

Huainanzi 淮南子

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Entry tags: Yellow and Yangzi Rivers Region, Cosmogony, Early Chinese text, Daoism, Daoist text, Cosmology, Text, Religious Group, Early Chinese Traditions

(1) Huainanzi 淮南子 (lit. Masters of Huainan) is an encyclopaedic cosmological treatise dating from the early Western Han 漢 (205 BC–9 AD). The text was produced at the court of the kingdom of Huainan 淮南. The finer details of the text's composition process, as well as the identity and role of a possible author, remain the subject of debate among scholars. The text was presented to Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 140–87 BC) in 139 BC by his own uncle and second king of Huainan, Liu An 劉安 (c. 179–122 BC), under the simple title of Neishu 內書 (Inner Writings). The occasion is described in Liu An's official biographies in Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (d. c. 86 BC) *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian) and Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) *Hanshu* 漢書 (Book of the Han), as well as in Gao You's 高誘 (c. 168–212) preface to his commentary to Huainanzi. (2) The Huainanzi comprises of twenty-one treatises (xun 訓), normally called "chapters", each of which encapsulates a thematic body of knowledge. Their content ranges from proto-science, metaphysics, and cosmogony to the more practical milieus of military strategy, ritual practice, and statecraft. By Huainanzi's own explicit claim in its postface "Yaolüe" 要略, its cycle of treatises synthesises, subsumes, and renders obsolete all other conceptual projects, past, present, and future, in order to formulate a perfect, complete articulation of the world. The ruler who digests this cosmological schema will master the fundamental workings of the realm and beyond, making Huainanzi the ultimate ruler's manual. (3) Many scholars have attempted to give full expression to the unitary nature of the cosmology put forth in Huainanzi. Michael Puett argues that it is a "phenomenology" that pushes the notion of "a monistic cosmos" to "the point when absolutely everything is seen as fully and inherently linked - not just seen as undifferentiated, but as even so linked that the very distinction of differentiated and undifferentiated is obliterated." ("Violent Misreadings: The Hermeneutics of Cosmology in the Huainanzi," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 72 [2000]: 40.) Benjamin Wallacker states that, in it, "[e]ach unique phenomenon is both part of and equal to the great unity of the cosmos." (*The Huai-nan-tzu, Book Eleven: Behavior, Culture, and the Cosmos* [New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1962], 10.) It is my personal interpretation that Huainanzi's diverse chapters are given to the formulation of a fractal cosmology, thereby achieving within limited text space a schema that is theoretically infinite in scope, application, and inter-connectedness. (4) Four of the most crucial features of Huainanzi's cosmology are "resonance" (ganying 感應, lit. "affecting and responding"), qi 氣 (vital breath, energy-matter), shen 神 (spirit, the numinous), and dao 道 (the Way). Resonance refers to the ability of separate entities to affect each other remotely, without any apparent transaction of physical force. The cosmic medium through which resonance is carried is qi; all forms, from the mythical to the mundane, are coalescences of qi. More rarefied coalescences of qi are associated with shen, a term that is variously used in reference to specific spirits and gods; to spirits and the supernatural in general; and to "the numinous" as a general, nebulous aspect pervading the world. Dao corresponds to reality at its most rarefied, referring to something like "ultimate reality" or "reality as it really is," before and beyond the bewildering frenzy of qi coalescences. "Dao" also suggests the force that gives motion and direction to reality, with its frenzy of qi coalescences. (5) Huainanzi's cosmological model extends to the delimitation of moral and other norms. However, I would argue that these norms must always be understood as artefacts of the text's overarching cosmological project. In other words, what norms are posited are done so as a reflection of their contextual application within this wider schema and their utility in its articulation, and must not be isolated from this precise context. (6) Huainanzi's ambitious claim to cosmological comprehensiveness has proved controversial on a number of interconnected fronts. First and foremost, scholars have not always been convinced that there is unity and consistency of thought across the text's chapters. The present consensus is that the twenty-one chapters build upon one another, establishing the text as a conceptual whole through sequence, at least. The claim that Huainanzi might

demonstrate a unity thought has sat uneasily alongside the text's traditional affiliation of "miscellaneous" or "eclectic" (zajia 雜家), per the ideological categorisation rubric of the Han imperial librarians. This claim is also, in the view of some scholars, implicated in uncertainties regarding the identity/ies and number of the text's author(s). Some scholars, moreover, have convincingly argued that any reconstruction of Huainanzi's cosmology ought to be tempered by the wider political contexts of the text's production, about which much remains tantalisingly uncertain. Contemporary Huainanzi scholarship unfortunately remains in a less advanced state than that of many other equivalent texts, and so many of these concerns are yet to be explored in-depth through the dialogues of multiple studies. (7) Huainanzi had a notable impact on premodern thought in China. Throughout the premodern period, the text impacted proto-scientific thought from the natural philosophy of Wang Chong's 王充 (27-100) Lunheng 論衡 (Discourses Balanced) to the Song 宋 (960-1279) encyclopaedia Taiping yulan 太平御覽 (Imperial overview of the Taiping period). The text was an important source within religious and philosophical Daoist discourse, with Liu An entering an evolving pantheon of Daoist "immortals" (xian 仙; see Ge Hong's 葛洪 [283-343] hagiography "Huainan wang" 淮南王 in Shenxian zhuan 神仙傳 [Biographies of Deities and Immortals], Wenyuange siku quanshu 文淵閣四庫全書 vol. 1059, 253-311 [Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1986], 284-5.) However, as far as is known, there is, either during the Han or shortly after, no organised religious group whose form or practices are directly associated with the text or take the text as scripture. Any database questions referring to religious groups should be understood in this context. (8) During the modern period, Huainanzi has remained consistently understudied relative to other early texts. After a series of Japanese critical translations appeared in the 1910s and 1920s, there were no major developments for several decades, until translations and studies of individual chapters began to appear in Western languages from the late 1950s onwards. The first complete critical translation in a Western language was a French edition released in 2003 as part of the Collection Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.



