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A COMPARISON OF THE GUODIAN AND MAWANGDUI *LAOZI* TEXTS

A Thesis Presented

by

DANIEL ANTHONY MURPHY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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CHINESE

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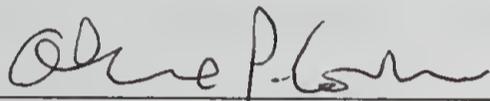
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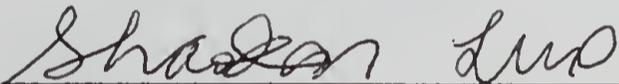
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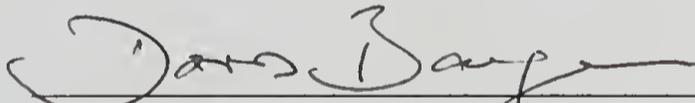
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND SCHOLARSHIP REVIEW

The Guodian *Laozi* Text

In 1993, a tomb excavated at the village of Guodian 郭店 near Jingmen 荊門 city in Hubei 湖北 province yielded, along with 15 other texts, the earliest known version of the *Laozi* 老子. Unlike extant versions of the *Laozi*, the text found at Guodian (GD) only contains material from all or part of 31 of the 81 received text chapters. This is approximately 2,000 characters in comparison to around 5,000 characters in the received text.

Archaeologists excavated the Guodian Chu Tomb Number One only because it had recently been robbed and water was entering the tomb through a hole cut by the tomb robbers, not because they anticipated a significant discovery. The complex of ancient tombs where the GD tomb was excavated is nine kilometers south of the ancient Chu 楚 capital city of Ying 郢. This was a Chu burial site during the time period, ending in 278 BCE, when Chu abandoned its capital at Ying. Liu Zuxin 劉祖信 in his article “An Overview of Tomb Number One at Jingmen Guodian” explains that the GD tomb can be conclusively labeled a Chu state tomb because of

1. The shape of the tomb, which employs “common construction methods for Chu tombs.”
2. The structure of the coffin. The coffin was divided into an inner compartment with a wooden platform for the corpse and an outer layer with a head compartment and a side compartment. All of this follows Chu burial customs.

3. The contents of the tomb, including the style of pottery, the style of writing found on the bamboo slips, bird-shaped walking staff heads, and other tomb materials all indicate that this tomb belonged to the state of Chu (Liu, “Overview,” 30-31).

Because the state of Qin defeated Chu in 278 BCE, with the Chu capital at Ying moving to Chen 陳 (present day Hubei province), the GD tomb cannot be later than 278 BCE. Based on the tomb contents most scholars date the tomb to sometime around 300 BCE.

According to the structure of the tomb, its contents, and the layers of coffins, the tomb occupant is probably of the *shi* 士 class, or the lowest rank of the aristocracy (Liu, “Overview”, 32). Among the contents of the tomb is a lacquer ear cup 耳杯¹ on the bottom of which is inscribed the characters “東宮之師,” which can be translated as “Teacher of the Eastern Palace.” At this time in the state of Chu “Eastern Palace” might have been used to refer to the heir apparent because this may have been his residence.² Based on this inscription many scholars have proposed that the tomb occupant may have been a tutor to the heir apparent. However, Paul Thompson and Peng Hao, among others, have expressed reluctance at relying too much on the ear cup to determine the identity of the tomb occupant.³ Other scholars do not believe that these characters mean “Teacher of the Eastern Palace” or do not agree that the characters should even be read as “東宮之師.”

¹ An “ear cup” 耳杯 is cup with crescent-shaped handles on its sides.

² The earliest instances of *dong gong* 東宮 “eastern palace” referring to the heir apparent are apparently in the *Shi Jing* 詩經 and *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳.

³ See Allan and Williams, *Guodian*, 123-125. See also Xing, “Paleographical,” 7-9

Robert Henricks writes that the idea of the tomb occupant as a tutor to the heir apparent would be “consistent with the types of texts put into the tomb. Instead of the ‘almanacs’ (*rishu* 日書), records of divination, and ‘inventories’ of items sent along with the dead (*qiance* 遣策) that we find in other Chu tombs, the bamboo slips put into this tomb constitute a philosophical library, the type that may well have belonged to a teacher” (Henricks, *Tao Te Ching*, 5).

E. Bruce Brooks, following Li Xueqin’s dating of the tomb,⁴ thinks it plausible that the occupant was a tutor to the person who was later called King Kaolie 考烈王, who ascended the throne in 262 BCE. He notes that the earliest that King Kaolie could be made heir apparent would be at the ascension of his father, Xiang Wang, to the throne in 298 BCE. The Chu capital moved elsewhere in 278 BCE. According to Brooks, the possible range of dates for the tomb is then 298- 278 BCE. The working date with the least possible error for the date of the GD tomb would then be the mid-point, 288 BCE (E. Brooks, “Gwodyen”).

The 804 bamboo slips found in the tomb, 730 of which have writing on them, were disordered because they were no longer connected to their bindings and were encased in mud. After specialist conservators completed cleaning and preserving the slips, best efforts were made to find the correct order of the slips for each text. Facsimiles of the slips along with an annotated transcription in modern characters were released to the public in May 1998.

⁴ Brooks cites Li Xueqin’s opinion as given during a lecture at Dartmouth College, November 1998. See Brooks, “Gwodyen.” Li Xueqin later writes that it is “appropriate to say that the Guodian Tomb No. 1 is a late fourth-century BCE tomb” (Li, “Important Discovery,” 58).

The procedure followed for organizing the slips into texts was as follows. “The bamboo slips with the *Laozi* material . . . were divided into three groups on the basis of the different shapes of the slips and the distances between the binding marks.”⁵ Originally, each of the three groups of slips had been bound, but the binding material had decomposed over time, leaving only the marks on the bamboo where the binding once was. The following table shows a breakdown of the GD *Laozi* organized into three bundles based on bamboo slip length, slip shape and location of the binding marks (Peng, “Post-excavation,” 33-34):

	# of slips	Slip length	Slip shape	Distance between binding
Bundle A 甲	39	32.3 cm	Both ends beveled	13 cm
Bundle B 乙	18	30.6 cm	Flat ends	13 cm
Bundle C 丙	28	26.5 cm	Flat ends	10.8 cm

There is nothing on the slips or in the tomb that indicates an order for the bundles. In other words, bundle A does not necessarily come before bundles B or C.

The order of some groups of bamboo slips within each bundle can be securely determined. In these cases, text at the bottom of one slip, because of its content, clearly continues at the top of another slip. In this way it can be determined that a number of slips should be read in consecutive order. Thus, within each bundle there are multiple slips that we know were read sequentially (which I will call a “unit”). However, in other cases, a line ends leaving a blank space at the bottom of that slip. In this case we do not know which slip comes next. Thus the order of the units within each bundle is not determined.

⁵ Peng, “Post- Excavation,” 33

The three GD *Laozi* bundles contain all or part of the following chapters as they would be divided and numbered according to the received text. Note that “C” indicates the end of a chapter, “A” indicates the beginning and “B” indicates the middle:

Bundle A: Unit One: 19, 66, 46C, 30, 15, 64C, 37, 63AC, 2, 32

Unit Two: 25, 5B

Unit Three 16A

Unit Four: 64A, 56, 57

Unit Five: 55, 44, 40, 9

Bundle B: Unit One: 59, 48A, 20A, 13

Unit Two: 41

Unit Three: 52B, 45, 54

Bundle C: Unit One: 17, 18

Unit Two: 35

Unit Three: 31C

Unit Four: 64C

Unit Five: *Taiyi Shengshui* 太一生水

From the length, shape, and distance between the binding marks on the bamboo slips we can determine that an untitled cosmological text, which has been titled by Chinese scholars according to its first four characters, *Taiyi Shengshui* 太一生水, was

included with Bundle C. This material is not included in any other version of the *Laozi* text. The GD version is the only extant version of this text.

Yin Zhenhuan 尹振環 believes that bundles A and B could have been bundled together, perhaps creating upper (上) and lower (下) divisions similar to those in other classical Chinese texts, as the distance between the binding marks for these two bundles is the same. He suggests this position even though the shape and length of A and B differ. According to Yin, bundle C may have then been an appendix 附錄 (Yin, “Guodian Chumu,” 3-29). The majority of scholars whose work I have consulted agree with Peng Hao that bamboo slips were “grouped as bundles of even length” and that this has been “corroborated by the discoveries of bamboo-slip texts of recent years.”⁶

The Mawangdui A and B *Laozi* Texts

Just twenty years prior to the GD discovery, in 1973 at the village of Mawangdui 馬王堆, near Changsha 長沙 in Hunan 湖南 province, archaeologists discovered in Han Tomb Number Three, among other texts, two texts written on silk which were the oldest version of the *Laozi* then known. In contrast to the GD tomb, we have the exact date the Mawangdui (MWD) tomb was sealed, provided by an inventory slip that can be converted to the Common Era Calendar date April 4, 168 BCE.

Of the two MWD versions, referred to as text A 甲 and text B 乙, it is believed Text A is the older. Text A is written in the older “small seal” 小篆 calligraphy, while Text B is written in the “clerical” 隸 script, which is relatively later (Yan, *Mawangdui*, 1).

⁶ Peng, “Post-Excavation”, 34

Further evidence is the avoidance of the characters in the name of the founding emperor of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang 劉邦 (reign: circa 206-194 BCE) by Text B. Text B replaces the character *bang* 邦 (realm), with its near synonym *guo* 國 (state). However,

Text B does not avoid the character in the *ming* of either Liu Ying or Liu Heng, who ruled 194-187 and

Names 名 and reign periods of pertinent rulers	
Liu Bang 劉邦:	206-194 BCE
Liu Ying 劉盈:	194-187 BCE
Liu Heng 劉恆:	179-156 BCE

179-156 BCE respectively. Later versions of the *Laozi* avoid both the character *ying* 盈 (waxing) changing it to its near synonym *man* 滿 (full) and the character *heng* 恆 (constant), changing it to its near synonym *chang* 常 (regular). This leads to the probability that Text B was written during the reign of Liu Bang (206-194 BCE).

Text A makes no such avoidances. This indicates that that Text A was written sometime before 206 BCE. The taboo name avoidance evidence is not completely solid because there is uncertainty about the universality of taboo name avoidance during that time period.

The two *Laozi* manuscripts found at MWD were both damaged, A more so than B, and in places where both A and B are legible the wording is not always identical. One question challenging scholars working with these texts has been to decide which of them is the more authoritative. Victor Mair chooses to translate the older of the two manuscripts, text A, except where the manuscript is illegible, torn, or otherwise defective. In these cases he defers to the other version, Text B (Mair, *Tao Te Ching*, 151). Robert Henricks prefers the more complete text B, although in 17 chapters where manuscript A

is more legible than text B, he follows manuscript A (Henricks, *Te-Tao Ching*, 3). D.C. Lau translates a “conflation” of the two MWD manuscripts (Lau, *Tao Te Ching*, 185).

The most striking difference between the MWD versions of the *Laozi* and the received text is that both of the MWD texts reverse the sequence of the Dao 道 and De 德 sections of the text (received text chapters 1-37 and 38-81 respectively), putting the *De* section first and the *Dao* section second. Additionally, several chapters are “out of order” when compared with the received text: (a) chapters 80 and 81 come between chapters 66 and 67, (b) chapter 40 comes between chapters 41 and 42, and (c) chapter 24 comes between chapters 21 and 22. It should be noted that both the MWD *Laozi* texts do not contain chapter numbers and the limited “punctuation” in the MWD texts generally does not allow for clear chapter delineations. However, black dots in one part of text A appear to denote some chapter divisions. These chapter divisions mostly, but not always, agree with those of the received text.

The Present Study

The present study attempts to treat systematically certain thematic differences between the GD and MWD *Laozi* texts. Although the literature on the GD *Laozi* is already very large, I have not found very many treatments of these thematic differences. Among the suggestions which have been made on this subject are the following.

Yin Zhenhuan’s 尹振環 book, which is a collection of his essays comparing the GD and MWD texts, in some cases presumes that the GD *Laozi*, as the earliest manuscript, is most authentic and thus can be used to correct mistakes in the later MWD

and received versions (Yin, *Chujian yu Boshu*). I examine this and other assumptions about *Laozi* textual filiation in chapter 2.

One of Tang Mingbang's 唐明邦 reasons for believing that the GD *Laozi* is a selection from a longer text is that Laozi's biography in the *Shiji* 史記 refers to a 5,000 character *Laozi*, while the GD *Laozi* is only about 2,000 characters. Tang finds that each of the three GD *Laozi* bundles has a theme and so were selected for their content (Tang, *Zhujian Laozi*, 429-435). I find his suggestion intriguing, although I am not entirely convinced by Tang's themes.

Taninaka Nobuichi argues that in comparison with the GD *Laozi* the later MWD texts are systematically more critical of Ruist concepts. Another important point made by Taninaka is that while the GD text does contain information on the Dao 道 it does not emphasize the Dao 道 as a creative force, as the received text does (Taninaka, *Cong Guodian Laozi*, 440). I regard his point about the *Dao* 道 as significant, and my own research on the GD *Laozi* recognizes and expands on a similar idea.

Zhou Anhua also argues that the 道 *Dao* is described differently in the GD *Laozi* on the one hand, and the MWD and received *Laozi* texts on the other. He concludes that the later versions of the *Laozi* make the *Dao* more powerful and mystical than in the GD *Laozi* (Zhou, *Chujian Boshu*, 191-193).

The GD *Laozi* sometimes lacks material present in the MWD *Laozi* texts (and the generally similar received texts); the reverse never occurs. Most of the thematic differences noticed above are due to this factor. In a smaller number of cases, thematic differences may be detected in lines that are present in the GD and MWD A and B texts.

The line differences may be shown to be similar in character to the differences resulting from material absent in the GD *Laozi*, but present in the MWD *Laozi*. The thematic differences I will discuss are as follows:

- 1) MWD texts are more critical of war, warfare, and weaponry than the GD *Laozi*
- 2) MWD texts describe the entities *Dao* 道, and *chang* 常 as systematically more powerful than does the GD *Laozi*.

In chapter 2, I discuss how I will approach the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts. Since there are missing or damaged segments for each of these texts, such a discussion is necessary. I also explore the potential relationships between these versions of the *Laozi* and the main stream of *Laozi* textual transmission. Finally, I discuss what can be gleaned about chapter divisions by comparing differences in chapter ordering among the GD, MWD, and received *Laozi* texts.

Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate the evidence for what I believe to be differences between the GD *Laozi* and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts on the topics of war, Dao 道, and 常 *chang* (constant).

