

CHARACTER VARIANTS IN THE MA-WANG-TUI TEXTS OF THE *LAO-TZU*

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Ed.: This article is an Introduction to Prof. Henrick's "Complete List and Discussion of the Character Variants in the Ma-wang-tui Texts of the *Lao-tzu*". We regret not being able to print the entire work because of its length.

The text of *Lao-tzu* (or *Tao te ching*) is of such interest that any new information about the text is eagerly received. Thus the discovery of two copies of the text at Ma-wang-tui (Hunan, near Changsha) in 1973-74 was a major find. This is especially so since these texts, dating from around 200 B. C. and thus the earliest known *Lao-tzu* manuscripts extant, differ from other versions of the *Lao-tzu* in several interesting ways. There is much to think about and explore: the reversed order of Parts I (Chapters 1-37) and II (Chapters 38-81); the rearrangement of some of the chapters; the punctuation in Part II of Text A (*chia*); the addition and omission here and there of characters, phrases, and lines.¹

One of the clearest differences, we note, is that these texts are loaded with different characters. These variant characters are the subject of this study. I here provide the reader with the complete list of the variants, noted chapter by chapter and line by line, checked against the standard Wang Pi text (SPPYed.). This will surely be of interest to all who work with the text, especially those who, like myself, are interested in the meaning of the text. But there is much here too for the linguist, for those interested in phonology, epigraphy, and classical

1. There are no chapter divisions and no chapter numbers in the Ma-wang-tui texts of *Lao-tzu*. But using the current numbers, what to us is Chapter 24 occurs here between 21 and 22, 41 comes between 39 and 40, and 80 and 81 come between 66 and 67. The punctuation is in the form of large dots placed at major breaks in the text. These are often found at points of current chapter division, but not always, i.e. breaks are noted here in the middle of some of our chapters. On the reversed sequence of Parts I. and II., mainland scholars generally feel that this denotes a "Legalist" provenance for the text. See for example Kao Heng 高亨 and Ch'ih Hsi-chao's 池曦朝 "Shih-t'an Ma-wang-tui Han mu chung ti po-shu *Lao-tzu*" 試談馬王堆漢墓中的帛書老子, *Wen wu*, 1974: 11, pp. 1-7. On the other hand, Yen Ling-feng 嚴靈峰 feels that it was simply a matter of packaging, that originally the text, which is here written on silk, was written on bamboo strips bundled together; Part II simply was put on top of Part I (or something such) and then taken out first and copied. See his argument in *Ma-wang-tui po-shu Lao-tzu shih-t'an* 馬王堆帛書老子試探 (Taipei: Ho-lo-t'u-shu 河洛圖書, 1976). I have commented on the reversed parts, the changed chapter sequence, and the added and/or omitted characters, phrases, and lines, in my article "Examining the Ma-wang-tui Silk Texts of the Lao-tzu: With Special Note of Their Differences from the Wang Pi Text," *T'oung Pao*, LXV (1979, 4-5). On the punctuation see my "A Note on the Question of Chapter Divisions in the Ma-wang-tui Manuscripts of the *Lao-tzu*", *Early China*, 4 (1978-79), pp. 49-51.

grammar, as I will show later on.

I will not attempt here to explain the meaning and significance of each of the variants. Many of them, I feel, require further research and reflection, and at this time I am content to simply bring this data to the attention of others. I will comment, however, on some of the variants, and I will make some general observations about the variants as a group. My observations are these:

1) The total number of *distinct* variants, not counting repetition, and omitting from consideration words, phrases, and lines that are added in or left out, counting only where one character in Ma-wang-tui clearly stands in place of another in Wang Pi, the total number of distinct variants in Text A is about 430, Text B, 424.² Of these approximately 220 occur at some point in both texts. Thus all told there are, combined, some 634 distinct variants exhibited in the Ma-wang-tui texts. That is over 10% of the text. The total occurrence of variants, counting repetition now, I make out to be 757 in Text A and 881 in Text B, even more impressive figures. And keep in mind in all of this that both texts are incomplete, both rotted away here and there, with Text A being the worse of the two.

Of the total variant occurrences, if we check for the variants in other versions of *Lao-tzu*, looking for instance in Chiang Hsi-ch'ang's 蔣錫昌 *Lao-tzu chiao-ku* 老子校詁, we find that some occur and some do not: 113 of the variant occurrences in Text A are found elsewhere; 138 of those in Text B, roughly 15% in each case.

I have left out of consideration in this only one thing: the negative *wu* 無, "without", "to not have," is written with the character 无 throughout both texts. Since that is a known form of the same word, I did not include that in my statistics. But the point is worth noting for this may say something about date or dialect. The text of *Chuang-tzu*, one observes, clearly prefers 无 to 無.

