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## A Groundbreaking Contribution to *Huainanzi* Translation Studies: A Review of Ding Lifu's *A Study on the Transmission and Translation of the Huainanzi*

**Hu Lishi**

**Abstract:** Professor Ding Lifu's *A Study of the Transmission and Translation of the Huainanzi* is the first monograph in China to systematically examine both the textual transmission of *the Huainanzi* and its international translation and reception. Grounded in more than a decade of research, the book exhibits both philological rigor and theoretical depth. Structured around the trajectory “domestic transmission—international translation— theoretical synthesis,” it not only offers a comprehensive account of *the Huainanzi*'s transmission from the Han dynasty onward, but also presents, for the first time, a systematic overview of its translation and reception in global academia. Introducing Gérard Genette's paratext theory, the author innovatively reveals the external conditions and operative mechanisms that shape the cross-cultural dissemination of classical Chinese texts, and proposes a multidimensional set of criteria for evaluating the success of classical text translation. Taking *the Huainanzi* as a case study, the book contributes significantly to the construction of a “discipline of Chinese classics translation studies.” As a pioneering work, it expands the research field and provides methodological insights for classical text translation, marking an important milestone in the study of *Huainanzi* translation and the broader field of Chinese classics translation.

**Keywords:** *Huainanzi*; transmission; translation studies; paratext; classical text translation

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**标题:** 《淮南子》译介研究的拓荒之作——评丁立福教授《〈淮南子〉传承与译介研究》

**摘要:** 丁立福教授的《〈淮南子〉传承与译介研究》是国内首部系统性探讨《淮南子》传承与国际译介的学术专著。该书以十余年研究积累为基础，兼具文献考证的厚度与理论探索的深度。全书以“国内传承—国际译介—理论总结”为主线，既全面梳理《淮南子》自汉代以来的传承脉络，又首次系统呈现其在国际学界的译介情况。在此过程中，作者引入热奈特“副文本”理论，创新揭示典籍译本在跨文化传播中的外部条件与运行机制，并提出典籍外译成功的多维标准，同时以《淮南子》为个案推动“中国典籍外译学”的建构。该书不仅开拓了研究领域，也为典籍翻译提供了方法论启示，是《淮南子》译介研究的开创性成果，也是中国典籍翻译研究的重要里程碑。

**关键词:** 《淮南子》；传承；译介研究；副文本；典籍翻译

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In the vast constellation of ancient Chinese texts, *the Huainanzi* has long been regarded as an encyclopedic intellectual masterpiece. It draws together the teachings of various pre-Qin schools—including Huang-Lao, Confucianism, Mohism, and Yin-Yang cosmology—while its unique historical background also reflects the political, cultural, and scholarly landscape of the early Han dynasty. Despite its intellectual richness, however, *the Huainanzi* has received far less scholarly attention, both in the history of Chinese textual studies and in the history of translation, than works such as the *Analects*, the *Daodejing*, and the *Zhuangzi*. Its importance in China's own intellectual history contrasts sharply with its marginal reception in overseas academia. It is precisely within this scholarly context that Professor Ding Lifu, through more than a decade of sustained effort, has focused his research on the transmission and translation of *the Huainanzi*, pioneering a field that had remained largely unexplored. Since his doctoral studies, Professor Ding has taken the English translation of *the Huainanzi* as his central research focus. He subsequently published over a dozen related articles in core academic journals such as *Chinese Translators Journal* (*Zhongguo Fanyi*) and *Beijing Social Sciences*, and he directed the first provincial-level research project in China dedicated to the translation and reception of *the Huainanzi*. These scholarly contributions culminated in the monograph *A Study of the Transmission and Translation of the Huainanzi* (hereafter Ding's Monograph), published by the Commercial Press in 2024. This book marks the first systematic and comprehensive study in China that integrates the textual transmission of *the Huainanzi* with its international translation and reception. Not only does it fill a major scholarly gap, it also provides a new paradigm for classical text translation studies through its interdisciplinary approach, meticulous philological examination, and innovative theoretical framework. As Professor Han Ziman notes in the preface, every step Professor Ding has taken in advancing and deepening *Huainanzi* studies has

consistently led the field at its scholarly frontier (Ding 2024, Preface II, xxii)<sup>1</sup>. The publication of this monograph therefore stands as a milestone in Huainanzi translation studies. This review analyzes Ding's Monograph from four perspectives—research approach, structural logic, major contributions, and minor shortcomings—in the hope of illuminating its pioneering significance and exploring the insights it offers for future studies of the translation of Chinese classics.

