



The Essential Huainanzi (Translations from the Asian Classics)

An Li King of Huainan

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Columbia University Press's widely anticipated, complete translation of the *Huainanzi*, published in 2010, opened exciting new pathways in the study of classical Chinese philosophy and literature. Compiled in the second century B.C.E., the *Huainanzi* is a critical work of early Chinese thought, clarifying a crucial period in the development of Chinese conceptions of the cosmos, human nature, and the social order. This abridgement contains essential selections from each of the *Huainanzi*'s twenty-one chapters and adds a new introduction and chapter descriptions. Designed for classroom use and general readers, it allows even greater access to this central work of Chinese intellectual history.

Outlining "all that a modern monarch needs to know" in order to govern efficaciously, the *Huainanzi* emphasizes rigorous self-cultivation and mental discipline, attributing successful rule to a balance of broad knowledge, diligent application, and penetrating wisdom. The text represents a remarkable synthesis of Daoist classics, such as the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*; works associated with the Confucian tradition, such as the *Changes*, the *Odes*, and the *Documents*; and a range of other foundational philosophical and literary texts, from the *Mozi* to the *Hanfeizi*. This abridgement preserves the *Huainanzi*'s special rhetorical features, such as its parallel prose and verse, and its unique compositional techniques, making its form and content accessible to students, specialists of later China, and audiences new to Chinese history and thought. For decades, Western scholars overlooked the *Huainanzi*'s sophisticated structure, creative content, and rich historical value, yet all that changed with the translation of the full text. The *Essential Huainanzi* continues to increase awareness of this brilliant work and change our understanding of early Chinese history.

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