2) Secondly, of the distinct variants, and this is very important, 123 in Text A are related by phonetic to the Wang Pi equivalent, 107 in Text B; that's 29% and 25% respectively. That is to say, these characters are either the phonetic of the character in Wang Pi, *or* they have the same phonetic with a different radical, *or* the Wang Pi character is the phonetic alone, the Ma-wang-tui equivalent having a radical added. I provide here some examples:

胃 (*wei*, stomach) for 謂 (*wei*, to say, call): throughout except A-51

重 (*chung*, heavy) for 動 (*tung*, to move): both texts-15

仿 (*fang*, as though) for 妨 (*fang*, hinder): B-12

榻 (*fu*, a yoke) for 輻 (*fu*, a spoke): B-11

浴 (*yii*, to bathe) for 谷 (*ku*, valley): both texts throughout

郊 (*chiao*, suburb) for 交 (*chiao*, intertwine): A-61

2. The two texts are labelled *chia* and *i* in Chinese, here A and B. Text A is the older of the two, apparently copied down between 221-206 B.C. Text B being copied between 206-194. Moreover Text A is in a script close to "small seal" (*hsiao-chuan*), Text B is closer to "clerical" (*li*). Both texts are in varying states of deterioration.

I have not worked with bronze inscriptions, but it is my impression that this is also common there, and certainly we find this phenomenon as well in pre-Ch'in texts and even in the Han, although not to this extent. I leave the exact explanation to experts. But we usually say that the nature of pre-Ch'in script was such that exact radicals had not yet been assigned or agreed to for each and every character. And certainly such characters (with a radical added to what is later used, or a different radical, or the radical missing) are listed as *ku-wen* 古文 (ancient script) variants in dictionary citations (e. g. see the *K'ang-hsi*). It follows, I think, and I refer you to Noel Barnard's recent article on this in *Ancient China: Studies in Early Civilization*,³ that part of the Ch'in reform of the script must have consisted of adding radicals to phonetics, or deciding on a certain radical over others, or, in some cases dropping a radical where one had been used.

Be that as it may, this seems to lead to the conclusion that the Wang Pi character is the correct one in most of these cases, reflecting the reformed script, and I am generally inclined to see it that way. But I am not sure that this is always true. Certainly the Ma-wang-tui character *ts'o* 銑, "file down" is superior to the Wang Pi *ts'o* 挫, "to push down" in the line in Chapter 4 *ts'o ch'i jui* 銑其銳 "dulls the sharp edges," as has been commonly recognized. And I will note some other interesting examples of this later on.

3) A significant number of variants are in fact grammatical particles and/or words: 76 in Text A; 83 in Text B. Some of these are well known and have already been discussed; I will here say only a little about them. The negative *fu* 弗, first of all, in place of *pu* 不 occurs around 27 times in Text A and 33 times in Text B, according to my latest count, and remember that excludes lacunae. It clearly is the contraction here of the negative *pu* plus *chih*, the preposed object, and adds grammatical clarity to many sentences. The loss of *fu* from the text is one of about a half dozen cases where a substitution had to be made in later texts to avoid the taboo name of Han emperor, in this case Liu Fu-ling 劉弗陵, Emperor Chao (r. 86-74 B.C.). In this connection we might also note the following variants: 1) 恒 for 常 in both texts throughout—Emperor Wen (r. 179-156 B.C.), Liu Heng 劉恒; 2) 邦 for 國 in Text A only—Kao-tsu (r. 206-194 B.C.), Liu Pang 邦; 3) 盈 for 滿 in Chapter 9 in both texts—Emperor Hui (r. 194-187 B.C.), Liu Ying 劉盈; and 4) 啓 for 開 in both texts throughout—Emperor Ching (r. 156-141 B.C.), Liu Ch'i 劉啓.

We also find that the caesura particle *hsi* 兮 does not occur in these texts; instead we find *ho* 呵 which usually means to scold or cough. Yen Ling-feng explains this by proposing a common pronunciation of the two (*ho* and *hsi*) at

3. "The Nature of the Ch'in 'Reform of the Script' as reflected in archaeological documents excavated under conditions of control," in David T. Roy and Tsuen-shuin Tsien, ed., *Ancient China: Studies in Early Civilization* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1978), pp. 181-213.

some point in the past.⁴ Hsü Fu-kuan, on the other hand, points out that *ho* is noted in this sense in the *Tz'u-hai* and adds that it has had this sense colloquially.⁵

Finally, as a question particle at the end of sentences, where Wang Pi has *yeh* 耶 or *hu* 乎, the Ma-wang-tui texts have *yü* 與 or the variant *yü* 興, specifically in Chapters 5, 7, 39 and 62. The question *yeh* does not occur. This is of interest since Karlgren marked *yeh* as characteristic of third century texts:⁶ the use of *yü*, instead, places the Ma-wang-tui texts more in line with Karlgren's Lu dialect, the dialect of the *Lun-yü* and *Mencius*.⁷

A few observations, but this is only the tip of the iceberg and much work needs to be done. First, there is clearly data here for adding greatly to our understanding of pre-Han syntax and the grammatical functions of certain words. Certainly the negatives deserve some attention for we have altogether 13 different kinds of negative substitution in the Ma-wang-tui *Lao-tzu*.⁸ I might comment further on one of these negatives, the character *wu* 毋 which we often call the negative imperative, "don't," but which also occurs in place of *wu*, "without". This negative does not occur in the Wang Pi text. It occurs 13 times in Text A and 14 times in Text B, mostly where Wang Pi has *wu* (not have) 無, but also for *pu* 不, and once for *wu* 勿.