Chapter 5 explores the relationship between thematic differences in the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts and their social, political, cultural and military contexts. Although a scarcity of reliable sources makes understanding the historical contexts from these time periods challenging, I believe that the examination of historical context is an important step towards understanding the *Laozi*.

CHAPTER 2

TEXT EXAMINATION

In this chapter I discuss how I will approach the unreadable portions in the GD *Laozi* and the relationship of the GD *Laozi* to the MWD *Laozi* texts and the main line of textual transmission. I conclude that using the MWD *Laozi* texts to fill in for GD *Laozi* lacunae is the best possible method. Although the available evidence makes reaching an absolute conclusion problematic, I believe it is most likely that the GD *Laozi* was selected from a longer, but not yet complete, *Laozi* text.

Secondly, I discuss how I handle the MWD texts when one or both of them have lacunae and the relationship of these two texts to each other and the main line of textual transmission. In agreement with William Boltz, I believe it is most likely that the two MWD *Laozi* texts were independently derived from a common ancestor. I conclude that it is most probable that the MWD A and B texts are derivative from the main line of textual transmission and that adherence to chapter ordering in the main stream of *Laozi* textual transmission became progressively firmer over time.

Lastly, I discuss what might be gleaned about *Laozi* chapter divisions by examining chapter sequencing in the GD, MWD and received *Laozi* texts. I believe that this discussion shows many received *Laozi* text chapter divisions as applicable as early as the MWD *Laozi* compilation. I conclude that some received text chapters were formerly more than one chapter and a very small number of received text chapters were formerly combined to form a single chapter.

The GD Text

The robbery of Guodian Chu Tomb Number One: The tomb was robbed before archeologists excavated it and discovered the GD *Laozi* and other texts. It may be argued that a discussion of the nature of the GD *Laozi* cannot be accurate because some GD *Laozi* bamboo slips may have been stolen from the tomb. Under this scenario we may not have the complete *Laozi* text that was sealed in the tomb at Guodian.

However, the evidence strongly suggests that no *Laozi* slips were stolen from the tomb prior to excavation. First, there are the “units” of slips within each bundle. A “unit” consists of a number of slips that we know run consecutively because the writing on the bottom of one slip continues at the top of another slip. A bundle consists of multiple “units,” whose association rests upon the conclusion that all of their slips were originally bound together in a single bundle. The last slip in a “unit” will have a blank space at the bottom of the slip following the last character of the last line. This indicates the end of a “unit.” Although all of the GD bamboo slips were found in a disordered heap immersed in mud in the GD tomb, we may confidently assume that “units” which were bound together consist of bamboo slips of the same length, with the same shape, and with binding marks in the same places. We do not know the original order of the units within each bundle.

None of the eleven units that consist of multiple slips⁷ appear to be missing any slips. Never among these slips is a line cut off in the middle, even though lines often begin towards the bottom of one slip and finish at the top of another. In every case a unit begins at the top of a slip with the beginning of a line at the start of a “chapter” and runs

⁷ There is only one unit with only one slip: what has been labeled unit 3 in Bundle A, consists of the first part of received text *Laozi* chapter 16.

through to the end of a line on the last slip in that unit. This very strongly suggests that the *Laozi* bamboo slips that were discovered in the tomb at GD are the complete cache of those that were interred over 2,000 years ago. I find no evidence that bamboo slips are missing from the Guodian *Laozi*.

How I treat unreadable portions in the GD *Laozi* text: There are characters in the GD text which are illegible because the bamboo slips have deteriorated or otherwise been damaged. In most cases where the GD manuscript is illegible, analogous sections of the two MWD manuscripts agree on a reading that uses the appropriate number of characters that are illegible in the corresponding GD section in the same or a strongly similar context. In most cases in which the GD and MWD *Laozi* texts are both present and readable, the texts do match. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that when the GD *Laozi* manuscript is unreadable, the illegible sections most likely originally had the same characters we find in the corresponding MWD *Laozi* manuscripts. When the Wang Bi and Heshanggong versions also agree this strengthens the argument. Of course, we cannot be 100% sure of the GD reading under this scenario, but I believe the above guidelines represent the best possibility of arriving at the most plausible conclusion.

The Relationship of the GD *Laozi* to the MWD and Received Texts

What is the textual relationship of the Guodian *Laozi* to the Mawangdui texts A and B and later versions of the *Laozi*? Does the GD *Laozi* represent a selection from a longer text? Was the GD *Laozi* a complete text at the time of its compilation, with other sections added by later compilers?

The Possibilities: Four main possibilities are generally considered for the relationship of the GD *Laozi* to the main line of *Laozi* textual transmission.

First, it is possible that the GD *Laozi* represents selections from an approximately 5,000 character *Laozi*. Under this proposition an original *Laozi* was compiled at a single time, or during a span of time, prior to the GD version in approximately 5,000 characters, as reported in the *Shiji* (*Shiji*, 37), reflecting the traditional attitude towards the *Laozi* text.

Second, there is the possibility that the GD *Laozi* is a selection from a *Laozi* text that at the time of selection had not yet reached its approximately 5,000-character maturity. E. Bruce Brooks points out that there are no selections from chapters 67- 81 of the received text included with the GD *Laozi*. If the 31 GD *Laozi* chapters were included in an 81 chapter text it is remarkable that no selections from chapters 67-81 were selected. Allowing for the possibility that a statistically reasonable number of chapters beyond 67 were available, but not selected, Brooks concludes that chapters 70-81 had not yet been composed at the time of GD compilation.⁸

Third, there is the possibility that since what we consider to be the GD *Laozi* material was in three separate bundles that these bundles were not considered to be a single text, but rather three texts. The three bundles, like all other texts recovered from the Guodian tomb, lack titles. The title *Laozi* or *Dao De Jing* is only applied because of the bundles' association with the text that is later given these names.

Fourth, it is possible that the GD *Laozi* is an early and complete version of the *Laozi*. Under this hypothesis the *Laozi* at the time of GD only had approximately 2,000

⁸ E. Bruce Brooks, personal communication, 31 March, 2006.

characters. The received 5,000 character *Laozi* would have developed out of the 2,000 character version discovered at Guodian.

Many discussions of the GD *Laozi* assume possibilities one or four. For example, Yin Zhenhuan's 尹振環 (Yin, *Chujian*) book at times assumes that the GD *Laozi*, as the earliest manuscript, is most authentic and thus can be used to correct mistakes in the later MWD and received versions. This model assumes the GD *Laozi* to be a direct ancestor of the MWD texts, and thus coincides with possibility four above. While Yin makes thoughtful comparisons between the GD and MWD *Laozi* texts, at times he implicitly relies on a model of textual transmission that posits a linear, vertical line of textual transmission between the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts. However, his work, like many others on the subject, doesn't present a case for his assumed model of textual transmission. Determining the most likely textual relationship of the GD *Laozi* to the MWD A and B and received text versions is crucial to the study of the *Laozi*.

Examination of Possibilities: I will first examine possibility one. What is the evidence for an original approximately 5,000 character *Laozi*? The evidence I have seen for this assertion comes from two sources: that the MWD and received versions of the *Laozi* have approximately 5,000 characters and secondly, the “Laozi Liezhuan” 老子列傳 of the *Shiji* 史記 (*The Records of the Recorder*).

The argument that the GD *Laozi* must have been selected from an approximately 5,000 character text because the *Shiji* writes of a 5,000 character *Laozi* is not sound. While the *Laozi* at the time of *Shiji* compilation had about 5,000 characters, the *Shiji*, probably completed around 90 BCE, was written several centuries after the GD *Laozi* compilation. The section on Laozi contains other information that would make us

question its reliability, such as including three different possibilities for the identity of the putative author, Laozi, and the probability that Laozi lived more than 160 years, with some people claiming he lived more than 200 years (*Shiji*, 35-44).

It is true that the MWD and received versions of the *Laozi* have approximately 5,000 characters. However, this does not exclude an earlier version containing fewer characters. The GD *Laozi* has only approximately 2,000 characters, but it is also the earliest known version of the *Laozi*.

I have not encountered strong evidence for the argument that there must have been an original *Laozi* in 5,000 characters from which the GD *Laozi* draws its text.

As mentioned in possibility two, there is an argument for the existence of a *Laozi* consisting of chapters 1 or 2-70 at the time of GD. Because the GD *Laozi* contains no material from chapters 67-81, but selects randomly from chapters 2-66, this argument suggests that chapters 70-81, and possibly chapter 1, did not exist at the time of GD. There is nothing I have discovered semantically or linguistically in the content of chapters 70-81 that would lead me to believe that they were excluded for other reasons.

The absence of chapters 67-81 in the GD *Laozi* is another argument against the idea of an original 5,000 character *Laozi* at the time of the GD version.⁹

Do the three GD bundles represent three separate texts or a single text in three parts? As indicated in the above, we know that the Guodian *Laozi* material was bound in three separate bundles.

It might be thought that there were too many slips in the GD *Laozi* text for them all to be bound together in one bundle, and therefore they were bound in three bundles.

⁹ However, by the times of MWD *Laozi* text A and B we know that the *Laozi* had approximately 5,000 characters. It thus seems probable that an approximately 5,000 character *Laozi* must have existed some years or decades before 194 BCE.

However, this possibility is easily refuted when we discover that, based on slip lengths and location of binding marks, other individual bundles of different texts at Guodian Chu Tomb Number One contained many more slips than all three of the Guodian *Laozi* bundles together. While *Laozi* bundles A, B, and C had 39, 18, and 28 slips respectively, the *Yu Cong Yi* 語叢一 *Collected Sayings [Number] One*, which consisted of one single bundle, has 112 bamboo slips, more than all three *Laozi* bundles. Other of the Guodian text bundles also have more slips than all three of the *Laozi* bundles. Thus, there must be some other reason beyond considerations of bulk for the three bundles, which we think of as approximately 40% of the received *Laozi* text, being separately bound.

I believe that the three bundles found at Guodian represent selections from a single text. My first reason for this concerns the systematic differences between the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts and the GD *Laozi* on the topics of warfare and the entities Dao 道, and Chang 常. These systematic differences are apparent throughout all three GD bundles and are not specific to only one or two of them. It is less likely that three distinct texts would share this commonality. This seems to indicate that the three bundles should be read as derived from one text, rather than as three separate texts.

If we are to consider the three Guodian bundles as three separate texts, each in its original order, then we must produce an awkward line of logic to explain why a later compiler would (1) change the order of the chapters within the three texts, (2) intermix chapters from the three texts, and (3) intersperse various chapters from other sources all in a single text.

As the three GD *Laozi* bundles probably represented a single text in the mind of the tomb occupant and his contemporaries, then there should be some reason for its

division. The reason for division into three bundles may or may not be knowable.

However, successfully identifying a theme for each bundle would provide a principle of selection for the three bundles from a longer *Laozi* text.

Tang Mingbang 唐明邦 suggests the following: bundle A focuses on 無為 non-action, 無欲 not having desires, 居下 taking the lesser position, and 不爭 not competing. Bundle B concerns lessening private interest, having few desires, and self cultivation. Bundle C concerns the theory that “the Dao takes as its exemplar that which is of itself” 道法自然 (Tang, “Zhujiang,” 430-31). Wang Bo 王博 believes bundle B focuses on self cultivation and bundle C on matters of ruling the state (Allan and Williams, *Proceedings*, 154).

There may have been other reasons for the division into three bundles, such as for teachings purposes or for some personal reason of the tomb occupant that we cannot know. I suggest the possibility of a second level of selection: the “units” within each bundle. Following are the themes as I see them for each unit:

Bundle A unit 1 (chapters 19, 66, 46, 30, 15, 64, 37, 63, 2, and 32):¹⁰ Promote not going to excess, taking the lesser position, and non-action 無為.

Bundle A unit 2 (chapters 25 and 5): Concern Heaven, Earth and cosmology.

Bundle A unit 3 (chapter 16): Perhaps focuses on meditation.

¹⁰ All chapter numbers according to the received text.

Bundle A unit 4 (chapters 64, 56, and 57): Center around acting, speaking, and non-involvement in affairs.

Bundle A unit 5 (chapters 55, 44, 40 and 9): Describe how to avoid physical harm, loss of material possessions, or loss of reputation.

Bundle B unit 1 (chapters 59, 48, 20, and 13): Promote submitting, decreasing, and conservation.

Bundle B unit 2 (chapter 41): Concerns the Dao 道 and *De* 德.

Bundle B unit 3 (chapters 52, 45, and 54): Concerns self cultivation/introspection.

Bundle C units 1-3 (material from received chapters 17 and 18, 35, and 31): Concern how those of the ruling class should act and be seen by the people. It is also possible that chapters 17 and 18, 35, and 31 comprise three separate units with separate themes.

Bundle C unit 4 is another version of part 2 of received chapter 64. It seems likely that these two versions of chapter 64 were copied from two different earlier *Laozi* texts.

Taiyi Shengshui 太一生水 (not found in the MWD or received *Laozi* texts) describes cosmology.

I suggest these themes as starting points for further exploration.

It is thus possible that the GD *Laozi* compiler organized the *Laozi* into units according to something like the themes I outline above. Each bundle also may have had an overarching theme. Could it be that the Guodian Chu Tomb Number One tomb occupant, who many scholars suspect to have been the tutor to the heir apparent, organized the *Laozi* into these themes for use as teaching material?

In the chapters 3 and 4 on war and powerful entities I discuss how the GD *Laozi* is systematically more accepting of the inevitability of warfare, and how the entities Dao 道 and *Chang* 常 “Constant” are given less prominent roles in the GD *Laozi* than in the MWD *Laozi*.

Immediately obvious in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts is the greater number of chapters that include a powerful, mystical or cosmological Dao 道. The following chapters which include a Dao that is often more powerful than the Dao in the GD *Laozi* are present in the MWD text chapters 2-70, but not in the GD text: 4, 8, 14, 21, 23, 24, 34, 38, 42, 47, 51, 53, 60, 62, and 65.

There are a number of chapters included in the MWD *Laozi*, but not present in the GD *Laozi*, which discuss a powerful feminine entity, such as chapters 6, 10, 28, and 61.

Third, there is a group of MWD and received chapters that contain material that may have been offensive to the GD *Laozi*'s ruling class audience. Those chapters that contain material potentially offensive to the ruling class are 12, 26, 29, 58, 67, 68.

Lastly, among chapters found in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts, but not found in the GD *Laozi*, are several which describe a cosmologically powerful “One” *yi* 一. These are chapters 10, 14, 22, 39, and 42.

This leaves only eleven chapters of a 2-70 chapter *Laozi* unaccounted for by the above mentioned themes: 3, 7, 11, 27, 33, 36, 43, 49, 50, 69, and 70 (16%). In sum, the great majority of lines and chapters that are present in the 2-70 chapter MWD *Laozi*, but are not present in the GD *Laozi* can be placed into a small number of categories, broadly concerning certain positions on war and powerful or cosmological entities.