Date Range: 140 BCE - 220 CE

Region: Huainan Kingdom

Region tags: China, East Asia, Anhui, Huainan kingdom

The southern kingdom of Huainan lay within the boundaries of the former state of Chu 楚, which had a distinct culture and extensive literature. As such, the Huainan court in Shouchun 壽春 was a literary and cultural powerhouse, and from 154 BC onwards, Liu An played host to a large roster of retainers with diverse specialisms, organising debates on their behalf, as well as patronising other forms of creative exchange. Huainan existed synchronously with the early Han empire, of which Huainan was a satellite or vassal kingdom. The relationship between the imperial family in the capital at Chang'an 長安 and the royal family in Huainan was sensitive and complex. Liu An was the grandson of Han primogenitor Liu Bang 劉邦, i.e. Han Emperor Gaozu 漢高祖 (r. c. 206-195 BC), as well as uncle to Emperor Wu, the reigning emperor when he ascended to the throne in Huainan in 164 BC. The official histories of Huainan in the Shiji and Hanshu describe decades of fatal conflict between Liu An's immediate family and their imperial relatives: Liu Chang 劉長 (198-174 BC), Liu An's father and seventh son of Liu Bang, died in exile following the accusation of attempted treason

against Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 180–157 BC). History would repeat itself in 123–122 BC, when Emperor Wu issued an edict denouncing Liu An and his court. Liu, faced with arrest, took his own life, following which his immediate family and entourage were executed. (See A. F. P. Hulswé, “Royal Rebels,” *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 69 [1981]: 315–25 for the crackdown on Huainan.) The total disintegration of relations within the extended Liu clan ran its course within Liu An's lifetime, as the Emperor was said to have gladly received the Neishu from him only a little more than a decade earlier. The conflict that fractured the Liu clan, led to Liu An's demise, and dissolved Huainan as a self-governing kingdom corresponded to a greater existential schism in the early Han regime. In its first decades, the regime oscillated between a Zhou-style 周 multi-centre confederacy of semi-autonomous kingdoms, on the one hand, and Qin-style 秦 authoritarian rule, concentrating power in the capital, on the other. However, following the Seven Kingdoms Rebellion of 154 BC, which involved large kingdoms such as Wu 吳, Chu, and Qi 齊, the central government moved to increase its power, for example setting up new commanderies. Over the decades that followed, relations between centre and periphery deteriorated rapidly, and Emperor Wu's overall reign was marked as a “period of increased authoritarian rule.” (Griet Vankeerberghen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001], 7.) In this context, the events of 123–122 BC marked a watershed, indexing the moment that the Han cast itself once and for all in the shape of a centralised autocratic empire, which, allowing a brief interregnum, ultimately endured for four centuries. In this precise context, the gesture of producing a Southern cosmological magnum opus and then presenting this to the Emperor indexes a complicated web of political forces. As Griet Vankeerberghen notes, Liu An's presentation of the text in 139 BC can be (and has been) parsed in almost opposite ways, both as a strategy for showing deference to the capital as well as a means to assert the South's cultural and moral superiority. This aspect of the text's early life has inspired many attendant interpretations of it, with many scholars noting the contingent political implications of Huainanzi's expansive, pluralistic cosmology, and looking to the Lius' diplomatic situation as its possible hermeneutical key.

Status of Readership:

Sources and Corpora

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: He Ning 何寧. *Huainanzi jishi 淮南子集釋*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014.
- Source 2: Major, John S., Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth. *The Essential Huainanzi*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Source 3: Gang, Bai, Anne Cheng, Charles Le Blanc, Jean Levi, Rémi Mathieu, Nathalie Pham-Miclot, and Chantal Zheng. *Philosophes taoïstes vol. 2: Huainan zi*. Collection Bibliothèque de la Pléiade No. 494. Paris: Gallimard, 2003.

Online Corpora

Relevant online Primary Textual Corpora (original languages and/or translations)

- Source 1 URL: 《淮南子 - Huainanzi》 at the Chinese Text Project, <<https://ctext.org/huainanzi>>, last accessed 26/5/2021.
- Source 1 Description: Complete digitised text.

General Variables

Materiality

Methods of Composition

– Written

Notes: Huainanzi was most likely produced collaboratively, materialising out of philosophical debates sponsored by Liu An's court. See Harold Roth, *Textual History of the Huai-nan zi* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 23. The text is hypothesised initially to have been composed orally/through a mixture of oral and written composition, and later written in full (see Martin Kern, "Creating a Book and Performing It: The 'Yao lüe' Chapter of the Huainanzi as a Western Han Fu," in *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, ed. Sarah A. Queen and Michael Puett, 124–50 [Leiden: Brill, 2014]. In this article, Kern posits that the presentation of Huainanzi at the Han court would have taken the form of a "splendid verbal performance.")



Inked

– with Ink

Notes: Hypothetically, earliest version(s) would have been inked while later versions would have been printed, reflecting the prevalent text production methods of the times.

Medium upon which the text is written/incised

– Bamboo

Notes: Hypothetically, earliest version(s) would have been bamboo, as the prevalent light stationery of

the time. There is no way to be sure what media the earliest material Huainanzi(s) was written on and with, as equivalent texts during that period were written on any of bamboo, wood, silk, or, later, paper.