The substitution of *wu* 毋 for *wu* 無, "to not have" tends to be in a series of parallel, negative clauses⁹ and is found primarily in three places, in Chapters 10, 39 and 72. In Chapters 10 and 39 it must surely be read as equivalent to "not have." In the former it occurs in the series "Can you do so and so, *without* doing so and so", e.g. in Wing-tsit Chan's translation—"Can you keep the spirit and embrace the one without departing from them?" "Can you clean and purify your profound insight so it will be spotless? [i.e. without a mark]", etc.¹⁰ I suppose these could be read "In keeping the spirit and embracing the one, *do not* depart from them", reading the *hu* 乎 at the end of each sentence as emphatic instead of

4. See Yen Ling-feng, *Ma-wang-tui po-shu Lao-tzu*, p. 60.

5. See Hsu Fū-kuan 徐復觀, "Po-shu *Lao-tzu* so fan-ying-ch'u ti jo-kan wen-t'i" 帛書老子所反映出的若干問題, in *Ming-pao yüeh-k'an*, 10: 6 (June, 1975), bottom of 97 and top of 98.

6. See his "On the Authenticity and Nature of the *Tso Chuan*." This was first published in *Göteborgs Högskolas Årsskrift*, 32 (1926: 3). A reprint has been done by Ch'eng-wen (Taipei: 1968). In this reprint see pp. 62-63.

7. For more on this see my article, "The Ma-wang-tui Manuscripts of *Lao-tzu* and the Problem of Dating the Text," *Chinese Culture*, 20: 2 (June, 1979), pp. 1-15. See especially pp. 2-8.

8. The reader will find in various places in the list that follows: 1) 弗 for 不; 2) 弗 for 無; 3) 不 for 非; 4) 毋 for 無; 5) 未 for 不; 6) 无 for 不; 7) 非 for 不; 8) 毋 for 不; 9) 毋 for 勿; 10) 不 for 勿; 11) 勿 for 不; 12) 弗 for 莫; and 13) 不 for 無.

9. One wonders, when a copyist uses both 毋 and 無 (or 无 here) for the same meaning, "to not have," what controls his choice of graph; is it simply copyist preference, or is regional dialect involved? In this case one might wonder if "a series of parallel, negative lines" is not the tip off to use 毋 instead of 无.

10. Wing-tsit Chan, *The Way of Lao Tzu* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1963), p. 116.

question.¹¹ But the *neng* 能 (“are you able”) occurs right in front of the *wu*, making an imperative reading awkward if not impossible. In Chapter 39 the *wu* occurs in the sequence “If Heaven did not have it [i.e. the One] to become clear, if the earth did not have it to be tranquil,” and so on. Again an imperative reading seems out of the question. On the other hand, the reading in Chapter 72 where *wu* 毋 occurs for *wu* 無 seems certain to be imperative, but thus it has been taken even with the negative *wu* “to not have.” Chan here translates, “Do not reduce the living space of their dwellings. Do not oppress their lives.”¹²

What is of greater interest for a changed view of the text is the substitution of *wu* 毋 for *pu* 不, and *wu* 毋 for *wu* 勿, both of which occur in Chapter 30. In chapter 30 we again have a series of negative statements, for the most part using the negative *wu* 勿 in Wang Pi. But these are often translated in a declarative sense, *viz.* Chan who says, “He [the good general] achieves his purpose but does not brag about it. He achieves his purpose but does not boast about it. He achieves his purpose but is not proud of it. He achieves his purpose but only as an unavoidable step. He achieves his purpose but does not aim to dominate.”¹³ Let me give here the Chinese for the Wang Pi text and the Ma-wang-tui. Note that the order of the lines is different in the two:

Wang Pi	Ma-wang-tui ¹⁴
果 而 勿 矜	果 而 毋 驕
果 而 勿 伐	果 而 勿 矜
果 而 勿 驕	果 而 一 伐
果 而 不 得 已	果 而 毋 得 已 居
果 而 勿 強	是 胃 果 而 不 強 物

I wonder if these are not actually intended as imperative statements, as D.C. Lau suggests with his translation,¹⁵ e.g., “Achieve your result but do not do so and so.” The *wu* 勿 of line 2, 4th tone, in my understanding, should be read in pre-Han literature as a compound of imperative *wu*+*chih*, the preposed object. That fits well here—“Achieve your result but do not brag *about it*.” And note that the last line, summing up the above, clearly a declarative sentence, uses the negative *pu* instead of either *wu*—i.e., “This is called achieving your results but

11. The Wang Pi Chinese is “載營壘抱一能無離乎,” etc.

12. Chan, *The Way*, p. 226.

13. Chan, *The Way*, p. 152.

14. This is actually a composite version of Chapter 30, based on Text A and Text B combined, but both manuscripts are fairly complete here. Text A varies from this in only three ways: 1) it has 驕 instead of 驕 in line 1; 2) The 伐 is missing in line 3; and 3) the 果 is missing in the last line. Text B has a lacuna at 而 in line 3, and the 不 is left out of the last line. I would see this as copy error. For the text see *Lao-izu: Ma-wang-tui Han mu po-shu* (Peking: Wen wu, 1976), p. 92.