Were those lines and chapters present in the MWD *Laozi* chapters 2-70, but not present in the GD *Laozi* more likely subtracted by the GD *Laozi* compiler or added by a later compiler?

Conclusion: I think it is most probable that the GD *Laozi* material was selected from a 1 or 2-70 chapter *Laozi* text. The GD compiler could have selected material from the longer text based on the themes I have outlined above, and organized it according to something like the units I have described. It is more probable that a text will move from lesser to greater thematic order.

The MWD A and B Texts

There were two versions of the *Laozi* discovered at Mawangdui, MWD text A and text B. Both of these have damaged or otherwise illegible sections. Considering these conditions, how should we approach a comparison of the GD *Laozi* with the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts?

Most often the two MWD *Laozi* texts are similar or the same. However, there are some places with potentially significant differences. When possible, I choose to compare the GD *Laozi* with both MWD texts. However, when one of the texts is unreadable I think it is most reasonable to adopt readings from the other text because these two

versions of the *Laozi* are so similar. When both of the MWD texts are unreadable I adopt readings from the received text.

There are four possible relationships between readings in the two MWD texts: (1) the two MWD readings are the same, (2) text A is readable, but text B is unreadable because the silk has been damaged (2a) text B is readable, but text A is not, (3) both texts are readable, but the two readings differ and (4) neither text A nor text B is readable because the silk has been damaged.

(1): When the two MWD texts agree on a reading this reading will be used for comparison with the GD *Laozi*. This is the most common case.

(2) and (2a): When one of the two MWD *Laozi* texts is legible, but the other is not, then the legible text will be used to fill in for the illegible one. This rule is reasonable because when both texts A and B are readable the two texts are mostly the same or strongly similar. Those sections for which both texts are legible act as a control test, informing us by the high frequency of sameness or similarity between the two texts, that this method for filling in for illegible portions of one of the texts is reasonable.

Of course, when one text is unreadable we cannot be 100% sure of its reading. However, I believe the method outlined above will produce the most probable result. I will sometimes note when the Wang Bi 王弼 and/or Heshanggong 河上公 *Laozi* texts¹¹ also agree with the reading from the legible MWD text that is being substituted for the unreadable or illegible MWD text. When the legible MWD *Laozi* text agrees with both the Wang Bi and Heshanggong versions, this increases the probability that we are inserting the correct reading for the damaged or otherwise illegible text.

¹¹ The Wang Bi 王弼 and Heshanggong 河上公 *Laozi* texts are the two most common received *Laozi* texts.

(3): When MWD *Laozi* text A and text B are both legible and have significant differences, I will translate both readings and compare them both with the GD *Laozi*. The following two lines from MWD *Laozi* chapter number 46 (all chapter numbers are according to the received text) will provide an example of this rule. The symbol “□” indicates a place in a manuscript where the character is unknown because the silk has been damaged, deteriorated or is otherwise illegible. The number of □’s indicates the most likely number of illegible characters. A blank space indicates no character was ever present:

MWDA	天	下	無	道	戎	馬	生	於	郊
MWD B			□	道	戎	馬	生	於	郊

Text A: When Under Heaven lacks the Dao, then warhorses are raised in the suburbs of the city

Text B: When lacking the Dao, warhorses are raised in the suburbs of the city¹²

When the two MWD *Laozi* texts have a difference that in my judgment does not significantly change the meaning of the text I will note the difference, produce one translation, and compare it with the GD *Laozi*. This line from chapter 31 is one example:

MWD A	故	兵	者	非	君	子	之	器	也
MWD B	故	兵	者	非	君	子	之	器	

“Therefore, weapons are not the tools of the Gentleman”

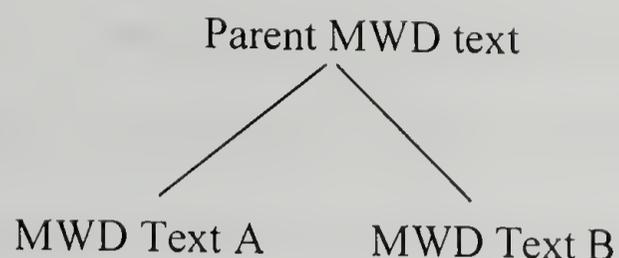
¹² According to rule #2 above, we fill in *wu* 無 for the illegible character in text B.

In my judgment *ye* 也 in this case does not add significant additional meaning. I produce one translation, but note the difference between the two texts to provide readers with the opportunity to judge these two readings for themselves.

(4) The most difficult case is when neither MWD text A nor text B is legible because the silk on both texts has been damaged. Fortunately, such instances are rare. In the case where both texts are illegible I use readings from the received Wang Bi 王弼 and Heshanggong 河上公 texts. When applying this rule I note the degree of similarity of the context surrounding the unreadable sections in the MWD text with the Wang Bi and Heshanggong texts. When the MWD lines surrounding the illegible section are the same or strongly similar to the Wang Bi and Heshanggong versions, this indicates that my rule is highly plausible. If the contexts for an unreadable MWD section are not similar to the Wang Bi or Heshanggong texts, then we are less sure that this method produces the correct reading, and may need to develop another approach to the problem. This rule is the least exact of the four suggested. When this rule is applied it will always be noted.

The Relationship of the MWD texts A and B to each other and to the Main Line of Textual Transmission

William Boltz employs methods of textual criticism in an attempt to determine for each reading the most authentic or earliest version (Boltz, “Textual,” 165-224). Below is an oversimplified representation of the *stemma codicum* for the relationship between the MWD *Laozi* texts and their parent that which Boltz presents in his article:



In some cases Boltz considers MWD A to be more like the parent MWD text, and in others he considers MWD B to be more like the parent MWD. As a result, he considers them to be independently derived from the parent text. Boltz makes an interesting case for his conclusion and it does seem as if the two MWD texts may have been derived independently from a source text.

The main difference between the MWD versions of the *Laozi* and the received text is that both of the MWD texts reverse the Dao 道 (chapters 1-37 in the received text) and *De* 德 (38-81 in the received text) sections of the text, putting the *De* section first and the Dao section second. Additionally, several chapters are “out of order” when compared with the received text.¹³

The chapter ordering in MWD A and B is the same. Is the order of the chapters in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts the original chapter order with the later received version changing the chapter order? Does the received text contain the original chapter order with the MWD versions as an off-shoot from a main line of textual transmission? Were both a Dao-*De* version and a *De*-Dao version in existence at the time(s) of MWD compilation, with only the Dao-*De* strain coming down to us as the received text version?

¹³ Chapters 80 and 81 come between chapters 66 and 67, chapter 40 comes between chapters 41 and 42, and chapter 24 comes between chapters 21 and 22. With the exception of one part of text A, the MWD *Laozi* does not contain chapter numbers and the limited “punctuation” in the MWD texts generally does not allow for explicit chapter delineations. The apparent chapter divisions in text A mostly, but not always, agree with the received text.

Conclusion: I tend to think that at the times of GD and MWD compilation adherence to the mainstream received text chapter ordering was becoming progressively more strict until it finally stabilized. Perhaps as the *Laozi* text gained prominence, departure from the mainstream ordering of the chapters and larger Dao and *De* sections became less likely.

The MWD A and B *Laozi* texts and the *De*-Dao sequence may belong to a dead-end branch from the main line of *Laozi* textual transmission. There are no extant *Laozi* texts or commentaries that I know of which have the *De* section first and the Dao section second.

Significantly, the *De* section contains more chapters on governance, while the Dao section has more chapters related to the nature of the Dao and self-cultivation. This, or other reasons, may have been the impetus for the differences in the order between the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts and the received text.

Chapter Divisions:

Neither the GD *Laozi* nor MWD A or B *Laozi* (with the possible exception of one part of text A) consistently indicate chapter divisions. In the following, I discuss what can be gleaned about chapter divisions from comparing the GD, MWD A and B and received *Laozi* texts.

Many received text chapter divisions are confirmed because the chapters as whole units are found in different contexts in the GD *Laozi* and the MWD *Laozi* texts.¹⁴ For example, in the MWD texts chapter 2 comes between chapters 1 and 3. In the GD *Laozi* chapter 2 comes between chapters 63 and 32. Because chapter 2 has been moved as a

¹⁴ The chapter ordering of MWD texts A and B are the same.

complete unit it is reasonable to conclude that it was considered an integral unit, which I will here call a chapter, at the very latest by the times of MWD A and B compilation.

Other chapters that are confirmed because they occur as whole units in different contexts in the GD and MWD texts are 9, 13, 19, 25, 32, 35, 37, 40, 41, 44, 45, 54, 59, and 66.

This can be compared with two received text chapters that occur next to each other in the GD, MWD and received *Laozi* texts. Received text chapters 17 and 18 occur sequentially in Bundle C unit 1 of the GD *Laozi*. Chapters 56 and 57 occur sequentially in Bundle A unit 4 of the GD *Laozi*.

There is strong internal evidence that chapters 17 and 18 were considered one chapter at the time of GD compilation. Received text chapters 17 and 18 read as follows in the GD *Laozi*. The dotted line indicates the received text chapter division between chapters 17 and 18:

1. 太上下知有之

As for he who is utmost, those below know that there is such a one

2. 其次親譽之

As for he who is a place below him, people personally praise him

3. 其次畏之

As for he who is another place below, people fear him

4. 其次侮之

As for he who is another place below, people slander him

5. 信不足安有不信

When trust is insufficient, how can there be distrust?

6. 猶乎其貴言也

Be Attentive! To these valuable words

7. 成事遂功

Having accomplished tasks and achieved success

8. 而百姓曰我自然也

The common people say “I am this way on my own”

9. 故大道廢安有仁義

Thus, when the Great Dao is abolished how can there be humanity and righteousness?

10. 六親不和安有孝慈

When the six relations are not in harmony how can there be filial piety and compassion?

11. 邦家昏□安有正臣

When the state and family are in disorder □, how can there be upright officials?

Line 9 in the GD version (received text chapter 18, line 1) begins with the word “thus” *gu* 故 indicating a continuation from the previous lines. The received text versions, in which line 9 is the first line of chapter 18, do not include the word *gu* “thus.” Considering this internal evidence, it is very likely that at the time of GD compilation, received text chapters 17 and 18 were regarded as a single chapter and that they were later separated into two.

Chapters 56 and 57 present a different set of circumstances. There are no linguistic features, such as the word *gu* “thus” between received text chapters 17 and 18, which would indicate that chapters 56 and 57 should have been read as one. On the contrary, a black box, which is used on the GD bamboo slips apparently to indicate division, is found between chapters 56 and 57. Moreover, a black dot, which indicates some type of division, is found between the two chapters in MWD text A.¹⁵ It seems more likely that chapters 56 and 57 were two chapters at the time of GD that were coincidentally placed next to each other. The distinctions in the semantic content of these two chapters supports this conclusion.

Several chapters that are found in the GD *Laozi* do not neatly fit the reordering criteria outlined above, because lines from the beginning or the end of these chapters as they exist in the received text version are not found in the GD version. It is thus possible that (1) the missing lines from the beginning or end of these chapters constituted separate units that were not chosen for inclusion with the GD *Laozi*, (2) that these sections did form part of the chapter, but were excised by the GD compiler for some other reason or (3) that these lines were added post-GD. These twelve chapters are: 5, 15, 16, 20, 30, 31, 46, 48, 52, 55, 63, and 64. These cases are more difficult to conclusively resolve than our previous examples.

Among these twelve chapters are seven that look as if they may have been considered more than one chapter at the time of the GD compilation. These are chapters 64, 46, 63, 5, 20, 52, and 30.

The easiest of these to analyze is chapter 64. The first part of what we later think of as chapter 64 is found in unit 4 in bundle A. One version of the second part of chapter

¹⁵ The dots are not found in MWD text B.

64 is found in the middle of bundle A, unit 1 while another version of the second part of chapter 64 is found in bundle C, unit 4.¹⁶ Because received text chapter 64 is never present entire at any point in the GD *Laozi* we may infer that it was considered two chapters at the time of GD compilation. The differences in semantic content between the two portions of chapter 64 support this conclusion.

Received text chapter 46 appears to have been more than one chapter at the time of MWD compilation. The chapter in MWD texts A and B reads as follows. Lines that are present in some form in the GD *Laozi* have an asterisk next to their number.

1.

MWD A	天	下	有	道	□	走	馬	以	糞
MWB B	□	□	□	道	卻	走	馬	□	糞

When Under Heaven has the Dao, then running horses are only used to make excrement
[for fertilizer]

2.

MWDA	天	下	無	道	戎	馬	生	於	郊
MWD B			□	道	戎	馬	生	於	郊

Text A: When Under Heaven lacks the Dao, then warhorses are raised in the suburbs of
the city

Text B: When lacking the Dao, warhorses are raised in the suburbs of the city

¹⁶ The second part of chapter 64 is the only portion of text that appears more than once in the GD *Laozi*.

*3.

MWD A	罪	莫	大	於	可	欲
MWD B	罪	莫	大		可	欲

No offense is greater than that which can be desired

*4.

MWD A	(禍)	莫	大	於	不	知	足
MWD B	禍	<input type="checkbox"/>					

No disaster is greater than not knowing when you have enough

*5.

MWD A	咎	莫	憚	於	欲	得
MWD B	<input type="checkbox"/>					

No fault is more ruthless than the desire to gain

*6.¹⁷

MWD A	<input type="checkbox"/>				
MWD B	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Recognizing enough as enough

*7.

MWD A	恆	足	矣
MWB B	<input type="checkbox"/>	足	矣

Is to constantly have enough

The first two lines can be considered semantically distinct from the last five.

Strengthening this semantic argument, MWD text A includes a black dot between lines 2 and 3. The black dot between lines 2 and 3 in MWD text A, along with the absence of

¹⁷ These lines are supplied from the Wang Bi and Heshanggong texts. In this case the context of the surrounding MWD lines is very strongly similar to the Wang Bi and Heshanggong texts.

lines 1 and 2 from the GD text, indicates that received text chapter 46 was most likely more than one “chapter,” divided into lines 1-2 and 3-7 at the time of MWD compilation.

The arguments for chapters 64 and 46 are relatively secure. The arguments for chapters 63, 5, 20, and 30 are less so. For these four chapters we will have to rely more heavily on semantic evidence and we will only be able to conclude that they may have been more than one chapter. Semantic content does not provide conclusive evidence on chapter divisions as different readers can weight it differently.

As for chapter 63, the received text version has 15 lines, but the GD version only includes lines 1-4 followed directly by lines 12-15. From the semantic content it appears that lines 1-4 and 12-15 could have been regarded as separate chapters at the time of GD and MWD compilations. I thus conclude that chapter 63 may have been more than one chapter.