Was the material modified before the writing or incising process?

–Other [specify]: Unknown.

Was the text modified before the writing or incising process?

–Other [specify]: Oral mediation; see above.

Location

Is the text stored in a specific location?

[Note at which point in time, for reference, if known; select all that apply]

– Yes

↳ Tomb
– No

↳ Cemetery
– No

↳ Temple
– No

↳ Shrine
– No

↳ Altar
– No

↳ Devotional marker
– No

↳ Cenotaph
– No

↳ Church

– No

↳ Mosque

– No

↳ Synagogue

– No

↳ Triumphal Arch

– No

↳ Monument

– No

↳ Mass Gathering Point

– No

↳ Cave(s)

– No

↳ Hilltops

– No

↳ Other natural sanctuaries

– No

↳ Boundary markers or lines

– No

↳ Domestic contexts

– Yes

Notes: During later imperial periods, the text appeared in private library collections. For these private collections, refer to Roth, Textual History.

↳ Library/archive

– Yes

Notes: After the Han Emperor received the “Neishu” in 139 BC, the work was sequestered in his

personal collection. It remained in the imperial archives for over a century, until approximately 10 BC, when Liu Xiang 劉向 (c. 79–8 BC) collated and arranged the work, renaming it Huainan nei 淮南內. This is the title under which the text is catalogued in the Hanshu “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 (“Technical Monograph on Art and Literature”). (See Hanshu [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962], 1741; Roth, *Textual History*, 27; 55–6.) Roth believes it possible that a second manuscript also existed in Liu An’s personal library and was recovered from his estate after his death. The transmission of the text after the Han has seen it pass through a great number of private and imperial collections, including imperial collections such as Siku quanshu 四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Sections).



Specify

– Specify: None.

Is the location where the text stored accompanied by iconography or images?

– No

Notes: Possibly incidentally.

Is the area where the text is stored accompanied by an-iconic images?

– No

Notes: Possibly incidentally.

Production & Intended Audience

Production

Is the production of the text funded by the polity?

– No

Notes: The production of the text was coordinated and, presumably, funded by the court of the kingdom of Huainan.

Is the text considered official religious scripture?

– No

Notes: Later, the text would influence the scripture of medieval religious Daoist movements.

Written in distinctly religious/sacred language?

– No

Notes: The text is not written throughout in a distinctly religious language, however it does incorporate religious and ritual terminologies and ideas alongside terminology and ideas belonging to philosophy, folklore, proto-science, and other domains. The text is written early middle Chinese, as used at the court of Huainan. This language is arguably influenced by the Southern variety/ies of Chinese native to the area around Huainan.

Intended Audience

What is the estimated number of people considered to be the audience of the text

This should be the total number of people who would serve as the intended audience for the text.

– Field doesn't know

Notes: The intended audience is the ruler (one person). At time of composition, this was Emperor Wu of Han. The actual readership during the Han would have extended beyond this; the Han imperial librarians, for example, read and catalogued the text. Since the Han, the text has been read and studied widely by scholar elites and officials, scholars of religious Daoism, and private readership.

Does the Religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members?

– No

Notes: There is no religious group directly attached to or associated with the text. The text itself calls only for the ruler's attention and study (see chapter 21.)

Are there clear reformist movements?

(Reformism, as in not proselytizing to potential new conservative, but "conversion" - or rather, reform - to the "correct interpretation"?)

– No

Is the text in question employed in ritual practice?

– No

Notes: Not as far as is known. The text may have been first presented to the Emperor Wu of Han as part of a lavish ritualised performance (see above.)

Is there material significance to the text?

– No

Context and Content of the Text (Beliefs and Practices)

Context

Is the text itself accompanied by art?

– No

Are there multiple versions of the text?

– Yes

Notes: See Roth, *Textual History*, in particular part two ("The Transmission of the Huainan Tzu") for details of the various versions and editions of the text. There are eighty-seven extant complete editions of the text.

↳ Are multiple versions viewed as proper?

– Yes

Notes: Scholars are mostly concerned with textual (as opposed to ideological) authenticity.

↳ If multiple versions are proper, is there a differentiation among versions by any means?

– Yes

Notes: By standards of textual criticism, for example completeness.

↳ Age of extant version of text?

– Yes

↳ Content of text?

– Yes

↳ Ritual purpose of text?

– No

↳ Is there debate about which version is proper?

– Yes

↳ Among debates about proper versions of the text, how is authority established?

– Yes

Notes: According to standards of textual criticism.

↳ Age of extant version of text?

– Yes

↳ Content of text?

– Yes

↳ Ritual purpose of text?

– No

Is the text part of a collection of texts?

– Yes

Notes: The text has later been incorporated into stable collections, such as Siku quanshu, however it is predominantly treated as a standalone work.

↳ Is there a sense of canonization?

– No

↳ Is the text part of a series of volumes?

– Yes

Notes: The text was initially presented to Emperor Wu of Han under the title of Neishu (Inner Writings). The court at Huainan also produced Zhongpian 中篇 (Central Chapters) and Waishu 外書 (Outer Book). Neishu is the only survivor from the trilogy, though Qing scholars reconstituted fragments of the Zhongpian, a manual of alchemical practice, from various encyclopaedia and commentaries (see Roth, Textual History, 12; 16.)

↳ How are the volumes ordered?

– Specify: Inner (Nei), Middle (Zhong), and Outer (Wai).

If the text is not explicitly scripture, is it part of another important literary tradition?

– Yes

↳ Cultural with religious implications?