15. See D.C. Lau, Tr., *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (Baltimore and London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1963), p. 88. “Bring it to a conclusion but do not boast; bring it to a conclusion but do not brag,” etc.

not forcing things." Line 4 too is different than the Wang Pi: it does not have "do this only when you have no choice [*pu-te-i* 不得已]," but *wu te i chü* 毋得已居, which could possibly be "Achieve your results but do not take their land to dwell in." This *i* does occur as the instrumental *i* 以, "by the way," later in Chapter 39 in connection with this *wu* in the line noted above, "If Heaven did not have it to become clear."

4) A number of the variants are copyist errors, pure and simple; there seems to be no doubt. When the copyist for Text A wrote in Chapter 23 者者同於失 he clearly meant 失者同於失, a line which appears to mean something like "He who abandons it [the Tao] is one with abandonment." And when the copyist for Text A wrote 明, "clear-sighted," in Chapter 12 in the line "The five colors cause one's eyes to go _____," he clearly meant *mang* 盲 "blind." Yen Ling-feng lists a total of 16 characters that fall into this category—13 in Text A and 3 in Text B.¹⁶ I fundamentally agree with Yen on his choice of errors. My list of probables comes to 19; 15 in Text A and 4 in Text B. They are 9.8 A (=Chapter 9, entry 8, Text A), 12.2 A, 16.5 A B, 22.1 A, 22.15 A, 23.10 A, 32.6 A, 38.1 B, 52.11 A, 55.15 A, 55.17 A, 62.6 B, 69.6 A, 70.8 B, 74.9 A, 74.10 A, 74.11 A, 79.3 A.

There might be many more variants that are actually copy error depending on how one sees the many homophones and characters that are close in pronunciation to their Wang Pi equivalents. Are these deliberate, known, *chia-chieh* (loan characters), or are they guesses from the copyist taking down oral dictation? Hsü Fu-kuan raises the latter point.¹⁷

I might add here that some of the variants seem to be clear cases of character abbreviation, the copyist saving time. Note for example, 女 for 安 (15.23 AB), and 耳 for 取 (12.13 A). One cannot see these as *chia-chieh* since even the Archaic pronunciations (女=*nio*, 安=*an*; 耳=*niag*, 取=*ts'iu*) would not match. Also abbreviated must be the 爰 for 憂 of 55.16 A. And the graph 耳 for 聖 in Text B throughout might qualify as well. For that matter, all cases of phonetic without the radical might be abbreviation. One wonders, for example, about the common 胃 for 謂, since the full character is used once in Chapter 51 (Text A).¹⁸

5) Next I move to a double point, one of great importance. The truth of the matter is that most of the variants in these texts, excluding now the grammatical particles, are either homonyms (or very close in sound) or synonyms of the Wang Pi equivalent, and sometimes both, and where they are purely homonyms it seems clear that the Wang Pi word is the one intended. The Wang Pi *ming* 冥, "dark, obscure", for example, makes better sense than the Ma-wang-tui *ming* 鳴, "birds cry" in the line "窈兮—兮, 其中有精" (21.11A).¹⁹ What this means is that very few

16. See Yen Ling-feng, *Ma-wang-tui po-shu Lao-tzu*, pp. 52-53.

17. See Hsü Fu-kuan, "Po-shu *Lao-tzu*," p. 99.

18. Most of this I have said earlier in the *T'oung Pao* article.

19. Chan, *The Way*, p. 137, translates "Deep and obscure, in it is the essence."

of the variants really change the meaning of the text in a significant way, about which I will say more in a moment. For now let me draw a corollary of that; the variants of the Ma-wang-tui texts of the *Lao-tzu*, it seems to me, are of more importance for linguistics than they are for philosophy. These provide data for many different kinds of language studies, and I would suggest that at least the following could be done. (My remarks here really apply to all of the Ma-wang-tui texts, not only the text of *Lao-tzu*.)

1) The Ma-wang-tui texts provide data for checking if not revising the current systems of reconstructed Archaic Chinese. What do the *chia-chieh* show about conclusions thus far reached? I might add that we cannot understand some things in these texts without reference to the present reconstructions. In Chapter 2, Text B, for example, we find *hsi* 昔 "formerly," in the line, "The 10,000 things _____ [formerly] and it does not begin them," where Wang Pi has *tso* 作 "to arise," clearly the correct word. But if we check Karlgren's Archaic Chinese then the problem is resolved; the Archaic pronunciation of *hsi* was *siak* and *tso* was *tsak*, hence the mixup.