What we later think of as chapter 5 may have been more than one chapter at the times of GD or MWD A and B compilations. Here are the first four lines of chapter 5 as they are found in MWD texts A and B. The GD *Laozi* does not contain these first four lines.

1. 天地不仁

Heaven and Earth are not humane

2. 以萬物為芻狗

They take the ten thousand things as straw dogs

3. 聖人不仁

The sage is not humane

4. 以百姓為芻狗

He takes the common people as straw dogs

In the received text these initial four lines are followed by four more. These latter four lines are the only four found in the GD *Laozi* from this chapter:

5. 天地之間

Between Heaven and Earth

6. 其猶橐籥與

Is it not like a bellows?

7. 虛而不屈

Insubstantial, yet inexhaustible

8. 動而愈出

Work it and it comes forth all the more

Received text chapter 5 concludes with two lines that are found in MWD A and B *Laozi* texts but not in the GD *Laozi*:

9. 多聞數窮

To hear much results in inevitable exhaustion

10. 不如守於中

It is not as good as holding fast to the center

In the case of received text chapter 5, lines 1-4, which are not included in the GD *Laozi*, could possibly be seen as a separate section from lines 5-8, which are found in the

GD *Laozi*. D.C. Lau sees “no connexion between the two passages other than the fact that they are both about ‘heaven and earth.’” (Lau, *Tao Te Ching*, 166). He thus sees them as two separate passages that were placed next to each other because they had one or two catchwords, “heaven” and “earth,” in common. I have some reservations as to whether we can know how much semantic cohesion was enough to form a chapter. It is plausible that received text chapter 5 could have been considered more than one chapter at the times of MWD compilation.

Received text chapter 20 may also have been more than one chapter at the times of GD and MWD compilations. Only the first part of this chapter, the first seven lines, is found in the GD *Laozi*. The second part, the last 19 lines, which appears to be on a different topic, is absent. The first seven lines may have constituted one chapter while the last 19 constituted another.

Chapter 52 was also likely more than one unit at the times of MWD compilation. In this case the GD *Laozi* contains only lines 5-10 of the 15 line chapter. There are appreciable semantic differences between lines 1-4, 5-10, and 11-15. In MWD text A there is a black dot between lines 4 and 5, thus increasing the likelihood that received text chapter 52 could have been more than a single chapter at that time.

Finally, chapter 30 may have been more than one chapter at the time of MWD compilation. The final line of chapter 30 in the GD *Laozi* reads:

其事好长

Such matters are good and endure

In the MWD texts this line is not found at this place in the chapter. Rather it appears to have been moved to an earlier part of the chapter and altered. The three lines that conclude the chapter in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts, which are not found in the GD *Laozi*, are:

1. 物壯而老

When things become robust they then become old

2.

MWD A	是	胃	之	不	道
MWD B		胃	之	不	道

This is called not following the Way

3. 不道蚤已

That which does not follow the Way will come to an early end

These last three lines may have been considered a separate chapter from the rest of chapter 30.

According to this reasoning received text chapters 64 and 46 were each two units at the time of GD. Chapters 5, 20, 40, 46, and 52 were each plausibly two or more individual units.

What about the other five chapters that could not be confirmed because they are not included in their entirety in the GD *Laozi*? These are chapters 15, 16, 31, 48, and 55.

Examining the semantic content of these five chapters supports the proposition that they were considered as whole chapters. Chapter 15 is a rather clear example. The last line in the GD *Laozi* for this chapter reads:

保此道者不欲尚盈

Those who hold close to this Dao do not desire to be overly full

The next line of chapter 15 from the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts, the last line in the chapter, reads as follows:

MWD A	□	以	能	□	□	□	成
MWD B	是	以	能	敝	而	不	成

Because of this they can become old, but never fully ripen

This last line appears to be semantically connected with the line before it.

Therefore, I conclude that chapter 15 should probably be confirmed with its received text chapter divisions at least by the times of MWD compilation.

Chapter 31 reads as follows in the MWD text with the lines found in the GD *Laozi* including an asterisk: “As for weapons, they are tools of ill omen/ As for such things, some hate them/ Therefore, those with desires do not dwell in them/*When the Gentleman administers affairs he values the left / *When [the Gentleman] uses military means he values the right / Therefore, weapons are not the tool of the Gentleman/*Thus, weapons are tools of ill omen/ *When using them cannot be avoided, reverence and respect should be utmost/ *Do not make them into objects of attraction.”

Based on semantic content, it is plausible that the MWD lines were intended to be read with the lines that followed them and not as part of a separate unit.

This case is further strengthened if we look at the lines immediately preceding the first two lines in the MWD versions. Because the MWD *Laozi* texts were written on silk, as opposed to bamboo strips, we can be certain of the order of the MWD *Laozi*, and thus know for certain the preceding lines. The MWD *Laozi* lines immediately preceding the

two lines read: “When things become robust they then become old/ This is called not following the Way/ That which does not follow the Way will come to an early end.”

There is no indication that the first two lines from MWD chapter 31 were read as a group with these three lines that precede them in MWD A and B. We can also reasonably assume that based on semantic content, the first two lines probably were read with the lines that follow them as a chapter. Therefore, it is plausible to count chapter 31 as a whole chapter.

The GD *Laozi* contains lines 1-6 of chapter 16, while the MWD A and B texts contain the entire 18 line chapter. The 18 lines have a cohesion from which we may infer that they were meant to be considered as a single unit in the MWD *Laozi*. Lines that are present only in the GD version carry an asterisk:

*1. 至虛極也

Ultimate insubstantiality is the limit

*2.

MWD A	守	情	表	也
MWD B	守	靜	督	也

Text A: Abide by the surface of tranquility

Text B: Abide by the center of tranquility

*3. 萬物旁作

The 10,000 things arise on the periphery

*4. 吾以觀其復也

I observe their reiteration

*5. 天物雲雲

Heaven's things are great in number

*6. 各復歸於其根

Each repeatedly returns to its root.

7. 曰靜

This is called tranquility

8. 靜是胃復命

Tranquility: this refers to returning to what is divinely ordained

9. 復命常也

Returning to what is divinely ordained is the Constant

10. 知常明也

To know the Constant is to be illumined

11.

MWD A	不	知	常	妄
MWD B	不	知	常	芒

Text A: Not knowing the Constant [常] is to be confused

Text B: Not knowing the Constant [常] is to be frustrated

12.

MWD A	妄	作	兇
MWD B	芒	作	凶

Text A: In confusion you will commit atrocities

Text B: In frustration you will commit atrocities

13. 知常容

Knowing the Constant you will be accepting

14. 容乃公

If accepting, then just

15. 公乃王

If just, then kingly

16. 王乃天

If kingly, then heavenly

17. 天乃道

If heavenly, then Dao-like

18.

MWD A	道	乃	勿	身	不	怠
MWD B	道	乃	沒	身	不	殆

Text A: Abiding by the Dao results in being free from neglect all the way till your life is exhausted

Text B: Abiding by the Dao results in being free from danger all the way till your life is exhausted

Line 7, “This is called Tranquility,” the first line not included in the GD *Laozi*, is clearly connected by the lines preceding it and would not be the first line in a new chapter or section. The lines following line 7 flow smoothly from “Tranquility” to “returning to what is divinely ordained,” to the Constant and from the Constant to lines 10-18, which are clearly connected. It is nearly certain that at the times of MWD *Laozi* A and B compilation these 18 lines were intended to be read as a single section.

Chapter 55 provides another good example of a chapter that was probably considered a complete chapter by the times of MWD compilation at the latest. The last two lines as they are found in the GD *Laozi* read

物壯而老

When things become robust they then become old

是謂不道

This is called not following the Way

The single additional line found in the MWD versions and the later versions of the text is:

不道蚤已

That which does not follow the Way will come to an early end

It would appear that, based on content, this last line should be attached to the two lines that come before it.

Chapter 48 may also have been considered a complete chapter. Based on semantic content the concluding lines, which are not found in the GD *Laozi*, may have been connected with the rest of the lines from that chapter.

The conclusions of the above arguments are summarized in the following chart:

Confirmed received text chapter divisions	Received text chapters that are likely confirmed	Received text chapters which were likely more than one chapter	Received text chapters that were more than one chapter	Received text chapters originally joined as one
2, 9, 13, 19, 25, 32, 35, 37, 40, 41, 44, 45, 54, 56, 57, 59, 66	15, 16, 31, 48, 55	5, 20, 52, 30, 63	46, 64	(17,18)

Where firm evidence is available, the chapter divisions of the GD text largely coincide with those of the received text. Some received text chapters have strong evidence of having been considered more than one chapter. In one case two received text chapters were once considered as one chapter.

Several chapter boundaries are also confirmed by comparing the changes in ordering between the MWD and received *Laozi* texts. The beginning of chapter 1, the end of chapter 37, the beginning of chapter 38, and the end of chapter 79¹⁸ are all confirmed because the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts reverse the Dao section (received text chapters 1-37) and the De section (received text chapters 38-81). The beginning and end of chapter 24, the end of chapter 21 and the beginning of chapter 22 are confirmed because in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts chapter 24 comes between chapters 21 and 22. In the received text chapter 24 is found between chapters 23 and 25. Likewise, chapter 40 is confirmed along with the end of chapter 41 and the beginning of chapter 42 because chapter 40 comes between chapters 41 and 42 in the MWD texts. The beginning of chapter 80, the end of chapter 81, the end of chapter 79, the end of chapter 66 and the beginning of chapter 67 are confirmed because chapters 80-81 come between chapters 66 and 67 in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts.

We can then look to rhetorical evidence that may mark the boundaries of certain chapters. Some *Laozi* chapters end with the stock phrases “吾何以知. . . ?/ 以此” “How do I know . . . ?/ By this” or “故去彼取此” “Thus he rejects that and adopts this.”

¹⁸ In the MWD texts chapter 79, not chapter 81, ends the *De* section.

The following chapters in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts conclude with“吾何以知. . . ?/以此” “How do I know . . . ? /By this.”: 21 and 54.¹⁹

Chapters that conclude with “Thus he rejects that and adopts this” 故去彼取此 are: 12, 38, and 72.

The black dots that we find in MWD text A at times point to other plausible chapters divisions. A black dot never occurs in the middle of a chapter that we have previously confirmed as having the same divisions as in the received text. Some of the black dots confirm chapter divisions we have already determined above. The black dots in MWD text A permit the confirmation of a few more chapter divisions: 45/46, 50/51(two chapters), 52 (two chapters), 52/53, 56/57, 62/63, 63/64, 66/80, 81 (two chapters) 68/69, 72 (two chapters), 72/73, 74/75 (two chapters), and 75/76. In MWD text B, between the end of the *De* section and the beginning of the *Dao* section are the words: “*De*- 3041 [characters]”. This clearly marks the end of the *De* section and beginning of the *Dao* section.

Confirming received text chapter 2 as a complete chapter at the time(s) of MWD compilation also allows us to confirm the received text division of chapter 1 at the time of MWD compilation. By delineating chapter 2, we can mark the borders between chapters 1 and 2. The end of chapter 1 borders the beginning of chapter 2: 1/2. The beginning of chapter 1 is bordered by the start of the *Dao* section of the MWD texts: 79/1/2. Incidentally, delineating the end of chapter 2 allows us to mark the start of chapter 3: 79/1/2/3.

¹⁹ Neither the GD nor the MWD A or B *Laozi* texts contain the phrase “以此” “By this” in the middle of chapter 52. In contrast, later versions of the *Laozi* do include this phrase in the middle of the chapter.

This method allows us to delineate the beginning and end of chapter 1. We know that chapter 1 was definitely not combined with material from some other chapter to form a single chapter at the latest by the time(s) of MWD compilation. It was probably considered a single chapter. The only other possibility is that chapter 1 was more than one unit. I will note the possibility that chapters determined by the above method may be more than one chapter by adding a “?” after their number: /1?/2/3.

By the same logic, because we have confirmed chapter 9, we can confirm the boundaries between chapters 8/9 and 9/10: 8/9/10. This confirms that chapter 8 ends at the start of chapter 9 and chapter 10 begins where chapter 9 ends. It does not yet tell us where chapter 8 begins or where chapter 10 ends. The results for the rest of our MWD data are as follows:

/1?/2/3 . . . 5 (probably more than one chapter) . . . 8/9/10 . . . 12/13/14?/15/16/
 (17,18)/19/20 (probably more than one chapter)/21?/22 . . . 23?/24?/25/26 . . . 29/30
 (probably more than one chapter)/31/32/33 . . . 34/35/36?/37/38 . . . 39?/40/41/42 . . .
 43/44/45/46(more than one chapter)/47?/48/49 . . . 50/51 (two chapters) /52(probably
 more than one chapter)/53?/54/55/56/57/58?/59/60 . . . 62/63 (more than one chapter)/ 64
 (more than one chapter) . . . 65?/66/67 . . . 68/69 . . . 72 (more than one chapter)/73 . . .
 74/75 (more than one chapter)/ . . . 79/80 . . . 81 (more than one chapter)/

Our updated chart looks like this:

Confirmed received text chapter divisions	Received text chapters which may have been more than one chapter	Received text chapters which were likely more than one chapter	Received text chapters which together formed a chapter	Received text chapters with only one boundary determined	Unexamined chapters
2, 9, 13, 15, 16, 19, 25, 31, 32, 35, 37, 40, 41, 44, 45, 48, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 66	1,14, 21, 22, 23, 24, 35, 36, 38, 39, 47, 53, 58	5, 20, 30, 46, 51 52, 63, 64, 72, 75, 81	(17,18)	3,8,10,12, 26, 29, 33, 34, 42, 43, 49, 50, 60, 62, 65, 67, 68, 69, 73, 74, 79, 80	4, 6, 7, 11, 27, 28, 61, 70, 71, 76, 77, 78,

Examining the sequencing of the GD, MWD A and B, and received *Laozi* texts confirms most of the received text *Laozi* divisions. Some received text chapters were considered more than one proto-chapter. We have seen what that looks like in its most obvious form: chapter 64 in the GD *Laozi*. In no other case do we find two parts of a received text chapter appearing in two different contexts. It seems unlikely that more than a few received text chapters beyond those in column four were combined to form one proto-chapter. We have seen what it looks like when that is the case with chapters 17 and 18.

The reasoning used in the above arguments is not airtight. I compare texts from different times and places. It is possible that in a number of cases what the GD compiler(s) considered a “chapter” was different from what the MWD A and/or B compilers considered a “chapter.” At times I employ subjective semantic arguments. The information is only good for chapter divisions at the times of MWD compilation and cannot speak to chapter divisions before that time. Within these limitations the tendencies outlined in the preceding paragraph are probable.

