves: The Development of the Chinese Eremitic Tradition to the End of the Han Dynasty*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press 1990) and Alan Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement: The Practice and Portrayal of Reclusion in Early Medieval China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2000.