2) In working on the Archaic pronunciation attention must be paid to initials as well as finals. Again there are some curious things in the Ma-wang-tui texts which might suggest dialect differences. One that struck me as odd, but one that is again resolved by reference to Karlgren, is the occurrence of *nung* 弄 "to play with," for *ch'ung* 寵 "favor," in Text B, Chapter 13 (item 4). But apparently the Archaic pronunciation was *lung* as in dragon, and in fact "dragon" was used as a *chia-chieh* for *ch'ung*; that is in fact the character used at this point in Text A.

3) The problem of what constitutes a given *chia-chieh* might be worked on again. Karlgren in his *Loan Characters in Pre-Han Texts* sets up rigid criteria on this. There is a range of allowable mixing of initials and finals for any case of *chia-chieh*.²⁰ Does this jive with the new data?

4) I have already mentioned that grammar and grammatical particles need attention.

5) And finally, we have much information here on the nature of the written script before the Ch'in reform and thus work for the specialists in epigraphy.

Specifically the Ma-wang-tui texts suggest three things about the language before the Ch'in reform: 1) that the matter of radicals, whether to use one in some cases, or which one to use in others, was far from settled. 2) That in many cases a given word was represented by two, three, or more graphs, sometimes even by a single copyist. *Pao* 寶, for example, "valuable", is written three different

20. See Bernhard Karlgren, *Loan Characters in Pre-Han Texts* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1968), pp. 10-17.

ways in the Ma-wang-tui *Lao-tzu*, as 璫 in 62.2 AB, 僕 in 67.5 A and 69.13 A, and 琛 in 67.5 B and 69.13 B. Or to take two more examples, 彼 “that, those,” is written four different ways, as 罷 in 12.12 A, 38.13 B, and 72.10 B, as 皮 in 38.13 A, as 被 in 72.10 A, and as 彼 in 12.12 B. And finally *pai-hsing* 百姓, “the 100 surnames, the common people,” is written as 百姓 in 5.1 B and 17.7 B and 75.4 A, as 百省 in 5.1 A, 17.7 A and 49.2 B, and as 百生 in 49 B.²¹ 3) That there were many graphs in use in the pre-Ch’in script that did not make it into modern times. Presumably these were dropped by the reform.²² Many such characters are found in the Ma-wang-tui texts, for example 𤑔 for 甦 in 11.4 B, 緝 for 混 in 14.11 B, 𤑔 for 禍 in 46.1 A, 58.7 A and 69.5 A, 𤑔 for 揣 in 9.3 B, 𤑔 for 爽 in 12.5 A, 𤑔 for 貨 in 12.9 A, and 𤑔 for 鄰 in 15.10 B and 80.11 B. Yen Ling-feng lists a total of 36 of these graphs.²³ I do not think this is the complete list, but for your reference the locations in my lists of Yen’s graphs are: 9.3B, 11.4B, 12.5A, 13.12A, 14.11B, 14.12A, 15.10B, 15.17B, 16.6B, 20.21A, 18.1A, 20.24A, 21.10A, 21.17A, 23.1B, 24.4A, 25.4B, 36.9A, 37.3A, 39.21A, 45.3A, 45.4A, 47.1B, 47.3B, 50.12A, 55.2A, 56.7A, 58.2B, 62.3A, 67.7B, 72.4B, 73.8B, 74.3B, 75.3A, 76.3A. He also includes “𤑔” for “聖” in Text B; the locations for this are noted below.²⁴

6) I come now to what is most important to me, to those variants that really make a difference to the meaning of the text. I think these are very few. If we suspend judgment for the moment on all homonyms and characters closely related in pronunciation, which could be *chia-chieh* or copy errors, and if we hold off on all characters related by phonetic, which could be *ku-wen* forms, abbreviation, or again *chia-chieh* or copy error, and if we eliminate what are pure synonyms, then there is not a whole lot left. I have gone through my list doing this and end up with something like 60–65 variants out of the total 634, and even with these there are many borderline homonyms or synonyms; where do we draw the line, for example, between the *chen-ch'en* 貞臣, “pure servant” of Ma-wang-tui (18.9A) and the *chung-ch'en* 忠臣, “loyal servant” of Wang Pi?

In any event I would draw readers’ attention to the following as possibilities for changes in meaning: 1.3AB, 2.4AB, 2.5AB, 2.12B, 5.7AB, 8.2AB, 8.8B, 10.12B, 10.14B, 15.1B, 15.12AB, 16.3A, 16.3B, 18.9AB, 20.2AB, 20.25AB, 21.14AB, 21.15AB, 21.19AB, 22.6AB, 22.3A, 22.7AB, 23.10AB, 23.12AB, 23.13AB, 24.6AB, 25.5AB, 26.4AB, 28.11AB, 31.2A, 33.12B, 35.3AB, 37.2AB, 37.9AB, 37.12AB, 40.1B, 41.20B, 42.2A, 50.6AB,

21. See footnote 88 below.

22. See Barnard’s article on this also—“The Nature of the Ch’in reform.” A.C. Graham finds many archaic characters in the *Mo ching*, a text which went unedited in the Han and thus was not updated. But he feels that some of these characters were deliberately created by the Mohists for their own terms and meanings. See A.C. Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), pp. 76–81.

