

**ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES**

Journal of the Department of Asian and African Studies  
University of Ljubljana – Faculty of Arts

**Asian Cultures: Modern Developments and Reinterpretations of  
Past Achievements**

Volume XIV, Issue 3  
Ljubljana, December 2010

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Published by: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani/Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

For: Oddelek za azijske in afriške študije/Department of Asian and African Studies

For the publisher: Prof. dr. Valentin Bucik, Dean of Faculty of Arts

Ljubljana, 2010, First edition

Number printed: 200 copies

Graphic Design: Mare Kovačič

Printed by: Birografika Bori, d. o. o.

Price: 7,00 EUR

ISSN 1408-5429

This publication is indexed in the Cobiss database.

This journal is published three times per year.

Yearly subscription: 18 EUR,

(Account No.: 50100-603-40227)

Ref. No.: 001-033 ref. »Za revijo«

Address: Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za azijske in afriške študije, Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija

tel.: +386 (0)1 24 11 450, +386 (0)24 11 444

faks: +386 (0)1 42 59 337

This journal is published with the support of the Slovene Book Agency (JAK).

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji

Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

930.85(5)(082)

ASIAN cultures : modern developments and reinterpretations of past achievements / [editor-in-chief Chikako Shigemori Bučar]. - 1st ed. - Ljubljana : Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete = Faculty of Arts, 2010. - (Asian and African studies, ISSN 1408-5429 ; vol. 14, issue 3)

ISBN 978-961-237-404-4

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254455808

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## **Traditional and Modern Literature**



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## Re-figuring Liu Xie's Carpet: on the Rhetoric of the *Wenxin diaolong*

Dinu LUCA\*

### Abstract

This paper analyzes and provides an alternative reading of several essential terms (*gangling*, *maomu*, and *shuniu*) around which Liu Xie famously articulates his vision on the structure of his *Wenxin diaolong*. It first examines how these key expressions produce contradictory projections when read non-figuratively; next it revisits their occurrences in earlier texts and proposes, in the case of *shuniu*, a significantly different reading; finally it explores the intricate intersections and rearrangements the “re-figuring” of these terms leads to. It suggests that respecting a text's fundamental figurality should be seen as a prerequisite for accurate, nuanced and in-depth investigations.

**Keywords:** Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong*, figure, *shuniu*

Apart from the occasional text proposing yet another rearrangement of the chapters in Liu Xie's 劉勰 *Wenxin diaolong* 文心彫龍 (*WXDL*), one does not commonly find, among the numerous hotly debated issues in contemporary “dragonology,”<sup>1</sup> much discussion dedicated to the structure of Liu's work. In this regard, things seem strangely controversy-free: in his *WXDL* dictionary (1996), for example, Zhou Zhenfu fails to even list the division of the text among the “contentious issues” of current research, mentioning primarily the formal presentation of the *WXDL* – that of a text that has historically circulated as a ten-*juan* 卷 book, with each *juan* including five *pian* 篇, to a total of 50. Like most

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<sup>1</sup> Several excellent state-of-the-field surveys are available, including Zhou 1996, Zhang and Wang 2001.

other critics interested in the matter, Zhou makes the mandatory reference to Liu Xie's own detailed description of the structure of his text in the book's closing chapter, the "Xuzhi" 序志 or "Ordering (my) intentions." Different as this account makes the *WXDL* look from its actual 50-chapter arrangement, on the one hand, and quite complex and contradictory as it appears upon closer examination, on the other, the view provided by this description seems to guide many contemporary approaches to the text. Exploring parts of the relevant paragraphs anew, suggesting the importance of a different (figural) reading of Liu's vision with regard to the structure of the *WXDL* – re-figuring it, as it were – and discussing the implications of its figurality are the goals of this paper.

Before we proceed, one further remark is in order: all readings built around auctorial statements fall of necessity, of course, in the debated realm of intentionalism. Countless theoretical matters raise their head here and pose serious challenges to anyone daring enough to ignore controversies that have polarized and divided scholars since at least the days of Wimsatt and Beardsley. In this context, I hasten to promise I will not suggest, on the basis of Liu Xie's **words**, a new reading of Liu Xie's **text**, but rather a new reading of Liu's **vision** of his own text. The degree the two correspond, if they do or, more significantly, if this correspondence can be made in the first place, are questions well beyond the scope of this article.

Liu's description of his book appears in one well-known extended paragraph in the "Xuzhi," the last chapter in the *WXDL*. It runs as follows:

蓋文心之作也，本乎道，師乎聖，體乎經，酌乎緯，變乎騷，**文之樞紐，亦云極矣**。若乃論文敘筆，則固別區分，原始以表末，釋名以章義，選文以定篇，敷理以舉統，**上篇以上，綱領明矣**。至於割情析采，籠圈條貫，摘神性，圖風勢，苞會通，閱聲字，崇替於時序，褒貶於才略，惛悞於知音，耿介於程器，**長懷序志，以馭群篇，下篇以下，毛目顯矣**。位理定名，彰乎大易之數，其為文用，四十九篇而已。

[My] work on the heart of literature takes root in the "Dao," a master in the "Sage" and a body in the "Classics," it scoops from the "Apocrypha" and changes with the "Sorrow" – [these are] the *shuniu* of literature, that is [its] pole.

With regard to discoursing on the rhymed and treating of the unrhymed [texts], the domains have been differentiated and the areas separated: I have traced the beginnings in order to show the continuations, explicated the names in order to clarify the meanings, chosen the [representative] texts to establish the [norms for all] compositions, and expounded the structure in



order to bring out the unifying thread – in the case of the upper chapters, the *gangling* is clear.