– Yes

Notes: Discussion of culture heroes, past rulers, legendary and mythical figures, folklore, and myth throughout. (This entry uses the terms "myth" and "folklore" to refer to traditional stories and histories that hold a central place in premodern Chinese culture, in many cases containing supernatural elements.)

↳ Behavioral literature?

– No

↳ Other

– Other [specify]: Cosmological, philosophical, and proto-scientific literature.

Content

Is the text - or does the text include - a ritual list, manual, bibliography, index, or vocabulary? (Select all that apply)

– Other [specify]: Seasonal ritual manual/calendar; summary epilogue that also serves as an index.

Notes: Chapter 5 is a seasonal ritual manual/calendar; chapter 21 is a summary epilogue that also serves as a rough index.

Are there lineages or a single lineage established by the text?

– No

Notes: None unique to the text; only widely known and accepted mythical and historical lineages.

Does the text express a formal legal code?

– No

Notes: Only interested in the law very generally, as far as it pertains to its broader cosmological context. There is broad, general discussion of law (fa 法) in chapter 9, for example.

Formulating a specifically religious calendar?

– Yes

Notes: Chapter 5 is a seasonal ritual manual/calendar, specifying the ritually-correct agricultural, hunting, bureaucratic, and interpersonal etc. practices for each lunar month. Note that chapters 3 (concerning astronomy) and 11 (concerning rituals and customs) also mention seasonal ritual customs.

↳ What is the arrangement of the calendar? [Select all that apply]

– Lunar?

↳ Does the calendar specifically dictate acceptable times for certain activities?

– Yes

↳ Planting?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., section 5.8.

↳ Water management? (such as opening or closing dams/dykes)

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 5.2-4, 5.8, 10.68.

↳ Harvest?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 5.4, 5.9.

↳ Naming ceremonies (for toddlers)?

– No

↳ "First haircuts" (pre-teen)

– No

- ↳ Ceremonies marking puberty/entry into adulthood?
 - No
- ↳ Marriage?
 - No
- ↳ House construction (often a metaphor for marriage)?
 - No
- ↳ Divorce?
 - No
- ↳ Warfare?
 - Yes
 - Notes: See Major et al., 5.6.
- ↳ Funerary services?
 - Yes
 - Notes: See Major et al., 5.6, 5.10, 5.13.
- ↳ Trade/commerce?
 - Yes
 - Notes: See Major et al., 5.5, 5.8.
- ↳ Festivals?
 - No
- ↳ Pilgrimages?
 - No
 - Notes: Only of extremely short distances associated with rituals on outskirts of settlements.
- ↳ Feasting?
 - Yes
 - Notes: Mentioned in reference to musical performances; see Major et al., 5.3-4, 5.9-10.
- ↳ Is feasting connected to the worship/sacrifices performed in

accordance with the guidelines of the text?

– No

↳ Is feasting sponsored by the same entity that produced the text/copies of the text?

– No

↳ Does feasting occur in a specific locations in accordance with guidelines from the text?

– No

Beliefs

Is a spirit-body distinction present in the text?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 1.21, 2.2, 2.6, 14.72. The text draws a distinction between two kinds of soul, the hun 魂 and the po 魄; see Major et al., 7.7-8, 9.2, 12.39, 16.1. The hun refers to the immortal ethereal soul, which leaves the body after death. It was even believed in some instances to wander from the body during sleep and other periods of altered consciousness. The po refers to the corporeal or vegetative soul, which is attached to the physical body and stays with it after death. The term for "body" in Huainanzi is shen 身 (body, self), which refers to the living body inclusive of the conscious self/person.

↳ Spirit-Mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other parts?

– Yes

Notes: Spirit corresponds to dynamic, undifferentiated qi, whereas the body corresponds to congealed, settled qi. See Major et al., 14.72.

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as non-material, ontologically distinct from body?

– Yes

Notes: Insofar as spirit corresponds to dynamic qi, whereas the body corresponds to congealed qi. Note that some scholars contest that Huainanzi ultimately presents a materialist cosmology; see Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭, "Huainanzi guanyu 'qi' de weiwuzhuyi de lilun" 《淮南子》關於“氣”的唯物主義的理論, in Zhongguo zhexueshi xinbian 中國哲學史新編 vol. 3, 139-45 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1989).

↳ Other spirit-body relationship?

– No

↳ Within conceptions of the mind: are there distinct notions of psychological states or aggregates?

– No

↳ Do practitioners engage in debates about mind-body dualism?

– No

Notes: Huainanzi is not associated with any group of “practitioners.”

↳ Are debates framed in other ways?

– No

↳ Do practitioners distinguish between a corporeal body and an incorporeal soul or spirit?

– No

Notes: In that Huainanzi is not associated with any group of “practitioners.”

↳ Are there other sides or features of the debate?

– Yes

Notes: The text draws a distinction between spirit and mind; see Major et al., 2.11. The term for “mind” is xin 心, which, besides “mind”, is also translated as “heart” or “heart-mind”. It refers broadly to all higher faculties of feeling, understanding, reflection, exploration, and moral decision-making that exist within each human being, however these might correspond to biological organs.

↳ What are historical mainstream and minority positions?

– Yes

Notes: The notions of hun and po souls and a theoretical distinction between spirit (shen) and mind (xin) are well-attested among “masters” (zi 子) and other literary and philosophical texts in circulation around the time of Huainanzi’s production.

Is belief in an afterlife indicated in the text?

– No

Notes: The text refers to ghosts of the deceased, to the existence of souls separate to the body (see above), and to the cases of mythical and legendary individuals who attained a kind of existence beyond the limits of their allotted biological life. However, the text does not systematically discuss the afterlife, either with regards to its qualities (location, temporality, function etc.) or the process by which the dying might transition into it. Moreover, notions of longevity and immortality seen in the text also complicate the idea of a discrete lifespan attached to a finite biological self, making it difficult to differentiate “life” and “afterlife” as clear categories.