### 1. Research Approach of Ding's Monograph

The research approach of Ding's Monograph reflects over a decade of sustained accumulation and reflection. Overall, it is both a systematic consolidation of the author's own research trajectory and a thoughtful response to the current state of scholarship. First, from the perspective of research background, *the Huainanzi* has long existed in a "blind spot" within studies of classical text translation. Compared with the Analects and the Daodejing, *the Huainanzi* is more voluminous and intellectually synthetic, and therefore has historically had limited visibility in Western academia. It was not until 2010 that Columbia University's "Library of Chinese Classics in Translation" published the first complete English translation, *The Huainanzi*, bringing the text into the international scholarly arena. In China, however, research had focused primarily on intellectual interpretation and textual collation, with little systematic work from the perspectives of translation studies or cross-cultural communication. Identifying precisely this gap, Professor Ding devoted himself to the translation and reception of *the Huainanzi*, demonstrating both perceptive topic selection and strategic academic foresight. Second, in terms of scholarly accumulation, Professor Ding's research shows a clear progression "from points to structure." His earlier articles addressed specific issues—for example, "A Study of the First Complete English Translation of *the Huainanzi* Abroad" evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the Columbia translation, while "Thresholds in the Translation of Chinese Classics: The Case of *the Huainanzi*" examined "threshold issues" in cross-cultural translation. These studies laid a methodological foundation combining translation studies, philology, and intellectual history. His doctoral dissertation, *A Comparative Study of Paratextual Styles in Chinese and Foreign English Translations of the Huainanzi*, further employed Gérard Genette's theory of the paratext, thereby shifting attention to the "extras-textual" dimensions that shape translation reception. This theoretical orientation becomes a key intellectual highlight in Ding's Monograph. Third, the monograph adopts a "dual integration" approach that breaks from the conventional practice in China of analyzing classical translations in isolation. On the one hand, it integrates two thousand years of domestic transmission of *the Huainanzi* with nearly a century of its overseas translation and reception, simultaneously tracing its historical lineage "backward" and examining its international dissemination "outward." On the other hand, it integrates textual analysis with reception studies, examining not only philosophical content and textual versions but also publication contexts, series effects, scholarly evaluations, and reader responses. This dual integration gives the work a distinctly interdisciplinary character. Finally, Ding's research is driven by a strong sense of problem consciousness. Rather than merely listing translation facts, he asks why some

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<sup>1</sup>Ding Lifu (2024), *A Study on the Transmission and Translation of the Huainanzi*. The Commercial Press. Citations below are indicated only by page numbers and will not be repeatedly specified.

translations gain wide circulation while others do not; rather than focusing on translation alone, he investigates paratextual design, publishing strategy, and academic networks. His comparison of the “Library of Chinese Classics” with Columbia University’s “Library of Chinese Classics in Translation” reveals the cultural mechanisms underlying “academic impact,” providing important implications for Chinese classical translation studies.

In short, Ding’s research approach may be summarized as follows: identifying a scholarly gap, drawing on long-term accumulation, adopting dual integration, and foregrounding methodological questions. This approach not only yields fresh insights into *the Huainanzi* but also opens new avenues for the study of classical text translation.

## 2. Logical Structure of Ding’s Monograph

Although not lengthy, Ding’s Monograph is tightly structured and demonstrates exemplary scholarly precision. The book consists of seven chapters, preceded by a preface and followed by appendices and references. Its overall composition exhibits a clear progression: the first three chapters address domestic transmission, the next three focus on foreign translation and reception, and the seventh chapter offers theoretical reflection and synthesis. This framework— “historical foundations → overseas dissemination → theoretical elevation”— gives the monograph both historical depth and comparative breadth.

More specifically, Chapter One serves as the literature review of the entire monograph. It systematically surveys research on *the Huainanzi* produced in Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan between 1934 and 2021, supplemented with detailed statistical data and visualized charts. The significance of this chapter lies not only in its establishment of a solid “documentary foundation” for the subsequent analysis, but also in its demonstration of Professor Ding’s methodological strength in quantitative statistics and visualization. For example, through charts displaying the number of researchers active in different periods, the distribution of research fields, and the types of publications, readers can clearly perceive the rise and decline of *Huainanzi* studies over time. Such an approach is not commonly seen in Chinese classical studies and thus reflects notable methodological innovation. What is particularly noteworthy is that Professor Ding already highlights the 2010 English translation of *The Huainanzi* by Zhai Jiangyue and Mou Aipeng in this chapter, laying the groundwork for the comparative translation analysis that follows and demonstrating his thoughtful, architectonic design of the book.