CHAPTER 3

WAR

Comparing lines in the Guodian *Laozi* with lines in analogous sections of the Mawangdui *Laozi* reveals systematic differences in the texts' sentiments about war. The MWD A and B *Laozi* texts include both lines that describe how to manage warfare under the assumption that it is necessary and lines that portray warfare and its outcomes as negative. By contrast, in the GD *Laozi* we mainly find those lines that suggest that warfare is acceptable when necessary. The GD *Laozi* does not have lines that suggest a more negative portrayal of warfare.

GD Lines that Concern War

The GD *Laozi* includes the following lines on war and weapons:

Chapter 31:²⁰

1. 君子居則貴左

When the Gentleman administers affairs he values the left

2. 用兵則貴右

When [the Gentleman] uses military means he values the right

3. 故曰兵者□□□□□

Thus it is said “Weapons □□□□□”

4. □得已而用之銛龔為上

When using weapons can □ be avoided, reverence and respect should be above all else

²⁰ All chapter numbers are according to the received text.

5. 弗美也

Do not make them into objects of attraction

6. 美之是樂殺人

To hold them as objects of attraction is to take pleasure in killing people

7. 夫樂 □□□ 以得志於天下

So, take pleasure in □□□ in order to achieve your ambition Under Heaven

13. 故殺□□則以哀悲莅之

Therefore, if you kill □□ treat it with mourning and sorrow

14. 戰勝則以喪禮居之

If you are victorious in battle, then administer formal funeral rites

For the unreadable characters represented by □ in this segment of the GD *Laozi*, if we look to MWD *Laozi* texts A and B we find what the MWD *Laozi* indicates to be the appropriate numbers of unreadable characters for the □s in the same context with some minor exceptions. Following is a comparison between GD *Laozi* lines with unreadable characters, lines 3, 4, 7, and 14, alongside analogous sections of the MWD texts. I also include lines that are legible in the GD text alongside their MWD A and B counterparts to show the strong similarity among the GD, MWD A and MWD B *Laozi* texts for these lines:

1.

MWD A	君	子	居	則	貴	左
MWD B	□	子	居	則	貴	左
GD	君	子	居	則	貴	左

2.

MWD A	用	兵	則	貴	右
MWD B	用	兵	則	貴	右
GD	用	兵	則	貴	右

3.

MWD A			□	□	不	祥	之	器	也
MWD B			兵	者	不	祥	之	器	也
GD	故	曰	兵	者	□	□	□	□	

4.

MWD A	不	得	已	而	用	之	銛	襲	為	上
MWD B	不	得	已	而	用	之	銛	小龍	為	上
GD	□	得	已	而	用	之	銛	襲	為	上

5.

MWD A	勿	美	也
MWD B	勿	美	也
GD	弗	美	也

6.

MWD A	若	美	之	是	樂	殺	人	也
MWD B	若	美	之	是	樂	殺	人	也
GD		美	之	是	樂	殺	人	

7.

MWD A	夫	樂	殺	人	不	可	以	得	志	於	天	下	矣
MWD B	夫	樂	殺	人	不	可	以	得	志	於	天	下	矣
GD	夫	樂	□		□	□	以	得	志	於	天	下	

13.

MWD A		殺	人	眾		以	悲	依	立	之
MWD B		殺	□	□		□	□	□	立	之
GD	故	殺	□	□	則	以	哀	悲	莅	之

14.

MWD A	戰	勝		以	喪	禮	處	之
MWD B	戰	勝	而	以	喪	禮	處	之
GD	戰	勝	則	以	喪	禮	居	之

For sections that are legible in the GD *Laozi* and the MWD A and B texts we find very strong similarity. This indicates that for the places where we substitute the MWD reading for missing, damaged, or otherwise illegible GD sections there is a high probability of accuracy. Although the MWD *Laozi* texts lack the characters like 故 曰 “thus it is said” in line three and the GD *Laozi* lacks the emphatic marker 矣, which is included in the MWD readings in line seven, the contexts are still strongly similar.

Using characters from the MWD texts to fill in for the missing characters in the GD text for chapter 31 produces the following reading:

1. 君子居則貴左

When the Gentleman administers affairs he values the left

2. 用兵則貴右

When [the Gentleman] uses military means he values the right

3. 故曰兵者不祥之器也

Thus it is said, "Weapons are tools of ill omen"

4. 不得已而用之鈞龔為上

When using them cannot be avoided, reverence and respect should be utmost

5. 弗美也

Do not make them into objects of attraction

6. 美之是樂殺人

To hold them as objects of attraction is to take pleasure in killing people

7. 夫樂殺不可以得志於天下

So, if you take pleasure in killing you cannot achieve your ambition Under Heaven

13. 故殺人衆 則以哀悲莅之

Therefore, if you kill human multitudes, treat it with mourning and sorrow

14. 戰勝則以喪禮居之

If you are victorious in battle, then administer formal funeral rites

Chapter 30:

1. 以道佐人主者

One who uses the Dao to assist the ruler of people

2. 不欲以兵強於天下

Will not desire to use weapons to exert force through Under Heaven

3. 善者果而已

He who is good will achieve the outcome, nothing more

4. 不以取強

He does not then adopt force

Chapter 57:

1. 以正治邦

Employ the regular to rule the realm

2. 以奇用兵

Employ the unorthodox to use troops

3. 以無事取天下

Employ non-involvement to grasp Under Heaven

4. 吾何以知其然也

How do I know this is correct?

5. 夫天多忌諱而民彌叛

Consider: When heaven has many taboos, the people will be filled with rebelliousness

6. 民多利器而邦滋昏

The more sharp weapons the people have, the more disordered the realm will be

The above examples include all lines from the *GD Laozi* that concern war, warfare, or weaponry.

MWD Lines that Concern War

The MWD *Laozi* includes the following lines on war in sections analogous to those found in the GD *Laozi*. All lines from the GD *Laozi* listed above are also included in some form in the MWD *Laozi*.

Chapter 46

1.

MWD A	天	下	有	道	□	走	馬	以	糞
MWB B	□	□	□	道	卻	走	馬	□	糞

When Under Heaven has the Dao, then running horses are only used to make excrement
[for fertilizer]

2.

MWDA	天	下	無	道	戎	馬	生	於	郊
MWD B			□	道	戎	馬	生	於	郊

Text A: When Under Heaven lacks the Dao, then warhorses are raised in the suburbs of
the city

Text B: When lacking the Dao, warhorses are raised in the suburbs of the city

Chapter 30:

1.

MWD A	以	道	佐	人	主
MWD B	以	道	佐	人	主

One who uses the Dao to assist the ruler of people

2.

MWD A	不	以	兵	強	□	天	下
MWD B	不	以	兵	強	於	天	下

Will not use weapons to force his way through Under Heaven

3.

MWD A	□	□	□	□
MWD B	其	□	□	□

This □□□

4.

MWD A	□	□	所	居	楚	杞	生	之
MWD B	□	□	□	□	□	棘	生	之

□□ have resided thorns and brambles grow there

5.

MWD A	善	者	果	而	已	矣
MWD B	善	者	果	而	已	矣

He who is good achieves the outcome, nothing more

6.

MWD A	毋	以	取	強	焉
MWD B	毋	以	取	強	焉

He does not then adopt force

For portions of lines three and four of this segment of chapter 30 both MWD text A and B are damaged or otherwise unreadable. If we consult the Wang Bi 王弼 and Heshanggong 河上公 versions of the *Laozi* we find that both of these texts follow these six lines from the MWD *Laozi* very closely. Thus, it is reasonable to adopt readings from the Wang Bi and Heshanggong texts as the most likely readings for lines three and four above.

Initially, it may seem that engaging in this process we will only be reading the received text backwards into the MWD *Laozi*. However, we know by looking at sections of the MWD *Laozi* that are legible, that the MWD *Laozi* is often strongly similar to the received text. Places where both the MWD *Laozi* texts are illegible because of damage to the silk are very short. In the case of the six lines above, the similarities between the MWD A and B and received text are particularly strong. Of course, we cannot know for certain the correct MWD reading. However, this method gives us the best possible clues.

For this first example we will show the comparison of the MWD lines alongside the Wang Bi (WB) and Heshanggong (HSG) versions:

1.

MWD A	以	道	佐	人	主	
MWD B	以	道	佐	人	主	
WB	以	道	佐	人	主	者
HSG	以	道	佐	人	主	者

2.

MWD A	不	以	兵	強	□	天	下
MWD B	不	以	兵	強	於	天	下
WB	不	以	兵	強		天	下
HSG	不	以	兵	強		天	下

3.

MWD A	□	□	□	□
MWD B	其	□	□	□
WB	其	事	好	還
HSG	其	事	好	還

4.

MWD A	□	□	所	居	楚	杙	生	之
MWD B	□	□	□	□	□	棘	生	之
WB	師	之	所	居	楚	荆	生	焉
HSG	師	之	所	處	荆	棘	生	焉

5.

MWD A	善	者	果	而	已	矣
MWD B	善	者	果	而	已	矣
WB	善	有	果	而	已	
HSG	善	者	果	而	已	

6.

MWD A	毋	以	取	強	焉
MWD B	毋	以	取	強	焉
WB	不	敢	以	取	強
HSG	不	敢	以	取	強

Adopting readings from the Wang Bi and Heshanggong texts for sections of the MWD *Laozi* in which both MWD texts A and B are illegible or damaged produces the following reading for the above example from the MWD *Laozi*.

1. 以道佐人主

One who uses the Dao to assist the ruler of people

2. 不以兵強於天下

Will not use weapons to force his way through Under Heaven

3. 其事好還

This deed would easily come back to you

4. 師之所居 楚 [机 or 棘] 生之

Where troops have resided thorns and brambles grow there

5. 善者果而已矣

He who is good achieves the outcome, nothing more

6. 毋以取強焉

He does not then adopt force

Chapter 31

1.

MWD A	夫	兵	者	不	祥	之	器	□
MWD B	夫	兵	者	不	祥	之	器	也

As for weapons, they are tools of ill omen

2.

MWD A	物	或	惡	之
MWD B	物	或	亞	之

As for such things, some hate them

3.

MWD A	故	有	欲	者	弗	居
MWD B	□	□	□	□	□	□

Therefore, those with desires do not dwell in them

4.

MWD A	君	子	居	則	貴	左
MWD B	君	子	居	則	貴	左

When the Gentleman administers affairs he values the left

5.

MWD A	用	兵	則	貴	右
MWD B	用	兵	則	貴	右

When [the Gentleman] uses military means he values the right

6.

MWD A	故	兵	者	非	君	子	之	器	也
MWD B	故	兵	者	非	君	子	之	器	

Therefore, weapons are not the tools of the Gentleman

Comparison of GD and MWD Treatments of the War Theme

Comparing lines in the GD *Laozi* on the topic of war or weapons with those lines from analogous sections of the MWD *Laozi* reveals two distinct treatments of the war theme.

The GD *Laozi* takes a systematically more accepting position on the inevitability of warfare than the MWD text. MWD A and B contain lines that describe how to approach war, weapons, and warfare, but also include lines that describe these things as

negative. In the GD *Laozi* we only find lines that describe how to approach war, weapons, or warfare; most lines that describe warfare in negative terms are not found in the GD *Laozi*.

For example, in the GD text we find the following lines in chapter 30: “One who uses the Dao to assist the ruler of people/ Will not desire to use weapons to exert force through Under Heaven/ He who is good achieves the outcome, nothing more/ He does not then adopt force.”

In the MWD version we find the second line altered by removing the character 欲 “desire,” changing the appropriateness of using weapons in this context:

“Will not use weapons to force his way through Under Heaven”

The GD line implies that using weapons in this context, while not desirable, is an option. So long as the actor uses weapons, but does not desire to do so, he abides by line two of the GD *Laozi*. By comparison, in the MWD version using weapons in this context is not an option. Whoever uses the Dao to assist the ruler of men *will not* use weapons.²¹ Examples like these seem insignificant at first, but taken as a group they point towards a purposeful trend.

Additionally, in chapter 30 the MWD text includes several lines not found in the GD version that present more negative views of warfare and its outcomes. While the GD *Laozi* skips directly from “Will not desire to use weapons to exert force through Under Heaven” to “He who is good achieves the outcome, nothing more” the MWD version

²¹ I find that Yin Zhenhuan 尹振環 had written about this point before I discovered it. Yin writes that the MWD *Laozi* leaves out the word “desire,” thus creating a different tone from the GD *Laozi* towards war. Yin, *Chujian*, 20-21.

inserts the following lines: “This deed would easily come back to you/ Where troops have resided thorns and brambles grow there.””

The GD *Laozi* seems to say that he who is good at using weapons will not be excessive. He will only achieve his objective and not use weapons for further purposes. However, the additional MWD lines cast the use of weapons in a decidedly more negative light. The deed of using weapons will be turned back upon you. The places where troops have stayed will not produce useful crops or pastureland, but rather useless thorns and brambles.

Presumably, the MWD text makes a realistic point here. Armies had to eat. For large armies carrying enough food with them over long distances was an unrealistic proposition. Therefore, it is probably true that they often got their food from the surrounding land. When armies left a place it was possible that little food remained in the surrounding area.

Notably, the Wang Bi text takes the negative effects of war one step further, adding a line which is in neither the GD nor the MWD *Laozi* texts: 大軍之後必有凶年 “After the presence of a large army will certainly come crop failure.” At a time when the most of the population sustained their livelihood through agriculture this prospect surely had significant implications.

Similar to chapter 30, for chapter 31 the GD text informs the reader how to approach warfare. The implication is that warfare is inevitable and so must be dealt with appropriately: “When the Gentleman administers affairs he values the left/ When [the Gentleman] uses military means he values the right.”

While I have never heard a completely satisfactory explanation for the uses of left and right in these lines, the important point in the context of this paper is that directions are given on how to appropriately approach the use of military means. The GD *Laozi* text continues “Thus it is said ‘Weapons are tools of ill omen’/When using them cannot be avoided, reverence and respect should be utmost/Do not make them into objects of attraction/ To hold them as objects of attraction is to take pleasure in killing people/ So, if you take pleasure in killing you cannot achieve your ambition Under Heaven” Again, for these lines guidance is provided under the assumption that a response to the use of weapons will be necessary. The implication is “since you will have to use weapons here are the social and moral guidelines for their use.”

Notably, the GD line that reads “Thus it is said, ‘Weapons are tools of ill omen’” is mostly a reconstruction using MWD texts A and B. The GD lines reads 故曰“兵者□□□□□”

Therefore it is said “Weapons □□□□□”

Considering the tendency of the GD *Laozi* to lack lines with this type of content this reconstruction may be more questionable than the others.

GD *Laozi* chapter 31 continues the theme of explaining how to deal with war under the assumption that regrettably it will be necessary to use such means: “Therefore, if you kill human multitudes, treat it with mourning and sorrow / If you are victorious in battle, then administer formal funeral rites.”