23. See Yen Ling-feng, *Ma-wang-tui po-shu Lao-tzu*, pp. 41–44.

24. For more on these “new” characters see my “Examining the Ma-wang-tui Silk Texts of the *Lao-tzu*,” section 2.

50.8AB, 51.2AB, 51.3AB, 51.5A, 52.13AB, 53.2AB, 55.12B, 57.8A, 57.11B, 58.5A, 59.1B, 62.6A, 64.4AB, 64.5A, 64.6AB, 67.13A, 67.19AB, 67.21AB, 69.9AB, 70.1A, 72.2AB, 75.5A, 76.6A, 78.9AB, 80.6A, 81.1B.

There are some interesting things here as readers will note, although many of these are "known variants." Let me comment on just a few of the examples, but I will begin with two variants which are in fact related by phonetic to show how complex this problem is.

1) First of all in Chapter 2, Text A has *i* 意 "idea" for 音 *yin* "sound" in the line *yin sheng hsiang ho* 音聲相和 "sound and voice harmonize one another." To be more precise the Ma-wang-tui texts and *chih* 之 and *yeh* 也 particles to each of the lines in the series that occurs here, making them phrases—*yin sheng chih hsiang ho yeh*—"the mutual harmonizing of tone and sound," and after the final phrase comes *heng yeh* 恒也 "these are all constants". So we have "the mutual production of being and non-being, the mutual forming of short and long," etc. "these are all constants," not "being and non-being produce one another, short and long form one another," etc.

In any event, Text A presents the interesting reading, "the mutual harmony of *idea* and voice." Could this reflect the original meaning with later copyists failing to copy down the heart radical underneath? Perhaps. But Text B like Wang Pi has *yin*, not *i*; and who is to say that *yin* with the heart radical underneath was not simply another way of writing *yin* at this time?

2) Secondly, another example of this sort occurs in Chapter 33 with an even more interesting reading. There in the line *ssu erh pu wang* 死而不亡 "to die but not really perish—that is true long life"—we find *wang* 忘 "to forget" for *wang* "to perish" in both texts. This seems to give the reading "To die but not be forgotten—that is true long life," an interesting reading indeed. But I wonder if John Cikoski's verbal categories—ergative and neutral—are relevant here?²⁵ If *wang* 忘 is neutral, then I am not sure that it could become passive in this context. In that case it would make no sense here except as a variant spelling of *wang* 亡 "to perish", which it could be, I admit, anyway.

3) Let me move now to some genuine variant readings and begin with Chapter 1. In the third line, both texts read *wan-wu* 萬物 "the ten thousand things" where Wang Pi has *t'ien-ti* 天地, "Heaven and Earth," in "The nameless is the origin of ____." So we have "The Nameless is the origin of the 10,000 things; the Named is the Mother of the 10,000 things." I prefer "Heaven and Earth," it sets up a better cosmology with the universe coming first followed by all things in it. But this does confirm the reading cited by Ssu-ma Ch'ien in *Shih-chi* 127, the biography of the diviners.²⁶

25. see John Cikoski's "Introduction to Classical Chinese" published in mimeo form by the Department of Oriental Languages, University of California. See pp. 1-18.

26. See *Shih chi* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1972, 5th edition), Vol. 10, p. 3220.

4) Next I move to Chapter 64 where we have those very nice sentiments: (quoting Chan) "A tree as big as a man's embrace grows from a tiny shoot. A tower of nine stories begins with a heap of earth. The journey of a thousand *li* starts from where one stands."²⁷ The first two sentences can stand as read, but there is not a word about a journey of a thousand *li*. Rather, Text A says that a high place of 800 ft. (reading *jen*, humanity as the *jen* meaning a measure of 8 ft.) begins where one stands—scaling it presumably. And Text B has "a high place of a hundred or a thousand feet." (see 64.4, 64.5 and 64.6 A and B)

5) Finally, at the opening of Chapter 37, both texts of Ma-wang-tui read "The Tao is constantly without a name"—*Tao heng wu ming* 道恒无名 where Wang Pi has "The Tao is constantly without action and yet there is nothing that is not done"—*Tao ch'ang wu-wei erh wu fu-wei* 道常無爲而無不爲. This is one of three places where we expect *wu-wei* and do not find it. In Chapter 3 where Wang Pi has, in the last line, "By acting without acting [*wei wu-wei*], all things will be in order" (Chan's translation)²⁸ the Ma-wang-tui texts (B at least, A has a lacuna here) read "If you do not act on them [*fu-wei*] and that's all, then all will be in order." And in Chapter 10 where Wang Pi has "Can you understand all and penetrate all without taking any action" (again Chan's translation),²⁹ the *Ma-wang-tui* texts (again Text B, Text A has a lacuna) have "Can you, in understanding all, do so without using knowledge?" But lest you fear that one of the hallmarks of Lao-tzu's philosophy is missing from these texts, the term *wu-wei* is still found in other places; in Chapters 2, 38, 43, 57, 63, and 64, in short, in all of the other places where it occurs in Wang Pi with the exception of 48 where both Ma-wang-tui texts have lacunae.