Is belief in reincarnation in this world specified in the text?

– No

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses dicated in the text?

– No

Notes: In that Huainanzi is not associated with a group of “adherents.”

Does the text indicate if co-sacrifices should be present in burials?

– No

Does the text specify grave goods for burial?

– Yes

↳ Personal effects?

– Yes

Notes: Specifies against the use of furs as grave goods, Major et al., 13.21.

↳ Valuable/precious items?

– Yes

↳ Significant value? (Gold, jade, so forth)

– Yes

Notes: Mentions different items that have historically been buried with the dead, e.g. pearls in the mouth, jade, cotton, and bamboo wrappings, or silken threads (compared with burials where the remains are simply covered); Major et al., 11.8, 12.56. Also mentions burials in tombs chiselled deep with ornamentation and high-mounded burial mounds; Major et al., 12.56.

↳ Some value? (valuable, or useful objects)

– No

↳ Other grave goods?

– Yes

Notes: Discusses different coffins used at different points in history, e.g. shrouded coffins (Major et al., 11.9), earthen coffins, stone coffins, double coffins, and partitioned and feather-decorated coffins (Major et al., 13.3).

Are formal burials present in the text?

– Yes

Notes: Mentions burials and interment at multiple points throughout, as well as reburials; Major et al., 5.1, 8.11, 11.8. The burial of animals (horses) is mentioned; Major et al., 13.21.

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↳ As cenotaphs?

– No

Notes: Not specified.

↳ In cemetery?

– No

Notes: Not specified.

↳ Family tomb-crypt?

– No

Notes: Not specified.

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities)?

– No

Notes: Not specified.

↳ Other formal burial type?

– Yes

Notes: Mention of tombs of particular surface area; Major et al., 11.9. Mentions burial mounds; Major et al., 12.56. Mentions the burying of people where they died, for example in the highlands or marshes; Major et al., 21.4. Mentions tombs were planted with pines and with cypress; Major et al., 11.9.

↳ Other intensive funerary ritual

– Specify: Not specified.

Are there practices that have funerary associations presented in the text?

– Yes

Notes: Discussion of mourning rites and rituals throughout; e.g. see Major et al., 8.12, 11.8, 13.3, 13.9.

↳ Do these practices take place at tombs/burial sites?

– No

Notes: Not specified.

↳ Do these practices take place for the veneration OR worship of the dead?

– No

Notes: Mourning rituals.

Are supernatural beings present in the text?

– Yes

Notes: Beings that could be described as “god(s)” appear in Major et al., 1.2 (huang 皇 - lit. “august [one]”), 3.27 (di 帝 - lit. “god, thearch”), 4.5 (tai di 太帝 - lit. “highest god”), and 7.1 (shen). “Ghosts and spirits” (gui shen 鬼神) are referred to throughout Huainanzi; see for example Major et al., 13.5, 13.21, and 20.5. Mythical figures with supernatural qualities and/or capable of supernatural feats, such Fuxi and Nüwa, the Queen Mother of the West, and Yu the Great, also appear throughout. (Fuxi 伏羲 and Nüwa 女媧 are a mythical husband-wife sibling pair, regarded as the founders of humanity. According to one tradition, they created the first humans out of clay; according to another, they also emerged as the sole survivors of a prehistoric flood. The Queen Mother of the West [Xiwangmu 西王母] is a goddess figure believed to reside in the West, in many instances the mythical Mount Kunlun 崑崙. From the medieval period onward, she is often associated with the notion of longevity. Yu the Great [Da Yu 大禹] was a legendary king who founded the Xia 夏 dynasty and managed to tame the relentless flooding at the time.)

↳ A supreme high-god is present

– No

Previously human spirits are present

– Yes

Notes: For explicit mention of humans becoming ghosts after they die, see Major et al., 2.2, 4.9, 20.5.

↳ Human spirits can be seen

– No

Notes: Explicitly stated, Major et al., 13.7, 20.5.

↳ Human spirits can be physically felt

– No

Notes: Explicitly stated so, Major et al., 13.21.

↳ Previously human spirits have knowledge of this world

– Yes

Notes: Lifetime experiences affect the spirit, e.g. ghosts of the murdered will haunt; see Major et al., 2.2, 20.5.

↳ Knowledge is restricted to a particular domain of human affairs

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Can see you everywhere normally visible (in public)

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home)

– No

↳ Can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives)

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Know basic character (personal essence)

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight)

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Have other knowledge of this world

–Specify: None.

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world

– Yes

Notes: Through the medium of the ritual personator (shi 尸); see Major et al., 20.16. Also, implicitly, according to the metaphysics of Huainanzi, through resonance.

↳ Human spirits have memory of life

– Yes

Notes: Lifetime experiences affect the spirit, e.g. ghosts of the murdered will haunt; see Major et al., 2.2, 20.5.

↳ Human spirits exhibit positive emotion

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Human spirits exhibit negative emotion

– Yes

Notes: Can haunt vengefully and be hateful; see Major et al., 2.2, 17.90. Ghosts are described weeping; Major et al., 8.5.

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living

– Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ In dreams

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ In trance possession

– Yes

Notes: Through ritual spirit personator; see Major et al., 20.16.

↳ Through divination practices

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Only through religious specialists

– No

↳ Only through monarch

– No

↳ Communicate through other means

–Specify: None.