Chapter Two turns to *the Huainanzi*’s compilation and textual transmission. Beginning with the historical context of the Huainan Kingdom during the Han dynasty, Professor Ding examines the cultural position of Liu An and his circle of retainers, and then analyzes the composition of the authorial group and the motivations behind the text’s formation. A major highlight of this chapter is the detailed comparison between the twenty-eight-juan Daozang version and the twenty-one-juan Northern Song edition. Ding observes that although modern standard editions generally follow the twenty-one-juan system, they do not wholly abandon the twenty-eight-juan version; rather, the two versions have been synthesized through comparative collation. This

attitude of drawing from both textual traditions not only reflects the complexity of the work's transmission, but also provides necessary textual grounding for translation studies.

Chapter Three moves into philosophical interpretation. Centered on the themes of “the unity of Heaven and humanity (tianren heyi)” and “following the natural Dao (daofa ziran),” Professor Ding elucidates the philosophical status of *the Huainanzi* as a Han-dynasty culmination of Huang-Lao thought. He traces the origins of the idea of “Heaven-human unity” and situates it within the broader trajectory of Chinese intellectual history, discussing its lasting influence on later thought. Although relatively concise, this chapter plays a pivotal role within the overall framework of “translation studies + intellectual history”: it provides essential conceptual background for the study of translation and, at the same time, prevents the monograph from becoming a narrowly technical work on translation alone, thereby preserving the cultural depth necessary for classical-text scholarship.

Chapter Four marks the key transition from the “domestic” realm to the “international.” Here the author provides a comprehensive survey of *Huainanzi* research and translation outside China. The coverage is remarkably broad: it includes early Japanese and Russian translation attempts, scattered studies in European and American academia, and even translation activities in Malaysia and parts of Southeast Asia. Especially important is Ding's detailed introduction and assessment of the 2010 English translation *The Huainanzi* published in the “Library of Chinese Classics in Translation” by Columbia University Press, which he compares with translations in other languages. The scholarly significance of this chapter lies in its presentation—virtually for the first time to Chinese academia—of a complete picture of *Huainanzi* studies in Western contexts. Whereas domestic researchers have long been aware of the Columbia translation, they have often lacked information about French, Russian, and Japanese versions. Ding's meticulous documentation fills this gap and enables scholars to re-evaluate the global position of *the Huainanzi* through an international lens.

Chapter Five focuses on the comparative study of two major English translations: (1) *Huai Nan Zi*, translated by Zhai Jiangyue and Mou Aipeng and published in 2010 within the “Library of Chinese Classics” (Da Zhonghua Wenku); and (2) *The Huainanzi*, the version published in Columbia University's “Library of Chinese Classics in Translation.” Professor Ding compares the two translations across multiple dimensions—publication background, academic influence, reception, and more. He points out their contrasting trajectories in global dissemination: although the former is part of a state-supported national project, it has limited visibility and low citation frequency in Western scholarship; by contrast, the Columbia version quickly gained wide recognition and multiple reprints owing to the prestige of its publisher and the branding effect of the series. Drawing upon abundant citation data and reader evaluations, Ding demonstrates the stark disparity in their international impact. This comparison reveals the complex mechanisms behind the “visibility” of classical translations and underscores a key insight: the success of translating Chinese classics into foreign languages depends not merely on translation quality, but also on publication platforms, academic networks, and paratextual design.

Chapter Six further deepens this discussion by examining the criteria for a “successful” translation of a classical text. Professor Ding argues that evaluating success cannot be reduced to linguistic accuracy alone; rather, it requires holistic consideration of publication context, academic influence, number of reprints, reader reception, and the translation’s role in cross-cultural communication. He emphasizes the significance of series frameworks: although *Huai Nan Zi* was included in the “Library of Chinese Classics,” this series lacks effective international distribution channels and therefore has limited global influence; the Columbia series, supported by a well-developed system for academic promotion, naturally enjoys far greater impact. This analysis highlights the importance of “external conditions” in classical translation and helps avoid the common tendency in translation studies to narrowly focus on linguistic issues.