Readers are now encouraged to explore the data on their own. The list of variants follows. But first a few words of explanation:

1) I repeat that this is only a list of the character variants, it is not a complete accounting of all the ways in which the Ma-wang-tui texts vary from the Wang Pi. Thus I make no mention of, and do not take into account for these purposes, the changes in sequence of characters, phrases, and lines, which are numerous in the Ma-wang-tui texts. Nor do I mention or take into account additions and/or omissions, of characters, phrases, or lines, which are also numerous. I have noted much of this elsewhere.³⁰

This is a study of character-for-character correspondence, noting those places where one character (or more) clearly takes the place of, fills the function of, another. In other words variants are only noted where corresponding characters are found in both sources, the Ma-wang-tui texts and the Wang Pi. Almost every

27. Chan, *The Way*, p. 214.

28. Chan, *The Way*, p. 103.

29. Chan, *The Way*, p. 116.

30. See section 4 of my "Examining the Ma-wang-tui Silk Texts of the *Lao-tzu*."

variant noted is a case of one character for one character, but in some cases I have noted binome variants (e.g. 君子 for 聖人 in Chapter 26, item 4, or 瓊官 for 榮觀, in Chapter 26, item 9), and in other cases one character stands for two (e.g. 故 for 是以 in 66, item 4) or two stand for one (e.g. 天下 for 人, 42, item 2).

2) I have used two transcriptions of the Ma-wang-tui texts in compiling this list: ① the copy of the texts found in *Wen wu* 文物, 1974:11, pp. 8-20; and ② the small paperback *Lao-tzu: Ma-wang-tui Han mu po-shu* 老子馬王堆漢墓帛書 (Peking: Wen wu, 1976). Both texts have the serious drawback of being printed in simplified characters, but one must use some transcription into modern characters unless one is expert in "small seal" script (which I am not).³¹

There are discrepancies between the two transcriptions. In general, *Lao-tzu: Ma-wang-tui* (hereafter LTMWT) is the more accurate of the two, but occasionally *Wen wu* is to be followed. All discrepancies have been noted.

I should add that I have completely checked LTMWT against the actual photoreprints (published in *Ma-wang-tui Han mu po-shu:1* (Peking: Wen wu, 1974, Vol. I.), and I rechecked the photoreprints wherever *Wen wu* and LTMWT showed different things.

3) All variants have been checked against Chiang Hsi-ch'ang's *Lao-tzu chiao-ku* (Taipei: Ming-lun, 1971) to see which have been found in other places. Known variants are noted as such: when the variant occurs in more than 10 other sources, it is cited herein as "common variant." The page numbers in *Lao-tzu chiao-ku* (hereafter LTCK) are also cited.

It is well known that the Ma-wang-tui texts have much in common with the Fu I 傅奕 text.³² Noting the variants found in LTCK one also sees similarity with what Chiang Hsi-ch'ang calls the "Lung" 龍 text, that is the text of Lung-hsing pei 龍興碑, the text used by the Ming scholar Ch'iao Hung 焦竑 in compiling his *Lao-tzu k'ao-i* 考異.³³ Many of the Ma-wang-tui variants are also found in Tunhuang fragments and in Fan Ying-yüan's 范應元 (Sung dynasty) *Lao-tzu Tao-te ching ku-pen chi-chu* 老子道德經古本集註.

4) There are a number of variants which occur repeatedly in the Ma-wang-tui texts that I have chosen not to list chapter by chapter, but rather to mention here at the beginning instead. They are: 1) 胃 for 謂—used in both texts throughout except for Text A-51; 2) 聲 for 聖—Text A throughout the "Tao" section, i.e. chapters 1-37, but A has 聖 in 38-81; 3) 耶 for 聖—Text B throughout; 4) 示 for

31. We do have Yen I-p'ing's 嚴一萍 rendering of the texts into non-simplified characters in his *Po-shu chu-chien* 帛書竹簡 (Taipei: I-wen 藝文, 1976). But this is not entirely reliable since it is based on the *Wen wu* printing of the texts, not on the actual photoreprints.

32. That is, Fu I's *Tao-te ching ku-pen p'ien* 道德經古本篇, based on a text of *Lao-tzu* found in A.D. 574 in the tomb of one of Hsiang Yü's (d. 202 B.C.) concubines. The Fu I text is printed in LTMWT.

33. Cf. Henricks, "Examining", note 77. Also see Chiang Hsi-ch'ang, *Lao-tzu chiao-ku*, pp. 11-12.

其—Text B throughout, Text A throughout the “Te” section, but 其 in 1-37;³⁴
 5) 呵 for 兮—both texts throughout. The location and number of occurrences of each of these variants is as follows:

1. 胃 for 謂

Text A: 1-1, 6-2, 13-3, 14-2, 16-1, 17-1, 27-2, 30-1, 36-1, 39-1, 55-1, 56-1, 59-1, 65-1, 68-3, 69-1, 78-1.

