INTRODUCTION: DIFFERENT VOICES IN THE MOZI: STUDIES OF AN EVOLVING TEXT

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Mo Di 墨翟 (ca. 479–381 BCE) claims to know that the ancient sages were caring and compassionate even though he has not personally heard their voices or seen their faces. Fortunately for him, their writings were preserved on bamboo and silk, metal and stone, or plates and bowls. So he could use their authority to promote his own novel ideas among the ruling elite of his day. He himself, however, was not so lucky: the book named after him was not carved in metal or stone, and it fared less well than the sages’ writings. The Mozi 墨子, a book of seventy-one units,¹ was seriously neglected in the course of Chinese history partly due to its perceived low literary value and uninteresting content. This agelong neglect has caused such serious textual corruption and interpretive difficulties that even contemporary scholars are often reluctant to tackle this text. Nevertheless, the authors of the current volume have chosen this voluminous source of Mohist thought—or, at least, its best-preserved parts—as their topic.

Written over a period of some two hundred years (roughly in the fourth and third centuries BCE) and possibly put into its current shape during the Han dynasty, the Mozi appears to have been largely forgotten until its

¹ Only fifty-three pian (units, chapters) are extant. But the fact that a Mozi version in seventy-one pian was listed in Hanshu 30.1738, has led to the belief that it originally had seventy-one chapters. For the textual history of the text, see Maeder, “Some Observations on the Composition of the ‘Core Chapters’ of the Mozi,” 29–34.
inclusion in the *Daozang* 道藏 (Daoist canon) published in 1447. Despite some emerging attention from the Ming dynasty onward, serious interest in *Mozi* began only with the textual studies of the Qing dynasty—more specifically, those studies conducted by scholars such as Bi Yuan 畢沅 (1730–1797), Wang Niansun 王念孫 (1744–1832), Wang Yinzhi 王引之 (1766–1834), Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821–1907), and Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848–1908). Missionary interest emerged with James Legge (1861) and Ernst Faber (1877) in the nineteenth century and was followed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by Japanese, Chinese, and Western scholarship and translation. The first Western translation, almost complete, was in German, by Alfred Forke (1922). Important partial English translations were made by Mei Yi-pao 梅贻寶 (1929), Burton Watson (1963), Angus C. Graham (1978), and Philip Ivanhoe and Bryan Van Norden; most recently, a complete translation by Ian Johnston (2010) has appeared.

Even though the *Mozi* is still not a hot topic in academic research, there has been an increasing interest during the last decades: there have been studies on Mohist thought or philosophy, on the social and geographi-