As for cutting out feelings and dissecting colours, I have surrounded and enclosed the [inner] orderly strings: I have expounded on the “Spirit” and “Nature,” sketched the “Wind” and “Dynamics,” integrated the “Union” and “Going Through,” and investigated “Sounds” and “Graphs”; rise and fall [have been discussed] in “Time and Order”; praise and blame, in “Overview of Talent”; sadness and grief, in “The Knower of Sounds”; anger and annoyance,<sup>2</sup> in “Showing the Vessel”; and those long harboured, in “Ordering [My] Intentions,” meant to drive the herd of the [other] chapters – in the case of the lower chapters, the *maomu* is apparent.

Establishing principles and setting up names are made manifest in the numbers of the great *Change*: out of these [fifty], only forty-nine chapters are used in relation to *wen*.<sup>3</sup>

My discussion will concentrate primarily on the passages in bold in the Chinese text above (the underlined sequence will also be addressed in passing). I first refer to the three shorter contexts – those featuring the expressions (better left untranslated for the moment) *shuniu* 樞紐, *gangling* 綱領 and *maomu* 毛目; a more extended discussion will follow with reference to the longer context that closes Liu’s paragraph.

None of the three terms mentioned above is seen as particularly problematic by researchers, classical, modern or contemporary alike. They are usually read, respectively, as “hub” or “crux” (*shuniu*), “guiding principle, guideline, program” (*gangling*) and “minute details” (*maomu*), with common paraphrases (or rather dis-figurations) like “general principles” (for *shuniu*) and “detailed catalogue” (for *maomu*) taking over in many contemporary texts. All of these terms seem to be primarily seen as long dead metaphors, whose figurality is acknowledged, albeit indirectly, only by the immediately accessible paraphrases offered in their stead in contemporary translations of Liu’s text.

These operations of dis-figuration are commonplace at the level of the whole *WXDL*, maybe because dragonologists, while often caught in arguments with regard to the text’s fundamental status, do seem to agree at least on one aspect, i.e. the *WXDL*’s essential authority as a theoretical metatext. Given that position, most

<sup>2</sup> Translation here is based on Yang Mingzhao (2001: 459).

<sup>3</sup> For Chinese text, cf. Zhang 1995: 317–321. For renditions into contemporary Chinese, comments and discussions, cf. *inter alia* Xiang 1984, Zhan 1989, Long 1992, Zu 1993, Lu and Mou 1995, Wang and Zhou 1998, Zhang 1995 and Yang 2001. My understanding of these paragraphs has also been shaped by the work of Tu 1997, Huang 2000, Lu 2000, Wang and Kong 2001, and Ling 2006, as well as Shih 1959, Owen 1992, Wong *et al* 1999, and Yang 2003.

hermeneutical endeavours make it their duty to pare the webbed toes and extra fingers (to paraphrase Liu Xie paraphrasing Zhuangzi) of the *WXDL*: they explain away all figures with a view to emphasizing clarity and, more than anything else, the systematic orderliness for which the text is so celebrated.

But figures are dangerous creatures. Treacherous, unstable, always slippery textual beings, they will not disappear because we will them into nothingness or because we forget that metatexts are also (and primarily) texts themselves. Moreover, figures are the perfect masters of disguise: they may seem dead, but in fact they just lurk in the dark, waiting for the right moment to come and take over long-established meanings, like unwelcome guests in the house of sense. These ultimate parasites (to echo J. Hillis Miller's *The Critic as Host*, 1977) are also the ultimate manipulators: it is from them that interpretation proceeds most often and so it is around them that many a hermeneutic battle has been fought. Therefore, it is often in their realm of presence and absence, to appeal to a celebrated Pascalian formula,<sup>4</sup> that theories construct and deconstruct themselves; it is also in this insecure space, where beauty and meaning, aesthetics and logic, and grammar and rhetoric make and unmake texts and metatexts alike, that we now need to operate.

A good starting point could be provided by Yang Mingzhao's (2001: 459) annotation on *maomu*. Yang notices that *gangling* and *maomu* are frequently associated, and quotes four contexts – one from the *Baopuzi* 抱朴子, two from the *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書 and one from the *Hongmingji* 弘明集:

操綱領以整毛目。 (Baopuzi, wai 5)

舉其綱領，略其毛目。 (Nan Qi shu 46)

綱領既理，毛目自張。 (Nan Qi shu 54)

振領持綱，舒張毛目。 (Hongmingji 10)

In all of Yang's examples, figurative derivation proceeds from the basic meanings of the terms, to wit "head-rope" (for *gangling*) and "tiny eyes" (*maomu*), in connection to a fishing net. Earlier uses of the image of the net in such metaphorical fashion with reference to politics or morals are numerous, and passages from texts as different as the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 or Huan Tan's 桓

<sup>4</sup> "Figure porte absence et présence..." Pascal (2004), *Pensées*, fragment 265/296.

譚 *Xinlun* 新論 (where *gang* 綱 and *mu* 目 are also paired together) can easily come to mind:

用民有紀有綱，壹引其紀，萬目皆起，壹引其綱，萬目皆張。 (*Lüshi chunqiu* 19.4)

舉綱以綱，千目皆張；振裘持領，萬毛自整。治大國者亦當如此。 (*Xinlun* 11)

However, my concern here is not the identification of the metaphorical fields where these passages could be inscribed. I am rather interested in pointing out the complementarity built by these figures in the passages above as well as Liu's "Xuzhi" context. Just like a net is made up of head-ropes and tiny eyes, so too, Liu would have us think, is the *WXDL*. In the passage under analysis here, therefore, the relevant contexts would read: "...in the case of the upper chapters, the head-ropes [of my net] are clear" and, respectively, "...in the case of the lower chapters, the tiny eyes [of my net] are apparent." Also, just like the head-ropes order the tiny eyes, controlling the opening of the net, so do, we are to understand, the upper chapters of Liu's text orient the lower sections of the *WXDL*.

