Interpretation of the Dao.

As these books show, ancient Chinese thinkers had begun to consider cosmic issues much earlier than we had imagined, and the formation of cosmic theories during ancient China occurred over a long process. In his research into Huainan during recent years, the author has pointed out that the cosmic theories of the Han Dynasty involved two types: one is the theory of cosmic genesis in Huainan, and the others is that of cosmic structure in Chang Mang's "Hengshen Zhiqiu" and "Ji" (Banyun Men). At the core of this literature is the idea of Huaiannamu, which was not original in terms of its theory about cosmic genesis, for a long theoretical history existed before the occurrence of Huaiannamu, and all the preceding cosmic theories had possibly served as theoretical examples for the concept of cosmic genesis in Huaiannamu.

Among all the literature that discussed cosmic issues before Huaiannamu, no one is more important than Huaiannamu. Huaiannamu is one of the cosmic books of the Chu State during the Warring States Period kept by the Chu Mencius. It was collected by the museum in 1994, with a photocopy edition and a recorded text by Li Ling formally published in 2003 (Mao 2003), pp. 287-399. According to Li Ling:

This is a complete piece of Daoist work, which is written on 13 bamboo slips, and is mostly preserved intact... On the back of the third slip there is an inscription "Guanxi 565", which is taken to mark the work. "Huanggang 15" is an alias for the Dao. "Huanggang 36" refers to the Dao which originated before the Heaven and the Earth, remains independent and unchangeable, and cannot be distinguished from the meaning of the word, without any vacancy or mistakes, and functions as an eternal creative source.

Scholars still debate over whether hongxian can be interpreted as the Dao and whether hongxian is identified with the Early Lingbao through its terminological implications in the essay of Huaiannamu. Because it has just been unscrambled and revealed to the public, it will take time for a common concept of hongxian to be formed. Hengshen is a newly available piece of material which contains many cosmic ideas, so the scholar will select the original passages and then try to locate the meaning of the text in reference to existing academic research. Not to mention that those who wrote to make sense of the Han Dynasty, and among them the author has come across interpretations by Li Ling, and commentators by Feng Pei, Li Xueqi, Li Shangping, Li Xiuqian, Li Shangming, Hong Shuqu, and Li Rui. In general, they agree with the author on the two questions, and differ with the author on the order of the words, the sequence of the bamboo slips, and the connections of the meanings of different lines. Here, the text deciphered by Li Ling is, in the version officially published by Shanghai Guji Chuanshi, is taken as the primary source, with commentators by other scholars selectively adopted and the opinions of other authors appended. Where I 1 refers to Li Ling's version of the text, I will give some notice. After going through the verbal meaning of the text, the author will then make a theoretical explanation from the point of view of cosmology. What has to be made clear is that scholars argue among themselves over how to divide the passages. Here, I divide the whole text into 9 passages in light of my own comprehension of the meaning of the text.
is something which implies some qualities, such as confusion and rules, even though the subject of nothing concrete can be seen. Therefore, "being" is defined and limited. As Quyanta Xsy 信言 (Chapter of Common Words Interpretations) in Huaxian says, "What begins things is nothing but nothing" (Ibid., p. 1469), it is clear that nothing things are not things. Likewise, what creates being is not being, either, and has to be some non-Being. So, any reference to the generis of the universe will lead to the thought that "being comes out of non-being." On the one hand, the concept of being and non-being in light of such thoughts emphasizes that non-being is prior to and more original than being, and on the other hand, that non-being cannot be defined, for any non-being that can be defined will be a being and thus excluded from the generis of beings. Thus, Hengtong, as it begins very early, can only be conceived of as the absolute nothingness that was absolutely simple, still and vacant, as it is described in Huaxian. That is the perspective of theoretical cosmology in Daoist cosmology, which shows how the Daoist necessarily conceive the beginning of the universe in simplicity, stillness and vacancy.

In regard to their values, Daoists have no choice but to refer to the origin of the universe — simplicity, stillness, vacancy and oneness — in the theory of cosmic genesis. It is because traditional cosmology in ancient China adopts a metaphorical model of humanist values rather than a cognitive sense in the sense of natural sciences. For ancient thinkers in China, cosmology was a meta-theory of the foundation for humanism, a fundamental model to understand society, politics, human life and history. The Daoist position in the generis theories about human civilization requires matching the simplicity that existed before human civilization with the simplicity, stillness, vacancy and oneness of the universe at its very beginning. Only with such an assumption can "returning to simplicity and truth" find its destination. According to Daoists, the esthetics of survival for human beings do not reside in the same all the time, but change throughout the course of history, and the essence of such change is that human beings flit from the empty state of no boundaries into the trap of narrow space. More than once both Zhuangzi and Huaxian have told about such a concept. For example, Huaxian says, human beings at their early days "appeared arrogant when they kept silent and ignorant as when they spoke", sometimes they thought they were wise and sometimes they were not. He even went so far as to say that when human beings first appeared, there was only silence of men (and women). They were man and woman, man and woman, differentiation made men and women, specify superior and inferior, and classify the noble and the chimp" (Ibid.).

Such artificial rules were made to meet real changes and needs; at the same time, the perturbation of these humanistic rules also changed human beings’ state of survival, restricting the life of human beings into a certain mode. Therefore, humanistic regulations have occurred throughout history are restrictive. According to Daoist thought on cosmic genesis, nothing limited can be original beings, so "establishedness" in a humanistic world as a kind of realized possibility of "situates" (Ibid., p. 1469) is possible only when human beings and human beings with such a single possibility as their whole essence will deny all their other possibilities. Daoists have repeatedly criticized Confucians because the former think the life of human society is a limited possibility formed during a certain period of history to a definitive status, and thus denied their historical limitations. According to Daoists, human beings should not be restricted by any "establishedness" in a humanistic world; instead, they should repeatedly "return" to the total of the "Dao" and the simplicity of "human persons" into the state of infants, and only in this way can they break through the limitation of "humanistic establishedness" and remain open to all possibilities. Thus, their pursuit of values to "return to the simplicity and truth" and thus to break through "humanistic establishedness," Daoists would certainly describe the origin of the universe in terms of simplicity, stillness, vacancy and oneness when they conceived of their theories of cosmic genesis, so that they could match it with the simplicity than, there was both and space (and time) (actions). Only with the simple, still, vacant and single origin of the universe can the simplicity before the institution find its cosmological basis, and only with the simplicity before the institution a "return to the simplicity and truth" become possible. So, whether from the logic in theories or from Daoist values, it is clear that Hengtong, a piece of the Daoist work, is predestined to refer to the nature of