THE CHRONOLOGY OF HSÜN-TZŪ

BY

J. J. L. DUYVENDAK.

The publication of Dr. Homer H. Dubs' book *Hsün-tzū, the moulder of ancient Confucianism* (Arthur Probsthain, London, 1927) is an event of considerable importance, and when the accompanying volume, which is now in the press) and which contains a translation of Hsün-tzū’s works, has been published, this important philosopher, who has been so long neglected, will at last have come to his own. While it seems preferable to leave a full discussion of the subject until the two volumes can be taken together, still perhaps previous interest which I have shown in this author 2) entitles me to take up now one or two points which Dr. Dubs discusses and to submit his views to a critical examination.

The difficulties which a Sinologue encounters in a work of this kind, are so manifold, that it is not to be expected that any one will succeed in surmounting them all at once. The critical study of Hsün-tzū has only just begun and in some respects final results will probably only be obtained after a long exchange of views. If therefore in the following pages I am critical of some of Dr.

---

1) Published while this article was being printed, under the title of: *The works of Hsün-tze, translated from the Chinese, with notes by Homer H. Dubs, Ph. D.*
Dubs' translations and opinions, I do not wish this to be interpreted as being in the least inappreciative of his work, to which I gladly pay a warm tribute.

I will confine myself here to the chronology of Hsün-tzŭ. This chronology, as is well known, is a very vexed problem. I do not think that Dr. Dubs' treatment of the matter has been quite conclusive, and I therefore offer here the results to which I have myself come. Though fully aware that it is impossible to arrive at a mathematical certainly, I believe that it may be useful to make a careful comparison of all the available data, as there is much confusion on some points.

Our main sources for Hsün-tzŭ's life are his biography in the Shih-chi (ch. 74) and Liu Hsiang's preface. As Dr. Dubs points out, of these two the Shih-chi, being the older, deserves the more credit and it is quite clear that Liu Hsiang borrowed part of his material literally from it. Dr. Dubs however does not seem to have noticed that another part of Liu Hsiang's statements comes directly from the Chan-kuo-ts'ê, the Account of the Warring States or from the Han-shih-wai-chuan ¹), and he has also neglected the information, which is not without interest, which we may glean from minor books; such as the Yen-t'ieh-lun ²) and the Feng-su-l'ung-i ³). Evidently he has not made full use of the critical discussion in the prolegomena to Wang Hsien-ch'ien's edition of Hsun-tzu, although he does quote from it ⁴).

1) By Han Ying 韓嬰, 2nd cent. B.C. Giles, Biogr. Dict., n° 631.
2) 鹽鐵論 by Huan K'un 桓寛, who flourished in the time of the Emperor Hsian 宣 of the Han dynasty (73—48 B.C.).
3) 風俗通義, a work of the 2nd century by Ying Shao 應劭 being, like the previous two works, part of the Han-wê-i-t's'ung-ahua 漢魏叢書.
4) Hsin-tzŭ-chi-chîch कुतुरक निरीक्ष कुण ज्ञाता by Wang Hsien-ch'ien 王先謙;