I would like to leave for strong intentionalists the discussion with regard to the relative significance, in Liu's eyes, of the two halves of his book (and the consequences that accepting Liu's hierarchy would imply for all those who nowadays privilege so much the more "theoretical" second half of the *WXDL*), and rather further emphasize a different aspect. For most classical and modern scholars (Ye Lianfang, Cao Xuequan, or Fan Wenlan), (Li in Yang 1995: 87) as well as (with some differences in terms of stress and nuance) for many contemporary critics (Zhang Yan, Peng Qinghuan, Wang Jinling, etc.) (Zhuo 2004: 4–7), it seems clear from Liu's passage that we are dealing with a two-part text, made up of upper and lower chapters – and this, once again, in spite of the actual circulation of the *WXDL* as a ten-juan, five-pian-per-juan book. Most contemporary researchers such as Zhou Zhenfu (1996: 553–554), however, also insist, again on the basis of Liu's instructions in the "Xuzhi," that one further subdivision should be made, leading to an image of the *WXDL* as a four-part composition made of sections of unequal length. Thus, the first five chapters, often named by contemporary readers, in keeping with Liu's own formula, the "crux" (literally, the "pivot and the knot," *shuniu* 樞紐) of the *WXDL*, represent the first part. The next group of twenty chapters includes sections 6 to 25, which are dedicated to a wide

variety of literary genres, often duly counted and listed. A third group is made up of chapters 26 to 49; this is sometimes further subdivided (leading, as discussed by scholars such as Li Miao (1995), or Zhuo Guojun (2004), to a five-, six-or even seven-part *WXDL*) or has its chapters rearranged according to what appear as more fitting criteria. Finally, one last part is made up of the “Xuzhi” chapter itself.

It is worth repeating that dragonologists are often busy debating other things, but not (or at least not too intensely) the divisions of the *WXDL* advanced by Liu. A second glance, however, reveals that things are not as clear as they seem. Let us first notice that the two-part division is problematic for a variety of reasons, the most obvious being the separate grouping of the first five chapters under the *shuniu* label: these are, in fact, discussed **outside** the group of the “upper chapters” and their outline ends with a concluding pronouncement that is quite similar<sup>5</sup> to those commenting on the upper and lower chapters below. This has led researchers who notice the paragraph's symmetries to opt for a tripartite structure of the text – the *shuniu*, the upper and the lower chapters. It is important to note here that earlier ternary divisions (advanced by, inter alia, the compilers of the *Sikuquanshu jianmingmulu* 四庫全書簡明目錄, Luo Genze or Zhou Xunchu) (cf. Li in Yang 1995: 87) separated the text into the upper and the lower chapters, and the “Xuzhi.”

The positioning of this last chapter is in fact more ambiguous: it is included among the “lower chapters” (it is the last to be mentioned in their group)<sup>6</sup> and yet it is also separated from them (and the rest of the book). This separation seems to be achieved first through the chapter's figuration as a kind of “whip” or maybe “shepherd” driving the other chapters (以馭群篇). Thus the “Xuzhi”, as we will discuss below, could be seen as fulfilling a primarily intra-textual function; it is also, in fact, the only chapter in Liu's list said to have any function whatsoever. However, this unique status can be questioned, and for contemporary dragonologists such as Guo Jinxi, or Zhang Changqing and Zhang Huien, for instance, the figure of the “whip” applies to the last five chapters of the text (see underlined parts in the passage above): this of course leads to quite a different four-part division of the *WXDL*. (cf. Li in Yang 1995: 87) No matter what we decide about this matter, the strange ending of Liu's paragraph we are focusing on here does seem to imply, as we shall see below, that the “Xuzhi” is a kind of

<sup>5</sup> 亦云極矣 as compared to 綱領明矣 and 毛目顯矣.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. above the underlined part in Liu's passage under analysis here.

supplement whose presence, in good Derridean fashion, is necessary but which needs erasure for reading to proceed.

How are we to disentangle Liu's masterfully crafted net? And how many parts does Liu Xie in fact state the *WXDL* contains? Are the first five chapters to be included among the "upper chapters," or are they a separate category – an upper beyond the upper? What about the "Xuzhi"? These are all questions that will concern us below.

In this context a discussion of the *shuniu* as a figure may be useful. Let us first notice that commentators usually highlight the connotations of centrality that both *shu* 樞 ("axis," "pivot") and *niu* 紐 ("knot") evoke, just like the binomial term resulting from their combination (*shuniu* as "hub," "central, essential factor," as dictionaries define it). Yet few if any readers notice the bizarre spatialization that this figure of centrality occupies when discussed against the upper-and-lower division: whatever we decide about the *shuniu* chapters (1–5), the question remains if the centre they refer to in this reading of the text should be placed **in front of** the upper. With the centre thus understood as somewhere else but the middle, Liu's text assumes a radical unbalance that fits poorly with the paeans of orderliness that it has often occasioned. Some contemporary readings manifestly assume this unbalance, focusing on the *shuniu* as a high priority textual area and then reading selectively the rest of the text (often only several lower chapters, those that are perceived as theoretically more challenging).

All of this follows naturally from the interpretation of the phrase *shuniu*, constantly read, as mentioned above, as a "crux" or "key" – the "crux" of the *WXDL* and the "key" to its understanding, the "hub" of the text. Such reading is validated historically, seems to be confirmed by the other use of the expression in the *WXDL*<sup>7</sup> and is also in keeping with present-day usage.

