Meaning-Construction
in Warring States Philosophical Discourse:

A Discussion of the Palaeographic Materials from Tomb Guōdiàn One

Positions (Toegevoegde Stellingen)

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1) The complexity of early Chinese texts has long been undervalued.

2) The study of early Chinese texts continues to neglect any clear distinction between editor and author.

3) The study of pre-Qín (221-210 BC) thought must recognize that the early text is the only explicit mediator of early intellectual activity.

4) Conventional treatment of texts as mere repositories of ideas does not enable a sound and historically valid reconstruction of early thought. This can only be achieved by looking at texts as meaningful objects.

5) Analysis of early palaeographical materials permits insight into the reciprocal relationship between communities and the texts they used. This allows us to define which texts were used in a predominantly oral context as opposed to those that were composed in writing.

6) The complex relationship between the spoken and the written renders impossible any attempt to (re)construct an imagined Urtext.

7) Conscious philosophy in China started with composing philosophical texts in writing.

8) Writing is more than just the mimesis of the mimesis.

9) Our perspective on early Chinese thought has long been shaped by thinkers from the Hàn 漢 Dynasty (ca. 202 BCE-AD 8; 23-220) who, working in an elaborate manuscript culture, imposed notions of coherency and unity on the past.

10) The physical length of an individual bamboo strip does not define the length of a meaningful textual unit. Moreover, in the Warring States period, the physical length of the bamboo strips does not reflect the status of a text at that time.

11) The academic world must re-assess the means by which it procures primary research materials in acknowledgement of how it promotes illegal trade in manuscripts.

12) Books in libraries disappear anyway. So why not allow open access to libraries in our universities?