Chapter Seven introduces Gérard Genette’s theory of the paratext, marking the theoretical apex of the monograph. Professor Ding compares the paratextual configurations of different translations—such as introductions, annotations, appendices, and indices. He argues that the translation by Zhai and Mou is weakened by its lack of paratextual support and thus fails to meet the research needs of Western scholars. By contrast, the Columbia translation excels not only in the rendering of the main text but also in its extensive introduction, detailed annotations, and interdisciplinary research tools, all of which significantly enhance its academic value. Based on this comparison, Ding concludes that for Chinese classics to genuinely enter the international scholarly stage, paratextual design must be taken seriously. This insight not only distills the lessons learned from *the Huainanzi*’s translation history but also offers generalizable guidance for the broader enterprise of translating Chinese classics.

Overall, Ding’s monograph achieves a three-tiered progression in its logical structure. First, on the historical level, the initial three chapters locate the study within domestic scholarship, tracing *the Huainanzi*’s textual transmission and intellectual background. Second, on the contemporary level, the middle three chapters shift to an international perspective, comparing Chinese and Western translations and analyzing differences in dissemination. Third, on the theoretical level, the final chapter ascends to methodological reflection, introducing paratextual theory and articulating general propositions. This structural design creates a clear trajectory—from “historical survey,” to “contemporary analysis,” to “theoretical synthesis”—and gives the monograph an internally coherent and tightly interlinked logic.

### **3. Major Innovations of Ding’s Monograph**

If the logical structure of Professor Ding’s monograph reflects his scholarly craftsmanship, the originality of its insights demonstrates his problem awareness and theoretical creativity. A close reading reveals at least four major breakthroughs. First, the systematic integration of domestic transmission and overseas translation. Previous studies of *the Huainanzi* have typically focused either on its intellectual history within China or on sporadic discussions of its foreign translations; few have attempted to bring the two into an organically unified framework. Professor Ding is the first to place “transmission” and “translation” within a single academic architecture, thereby sketching a grand trajectory that spans “from the Han to the present, from China to the world.” This “dual-line approach” not only presents the historical depth of *the Huainanzi*, but also highlights



the breadth of its cross-cultural dissemination. In this sense, Ding's work is both a groundbreaking study of *the Huainanzi* and an innovative paradigm for research on the translation of Chinese classics. As Professor Han Ziman notes, Ding's integration of transmission studies with translation studies represents a "boldly pioneering" attempt that opens a new horizon for both Chinese and international scholarship (Preface II, xxi).

Second, the academic evaluation of paratextual elements in translated editions. Professor Ding had already introduced Genette's concept of "paratext" in his doctoral dissertation; in this monograph, he further develops it into a systematic comparative framework. He argues that paratexts—such as introductions, annotations, appendices, and indexes—are not mere auxiliary materials, but essential conditions for a translation's entry into international academic discourse. For instance, *The Huainanzi* published in the "Chinese Classics" series by Columbia University Press (translated under the direction of John S. Major) quickly became authoritative in Western sinology largely because of its extensive introductions and interdisciplinary annotations. By contrast, the *Huai Nan Zi* included in the "Library of Chinese Classics" series (translated by Zhai Jiangyue and Mou Aipeng) lacks substantial paratextual support and is therefore of limited scholarly utility. Ding identifies one fundamental reason for the superiority of the Columbia translation: its paratexts are complete in form, appropriate in content, and balanced in length, providing readers with the contextual resources essential for understanding a Chinese classic (p. 210). He observes: "Translators strive to design paratexts for classical works because such materials furnish readers with the supplementary information necessary for comprehension, thus attracting more readers and enabling the classic to continue its life abroad. At the same time, the paratext itself constructs a textual environment that echoes and corroborates the main text" (p. 212). This insight deepens the dimensions of translation studies and offers practical guidance for improving the global dissemination of Chinese classics. Professor John S. Major remarks in his preface that Ding's paratext-based analysis "not only introduces this critical tool to Chinese scholars, but also demonstrates how it can enrich literary research" (Preface I, viii). Professor Hu Zhuanglin of Peking University likewise commends the innovative nature of Ding's paratextual hermeneutics.