This is nevertheless not very adequate, I believe. There seem to be no extant texts earlier than the *WXDL* in which *shuniu* is used in the manner commentators usually understand it today.<sup>8</sup> In the very limited contexts it does appear, this binomial construction has an exclusively astronomical referent – the "Celestial Pivot" (*tianshu* 天樞) or the "Knot Star" (*niuxing* 紐星), a small star (4339

<sup>7</sup> In chapter 24, we find the following about the genre of *yi* 議 or "opinion": 故其大體所資，必樞紐經典，采故實于前代，觀通變于當今。

<sup>8</sup> The only other occurrence with the word used in this sense is in the *Nan Qi shu* 28, a text produced by one of Liu's contemporaries, Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (489–537).

Camelopardi) in the Beiji 北極 or “Northern Pole” constellation which was also “the pole-star of the Han.” (cf. Needham 1959: 261) It was often associated in various Han and later texts with the Yellow Emperor 黃帝, as corroborated by his alternate name of “Container of the Pivot and the Knot” 含樞紐; the Emperor is otherwise known as the “Spiritual Dipper.” 神斗 (cf. Nienhauser 2002: 224–225)<sup>9</sup> Reading in this direction – *shuniu* as “pole star,” or “guiding star” – also makes better sense semantically in Liu's context (文之樞紐，亦云極矣); moreover, it may indeed perhaps explain how there can be something that is “upper beyond the upper” in Liu's text.

In the alternative spatialization that I am imagining here, the first five chapters of the text, just like the “Xuzhi” itself, are not figured on the same plane as the rest: they are of the text, yet somehow above it, like the pole-star and, respectively, like a whip (in the case of the “Xuzhi”), guiding or driving all not from behind but rather from above. The reasons for this inclusion/exclusion – or rather, after abandoning all the spatial connotations of the *shang/xia* pair, vertical positioning versus linear continuum – are different in each case. The “Xuzhi,” as we shall see in detail below, is both the *WXDL*'s own metatext, where the text takes its distance to itself, and the paratextual supplement that the text does not need, but without which it cannot reach completion. On the other hand, the “constellation” (to use a figure of my own) of the *shuniu* chapters treats of the very “root” and “trunk” of *wen* – of *wen* as related to the Dao, the sages, and the Classics, of *wen* from a time and of a quality that set it apart from multiplicity and inexorable degeneration, as discussed by Liu in detail from chapter 6 on.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For the associations mentioned here, most information comes from texts quoted in *Shiji* 史記 (see for instance the *Suoyin* 索引 and *Zhengyi* 正義 ad *Benji* 本紀 1, the *Zhengyi* ad *Benji* 12, etc.), *Hanshu* 漢書 (Yan Shigu 顏師古 ad *juan* 25 *shang* – the *Jiaosizhi* 郊祀志) or *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (ad *Benji* 2) commentaries, such as the *Shangshu diming yan* 尚書帝命驗 or Liu Xiang's 劉向 lost *Wujing tongyi* 五經通義. The *Tianwenzhi* 天文志 in the *Jinshu* 晉書 also discusses the Yellow Emperor as a star sitting in the “Supreme Minuteness” 太微 polar area (黃帝坐在太微中，含樞紐之神也). The *Weishu* 魏書 (*liezhuan* 79) quotes a “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Images” 觀象賦 that develops the same image. Cf. also Knechtges (1996: 34) and Goodman (1998: 103).

<sup>10</sup> That the same *wen* also includes the lush, exaggerated, “exotically” religious Southern Tradition of Qu Yuan (which Liu discusses in his chapter 5) and, more than anything else, the fake and despised “Apocrypha” (Liu's chapter 4) of Han times, dedicated to portents, omens, divination and speculation of all kinds, has made many a critic develop alternative theories, solutions or plain dismissals of Liu's arrangement. And yet, in each case for different reasons, it makes sense, I think, to include these two chapters as well in the *shuniu*; this however should be the subject of another paper.

The word “constellation” is not, in fact, an innocent figure (is there ever any?). I use it only speculatively here because, as is well-known, the pole-star according to the celebrated Confucian expression (*Analects* 2.1) centres the stars around it and polarizes the heavens. In doing so it carries all the associations of “core,” “nucleus,” or “focus” of *shuniu*; however, the ideas of distance and difference may not come out very exactly if we appropriate the usual translation for *shuniu*. “Constellation,” while less accurate, fits nicely with a different aspect: with the (Celestial) Pivot or the Knot (Star) seen in the classical view of the skies as part of a five-star Northern Pole constellation (cf. Needham 1959: 261), it is quite tempting to speculate on the equivalence between the number of stars and the number of chapters in Liu Xie’s grouping.

Even if we accept that the *shuniu* of Liu’s text does not designate its key or nucleus – and thus we do not see it as a kind of coagulation point like a hub around it the rest of the chapters gather, but rather as something that dominates the text from above, guiding the development of the other chapters – we still have a problem. It is not difficult to see that the alternative spatialization mentioned above makes sense with regard to the upper part of the *WXDL* and to it alone – the *shuniu* chapters being dedicated to the qualitatively different (by proximity with the Dao and association with the Sage, the Classics, etc.) “root” and “trunk” of *wen*, and chapters 6 to 25 treating of the different “branches” of the tree of *wen*. However, the tree metaphor works manifestly only for the first half of Liu’s text and does not seem to apply to the “lower chapters,” the “tiny eyes” or *maomu* in a different metaphorical context.

In light of all this, and taking into account that the net metaphor does nicely connect the two upper and lower parts of the *WXDL* in a coherent mesh, can we possibly see it to co-exist with this tree metaphor that can be easily demonstrated to articulate the first half (chapters 1 to 25) of Liu’s text? And since we are here, do all these figurations (the *shuniu*, the tree, the net) make any sense when seen from the numerological perspective (49 equally significant chapters dedicated to *wen* + 1) sketched in the final paragraph in Liu’s passage discussed here (位理定名，彰乎大易之數，其為文用，四十九篇而已)?

