continuities and changes between postwar politics and events that are more recent. Each contribution has focused on a particular institution, policy, or process, but collectively the chapters give a sense of those changes and continuities. The *Handbook's* most important contribution is to sum up and present clearly the past and current state of Japanese politics and policymaking. It has accomplished this task well. The *Handbook of Japanese Politics* will serve as a handy and much-needed reference on current Japanese politics.

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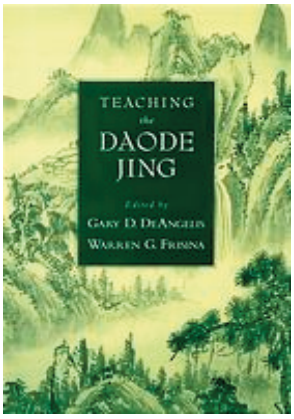
Teaching the Daode Jing

GARY D. DEANGELIS AND WARREN G. FRISINA, EDITORS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, NEW YORK, 2008
206 PAGES, 978-0-19-533270-4, PAPERBACK

Reviewed by David Jones



Why the *Daode Jing* is a special text comes out clearly in *Teaching the Daode Jing*. In general, this volume will be more useful to college/university nonspecialists than high school teachers. Some essays, however, will be more helpful than others for teachers such as those by Judith Berling, Geoffrey Foy, and John Thompson, which offer more "nuts and bolts" classroom scenarios: "Letting the *Daode Jing* Teach"; "Gender and the *Daode Jing*"; and "The *Daode Jing*: An Exercise in How Interpretations Change." Of these essays, Berling's is most rewarding. Of special note is Hans-Georg Moeller's "Introduction," which pulls the book's diverse voices together. All authors share deep passion, despite their different approaches, to this magnificent text.

Like other edited volumes, this collection has an unevenness to it, which is bound to be the case when such established scholars as Livia Kohn and Harold Roth are included in the project. As one might expect, the book tries to cover the range of terrain from the scholarly to the practical. If there is a criticism to be found, it would be this book tries to do too much in its attempt to include both ends of the spectrum.

In "Third-Person and First-Person Approaches to the *Laozi*," Harold Roth strikes a compromise between attentiveness to historical accuracy (third person) and being critical (first person). Roth's solution is to bring students into experiential learning modes through breathing exercises, which he calls "reconstructive meditation" and represents a "critical first-person" way of understanding. Although students will receive some understanding of the text, there are few passages directly germane to breathing and meditating, and such exercises may be more successful with college/university students. Nevertheless, this is one of the volume's best essays for bridging the scholarly/practical divide.

In "The Reception of Laozi," Livia Kohn contends that Daoism is primarily a religion and refocuses attention from its philosophical dimensions. Those who approach texts with a certain philosophical acuity may find this approach to be somewhat narrow. Kohn, however, argues her point well that the *Daode Jing* had for centuries been used for meditation and liturgy, ordinations of priests, and advancement of lay followers (137). Another strong chapter is Russell Kirkland's "Hermeneutics and Pedagogy" where he reminds students the text was written for another culture. Do not "colonize the *Daode Jing*" is his warning. This approach is indisputably valuable, but students will always bring their cultural moorings forward, and these preconceptions can be put to good service with ideas being lifted from their historical context for present-day creative philosophizing and religious understanding. Kirkland is aware of this because he challenges "students to question cherished beliefs" (158).

Another helpful chapter is Robert G. Henricks' "The *Dao* and the Field," where he employs the "model of a *field of wildflowers passing through the seasons*" for *dao.* We can grasp "the nature of Dao in its totality [because] we can see it . . . prior to, during, and after creation" (35). In winter, there's no indication of the soil's fecundity even if we were to dig down, all we would find is its stillness, silence, and emptiness in the "one, undifferentiated, homogeneous earth" (36). The cycles are present and the flowers will be replaced by other flowers and so on. In contrast to flowers, "people can and do go against the natural way of things [by turning] their backs on the mother and [becoming] uprooted" (37). This analogy will be effective for classroom use.

Norman J. Girardot and Michael LaFargue both offer some enjoyable reads. Girardot's "My Way: Teaching the *Daode Jing*" takes up popular "Dao-Lite" cultural expressions (107). In this somewhat autobiographical account, there are interesting, insightful, and amusing anecdotes about politics, counterculture, and economics (108). For those new to teaching this text, it's inevitable the "new-age Daoism" criticized by Girardot will surface. Michael LaFargue's "Hermeneutics and Pedagogy: Gimme That Old-Time Historicism" is given the notable position of having the last word and with reason. The gulf between contemporary America and ancient China is taken up with the question of audience—what it meant to its original audience and what it can mean to contemporary readers. Following hermeneutical leads, LaFargue argues that understanding a text in its otherness is an appropriate beginning point. In this way, readers empower themselves to challenge the messages texts offer. He offers helpful strategies that

teach students to become competent readers by assigning topical glossary essays and proverb-like aphorisms that include hints on how to detect the text's polemics, such as what *ren* really means ("code word for Confucianism"). As other authors do, LaFargue points out the text's political dimensions.

