



The Essential Huainanzi (Translations from the Asian Classics)

An Li King of Huainan

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Compiled in the second century B.C.E, the *Huainanzi* clarifies a crucial period in the development of Chinese conceptions of the cosmos, human nature, and the social order. Outlining "all that a modern monarch needs to know," the text emphasizes rigorous self-cultivation and mental discipline, attributing successful rule to a balance of broad knowledge, diligent application, and penetrating wisdom.

In 2010, the editors of this volume completed the first complete English-language translation of the *Huainanzi*, opening exciting new pathways in the study of philosophy, Asian studies, political science, and Asian literature. This abridgement contains essential selections from each of the *Huainanzi*'s twenty-one chapters and adds a new introduction and chapter descriptions. 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 works, from the *Mozi* to the *Hanfeizi*. The abridgement preserves the *Huainanzi*'s special rhetorical features, such as its parallel prose, verse, and unique compositional techniques. 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. Designed for classroom use and general readers, *The Essential Huainanzi* continues to increase awareness of this brilliant work and change our understanding of early Chinese history.

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