I think the answer to the first question clearly depends on our ability to accept the multiple planes that intersect in Liu’s vision. First, chapters 1 to 5 are set apart as qualitatively different, the “pole star” of the “upper chapters”; then, they belong with the “upper chapters” to the reticular world of *wen* as a tree, separated as they

are from them only in terms of quality and metaphysical proximity to the Dao and the Sage. Next, the upper chapters themselves make up, with the lower ones, which they guide as net-like “head-ropes,” the textual mesh of the *WXDL* (in this sense, to the degree they are part of the upper chapters, the *shuniu* also govern the lower chapters and thus the whole book). Last but not least, the whole is set apart from the “Xuzhi” – a sort of foreign body which both, it would seem, belongs and does not belong to the text.

With so much overlapping in terms of the exact areas covered by the profusion of figures put forth by Liu, suggesting clear-cut divisions in the text does not seem a productive endeavour. Moreover, Liu's own final pronouncement on the matter, coming as it does almost like an after-thought in the passage I zoom-in on in this paper, makes such divisions even more problematic. After all, Liu does set there all of the first 49 chapters of the *WXDL* as a coherent and compact corpus against the “Xuzhi,” making all oppositions and arrangements quite relative.

Moving on to the second question, I have already mentioned the strange regime of the “Xuzhi” in Liu's review. On the one hand, it is included among the lower chapters, and on the other it seems to be the subject of a special statement that comes almost like a postscript, after three somewhat symmetrical paragraphs that delineate the structure of the *WXDL* and with which it bears no formal resemblance. According to this statement, the “Xuzhi” seems to require exclusion from Liu's text.

Looking anew at Liu's first mentioning of the “Xuzhi” (長懷序志，以馭群篇), it should be pointed out that the figure of “driving” the “herd” of the other chapters is rarely, if ever, acknowledged as such in contemporary scholarship. Denied a figural status, the context yields somewhat banal readings that highlight the obvious fact that the “Xuzhi” (sometimes, as we have seen, taken together with the four previous chapters) closes the *WXDL*, coming as it does at the end of the book. Conversely, a figural reading would lead to a different positioning for the “Xuzhi” which, seen as the driver of the other chapters, could be figured as their “shepherd” or maybe their “whip”<sup>11</sup> – something that does not come behind the other sections, but rather above or beyond them. To put it differently, and in light of what comes next, as this text's *impossibly* co-present metatext.

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<sup>11</sup> The idea of a “textual whip” is particularly appealing when taking into account a line in Lu Ji's 陸機 *Wenfu* 文賦: 立片言而居要，乃一篇之警策。



But what are we to make in fact of the last passage? The paragraph alludes to a context in the *Xici* 繫辭 (A9) discussing the practice of the *yi* 易 divination. According to it, and in keeping with the “whip” figure already mentioned, the “Xuzhi”<sup>12</sup> inscribes itself somewhere both inside and outside the *WXDL* proper. It both belongs to the text (which it rounds off) and yet somehow stays out of it (as the 50<sup>th</sup> yarrow stalk that must be cast aside at the beginning of the divinatory process), thus both being and not being of the text. This chapter’s threshold status is best illustrated by the perfectly paradoxical fashion in which Wang Bi comments on the divination procedures alluded to above by Liu:

演天地之數，所賴者五十也，其用四十有九，則其一不用也。不用而用之以通，非數而數之以成，斯易之太極也。四十有九，數之極也。夫無不可以無明，必因於有，故常於有物之極，而必明其所由之宗也。(Lou 1980: II, 547–548)

In expanding the numbers of Heaven and Earth, we rely on fifty. Of these, we use forty-nine, so one is not used – not used, yet used to transmit, not a number, yet counted to reach completion: this is the ultimate pole of change, and forty-nine is the pole of all numbers. Nonbeing cannot be brought to light through nonbeing, it must follow being; therefore, always [staying] at the pole of those that have being, we will certainly bring to light the ancestor whence they come.<sup>13</sup>

“Not used, yet used, not a number, yet counted [in]” – this is exactly how and what the “Xuzhi” seems to be in the economy of the *WXDL*: this is the non-space where Liu, instead of treating of *wen*, as the rest of the *WXDL* purports to do, can talk mostly, with-in/out the *WXDL*, about the *WXDL* – and of course, about the *WXDL* talking about *wen*. Text and metatext can thus meet in the insecure space of paratext (fundamentally, the “Xuzhi” is, in terms of name, position and generic echoes, a postface) and thus make up the supplement which rounds off and needs then to be discarded.

<sup>12</sup> Wang Yuanhua (1979: 41–42) is, as far as I know, the only critic who would argue that the chapter that does not treat of *wen* in the *WXDL* is not the “Xuzhi”, but rather the “Yuan Dao” 原道, the first section in the *WXDL*. His argument, not widely accepted, does make sense, however, in view of the actual parallelism between divination and the structure of the *WXDL* constructed here by Liu: the 50<sup>th</sup> yarrow stalk is the first, in fact, to be cast aside.

<sup>13</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, Lynn does not discuss this paragraph (which he included in his 1994 rendition of the *Yi* with Wang’s commentaries) in his article in Cai 2001. In Western studies, at least, Wang Bi’s comment does not seem to be often juxtaposed to Liu Xie’s passage; an exception is Fuehrer 2004: 72.