Third, the construction of a multidimensional standard for evaluating the success of translations of Chinese classics. Traditionally, the success of a translation has been judged primarily by linguistic criteria: fidelity, accuracy, or stylistic appropriateness. Such evaluations focus narrowly on the translated text and overlook factors related to publication and reception. Professor Ding, by contrast, argues that the success of transmitting a classic abroad must be assessed across multiple dimensions: selection of publishing platform, integration into academic networks, breadth of readership, frequency of reprints, and the quality of paratextual materials. He further emphasizes that authors, editors, translators, publishers, media organizations, and readers must all be regarded as constituents of the overall dissemination chain; each has a role in enhancing the "extratextual" dimensions of a translation. For example, publishers and editors can shape contextual cues through book design, series frameworks, or page layout; media coverage—such as interviews, reviews, and public forums—can greatly enhance the public visibility of translated classics. In brief, all key actors involved in the publication and dissemination of a translation must guard their respective "gateways" in order to win

and retain readership for the classic (p. 215). Translation success, therefore, is a systemic enterprise rather than a purely technical matter. This perspective transcends the limitations of conventional translation criticism and situates translation within the broader framework of cross-cultural communication.

Fourth, using *the Huainanzi* as a case study to advance the construction of a discipline of “Chinese Classics Translation Studies.” Ding’s work is not merely a case study; it carries foundational significance for the emerging field of “foreign translation of Chinese classics.” For a long time, research on the external dissemination of Chinese classics has been fragmented and experiential, lacking a systematic theoretical framework. Centering on *the Huainanzi*, Professor Ding undertakes rigorous textual scholarship while simultaneously proposing generalizable theoretical questions: How should translation success be defined? How should paratexts be designed? How can the effects of series publication be leveraged? These questions go beyond *the Huainanzi* itself and have broad methodological implications. In this sense, Ding’s monograph not only fills a gap in studies of *Huainanzi* translation but also provides a model for the construction of an entire field of Chinese Classics Translation Studies. As Dr. Tseng Tai-yuan of the Taiwan Association of Translation and Interpretation observes, the ultimate contribution of Ding’s work lies in its reflection on the effective international transmission of Chinese classics—a contribution rich in practical value and scholarly insight.

In sum, the major innovations of Ding’s monograph can be summarized as “four firsts”: the first systematic integration of domestic transmission and overseas translation; the first application of paratext theory to compare Chinese and Western translations; the first proposal of a multidimensional standard for evaluating translation success; the first use of *the Huainanzi* as a case study to promote the discipline of Chinese Classics Translation Studies. These “four firsts” establish the distinctive position of Ding’s monograph in the field and fully explain why it has been hailed as “a pioneering work in the study of *Huainanzi* translation.”

#### **4.Minor Limitations of Ding’s Monograph**

As the first systematic study—both domestically and internationally—on the transmission and global translation of *the Huainanzi*, Professor Ding’s monograph is undoubtedly a groundbreaking work. In addition to the scholarly contributions discussed earlier, the book has received extensive recognition from the academic community at home and abroad immediately upon publication; these endorsements are already collected on the front flyleaf, and therefore need not be repeated here. Nevertheless, after a careful reading of the work, the present reviewer still finds a few minor limitations. With due modesty, I venture to offer several humble observations in the hope of receiving Professor Ding’s guidance.

First, the book still leaves some room for improvement regarding textual consistency and fine-grained details. While the overall writing is rigorous, occasional expressions, word choices, punctuation, and citations show slight inconsistencies. The following table provides specific examples:



| No. | Page  | Line                              | Error                                | Suggested Correction                                                                         |
|-----|-------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | 8     | last line                         | “差点就湮灭于”                             | The expression is overly colloquial; revise to “几近湮灭”.                                       |
| 2   | 17    | 13 <sup>th</sup> line from bottom | “深入地”                                | The particle “地” is redundant; modern Chinese allows “深入” to function directly as an adverb. |
| 3   | 17    | 5th line from bottom              | “以刘文典和胡适等为代表的一批大师和学者研究《淮南子》，而且颇有建树。” | The phrasing is awkward; revise to “以刘文典和胡适等为代表的一批大师和学者纷纷投入《淮南子》研究，且颇有建树。”                   |
| 4   | 76–77 | Paragraph 2                       | Four semicolons used inappropriately | Replace semicolons with full stops.                                                          |
| 5   | 113   | lines 5–6                         | Improper use of punctuation          | Add a pause mark after “萌发期” and “奠基期”; change the “和” following “发展期” to “以及”.              |
| 6   | 114   | line 15                           | “自成体系的独特学派”                          | “独特” is redundant; delete.                                                                   |
| 7   | 114   | footnote                          | “于秦朝就永远地失传了”                         | Overly colloquial; revise to “于秦朝时已然失传。”                                                     |
| 8   | 115   | last line                         | “以期实现富国强兵的初衷”                        | “实现……初衷” is awkward; revise to “达成……目标”.                                                     |
| 9   | 129   | line 9                            | “《庄子·齐物训》”                           | Should be corrected to “《庄子·齐物论》”.                                                           |
| 10  | 207   | last line                         | “充分发扬图书评论的魅力”                        | Inappropriate phrasing; revise to “充分发挥图书评论的作用” or “充分挖掘图书评论的价值”.                            |
| 11  | 211   | line 5                            | “刚才对副文本外延的囊括是不周延的”                   | “刚才” is colloquial; revise to “上述” or “前述”.                                                  |
| 12  | 217   | line 6 / 6th line from bottom     | “修彻‘门槛’”                             | “修彻” is unclear and likely a typographical error; should be “修葺” or “修缮”.                    |