Non-human supernatural beings are present

– Yes

Notes: Mythical and supernatural beasts appear throughout, and especially in chapter 4. Many that features appear in passages drawn from Shanhaijing 山海經 (The Classic of Mountains and Seas). Note that, in many instances, it is not possible or useful to draw a line between "supernatural" and "non-supernatural" beasts. First, many beasts that would seem immediately mythical or supernatural to a modern reader would have been readily accepted as a "real" animal in early China. Second, within Huainanzi's resonance-inflected cosmology, all beings, no matter how mundane, have the scope to spark off "supernatural" events.

↳ Supernatural beings can be seen

– Yes

Notes: Are in many instances as physically real and visible as non-supernatural beasts.

↳ Supernatural beings can be physically felt

– Yes

Notes: Are as physically real and visible as non-supernatural beasts.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world

– Yes

Notes: They inhabit both the known world and liminal geographies just beyond it.

↳ Knowledge is restricted to a particular domain of human affairs

– No

↳ Knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region

– No

↳ Knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Can see you everywhere normally visible (in public)

– No

↳ Can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home)

– No

↳ Can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives)

– No

Notes: Not addressed.

↳ Know basic character (personal essence)

– No

↳ Know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight)

– Yes

Notes: Some creatures are described as having future sight, e.g. Major et al., 13.12.

↳ Have other knowledge of this world

– Yes

Notes: Certain supernatural and mythical creatures demonstrate an understanding of resonance and the ability to harness this, among other extraordinary abilities. See chapter 7 in particular.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world

– Yes

Notes: Like any other physical beast.

↳ Supernatural beings can reward

– No

↳ Supernatural beings can punish

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings communicate with the living according to the text?

– Yes

Notes: Physical interaction is possible.

↳ In waking, everyday life?

– Yes

↳ In dreams?

– No

↳ In trance possession?

– No

↳ Through divination practices?

– No

↳ Only through religious specialists?

– No

↳ Only through monarch?

– No

↳ Other?

–Specify: None.

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world

– Yes

Notes: Certain supernatural and mythical creatures demonstrate an understanding of resonance and the ability to harness this. See chapter 7 in particular.

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion

– Yes

Notes: Can appear as gentle.

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion

– Yes

Notes: Can appear as aggressive.

↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature

– Specify: Certain supernatural and mythical creatures demonstrate an understanding of resonance and the ability to harness this. See chapter 7 in particular.

Does the text attest to a pantheon of supernatural beings?

– Yes

Notes: The text attests to a wide variety of god-like and mythical figures, but does not organise them within any overarching hierarchising (or other organising) principle.

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model?

– No

↳ Organized hierarchically?

– No

↳ Power of beings is domain specific?

– No

Notes: All beings are ultimately capable of exerting their will absolutely and universally through the mechanism of resonance (ganying).

↳ Other organization of pantheon?

– Specify: None.

Are mixed human-divine beings present according to the text?

– Yes

Notes: Many of the mythical figures indicated higher above can arguably be categorised as mixed human-divine. Moreover, the text offers many techniques and other provisions for (self-)divinisation, blurring the line of the human and the divine. Self-divinisation in Huainanzi is discussed at length in the work of Michael Puett.

↳ Mixed human-divine beings can be seen?

– Yes

↳ Mixed human-divine beings can be felt?

– Yes

↳ Do mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living according to this text?

– Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life?

– Yes

↳ In dreams?

– No

↳ In trance possession?

– No

↳ Through divination practices?

– No

↳ Only through religious specialists?

– No

↳ Only through monarch?

– No

↳ Other?

– Specify: None.

Is there a supernatural being that is physically present in the/as a result of the text?

– No

Are other categories of beings present?

– Other [specify]: Heaven (tian 天) and dao.

Notes: Heaven is described as rewarding and meting out punishments as well as having knowledge of what happens “below”; Major et al., 12.28. Heaven should be understood as an ambiguous, nebulous (i.e. not anthropomorphic) force or power, albeit demonstrating will or intentions. There is arguably overlap with ideas such as “fate” or “nature”.

Does the text guide divination practices?

– Yes

Notes: Mentions divination and its uses.

↳ Divination by examination of the extra (animal remains)

– Yes

Notes: With milfoil stalks and animal remains; see Major et al., 5.10, 17.19, 20.5.

↳ Divination through human communication?

– No

↳ Divination through animal-behavior?

– No

↳ Divination through non-living material?

– Other [specify]: None.

Notes: Celestial forms; see Major et al., 3.34.

↳ Other form of divination:

– Specify: None.

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present in the text?

– No

Notes: Resonance may be argued to be a kind of supernatural monitoring.

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment in the text?

– No

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards in the text?

– No

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present in the text?

– No

Is an eschatology present in the text?

– No

Notes: Michael Puett argues that Huainanzi encompasses a kind of eschatology in “Sages, Creation,

and the End of History in the Huainanzi,” in *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, edited by Sarah Queen and Puett, 267-90 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

Norms & Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the text?

– Yes

Notes: As a general remark, the text is not prescriptive but descriptive, or rather, prescribes through description. While the text does enumerate explicit rules, these are set within the context of a detailed correlative cosmological schema, against which the reader may infer propitious behaviours and practices.

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious text?

– Yes

↳ What is the nature of this distinction?

– Present (but not emphasized)

↳ Are specifically moral norms prescribed by the text?

– Yes

↳ Specifically moral norms are implicitly linked to vague metaphysical concepts

– Yes

Notes: Linked to notions such as dao, qi, and resonance.

↳ Moral norms are explicitly linked to vague metaphysical entities

– No

↳ Linked to impersonal cosmic order (e.g. karma)

– Yes

Notes: Linked directly to the idea of resonance.