Space limitations prevent me from further exploring the implications of Liu's pronunciations on the "Xuzhi" and the ways in which fully acknowledging this chapter's paratextual status might lead to a significant reinterpretation of some of the text's often discussed perspectives. Suffice it to say here that I take this impossible duality connected to the status of the "Xuzhi" – the ultimate paradox (further enhanced, of course, by the fact that the "text" of the *WXDL* is, in turn, critical metatext) articulating this and many extended paratexts in the tradition – to be the essential condition necessary for Liu in order to conceive of his text as a "wholly other" critical metatext (other from the tradition – which he criticizes in a long paragraph in the same "Xuzhi" – and other from all generic categorization – what is, in fact, the genre of the *WXDL*?)<sup>14</sup>

All this, however, will not be developed here. In guise of conclusion for these lines, I prefer to make a plea not so much for the accuracy or relevance of the readings above, but rather for the basic assumption that motivates them: the *WXDL* is a work of *wen*, where figurality plays a major, structural part. One interpretation or another may be always accepted or rejected; but ignoring the figurative actuality of a text, and dis-figuring it in the name of metatextual clarity, seem to me to be hermeneutically untenable practices. In this sense, the contribution of this paper can best be seen as a re-figuration of Liu Xie's intricate texture or carpet – or rather as an invitation to reading.

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<sup>14</sup> For a longer discussion on these aspects, see Luca 2009.

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## The Significance of Symbolic Elements in Lu Xun's Short Stories

Tina ILGO\*

### Abstract

The present article interprets the symbolic elements in Lu Xun's short stories which have been neglected in earlier studies about Lu Xun. I intend to show that the most obvious symbols in his fiction, like the iron room, the cannibalism, etc., have their counter balance in the animal symbols present in his work. Following this idea, I will focus on his less famous stories, such as *A Comedy of Ducks* and *Some Rabbits and a Cat*.

**Keywords:** modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun, symbolic elements, *A Comedy of Ducks*, *Some Rabbits and a Cat*

### 1 Introduction

Lu Xun is known as the father of modern Chinese literature, a short story writer, an essayist, a poet, a translator, a social critic, a teacher and a lecturer. Above all, he was a great writer and thinker who longed for spiritual and mental freedom, but who was, due to his incredible literary talent and clear insights into Chinese history, culture and society, a “loner in the crowd”, entrapped in the “iron house” of the backward Chinese society of that time. Because his literary legacy is extremely rich, it is hard to classify his works and ascribe them to one literary trend. His short stories are attributed to realism, satiric realism, symbolic realism, symbolism and psychological symbolism. Jaroslav Průšek denoted them as “predominantly reminiscent and lyrical”. In my opinion, Lu Xun's fiction cannot

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be grasped in a single trend, but is composed of multiple trends clearly incorporated into his stories. I believe the principal element that connects these fragmented pieces in a deeply sensible whole is the symbolical meaning.

In this article I intend to show that the most obvious symbols in Lu Xun's fiction, like the iron room, the cannibalism, etc., have their counterbalance in the animal symbols present in his work. Following this idea, I will focus on the analyses of his less famous stories, such as "A Comedy of Ducks" and "Some Rabbits and a Cat", in which the author presents the problem inherent to the Chinese society, which prevents Chinese youth from imposing their ideas in order to change the society. Due to an extended use of symbols, Lu Xun's short stories carry a universal message that transcends the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> century China, and fit perfectly in today's society.

Quite a few sinologists already argued and presented evidence that Lu Xun is not simply a realistic writer: Fokkema in his study *Lu Xun: The Impact of Russian Literature* states that "the objective representation of social reality was not a value that inspired Lu Xun" (Fokkema 1977: 91). Fokkema also notes that Lu Xun certainly did not harbour the ideal of realism and naturalism according to which the writer is supposed to be merely a humble observer who must depict the world in objective manner and be able to completely separate reality from his creative sensibility, his inner state of mind, his beliefs, psychological traumas and childhood memories. (Fokkema 1977: 92) In his essay titled *How "The True Story of A Q" was Written* Lu Xun writes: "I only wish that as people say, I had written about a period in the past, but I fear what I saw was not the past but the future – even as much as from twenty to thirty years from now." (Lu 2003a: 317) It is quite clear that Lu Xun did not simply depict current situation in China, but concerned himself with much broader and far-reaching questions concerning Chinese national character and human nature in general. He does not see himself as a mere observer, but almost as a prophet who uses his highly developed sensibility to reveal problems concerning the cannibalistic, indifferent, apathetic, cruel human nature that needs to be cured by realizing its own wrongdoing. He saw himself as the "voice of China" as "warrior of the spirit" as he writes in his essay *Silent China*: "We have men but no voices, and how lonely that is! Can men be silent? No, not unless they are dead, or – to put it more politely – when they are dumb." (ibid: 330)



In his creative writings Lu Xun thus relied on his creative sensibility, his convictions, his memories and his trauma of early childhood, whether exaggerated and fictionalized or not. The melancholy, pessimism and fascination with the darker aspects of life and with death, mentioned by T. A. Hsia pervade his works and to use David Der-wei Wang's words "serve as a secret fountainhead of his literary inspiration" (Wang 2004: 22). Fokkema also pointed out that Lu Xun's taste for foreign literature and his choice for translation show that he had preference for "the complex of symbolic values conveyed by Russian literature" (Fokkema 1977: 90). The authors that he especially liked, like Byron, Shelly, Andreyev, Artsybashev, Garshin and Gogol to name just a few, regardless of whether or not they are officially stigmatized as exponents of realism, romanticism or symbolism, often resorted to, as Fokkema writes, "to romanticist devices as natural symbolism, mystification, the cult of heroism, and the irrational predilection for absurd exaggeration and irony" (ibid.). What I am trying to show is not that Lu Xun wasn't concerned with the events of his time, I am only trying to throw some light on Lu Xun as a creative writer and stress his ability to make his literary works timeless and to draw some attention to a different kind of interpretation of his creative writing, based on symbolic elements that connect individual, separate stories into a coherent whole, which alludes to some kind of meta-meaning, that surpasses time, space and nationality. Lu Xun himself wrote the following: "The happenings I described generally arose from something I had seen or heard, but I never relied entirely on facts. I just took one occurrence and modified or expanded it till it expressed what I had in mind." (Lu 2003b: 264). In my opinion, categorization of symbols and their analyses will eventually convey what he had in mind, and it will help us understand his deepest inner feelings, his beliefs and his traumas. Further, it will show us the essence of his creative writings and the message he tried to convey not only to his own but also to future generations. By focusing on the symbolical nature of his fictional writing we will neglect some other crucial aspects, but that doesn't mean that all additional dimensions of his work aren't present.