《丁立福〈淮南子传承与译介研究〉》中的文字规范与细节改进示例

Illustrative Cases of Textual Norms and Detail Refinements in Ding Lifu's *A Study on the Transmission and Translation of the Huainanzi*

Second, the balance of domestic and international scholarship could be improved. Professor Ding's survey of domestic research in Chapter One is exceptionally comprehensive—particularly the statistical charts covering studies from 1934 to 2021, which present the field's development with admirable clarity and considerable academic value. However, the discussion of international scholarship in Chapter Four, though covering a range of countries and languages, displays noticeable variation in depth. For instance, the section on Japanese scholarship is relatively brief, mentioning only a few translations without reconstructing a coherent intellectual trajectory. Given Japan's rich tradition of Sinology and its substantial body of research on Daoist thought, scholarship related to *the Huainanzi* is likely far more extensive. A deeper exploration—

and particularly a comparison with Western scholarship—would not only highlight the international landscape of research more fully but also illuminate the dynamics of cross-cultural scholarly exchange.

Third, some chapters provide relatively limited discussion of their core themes. Professor Ding repeatedly emphasizes the importance of “reader reception,” and his paratextual approach rightly devotes careful attention to contextual and background information needed by readers. While this expands readers’ interpretive space, it also sometimes reduces the space available for direct theoretical analysis of central issues. For example, Chapter Six, “A Study of Classical Texts Related to the Twin Translations of *the Huainanzi*,” comprises two subsections of nearly equal length: (1) “The Current State of Classical Text Translation within the Library of Chinese Classics Project” and (2) “Issues in Classical Text Translation Reflected in the English Versions of *the Huainanzi*.” Yet readers may expect the latter to offer deeper, more evidence-based insights with a clearer problem-orientation. If this section could be expanded with more concrete examples and detailed analysis, the understanding of the English translations of *the Huainanzi* would be significantly enriched.

Fourth, the integration of philosophical analysis and translation studies could be strengthened. Chapter Three’s exposition of *the Huainanzi*’s philosophical core—especially its treatment of concepts such as “the unity of Heaven and humanity” and “Dao as natural spontaneity”—achieves impressive theoretical depth. However, from the perspective of translation studies, the connection between this philosophical analysis and the subsequent chapters on translation remains somewhat tenuous. A key unanswered question is: How does the philosophical complexity of *the Huainanzi* concretely shape translation strategies and translated representations? Take the concept of Dao as an example. In *the Huainanzi*, Dao carries both metaphysical and practical dimensions. Yet in English translation three major strategies commonly appear: Dao (transliteration); the Way (semantic translation); principle (interpretive translation). Each method highlights certain aspects while inevitably obscuring others. If the book were to analyze specific textual cases, comparing how different translations negotiate these semantic tensions, it would illuminate the interpretive challenges embedded in translation choices and further demonstrate the interplay between intellectual history and translation strategies. From a disciplinary perspective, the translation of core philosophical categories such as Dao and wuwei represents a critical gateway for advancing *Huainanzi* translation studies. Case-based analysis would thus not only strengthen the coherence between the book’s philosophical and translational sections but also provide a practical methodological model for future research.

In sum, Ding’s monograph is methodologically rigorous and richly argued, combining substantial historical depth with theoretical sophistication. It represents the fruit of more than a decade of meticulous scholarly engagement. The work’s significance lies not only in opening a new field for the study of *the Huainanzi*’s transmission and translation, but also in offering a valuable paradigm and practical pathway for the global dissemination of Chinese classics. In this sense, the book is both a milestone in *Huainanzi* scholarship and a meaningful contribution to the broader endeavor of promoting Chinese classical texts on the world stage.

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