↳ Linked in some way to an anthropomorphic being

– No

↳ Specifically moral norms are linked explicitly to commands of anthropomorphic being

– No

- ↳ Specifically moral norms are have no (sic: have no?) special connection to the metaphysical
 - No

- ↳ Moral norms apply to (select all that apply)
 - All individuals (any time period)

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the text?

– Yes

- ↳ Honesty/trustworthiness/integrity
 - Yes
 - Notes: Major et al., 10.27.

- ↳ Courage (in battle)
 - No

- ↳ Courage (generic)
 - No

- ↳ Compassion/empathy/kindness/benevolence
 - Yes
 - Notes: Humaneness (ren 仁) (Major et al., 13.5).

- ↳ Mercy/forgiveness/tolerance
 - Yes
 - Notes: Major et al., 5.13.

- ↳ Generosity/charity
 - No

- ↳ Selflessness/selfless giving
 - No

- ↳ Righteousness/moral rectitude
 - Yes
 - Notes: Major et al., 13.5. Propriety in conduct (Major et al., 9.29-30).

↳ Ritual purity/ritual adherence/abstention from sources of impurity
– Yes

↳ Respectfulness/courtesy
– Yes

↳ Familial obedience/filial piety
– Yes
Notes: Major et al., 20.10.

↳ Fidelity/loyalty
– Yes
Notes: Major et al., 10.27.

↳ Cooperation
– No

↳ Independence/creativity/freedom
– No

↳ Moderation/frugality
– Yes
Notes: See Major et al., 13.18, 14.39.

↳ Forbearance/fortitude/patience
– No

↳ Diligence/self-discipline/excellence
– Yes

↳ Assertiveness/decisiveness/confidence/initiative
– No

↳ Strength (physical)
– No

↳ Power/status/nobility

– No

↳ Humility/modesty

– No

↳ Contentment/serenity/equanimity

– Yes

Notes: Being harmonious (he 和) (Major et al., 13.8).

↳ Joyfulness/enthusiasm/cheerfulness

– No

↳ Optimism/hope

– No

↳ Gratitude/thankfulness

– No

↳ Reverence/awe/wonder

– No

↳ Faith/belief/trust/devotion

– No

↳ Wisdom/understanding

– Yes

Notes: Major et al., 9.29.

↳ Discernment/intelligence

– Yes

Notes: Major et al., 12.12. Acuity, clarity, stillness (Major et al, 7.4; 11.10).

↳ Beauty/attractiveness

– No

↳ Cleanliness (physical)/orderliness

– No

↳ Other important virtues

– Yes

Notes: Wuwei 無為 (non-action), emptiness, tranquillity (Major et al., 8.5); caution; expansiveness of will (Major et al., 9.29-30); sincerity (Major et al., 10.22); even-handedness, consistency (Major et al., 5.13). De 德 (moral potency) is strongly emphasised throughout. (Wuwei refers to the doctrine that the most felicitous outcomes are always achieved by spontaneously modifying one's plans and behaviours to align to the ever-changing state of affairs in the world, rather than striving to go against this. A non-action "practitioner" reflects carefully and dispassionately on the apparent situation and pursues a path of least resistance. Moral potency refers to an individual's capacity to behave in a manner that harnesses the force of the dao. It encompasses both the idea of power, potentiality, and capacity, as well as moral cultivation and correctness.)

Advocacy of Practices

Does the text require celibacy (full sexual abstinence)?

– No

Does the text require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence)?

– Yes

↳ Monogamy (males)

– Yes

Notes: As marriage; Major et al., 20.10.

↳ Monogamy (females)

– Yes

Notes: As marriage, Major et al., 20.10.

↳ Other sexual constraints (males)

– Yes

Notes: Moderation in sexual activity. Seasonal abstinence; Major et al., 5.5, 5.11, 5.13.

↳ Other sexual constraints (females)

– Yes

Notes: Presumably same as males.

Does the text require castration?

– No

Does the text require fasting?

– No

Does the text require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods)?

– Yes

Notes: Calls for moderation in diet throughout, e.g. Major et al., 14.39. Calls for seasonal dietary limits, Major et al., 5.3, 5.5., 5.11.

Does the text require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations?

– No

Does the text require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of adults?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of children?

– No

Notes: Not mentioned.

Does the text require self-sacrifice (suicide)?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of property/valuable items?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of time (e.g. attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.)?

– Yes

Notes: Describes participation in a variety of rituals, throughout.

Does the text require physical risk taking?

– No

Does the text require accepting ethical precepts?

– No

Does the text require marginalization by out-group members?

– No

Does the text require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household)?

– Yes

Notes: See for example Major et al., 2010.

↳ What is the average interval of time between performances?

– I don't know

Does the text require participation in large-scale rituals?

– Yes

Notes: State/royal rituals are described; e.g. throughout chapter 5, Major et al., 2010.

↳ On average, how many participants gather in one location?

– I don't know

↳ Interval of time between performances (in hours)

– I don't know

↳ Are there orthodoxy checks?

– No

↳ Are there orthopraxy checks?

– No

↳ Does participation entail synchronic practices?

– No

↳ Is there use of intoxicants?

– No

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present as indicated in the text?

– No

Does the text employ fictive kinship terminology?

– No

Does the text include elements that are intended to be entertaining?

– Yes

Notes: Uses a rich variety of literary forms and styles throughout, including verse.

↳ Drama?

– Yes

Notes: Myth.

↳ Comedy?

– Yes

Notes: Includes wry, amusing, and sometimes satirical parables, for example episodes taken from Zhuangzi 莊子.

↳ Tragedy?

– Yes

Notes: Myth.