As in chapter 30, in chapter 31 the MWD text again includes additional lines that are not present in the GD *Laozi* which present a markedly more negative view of war and its outcomes: “As for weapons, they are tools of ill omen/ As for such things, some hate

them.” As the GD compiler probably excised these lines, the trend of the GD *Laozi* lacking lines with an overly negative attitude towards warfare is significant.

In chapter 57, the GD *Laozi* again gives instructions on dealing with warfare. These lines are also included in the MWD texts. “Employ the regular to rule the realm/ Employ the unorthodox to use troops/ Employ non-involvement to grasp all Under Heaven.” These lines describe the opposite approaches to be taken in administering government and military affairs. For the purposes of the arguments made here, the important point is that the GD text provides guidance on the use of military means.

The MWD *Laozi* also includes the following lines from chapter 46, which are not present in the GD *Laozi* on warfare. The text from MWD A reads “When Under Heaven has the Dao, then running horses are only used to make excrement [for fertilizer]/ When Under Heaven lacks the Dao, then warhorses are raised in the suburbs of the city.”

When the Dao is not present horses will be used for war. By contrast, when the Dao is present these same horses are not prized for their speed, but for their manure. In this agriculturally based society manure fertilizer was a valuable and useful product. Shortage of fertilizer would have negatively affected agricultural output. Like the above examples, this one shows a negative portrayal of war present in the MWD text, but not present in the GD *Laozi*.²²

The above examples include all of the GD *Laozi* mentions of war, warfare and weaponry. While some *Laozi* chapters are present in the MWD *Laozi*, but not present in the GD *Laozi*, these chapters on war are present in both, but with significant differences. This demonstrates a special interest in the topic of war. Overall, the GD *Laozi* tends to

²² As I noted in chapter 2, these first two lines from chapter 46 could be considered a separate chapter from lines 3-7 of received text chapter 46.

include lines that advise on how to manage the undesirable, but inevitable, fact of war. The MWD A and B texts systematically portray warfare as more negative.

All lines from the GD *Laozi*, some with slight modification, are also included in the MWD texts. Characters or lines may be altered, perhaps to fit changing grammar considerations for different compilers, locations, or sometimes to change meaning, but all complete lines or chapters that are present in the GD *Laozi* are also present in the MWD *Laozi*.

If, as I suggest, the GD *Laozi* is a selection from a longer text, it is very significant that the GD compiler selected these sections on war, yet edited them to omit negative references to war. A plausible reason for only including material with more positive viewpoints on war is that the audience for the text may have been the heir apparent. For the heir apparent, and other members of the Chu ruling class, war was inevitable.

The one exception to the rule of the MWD and received *Laozi* texts encompassing the GD *Laozi*, is *Taiyi Shengshui* 太一生水. *Taiyi Shengshui*, which due to the length of the bamboo strips and the location of the binding notches, we know was included with bundle C of the GD *Laozi*, is noticeably different from the rest of the GD *Laozi*. It is significantly longer than any other section of the GD *Laozi*. No other extant copy of the *Laozi* includes *Taiyi Shengshui*. Along with *Taiyi Shengshui*, bundle C contains five *Laozi* chapters as these chapters would be divided according to the received text: chapters 17, 18, 35, 31, and 64. The chapter 64 in bundle C is an alternate version of the chapter

64 in bundle A.²³ Some people do not consider *Taiyi Shengshui* to be part of the GD *Laozi*. Nonetheless, from the physical evidence it is virtually certain that *Taiyi Shengshui* was attached to the GD *Laozi* bundle C.

²³ The duplication of a chapter in two different forms in the GD *Laozi* indicates that there must have been multiple versions of the text even at the time of GD. The GD tomb was most likely sealed around or immediately after 300 B.C.

CHAPTER 4

POWER: DAO 道, THE RULING ELITE, AND

CHANG 常 “THE CONSTANT”

Taninaka Nobuichi and Zhou Anhua have both written about the different characterizations of the Dao 道 in the Guodian and later versions of the *Laozi* (Zhou, *Chujian Boshu*, 191-193; Taninaka, *Cong Guodian Laozi*, 440). Their arguments focus on how the GD *Laozi* describes a Dao that is less powerful, creative, and mystical than later versions of the *Laozi*. Taeko Brooks finds that the GD *Laozi* text reveals an “interest in a practical, result-oriented [Dao].” She notes that of the 35 chapters excluded from a 1-66 chapter *Laozi* at the time of the GD *Laozi* compilation one criterion for exclusion would have been “suggestions of a mystical or cosmological [Dao]” (Taeko Brooks, “Cultural”). In the following, I examine these conclusions by looking at specific passages in the GD *Laozi* and analogous sections of the Mawangdui A and B texts that include mention of the Dao 道.

In addition, I suggest that the GD *Laozi* describes a Dao that is less powerful than the ruling class. In contrast, the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts describe a Dao that is often more influential and powerful than the ruling elite. The Dao may intentionally be described as less powerful than the ruling elite in the GD *Laozi* because of a conscious desire to avoid offending the text’s ruling class audience.

I further suggest that it is not only Dao 道 that is presented as less powerful in the GD *Laozi*, in comparison with the MWD *Laozi* texts A and B, but also the “Constant” *chang* 常.

GD Lines that Concern the Dao 道

Dao 道 is written 29 times in the GD *Laozi* including *Taiyi Shengshui*. I select the following examples as representative for my discussion:

Chapter 30: (All chapter numbers are according to the received text.)

1. 以道佐人主者

One who uses the Dao to assist the ruler of people

2. 不欲以兵強於天下

Will not desire to use weapons to exert force throughout Under Heaven

Chapter 37:

1. 道恆無爲也

The Dao is constantly without action

2. 侯王能守之

When Lords and Rulers are able to keep to it

3. 而萬物自化

Then the 10,000 things are transformed on their own

Chapter 32:

1. 道恆無名

The Dao is eternally nameless

2. 樸雖微天地弗敢臣

Although its fundamental substance is subtle, Heaven and Earth dare not make it their subordinate

3. 侯王如能守之

If Lords and Rulers are able to keep to it

4. 萬物將自賓

Then the 10,000 things will obey of their own accord.

Chapter 25:

1. 天大地大道大王亦大

Heaven is Great, Earth is Great, Dao is Great, the Ruler is also Great

2. 域中有四大安王處一安

In the realm there are four Great ones, and the Ruler is positioned as one of them

Chapter 55:

1. 物壯則老

When things become robust they then become old

2. 是謂不道

This is called not following the Way

MWD Lines that Concern the Dao 道

The Mawangdui A and B *Laozi* texts include the following lines that contain the Dao 道 in sections that have analogous counterparts in the Guodian *Laozi*. The above examples from the GD *Laozi* are also found in the MWD *Laozi* A and B, unless otherwise noted.

Chapter 55:

1.

MWD A	□	□	即	老
MWD B	物	壯	則	老

When things become robust they then become old

2.

MWD A	是	胃	之	不	道
MWD B		胃	之	不	道

This is called not following the Way

3.

MWD A	不	道	□	□
MWD B	不	道	蚤	已

That which does not follow the Way will come to an early end

Chapter 25:

1.

MWD A	□	□	天	大	地	大	王	亦	大
MWD B	道	大	天	大	地	大	王	亦	大

The Dao is Great, Heaven is Great, Earth is Great, the Ruler is also Great

2.

MWD A	國	中	有	四	大	而	王	居	一	焉
MWD B	國	中	有	四	大	而	王	居	一	焉

The state has four Greats, and it is the Ruler who occupies one of them

Chapter 15

1.

MWD A	□	□	□	□	□	□
MWD B	古	之	僊	為	道	者

The ancient immortals were those who practiced the Dao:

2.

MWD A	□	□	□	□
MWD B	微	眇	玄	達

Subtle and wonderful, profound and understanding

Chapter 46:

1.

MWD A	天	下	有	道	□	走	馬	以	糞
MWD B	□	□	□	道	卻	走	馬	□	糞

When Under Heaven has the Dao, then running horses are only used to make excrement

[for fertilizer]

2.

MWDA	天	下	無	道	戎	馬	生	於	郊
MWD B			□	道	戎	馬	生	於	郊

Text A: When Under Heaven lacks the Dao, then warhorses are raised in the suburbs of the city

Text B: When lacking the Dao, warhorses are raised in the suburbs of the city

Comparison of GD and MWD Treatments of the Dao 道

Overall, the Dao plays a more powerful and influential role in the MWD A and B *Laozi* and received texts than in the GD *Laozi*. The character Dao 道 is used in about the same proportion, approximately once every 70-75 characters, for the GD and Wang Bi *Laozi* texts. However, many segments of the GD *Laozi*, when compared with their MWD A and B received text chapter counterparts, are “missing” segments that use the character 道 Dao. This includes chapters 15, 16, 30, 31, and 55.

Comparing the Dao 道 in the GD *Laozi* with the Dao 道 in the MWD *Laozi* texts reveals qualitative differences in the status of the Dao.

For example, chapter 15 in the GD *Laozi* begins with the lines

1. 古之善為士者

Those who in ancient times were good at being officers

2. 必微溺玄達

Were invariably subtle and deep, profound and understanding

Alternatively, the MWD A and B versions of these lines read, “The ancient immortals were those who practiced the Dao:/ Subtle and wonderful, profound and understanding.” The MWD *Laozi* version provides the Dao a comparatively higher status role, as something practiced by ancient immortals with positive qualities. The GD version of these lines does not include the character Dao 道 at all. The characters *shi zhe* 士者 probably refer to those people who would have served as military or civil officers in the government. The GD version praises those people who were of status, while in the MWD A and B versions praise is reserved for those ancient immortals who practiced the Dao.

Examples such as this may seem minor at first, but taken together, they suggest a consistent pattern.

Again, chapter 25 in the MWD *Laozi* texts as compared to the GD version emphasizes the prominence of the Dao in contrast to the ruling elite. Where the GD *Laozi* reads “Heaven is Great, Earth is Great, Dao is Great, the Ruler is also Great/In the realm there are four Greats, and the Ruler is positioned as one of them,” the MWD version changes the order of the first line to emphasize the Dao: “The Dao is Great, Heaven is Great, Earth is Great, the Ruler is also Great.”

While chapter 55 of the GD *Laozi* includes the lines “When things become robust they then become old/This is called not following the Way” the MWD texts also include an additional line which re-emphasizes the prominence of the Dao: “That which does not follow the Way will come to an early end.”

In the GD *Laozi* the Dao is presented as something that can be used by humans, often those of the ruling class, to achieve a goal. Some examples of this are chapter 37: “The Dao is constantly without action/ When Lords and Rulers keep to it/ Then the

10,000 things are transformed on their own,” chapter 32: “The Dao is eternally nameless/ Although its fundamental substance is subtle, Heaven and Earth dare not make it their subordinate/If Lords and Rulers can keep to it/ Then the 10,000 things will obey of their own accord” and chapter 30: “One who uses the Dao to assist the ruler of people/ Will not desire to use weapons to exert force through Under Heaven.” Each of these cases from the GD *Laozi* portrays the Dao as a tool that can be used for the benefit of humans and specifically the ruling class.

By contrast, in many cases in the MWD A and B versions, the Dao becomes something that is more mystical, more supernatural, less available to the human realm, and less of a tool for the “Lords and Rulers.” Chapter 46 in MWD text A reads: “When Under Heaven has the Dao, then running horses are only used to make excrement [for fertilizer]/ When Under Heaven lacks the Dao, then warhorses are raised in the suburbs of the city.” The Dao here is a much more powerful entity, in this case with the ability to influence war.

As described in chapter 3, the GD *Laozi* and the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts handle the war theme differently. The GD *Laozi* describes the ways warfare should be approached by the ruling class. In the above example, which is not found in the GD *Laozi*, but found in the MWD *Laozi*, control over warfare is shifted from the ruling class onto the Dao.

In the preceding paragraphs I suggest that the Dao in the GD *Laozi* is more often a Dao that can be used by the ruling class for benefit. Perhaps the above passage, which suggests that the Dao 道 is more influential than humans when it comes to matters of war,

was inappropriate as teaching material for the heir apparent or other members of the ruling elite and so was excised by the GD compiler.

The MWD *Laozi* includes other lines, in chapters that are not found in the GD *Laozi*, which describe a Dao 道 that is more powerful than the one in the GD *Laozi*.

Following are some examples:

Chapter 4

1.

MWD A	□	□
MWD B	道	沖

The Dao is depleting

2.

MWD A	□	□	□	□	□	盈	也
MWD B	而	用	之	有	弗	盈	也

Use it, although there is something that does not fill it up

3.

MWD A	瀟	呵	始	萬	物	之	宗
MWD B	淵	呵	怡	萬	物	之	宗

Profound! At the beginning it is the ancestor of the 10,000 things

.....

9.

MWD A	吾	不	知	□		子	也
MWD B	吾	不	知	誰	之	子	也

I do not know whose offspring it is

10.

MWD A	象	帝	之	先
MWD B	象	帝	之	先

It seems it came before the Spirit

In this passage the Dao is described in mystical and cosmological senses that we do not find in the GD *Laozi*. Significantly, the last line again points to a Dao with a more prominent status than that of the ruling elite.

Other examples from MWD A and B *Laozi* texts show a Dao 道 that is more cosmological and mystical.

Chapter 42:

1.

MWD A	□	□	□
MWD B	道	生	一

Dao gave birth to The One

2.

MWD A	□	□	□
MWD B	一	生	二

The One gave birth to The Two

3.

MWD A	□	□	□
MWD B	二	生	三

The Two gave birth to The Three

4.

MWD A	□	□	□	□
MWD B	三	生	□	□

The Three gave birth to the ten thousand things²⁴

Chapter 51:

1.

MWD A	道	生	之	而	德	畜	之
MWD B	道	生	之		德	畜	之

The Dao gives birth to them and the *De* rears them

Chapter 1:

1.

MWD A	道	可	道	也
MWD B	道	可	道	□

If a Dao can be spoken of

2.

MWD A	非	恆	道	也
MWD B	□	□	□	□

It is not the unvarying Dao

²⁴ The reading for the last two characters of this line comes from the received texts, which have a context strongly similar to this section of the MWD *Laozi*.

Chapter 62:

1.

MWD A	□	者	萬	物	之	注	也
MWD B	道	者	萬	物	之	注	也

The Dao is that of which the 10,000 things are tributary

2.

MWD A	善	人	之	瑾	也
MWD B	善	人	之	瑾	也

It is a precious thing to the good man

3.