Some of these themes are also found in Eva Wong's "The *Daode Jing* in Practice" and Gary D. DeAngelis' "Mysticism in the *Daode Jing*." In the latter essay, DeAngelis offers a standard definition of mysticism as direct experience of union that is often perceived as "transcendent, the sacred, the holy, the divine" (64). Transcendence is taken issue by David L. Hall's "The *Daode Jing* and Comparative Philosophy" (49). Hall argues against this vertical dimension by asserting it's been responsible for thinking about *dao* in metaphysical terms. Hall counterposes this move with the *wu* forms: *wuwei* (nonassertive action), *wuzhi* (knowing without principles), and *wuyu* (objectless desire). For DeAngelis, teaching the *Daode Jing* as a mystical text provides him the opportunity to discuss epistemological issues. His essay is valuable because of its teaching focus. Another beneficial essay is Eva Wong's "The *Daode Jing* in Practice," which is a more practical way of reaching the experience DeAngelis and others outline. Wong reminds readers that Daoist texts are not merely intellectual exercises but are guidelines for practice (78). Engaging in practice and accepting Daoism as a practice is "to learn to accept the natural course of things," and the value of a text lies in its use (88).

All authors use this timeless text in their own ways and provide a number of ways to walk the way.

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China's Rise in Historical Perspective

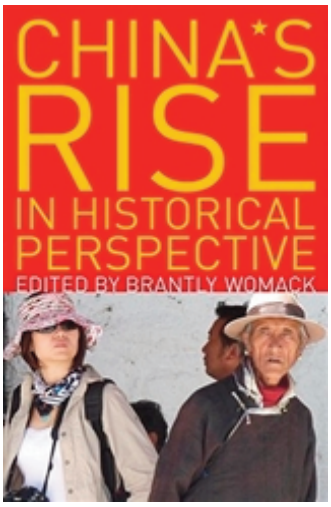
Edited By Brantley Womack
Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010
286 pages, 978-0-7425-6722-1, Paperback

Reviewed by Richard L. Wilson

Although *China's Rise in Historical Perspective*, edited by Brantley Womack, may be too advanced for secondary schools or lower-level undergraduate classes, it is an important book meriting serious attention from teachers at all levels for deepening their understanding of how China has come to challenge the economic primacy of the United States in such a short time. Discussion of China's rise has been either nonhistorical or based on such a short historical timeframe that a serious examination of the historical roots of China's recent rise is in order.

This book has a rare—one is tempted to say unique—origin and format. The University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs sponsored a set of five forums in the spring of 2009. The authors of the various chapters were invited to present papers that were discussed at each conference. Based on comments at the forums, the final chapters were prepared for publication. The success of this technique is evident in the quality of the chapters in the book.

Each forum paired a historian with a contemporary China expert discussing an important topic. The synergy created by the use of the historian and nonhistorian was another technique that improved the analysis. The first conference paired historian Joseph W. Esherick with contemporary observer Lowell Dittmer in what they choose to call an examination of the "dilemmas of identity for the Chinese (an examination that can only fully be understood when read with the concluding essay by Qin Yaqing).



Evelyn S. Rawski provided the more distant historical information on China's security issues and strategy, while Michael D. Swaine provided an account of these issues in the post-Cold War period. Dwight H. Perkins offered a global perspective on China's pre-reform economy, and then Barry Naughton addressed the dynamics of China's current reform-era economy. Environmental issues were addressed under the heading of "Ecological and Resource Interaction." Mark Elvin looked at the history of the environmental impasse of the latter days of the Imperial period, while Erica S. Downs discussed contemporary issues in China's current energy rise. Political and governmental issues were discussed under the heading of "Political Creativity and Political Development." R. Keith Schoppa offered the more historical view, and Joseph Fewsmith provided the contemporary analysis. Each of these paired essays deserves greater attention to give each full credit, but space does not permit a more detailed examination. The five paired essays culminate in a superb essay by Qin Yaqing.

Collectively, these eleven essays focus research and scholarship on at least one area that needs additional attention. Qin Yaqing does not mention Confucianism except in a few references that directly or indirectly suggest it was abandoned a century ago. He examines China's political psychology without directly mentioning that the current Chinese system is still Confucian at its core, albeit with the transformations that occurred in the belief system between the fifth century BCE and the present.

Even though Qin Yaqing barely mentions Confucius, evolved Confucian-centered Chinese traditional thinking abounds in his