↳ Epic entertainment?

– Yes

Notes: Myth.

Does the text specify sacrifices, offerings, and maintenance of a sacred space?

– Yes

↳ Are sacrifices specified by the text?

– Yes

↳ Animal sacrifice?

– Yes

Notes: Throughout, e.g. throughout chapter 5.

↳ Human sacrifice?

– No

↳ Are there self-sacrifices specified by the text?

– No

↳ Are there material offerings present?

– Yes

Notes: Grains, meats, and foods; wealth and precious objects such as jades. See throughout chapter 5; Major et al., 3.28.

↳ Are they mandatory?

– Yes

Notes: In certain rituals.

↳ Are they composed of valuable objects?

– Yes

Notes: Sometimes.

↳ Are they composed of daily-life objects?

– Yes

Notes: Sometimes, such as daily foods.

↳ Are material offerings interred at this place (in caches)?

– No

↳ Are there particular smells associated with material offerings?

– No

↳ Are there particular visual stimuli (colors, symbols) associated with the offerings? (I.e. 'must be bright' 'must include red')

– No

↳ Other?

–Specify: None.

↳ Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory?

– Yes

↳ By the community?

– No

↳ By specific individuals?

– Yes

Notes: The ruler.

↳ Is the maintenance of the place regulated by the text?

– No

Institutions & Production Environment of Text

Society & Institutions

Society of religious group that produced the text is best characterized as:

– Other

Notes: A kingdom

Are there specific elements of society that have controlled the reproduction of the text?

– An empire

Notes: The Han empire, and later, subsequent empires.

Are there specific elements of society involved with the destruction of the text?

– Other

Notes: None.

Welfare

Does the text specify institutionalized famine relief?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 5.3, 5.13, 9.28.

Does the text specify institutionalized poverty relief?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 5.3, 5.6, 5.13.

Does the text specify institutionalized care for elderly & infirm?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 5.6, 5.8, 5.13.

Other forms of welfare?

– Yes

Notes: Redistribution of wealth; see Major et al., 3.22, 5.3, 5.5. Care for orphans; see Major et al., 5.3, 5.13.

Education

Are there formal educational institutions available for teaching the text?

– No

Are there formal educational institutions specified according to the text?

– Yes

Notes: Briefly mentioned. See Major et al., 20.10.

Does the text make provisions for non-religious education?

– Yes

Notes: Briefly mentioned. See Major et al., 20.10.

Does the text restrict education to religious professionals?

– No

Does the text restrict education among religious professionals?

– No

Is education gendered according to the text?

– No

Is education gendered with respect to this text and larger textual tradition?

– No

Does the text specify teaching relationships or ratios? (i.e.: 1:20; 1:1)

– No

Are there specific relationships to teachers that are advocated by the text?

– No

Are there worldly rewards/benefits to education according to the text specified by the text itself?

– Yes

Notes: The text as a whole works as a performative testament to the power of learning and knowledge, as it empowers its royal reader to extend their influence further. Positive descriptions of learning (xue 學) and its effects appear throughout the text.

Bureaucracy

Is bureaucracy regulated by this text?

– Yes

↳ Does the text regulate bureaucracy permanently?

– No

↳ Does the text regulate bureaucracy temporarily/seasonally?

– Yes

Notes: For regulation of weights and measures, see Major et al., 5.2, 5.5, 5.8. For penal matters, chapter 5 throughout.

↳ Does the text dictate how the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group?

– No

↳ Does the text dictate how individuals interact with other institutional bureaucracies?

– No

↳ Does the text regulate the primary supporting income of the place?

– No

↳ Does the text provide for provisions to lease out land?

– No

↳ Does the text provide for provisions to lease out tools?

– No

Public Works

Does the text detail interaction with public works?

– Yes

|

↳ Does the text advocate for public food storage?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 5.8-9.

↳ Does the text provide guidance for food distribution?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 3.22, 3.42, 5.8, 5.12-13.

↳ Does the text regulate places for civic functions?

– No

↳ Does the text regulate places for the practice of justice?

– Yes

Notes: Briefly mentions prison, Major et al., 5.7.

↳ Does the text advocate or specify controls for water management (irrigation, flood control)?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 5.2-3, 5.7, 5.13, 10.68.

↳ Does the text specify restrictions on common transportation?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 3.22, 5.5, 5.13.

↳ Other form of regulation of public works?

– Specify: Structure of public works

Notes: Five offices of public works are detailed on Major et al., 3.13.

Taxation

Does the text specify forms of taxation?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., chapter 5 (includes discussion of corvee), 9.27.

↳ Does the text require the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes?

– No

↳ Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question?

– No

↳ Is taxation linked to an understanding of charitable giving?

– No

Warfare

Does the text mention warfare?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 8.12, and chapter 15 in its entirety.

↳ Does the text dictate how to control an institutionalized military?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 3.36.

↳ Power to conscript?

– No

↳ Maintain a full-time military corps (E.g. Swiss Guard):

– No

↳ Maintain a standing army?

– No

↳ Particular types of training/readiness?

– No

↳ Does the text restrict/advocate for participation in exogenous military organizations?

– No

↳ Does the text celebrate/bemoan protection/subjugation by an exogenous military force?

– No

Food Production

Does the text mentioned food production/disbursement?

– Yes

Notes: See Major et al., 9.27-28.



Does the text in question dictate how the religious group in question provide food for themselves?

– No



Does the text celebrate/restrict food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question?

– No



Which of the follow are forms of ritual food production [choose all that apply]?

– Small-scale agriculture/horticultural gardens or orchards

Notes: See Major et al., 5.6, 5.8 for husbandry of sacrificial beasts.