Text B: 1-1, 6-2, 10-1, 13-3, 14-2, 16-1, 17-1, 22-1, 27-2, 30-1, 36-1, 39-1, 51-1, 56-1, 59-2, 65-1, 67-1, 68-3, 69-1, 78-1.

2. 聲 for 聖

Text A: 2-1, 3-1, 5-1, 7-1, 12-1, 19-1, 22-1, 27-1, 29-1.

3. 耶 for 聖

Text B: 2-1, 3-1, 5-1, 7-1, 12-1, 19-1, 22-1, 29-1, 49-1, 63-1, 64-2, 66-1, 70-1, 71-1, 72-1, 77-1, 78-1, 79-1, 81-1.

4. 六 for 其

Text A: 38-4, 39-1, 45-1, 47-2, 50-4, 52-9, 56-5, 58-2, 60-4, 61-1, 64-1, 65-1, 66-2, 71-1, 72-2, 74-1, 75-3, 76-2, 78-1, 80-4.

Text B: 1-1, 3-4, 4-4, 5-1, 7-5, 9-1, 11-3, 14-4, 15-4, 16-1, 17-4, 20-2, 21-4, 24-1, 25-1, 27-2, 28-6, 30-1, 33-1, 34-2, 35-1, 38-3, 39-1, 45-1, 47-2, 48-1, 50-3, 52-8, 59-5, 56-6, 57-1, 58-6, 59-2, 60-4, 61-1, 63-1, 65-1, 66-2, 67-1, 71-1, 72-3, 73-1, 74-1, 75-3, 76-2, 77-1, 78-1, 80-4.

5. 呵 for 兮

Text A: 4-1, 15-3, 20-4, 21-5, 25-2.

Text B: 4-2, 15-6, 17-1, 20-5, 21-6, 25-2, 34-1.

Readers will notice that I have not been consistent in this: 恒 for 常 is also a common and well known variant in both texts as is 邦 for 國 in Text A. Moreover 勝 is always written 朕 in Text B. But these three variants are noted chapter by chapter in my study. My defence rests in part on frequency: these three variants are not found in great numbers. But I also wished to avoid some confusion in the cases of 恒 and 邦. Not all 常's are 恒's in the Ma-wang-tui texts, and the character 國 does occur in Text A (as a variant for 域 in Chapter 25). In fact in the 恒 for 常 case one finds an interesting functional distinction drawn in the Ma-wang-tui texts: when “constant” is used in an adjectival or adverbial sense (i.e., Chapters 1, 3, 27, 28, 32, 34, 37, 46, 48, 49, 51, 61, 64, 65, 74 and 79) it is 恒, but “constant” as noun (Chapters 16, 52 and 55) is 常.

One final note, as mentioned above, 無 is written 无 in the Ma-wang-tui texts. I have not bothered to note this chapter by chapter.

6) A note on the format. My design has been to provide a list which could

34. *Wen wu* does not show this; it always prints 其 throughout both texts. LTMWT mistakenly prints 其 for 六 in Text B-7, 28, 61, and 63 and Text A-5, and 76.

be readily used as a companion to the Wang Pi text (SPPY ed.). Therefore, the list is set up running from Chapter 1-81 with the chapter sequence of Wang Pi. Variants are noted within each chapter in the sequence of the chapter itself—thus read from the beginning. Whenever a variant occurs in both texts, I note it in Text A first. In any event the character in both texts is always noted. If Text B has the same as Text A, I note it "*ibid.*"; if it is the same as Wang Pi, I have "=Wang Pi"; if it is a different variant than Text A, the character is noted. "Lacuna" means exactly that: the text is rotted away.

The line context of each variant is noted. The blank underlined space indicates where the variant fits; one can thus see what the Ma-wang-tui texts would read and what the Wang Pi says. But the Chinese of the context line comes from the Wang Pi text (SPPY ed.). The Ma-wang-tui lines are *often* not exactly the same. Where this affects the relevance of the variant I have noted the Ma-wang-tui context as well (in footnotes).

馬王堆帛書老子中之異體字

韓 祿 伯

本文乃針對馬王堆帛書老子及王弼老子中異體字之比較。文論六點：

(一)帛書甲本異體字430，乙本424；甲本異體字共出現757次，乙本881次。

(二)異體字中25%至30%乃同音字：

(1)帛書老子之異體字乃王弼老子之表音部分。

(2)帛書老子之異體字與王弼老子具同一表音部分，不同部首。

(3)帛書老子之異體字乃王弼本原字加一部首。

(三)異體字中不少為虛字或語尾助詞。文中特別注意「毋」與「無」，「弗」與「不」，「呵」與「兮」，「與」與「邪」之應用。

(四)異體字中包括別字及簡體字。

(五)帛書中絕大多數之異體字乃王弼本之同音或同義字。故帛書老子異體字之研究對語言學之貢獻大於對老子哲理之探討。本文作者並舉例說明此類異體字對中國上古文字語言研究之價值。

(六)帛書異體字中僅60至65字改變王弼老子文義。如帛書甲本第二章之以「意」代「音」，甲乙兩本第三十三章之以「忘」代「亡」，及第三十七章之以「无名」代「無為」。