MWD A	不	善	人	之	所	瑾	也
MWD B	不	善	人	之	所	保	也

Text A: And regarded as precious by the not good man

Text B: And the not good man's protector

The MWD A and B *Laozi* texts portray a Dao 道 with more creative abilities and greater mystical influence than the Dao we find in the GD *Laozi*. Taeko Brooks has suggested that cosmological parts of the *Laozi* text were systematically excised by the GD compiler because they were offensive to the supernatural sensibilities of the Chu court. *Taiyi Shengshui*, which describes cosmological forces and processes, substituted in the GD *Laozi* for the excised cosmological material (Taeko Brooks, "Cultural"). This would explain the MWD *Laozi* depictions of a cosmological Dao that are not found in the GD text.

The GD compiler may have excluded descriptions of the Dao as more powerful than the ruling class because this would have been inappropriate in teaching material intended for the heir apparent or others of the ruling class.

Depictions of *Chang* 常 (Constant) in the GD and MWD *Laozi* Texts

The Constant 常 plays a more prominent and powerful role in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts in comparison with the GD version. The GD *Laozi* and MWD *Laozi* A and B texts, all written before the rule of Liu Heng 劉恆 (179-156 BCE), use both the characters *heng* 恆 and *chang* 常. Later versions of the *Laozi* replace all instances of *heng* 恆 with *chang* 常 to avoid the tabooed personal name of Emperor Wen 文 (Liu Heng 劉恆) who ruled 179-156 BCE.

GD Lines that Concern *Chang* 常 (Constant)

In the GD *Laozi* *chang* 常 occurs once.

Chapter 55:

1. 和曰常

Harmony is called the Constant [常]

2. 知和曰明

Knowing Harmony is called Illumination

3. 益生曰祥

Prolonging one's life is called an inauspicious omen

4. 心使氣曰強

The mind manipulating *qi* is called forcing

MWD Lines that Concern *Chang* 常 (Constant)

In the MWD *Laozi* text A, *chang* 常 occurs six times. In MWD text B, *chang* occurs seven times.

Chapter 55:

1.

MWD A	和	曰	常
MWD B	□	□	常

Harmony is called the Constant [常]

2.

MWD A	知	和	曰	明
MWD B	知	常	曰	明

Text A: Knowing Harmony is called Illumination

Text B: Knowing the Constant [常] is called Illumination.

3.

MWD A	益	生	曰	祥
MWD B	益	生	□	祥

Prolonging one's life is called an inauspicious omen

Chapter 16:

1.

MWD A	□	是	胃	復	命
MWD B	靜	是	胃	復	命

Tranquility: this refers to returning to what is divinely ordained

2.

MWD A	復	命	常	也
MWD B	復	命	常	也

Returning to what is divinely ordained is the Constant [常]

3.

MWD A	知	常	明	也
MWD B	知	常	明	也

To know the Constant [常] is to be illumined

4.

MWD A	不	知	常	妄
MWD B	不	知	常	芒

Text A: Not knowing the Constant [常] is to be confused

Text B: Not knowing the Constant [常] is to be frustrated

5.

MWD A	妄	作	兇
MWD B	芒	作	凶

Text A: In confusion you will commit atrocities

Text B: In frustration you will commit atrocities

6.

MWD A	知	常	容
MWD B	知	常	容

Knowing the Constant [常] you will be accepting

7.

MWD A	容	乃	公
MWD B	容	乃	公

If accepting, then just

8.

MWD A	公	乃	王
MWD B	公	乃	王

If just, then kingly

9.

MWD A	王	乃	天
MWD B	□	□	天

If kingly, then heavenly

10.

MWD A	天	乃	道
MWD B	天	乃	道

If heavenly, then Dao-like

11.

MWD A	道	乃	沕	身	不	怠
MWD B	道	乃	沒	身	不	殆

Text A: Abiding by the Dao results in being free from neglect all the way till your life is exhausted

Text B: Abiding by the Dao results in being free from danger all the way till your life is exhausted

Chapter 52:

1.

MWD A	用	亅	光	復	歸	亅	明
MWD B	用	□	□	□	□	□	□

Use the brightness to return to the illumination

2.

MWD A	毋	道	身	央
MWD B	毋	遺	身	央

Text A: Do not follow your life to disaster

Text B: Do not lose your life to disaster

3.

MWD A	是	胃	襲	常
MWD B	是	胃	□	常

This is called joining the Constant [常]

Comparison of GD and MWD Treatments of *Chang* 常 (Constant)

In comparison with the GD text, the MWD “Constant” 常 is much more prominent. We come to this conclusion for two reasons: (1) the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts use the character *chang* 常 much more frequently than the GD *Laozi* texts and (2) qualitatively *chang* 常 is a more prominent entity in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts than in the GD *Laozi* text.

In the GD *Laozi* there is only one instance of the “Constant” *chang* 常, which is in chapter 55. In contrast, MWD text A uses *chang* six times and MWD text B uses *chang* seven times.

In the case of the GD *Laozi*, *chang* 常 the “constant,” is an epithet for another entity: Harmony. “Harmony is called the Constant [常]/ Knowing Harmony is called Illumination.”

By comparison, in chapter 55 of the MWD *Laozi* text B the “Constant” is given a more prominent place with a different version of the second line: “Harmony is called the Constant [常]/Knowing the Constant [常] is called Illumination/ Prolonging one’s life is called an inauspicious omen.” MWD *Laozi* text B, in comparison with the GD *Laozi* version, shifts the focus of this section from Harmony to the Constant.

The other occurrences of *chang* 常 in the MWD texts A and B also describe a Constant with a more powerful and influential role than is found in the GD *Laozi*. The section of chapter 16 that we do not find in the GD *Laozi* focuses most heavily on the “Constant.” (In the following, when translations of MWD texts A and B differ, then the translation from text B is in parenthesis.)

#1. “Tranquility: this refers to returning to what is divinely ordained/ #2. Returning to what is divinely ordained is the Constant [常]/ #3. To know the Constant [常] is to be illumined/ #4. Not knowing the Constant [常] is to be (frustrated) confused/ #5. (In frustration) In confusion you will commit atrocities/ #6. Knowing the Constant [常] you will be accepting/ #7. If accepting, then just/ #8. If just, then kingly/ #9. If kingly, then heavenly/#10. If heavenly, then Dao-like/#11. Abiding by the Dao results in being free from (danger) neglect all the way till your life is exhausted.

In this excerpt the character *chang* 常 is used four times and its high value is clear: knowing the Constant is to be illumined, while not knowing the constant is to be confused/frustrated. Knowing the Constant is to be accepting, and being accepting leads to being just. This type of high regard for *chang* 常 is not found in the GD *Laozi*.

In a section of chapter 52 that, according to received text chapter divisions, is not present in the portion of chapter 52 that we find in the GD *Laozi*, we again find mention of the “Constant” *chang* 常. This section of chapter 52 in the MWD texts reads “Use the brightness to return to the illumination/ Do not (lose) follow your life to disaster/ This is called joining the Constant [常].” As in the case of chapter 16, in chapter 52 we find an example of praise for the “Constant” that is not found in the GD version.

The GD compiler may have excluded a prominent “Constant” 常 perhaps because this powerful entity was in some way unacceptable to the Chu ruling class audience.

Comparison of *Chang* 常 and *Heng* 恆 in GD and MWD *Laozi* Texts

Because the GD *Laozi* and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts were all written before the reign of Liu Heng 劉恆 (179-156 BCE) they are the only extant versions of the *Laozi* to use both the characters *heng* 恆 and *chang* 常. In the following, I compare the characters *heng* and *chang* in the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts to determine any differences in their meaning or usage. Such a study would ideally take into account a wider array of texts; I hope that someone will take up this line of research.

Occurrence of *chang* 常 in the GD *Laozi*:

Chapter 55: 和曰常

Harmony is called the Constant [常]

Occurrences of *heng* 恆 in the Guodian *Laozi*:

Chapter 37: 道恆無爲也

The Dao is constantly [恆] without action.

Chapter 32: 道恆無名

The Dao is eternally [恆] nameless

Chapter 46: 知足為足此恆足矣

Knowing enough is enough, this is to constantly [恆] have enough

Chapter 64 (bundle C):

人之敗也 恆於其且成也敗之

Man's downfall: always [恆] as he is about to succeed, he spoils it.

From these initial examples, it is tempting to conclude that, at least in the GD *Laozi*, *chang* is used as a noun, while *heng* may modify verbs or be a verb itself. This is one possible interpretation of the information above. However, the argument has two uncertainties. First, *heng* does not definitely modify a verb in every case above. For example, 道恆無爲也, which I have translated as “The Dao is constantly [恆] without action” could also be translated as “The Dao is constant [and] without action.” However, there is no instance above in which *heng* is unambiguously a noun.

Secondly, there is only one instance of the character *chang*.

Further complicating matters, the character *ji* 極 and the character *heng* 恆 were written in very similar ways at the time of GD *Laozi* compilation.²⁵ Most scholars, including Peng Hao,²⁶ Lian Shaoming,²⁷ and Yin Zhenhuan,²⁸ conclude that chapter 16 also has the character *heng* 恆:²⁹

至虛恆也

The ultimate insubstantiality is constant [恆]

Since *heng* is used as a nominal here, this would seem to contradict the above speculations about *heng* modifying verbs and *chang* acting as a noun. However, in the context of this line in chapter 16 the character *ji* 極 (limit or extent) would also make sense: “Ultimate insubstantiality is the limit [極].” The character in this line in both of

²⁵ See Zhang, *Etymologies*, 305 and 416. See also Peng, *Laozi Jiaodu*, 49.

²⁶ Peng, *Laozi Jiaodu*, 49

²⁷ Lian, “Heng,” 463-64

²⁸ Yin, *Chujian*, 234

²⁹ Robert Henricks believes that the character *ji* 極 should be “preferred for continuity with later editions” (Henricks, *Lao Tzu's*, 60). He also believes that *ji* 極 “is preferred over *heng* on phonological grounds” (209 n.58).

the MWD texts and the Wang Bi *Laozi* is *ji*. Interestingly, no other GD *Laozi* example of *heng* 恆 becomes *ji* 極 in later texts. Peng Hao, who believes the character in this excerpt from the GD *Laozi* is *heng* 恆, maintains that *heng* 恆 was later mistakenly written as *ji* 極 because the two characters are so similar.³⁰

There may have been a tendency to use *chang* as a nominal and *heng* to modify verbs.³¹

Comparing *heng* and *chang* in the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts supports the hypothesis that *heng* tends to be used as a modifier, while *chang* is used as a nominal.³²

The MWD texts include the occurrences of *heng* cited above for the GD texts, with the noted exception of chapter 16. Some examples of *heng* used as a modifier in the MWD *Laozi* texts A and B follow:

Chapter 1:

MWD A	非	恆	道	也
MWD B	□	□	□	□

It is not the unvarying [恆] Dao

Chapter 3: 恆使民無知無欲

Constantly [恆] make the people be without knowledge and without desire

Chapter 34: 恆無欲也

Constantly [恆] without desires

³⁰ Peng, *Laozi Jiaodu*, 49

³¹ Robert Henrieks also believes that there is an instance of *heng* 恆 in chapter 59 of the GD *Laozi*. See Henrieks, *Lao Tzu's*, 84-86, 213 n. 4. This view is not shared by the Jingmen City Museum edition of the GD texts (*Guodian Chumu Zhujuan*, 117), Lian Shaoming or Yin Zhenhuan, who all read the character as *ji* 極.

³² *Heng* 恆 occurs in MWD texts A and B in chapters 46, 48, 51, 61, 64, 65, 67, 74, 76, 79, 1, 2, 3, 27, 28, 32, 34, and 37. It also occurs in MWD text B in chapter 49.

However, there is an exception in chapter 2, where *heng* is used as a noun.

Chapter 2:

1.	MWD A	有	無	之	相	生	也
	MWD B	□	□	□	□	生	也

Existence and non-existence beget each other

2. 難易之相成也

Difficult and easy bring each other to fruition

3. 長短之相刑也

Long and short form each other

4. 高下之相盈也

High and low fill each other

5. 音聲之相和也

Tone and voice harmonize each other

6. 先後之相隨

Before and after pursue each other

7. 恆也

This is a constant [恆] principle

In conclusion, the evidence from the GD and MWD A and B Laozi texts suggest the possibility that in the GD and MWD *Laozi* A and B texts *chang* 常 tended to be used as a noun, while *heng* mostly was not used as a noun, but rather to modify verbs or nouns.

CHAPTER 5

CONTEXT: THE POTENTIAL INFLUENCES OF TIME, PLACE, AND AUDIENCE ON THE GUODIAN AND MAWANGDUI A AND B *LAOZI* TEXTS

As the GD and MWD *Laozi* texts have significant thematic differences on important topics such as war, Dao 道, *chang* 常, and cosmology, we logically wonder about the reasons for these differences. Examining what we know about time, place, and audience for the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts may point toward the reasons for some of these differences. In the following, I suggest that the most likely audience for the GD *Laozi* was the ruling elite. I find that the GD and MWD text positions on war may be explainable by examining the political and social realities of these times and places. Lastly, I consider the relationship between different depictions of cosmology and the historical contexts of these versions of the *Laozi*.

The Audience of the GD *Laozi*

The context of the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts does not only concern Chu, Qin, or early Western Han, but also the specific intended audience for the *Laozi* text. The ruling class is the most likely audience for the Guodian *Laozi*.

As discussed in the introduction, the lacquer “ear cup” 耳杯 found in Guodian Chu Tomb Number One indicates that the tomb occupant, the person who used the texts found in the tomb, may have been a tutor to the heir apparent.

Textual factors in the GD *Laozi* also lead me to believe that the audience was the ruling class. There are those lines that are addressed explicitly to the ruling class, and those lines addressed to someone who is most likely part of the ruling class of society.

The following lines from the GD *Laozi* directly address those who are in a position to rule:

Chapter 57:

1. 以正治邦

Employ the regular to rule the realm

2. 以奇用兵

Employ the unorthodox to use troops

Chapter 59:

1. 治人事天莫若嗇

For ruling the people and serving Heaven there is nothing so good as being conservative

Chapters 37, 32, and 25 mention the ruler or the ruling class directly. Chapters 37 and 32 instruct those of the ruling class on how they can use the Dao to secure or gain power and influence:

Chapter 37:

1. 道恆無爲也

The Dao is constantly without action

2. 侯王能守之

When Lords and Rulers are able to keep to it

3. 而萬物自化

Then the 10,000 things are transformed on their own

Chapter 32:

1. 道恆無名

The Dao is eternally nameless

2. 樸雖微天地弗敢臣

Although its fundamental substance is subtle, Heaven and Earth dare not make it their subordinate

3. 侯王如能守之

If Lords and Rulers can keep to it

4. 萬物將自賓

Then the 10,000 things will obey of their own accord.

Chapter 25 positions the ruler as equally powerful with the Dao 道, along with *tian* 天 “Heaven” and *Di* 地 “Earth:”

Chapter 25:

1. 天大地大道大王亦大

Heaven is Great, Earth is Great, Dao is Great, the Ruler is also Great

2. 域中有四大安王處一安

In the realm there are four Great ones, and the Ruler is positioned as one of them

In addition, there are lines in the *GD Laozi* that address issues of ruling or indicate a power or authority able to influence great numbers of people. These lines are most likely addressed to the elite ruling class.

Chapter 19:

1. 絕知棄辨

Eliminate knowledge, abandon distinctions

2. 民利百倍

And the people will benefit a hundredfold

Chapter 57:

1. 我無事而民自福

When I am without interference, the people prosper on their own

2. 我無爲而民自化

When I am without action, the people are transformed on their own

3. 我好靜而民自正

When I prefer tranquility, the people become right on their own

4. 我欲不欲而民自樸

When I desire not to desire, the people become their fundamental selves on their own

Chapter 66 can easily be seen as a metaphor for the relationship of the ruler to the people:

Chapter 66:

1. 江海所以為百谷王

The reason the river and sea act as the rulers of 100 mountain valleys

2. 以其能為百谷下

Is because they can be below the 100 mountain valleys

3. 是以能為百谷王

Therefore, they can act as the rulers of the 100 mountain valleys

Chapter 30 appears to identify those who will help the ruler, while not attempting to seize too much power:

1. 以道佐人主者

One who uses the Dao to assist the ruler of people

2. 不欲以兵強於天下

Will not desire to use weapons to exert force throughout Under Heaven

3. 善者果而已

He who is good achieves the outcome, nothing more

4. 不以取強

He does not then adopt force

Chapter 13 describes the conditions under which one would be entrusted with all Under Heaven:

1. 故貴為身於³³為天下

Thus, he who values maintaining order in himself more than maintaining order Under Heaven

2. 若可以託天下矣

Can be entrusted with Under Heaven

3. 愛以身為天下

He who cherishes himself as if he were Under Heaven

4. 若可以奇天下

Can have all Under Heaven passed on to him

Dividing the GD *Laozi* into chapters according to the received text, the above examples are taken from 10 of 32 chapters represented in the GD *Laozi*, or 31%. In addition, there are a number of lines that warn the reader about the dangers of excessive material possessions or desires. We can presume that the elite ruling class and perhaps a newly developing commercial class were the main classes of people who had the potential to go to excess.

Chapter 9:

1. 金玉盈室

If gold and jade fill your rooms

2. 莫能守之

No one can hold onto them

³³ For the substitution of later readings in certain contexts see above, page 13.

3. 貴富驕

Wealth, rank and pride

4. 自遺咎也

On their own will fall away and leave you in disaster

Chapter 46:

1. 罪莫厚乎甚欲

Of faults, none is more burdensome than excessive desires

2. 咎莫憊乎欲得

Of errors, none is more tragic than desiring to gain

3. 過莫大乎不知足

Of blunders, none is greater than not knowing when one has enough

Taken together, all of these textual examples point toward the wealthy ruling elite as the audience for the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts.

Historical Context and the War Theme in the GD and MWD *Laozi*

The intended audience and the sociopolitical context of the state of Chu had an influence on the content of the GD *Laozi*. Barry Blakeley in his essay “Chu Society and State” finds that in pre-imperial China “government and elite society were inextricably intertwined. The dominant social stratum was a hereditary warrior aristocracy” (Blakeley, “Chu Society,” 52). While there were likely officers whose main duties were with military affairs, it appears the Chu elite social stratum was generally concerned both with

governance and military affairs. It is therefore no surprise that the *Laozi* contains information on both governance and warfare.

Taeko Brooks finds that the GD *Laozi* shows an “interest in caution, carefulness, humbleness, and frugality in governmental as well as personal matters.” According to Brooks this “can be observed in the actions of the Chu state and particularly in its style of military operations, which over many centuries show a consistent tactical frugality and strategic patience; and a general economy of means, both military and civil” (T. Brooks, “Cultural”).

Broadly, Chu military strategy was to gain territory until strong resistance was met, and then shift the focus of their attention elsewhere. Barry Blakeley sums up the history of Chu territorial expansion and contraction: “there were setbacks, but when opposition stiffened in one quarter, Chu simply shifted its attention to others” (Blakeley, “Geography,” 20).

This Chu military strategy is rather clearly reflected in the GD *Laozi*'s general themes of not going to excess, not desiring those things that are hard to obtain, and conservativeness, particularly if we consider that the text's audience was most likely the ruling class and/or heir apparent who would be involved in military and political strategy and policy. The GD *Laozi* highlights themes of not going to excess more than the MWD A and B or received *Laozi* texts. Perhaps the GD *Laozi* suggests pragmatic political and military advice to its elite ruling class audience.

While the GD *Laozi* may have functioned primarily as a statecraft text, the MWD A and B *Laozi* may have been read more as philosophical and personal cultivation texts. Perhaps this difference would have been the result of the Qin unification in 221 BCE.

Prior to this time, the *Laozi* would have been one of a number of competing statecraft texts during the Warring States Period. Because it was read as a statecraft text in the pre-Qin period, particular attention would have been paid to the status of the ruling class in relation to entities like the Dao. After Qin unification, competition between states was no longer the predominant political issue of the day. As a result, the *Laozi* may have come to be read as more of a philosophical or personal cultivation text, rather than a guide to statecraft. Issues such as the predominance of the ruling class may have become less important as a wider audience read the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts for its philosophical value.³⁴

As I discussed in chapter 3, the GD *Laozi* describes how to handle issues of warfare, based on the assumption that warfare is undesirable but unavoidable, and so must be dealt with. In contrast, the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts, in addition to the lines on warfare found in the GD *Laozi*, include lines that are consistently more negative towards warfare and its outcomes.

A reason for the different stands on warfare may have been the different social, political, and military contexts of these texts. In the centuries leading up to 300 BCE, the approximate date of the GD *Laozi*'s interment, the state of Chu was engaged in frequent military conflict with numerous other states. The political and military situation was marked by an ever-changing constellation of alliances among the many states. It is reasonable to surmise that we do not find material with a negative tone towards warfare in the GD *Laozi* because such a tone would be inappropriate, indeed perhaps even unrealistic, for an audience ruling in this political and military atmosphere.

³⁴ Professor Alvin Cohen suggested this idea to me in personal communication April, 2006.

In this sociopolitical context, to ally with one state was to become the enemy of other states. Reading the GD *Laozi* with the idea that Chu had to navigate a constantly changing web of military and political alliances leads to understanding some passages in the *Laozi* in new ways. For example, received text chapter 13 in the GD *Laozi*:

1. 寵為下也

Favor is subordinating

2. 得之若纓

Obtaining it is like being bound

3. 失之若纓

Losing it is like being bound

4. 是謂寵辱若纓

And so we say that favor and disgrace are both like being bound

The MWD A and B *Laozi* texts contain the GD *Laozi*'s lines on warfare, but also include additional lines that are more negative towards war. As the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts were copied around or after Qin unification in 221 BCE the military message may have been two-fold: Qin and Han external territorial expansion via military means is encouraged, but internal warfare in the recently unified state is not. This situation might explain the MWD A and B *Laozi* texts' depiction of warfare relative to that of the GD *Laozi*.

In support of this point "it may be surmised that, despite the unification [of 221 BCE], loyalties to ancient houses and a nostalgia for regional independence may well have survived among the remnants of the old royal families, their officials and their

retainers.” (Loewe, “Han”, 110). We also know that “the cessation of internal warfare in 221 [BCE] was followed . . . by external military and colonial expansion (Bodde, “Ch’in”, 64).

Cosmology and Context in the GD and MWD *Laozi*

The different depictions of cosmology in the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts may be the result of the different contexts of these texts. Working under the conclusion that the GD *Laozi* is selected from a longer text, Taeko Brooks suggests that the GD *Laozi* compiler(s) “were not content to excise spiritually incompatible material from their reworked DDJ, but were also concerned to include compatible material, thus filling the void created by their excisions with something in the same category” (T. Brooks “Cultural”). According to Taeko Brooks, the compatible material replacing spiritually incompatible material is *Taiyi Shengshui*.

This is a convincing proposition, especially because the Dao 道 is often described in cosmological senses in later versions of the *Laozi* but not nearly so much in the GD *Laozi*, while *Taiyi Shengshui* provides an alternative cosmology. Entities that are not found in the GD *Laozi*, such as “The One” (*yi* 一), often play a cosmological role in later versions of the *Laozi*. It is also possible that chapter 25 in the GD *Laozi* is a reference to *Taiyi Shengshui*:

Chapter 25:

1. 有狀混成

That which has form came about from chaos

2. 先天地生

Before the birth of Heaven and Earth

3. 寂繆獨立不改

Silent and deep, self contained and unchanging

4. 可以為天下母

This could be regarded as the Mother of all Under Heaven

5. 未知其名

We have never known its name

6. 字之曰道

We denominate it as The Way [*dao*]

7. 吾強為之名曰大

Were I forced to produce a name it would be “Great”

The character that has been interpreted as *tai* 太 in *Taiyi Shengshui* and the character that has been interpreted as *da* 大 “Great” in the above lines were written in the exact same ways in the GD *Laozi*.³⁵ It is probable that both of these characters should be read as either *da* 大 or *tai* 太, although the character that has been read *tai* 太 is never used as a noun, whereas *da* 大 is. The above lines, which describe a cosmological force, may be an allusion to *Taiyi Shengshui*, which describes cosmological production, processes, and forces.

³⁵ Compare *Guodian Chumu Zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 page 4, slip 22, characters 6, 14, 16, 18, and 21 with page 13, slip 1, characters 1, 7, and 15.

One reason that the GD *Laozi* presents a different cosmology from the MWD *Laozi* may be that the audience for the GD version in the state of Chu in the fourth century BCE had cosmological and/or spiritual beliefs which coincided with *Taiyi Shengshui*, but conflicted with the cosmology in the *Laozi*. Although not fully understood, it is clear that there were strong spiritual beliefs associated with *Taiyi* (The Grand One) as early as the Warring States Period in the state of Chu.³⁶ The MWD versions, which lack *Taiyi Shengshui*, present a cosmology based on the Dao 道, The One 一, and other entities, which is different from the cosmology in *Taiyi Shengshui*. This may have been more acceptable to the groups using these texts during the Qin and early Han.

³⁶ See Li, "Taiyi"

CONCLUSION

Before embarking on an in-depth examination of the content of the GD or MWD A and B *Laozi* texts, I believe it is necessary to consider how one will approach each of these texts. In my Text Examination chapter I suggest that when the GD *Laozi* text has unreadable sections, it is most reasonable to supply the missing characters from the MWD texts. This is reasonable because sections that are present for the GD and MWD texts are so often the same and because unreadable sections in the GD *Laozi* are often short.

I further conclude that it is most probable that the GD *Laozi* material was selected from a 1 or 2-70 chapter *Laozi* text. I suggest some principles of selection for the GD *Laozi* material from a longer *Laozi* text that can be explained by the historical, social, and political contexts of the time of text composition.

As for the MWD *Laozi* texts, I find that when one of the texts has unreadable portions it is reasonable to adopt the reading from the other text. When the readings of the two texts differ, I provide both readings for comparison. When both texts have unreadable portions I adopt readings from the received texts. In most cases in which both the MWD and received texts are readable the texts are the same or similar.

Based primarily on the styles of calligraphy MWD A predates B. In agreement with William Boltz, I tend to think that the two MWD texts were derived independently from a source text. I suggest that it is most probable that the MWD *De-Dao* ordering diverges from the main line of *Laozi* textual transmission.

Lastly, my Text Examination chapter approaches the issues of chapter divisions in the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts. I first examine segments of the text that are

found as whole units in different contexts in the GD and MWD A and B *Laozi* texts. I think this to be the most scientific means possible for determining chapter divisions. When this method has been exhausted, I move on to examining semantic content to try to determine chapter divisions.

I find that many received text chapter divisions are confirmed, that some received text chapters were formerly more than one unit, and that only one pair of received text chapters were combined to form a single chapter at the latest by the times of the MWD A and B *Laozi* compilations.

Chapter 3 on war, I think, presents convincing evidence that the GD *Laozi* text and the MWD texts A and B have systematically different standpoints on the topics of war and warfare. The GD *Laozi* includes information on the ways warfare should be managed under the presumption that such management will be unavoidable and necessary. In contrast to the MWD A and B and received texts, the GD *Laozi* lacks the lines that are most negative towards war and warfare.

In chapter 4, I find, in agreement with some other scholars, that the GD *Laozi* describes a less powerful, less mystical, and less creational Dao 道. I further suggest that the Dao in the GD *Laozi* may purposely be described as less powerful than the ruling elite, while the MWD A and B received texts do not observe this guideline. I also demonstrate how the entity *chang* “the constant” 常 has a more influential and prominent place in the MWD A and B and received *Laozi* texts in comparison with the GD *Laozi*. Comparing the characters *heng* 恆 and *chang* 常, I find that *chang* tends to be used as a noun, while *heng* tends to be used not as a noun, but as a modifier of verbs.

In chapter 5, I explore some ways that the contextual factors of audience, time, and place can be used to explain the thematic differences in these different versions of the *Laozi*. The textual evidence most strongly suggests the ruling class as the original audience for the GD *Laozi*. This would explain why the Dao in the GD *Laozi* is consistently described as less powerful than the ruling class.

The emphasized themes of frugality and not going to excess in the GD *Laozi* are a rather clear reflection of Chu military strategy, which generally entailed fighting in one region until strong resistance was met and then shifting attention to another quarter, thus conserving warriors and supplies.

The absence in the GD *Laozi* of lines that are negative towards war may be explained by the inevitability of war for the state of Chu. Material with a negative perspective on war may have been unrealistic, or perhaps inappropriate, for the Chu ruling elite who was the most likely audience of this text. By contrast, during the time of the MWD *Laozi*, after the unification of 221 BCE, external expansion via military means may have been encouraged, while internal warfare among the recently unified states was not.

Lastly, historical context can explain the different cosmological material found in the GD and MWD *Laozi* texts. Taiyi was an entity of high divine importance during the Warring States Period in the state of Chu. Taeko Brooks has suggested that the GD compiler excised spiritually incompatible material from the *Laozi* and replaced it with *Taiyi Shengshui*, a cosmological rendering acceptable to the Chu court.

For many centuries, scholars have puzzled over the nature of the *Laozi* and its enigmatic content. The discoveries within the last 35 years of the three earliest versions

of the *Laozi* present a special opportunity to advance the state of knowledge in this field.

I hope that my work will in some way contribute to the ongoing scholarly effort to develop these new possibilities.

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