In this paper I shall only focus on the analysis and interpretation of the animalistic symbols in the stories *Some Rabbits and a Cat* and *A Comedy of Ducks*. The reason for this is that prevailing traditional interpretations usually focus on Lu Xun's more famous stories and thus neglect the importance of these two short stories that are thought as his less inspired works. (Lee 1987: 54) I believe that Lu Xun's intention in the two stories already mentioned was to transfer the human

realm to the animal realm, so he could once again express his central ideas about the world we are living in: the cannibalistic feast where the strong eat the weak. This central idea is timeless as it can be applied to any society at any time.

## **2 Depiction of Symbolic Elements in *Some Rabbits and a Cat***

In the story *Some Rabbits and a Cat* the gathering of children, adults and even a dog in a circle to see the new bunnies reminds us of the crowd gathering around the victim, who is about to be beheaded. In the case of rabbits, the crowd likewise came to feed its curiosity. Once they fed their curiosity, the Third Missus kept the bunnies penned up in a little yard behind the back window – she prepared a little “iron house” for them.

At the beginning of the story, we can read that “Third Missus bought her children two white bunnies”. (Lu 1990: 191) The narrator depicts them as “naive and trusting” (ibid.), but capable of “apprehensive and suspicious look too” (ibid.). The description of the bunnies can easily be translated into the human world. They represent a new life, the Chinese youth that is trying to survive in a hostile world full of predators. Rabbits are prey animals; they have a very fast reproductive rate, which gives them more chances to survive. If confronted by a potential threat, they usually do not resist or fight, but tend to freeze and observe. Rabbits appear in all world mythologies, beliefs and folklores. They are all alike, even in their contradictions, just as images of the moon. The moon connects rabbits to the ancient deity Mother Earth, with the symbolism of fertile and always renovating waters, vegetation, and never-ending revival of life itself in all its forms. Rabbits are lunar creatures, because they sleep during the day and run around during the night. The rabbit is also a symbol of fertility, and in China there is a belief that the female hare conceives merely by looking at the moon. However, the rabbit is still a weak animal, which is willing to sacrifice its childlike nature for future evolution. (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 2006: 293–294)

The rabbits in Lu Xun’s story symbolize downtrodden people who still persist in their fight for life. Though constantly threatened by predators, they are still capable of producing enough offsprings not to die out. If we think of a quotation from the *Diary of a Madman*, we can depict some other symbolic meanings of the rabbit in Lu Xun’s stories: “Savage as a lion, timid as a rabbit, crafty as a fox ...” (Lu 1990: 35) According to Leo Ou-fan Lee’s interpretation of this quotation, the

world the Chinese were living in was a hierarchical nightmare, where the strong with lion's cruelty oppressed the weak, and the weak timidly like rabbits fawned upon those who possessed power. When the strong and the weak met for the first time, and they were not completely sure of their social positions, they both acted craftily like a fox until it became clear who is who. The rabbit is thus depicted as timid and represents the Chinese masses that have experienced so many difficulties for so long that they became indifferent, following only their instinct to reproduce.

We have timid rabbits on one side and a malicious predator on the other. The predator is the big black cat that killed the first pair of bunnies: "What we really had to guard against was that obnoxious black cat who often perched atop the low courtyard wall, watching them with savage eyes." (Lu 1990: 192) We must take into consideration that even well-fed domestic cats may hunt and kill – a fact that is comparable to the men-eating society in its metaphorical meaning. The cat thus symbolizes an oppressive, cannibalistic cultural, social and political system where the strong eat the weak. It belongs to the same family as the lion mentioned in a previous quotation. In the story the cat is placed upon the wall from where it is watching the rabbits. Height gives the cat a better observation point, allowing it to survey its territory. Lu Xun's big black cat could therefore symbolize the government that constantly surveys the frightened people, restricts their freedom and controls them by implementing a cannibalistic social system. In such a system, not only the strong devour the weak, but also the weak "eat" their own kind, the old "doom" the young by restricting their freedom and bringing them up in accordance with the old traditional system that supports cannibalism, causes the decline of humanity and hinders progress. When the rabbits in the story produced an offspring, the parents didn't look after their bunnies properly.

From then on, Third Missus not only detested the black cat but was also more than little put out with the parent rabbits... since the mother hadn't nursed them evenly, those bunnies in the first litter who had not been aggressive enough to get a teat probably had died long before the cat got the two we have seen. (Lu 1990: 194)

The question that arises is: How was mother China taking care of her children? Not only the repressive government, but also the traditional social system deeply inscribed in people's minds, are preventing youth from finding new ways, from abandoning the prevailing cannibalistic nature and from becoming "real human beings". If one is not aggressive enough, if he does not join the cannibals, he

prematurely meets death. Those who survive and are potential “warriors of the spirit” are killed by the cat. So the young, except for those who harbour a “slave mentality” and a “cannibalistic nature”, and are aggressive enough toward their own kind and obedient to those higher than themselves, have no chance to survive. In his essay entitled *Literature of a Revolutionary Period* Lu Xun wrote:

Those who are strong do not talk, they kill. The oppressed have only to say or write a few words to be killed; or, if lucky enough to escape, all they can do is shout, complain or protest, while those who are strong go on oppressing, ill-treating and killing them, and they are powerless to resist /.../ It is the same in animal kingdom. When a hawk catches a sparrow, the hawk is silent, the sparrow is the one to cry out. When a cat catches a mouse, the cat is silent, the mouse is the only one to cry out. And the one that can only cry ends by being eaten by the one that is silent. (Lu 2003a: 335)

After the death of the bunnies, the narrator thinks about all the lives that were lost. He sympathizes with all the people who were and will be “eaten” by the cannibals and forgotten. Then he reveals his own feelings towards the big black cat that killed the bunnies. Killing the “young innocent children” represents for the narrator an unfounded violence that draws him to react and re-establish justice, and the story ends in the following way:

That black cat is not going to strut and swagger on top of that wall for much longer, I promised myself decisively. Without premeditation on my part, my glance fell on a bottle of potassium cyanide that was stored inside the bookcase. (Lu 1990: 196)

The final passage can again be read in two different ways. It could mean that violence releases the desire for revenge and the narrator gets caught in the same pattern of hierarchical system where the strong devour the weak. The other more probable explanation is that he wishes to get rid of the predator that will continue to kill bunnies; by killing the cat, the narrator, named Xun (as Lu Xun), wants to destroy the social system based on the predator-prey pattern.

### **3 Ducks and Tadpoles as Animalistic Symbolic Elements in the Story *A Comedy of Ducks***

In the story *A Comedy of Ducks*, we come across the same image of cannibalism. What is new is that the big and vicious black cat is replaced by the cute little

ducklings – the calculative government is replaced by a naïve and ignorant crowd, which unconsciously follows the same patterns of behaviour, and devours the very people who could bring changes. At the beginning of the story, we learn that a blind Russian poet visited Lu Xun's family and stayed in Zhou's family compound while he was teaching Esperanto in Beijing. The first thing that attracts our attention is that Eroshenko is the one who reveals the truth about China to Lu Xun. When Eroshenko comes to Beijing, he complains to Lu Xun: "It's quiet here, too quiet, might as well be living in the middle of a desert!" (Lu 1990: 197) The truth about "silent" China which has "men but no voices" was revealed to the narrator through the presence of the other, a foreigner, a blind poet from Russia, a country whose writers Lu Xun deeply admired. China and her people became so apathetic that they were no longer capable of realizing the situation they have found themselves in. To describe it, Lu Xun uses the words from the book *The Family Sayings of Confucius*: "Stay too long in a room filled with orchids and you no longer notice their fragrance." (ibid.) In other words, before his friend's visit, Lu Xun went numb and had unconsciously reconciled himself with his country's status quo.

In the third paragraph of the story, the narrator mentions that there is no spring or autumn in Beijing. "The end of winter was tacked onto the beginning of summer, and as soon as summer was past, winter started right in all over again." (ibid.) Spring and autumn are both transitional periods that enable nature its rebirth. Spring is broadly associated with the concepts of rebirth and renewal. In spring, new life is being born. More generally the term is used as a metaphor for the start of better times. Autumn is associated with the transition from warm to cold weather. Most ancient cultures featured autumnal celebrations of the harvest, often the most important on their calendar. If we connect the absence of the two seasons with the social and political atmosphere in China (at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), we can conclude that after the winter – after the hardships and suffering of the people – immediately begins the summer – the suffering results in rebellion or revolution and people are full of enthusiasm and hope for a better future. After the summer, after the passionate revolutionary period, the winter comes again and the suffering continues, no spring and no autumn.

Eroshenko then compares China to Burma where "there is music everywhere" (ibid.: 198), where the insects sing and their calls blend together in a symphony. Burma was certainly not as silent as China. Eroshenko expresses his

disappointment by stating: “You don’t even have frogs in Beijing” (ibid.). He learns from Lu Xun that there are plenty of frogs in Beijing and decides to break the tormenting silence by buying tadpoles that will eventually become frogs. In metaphorical sense, by raising frogs, Eroshenko would once again give voice to China. The tadpoles, as the bunnies in previous story, represent Chinese youth who is eager to learn and grow.

Unfortunately, a peasant came with ducklings one morning, and because they were so lovable, Eroshenko could not resist and bought four of them. But the cute little ducklings ate all the frog babies, just when they grew their legs, yet before they had a chance to evolve completely. “ ‘Mr. Airy-send-go, they’re all gone. The frog babies are all gone!’ reported the youngest of the children excitedly /.../ ‘What, the tadpoles?’ ... ‘Oh, no!’ ” (Lu 1990: 200) Eroshenko then left China for Russia, and in silent China the two seasons changed again. The story ends in the following way:

Now we are again at the juncture between the end of summer and the beginning of winter. We have had no news at all of Eroshenko... Although he is gone, four ducks are quacking away for all they are worth in the midst of this ‘lonely desert’. (Lu 1990: 200–201)

Even Eroshenko, a foreigner, despite all his efforts (with the tadpoles and the students) could not wake up the silent China. After he left Beijing China was still a “lonely dessert”, as it used to be.

#### 4 Conclusion

I believe that both Lu Xun’s short stories *Some Rabbits and a Cat* and *A Comedy of Ducks* carry the same central message as his other more famous stories: China with her cannibalistic social system, where the strong devoured the weak, where new prosperous lives were lost without notice, where people were not conscious of loneliness, apathy and indifference, where a vicious black cat as well as lovable ducklings ate baby rabbits and baby frogs. It was condemned to silence, and those few individuals who were conscious of this silence were condemned to loneliness. Lu Xun often compared the human world to the animal realm. He wrote about sheep and beasts, about prey and predator animals, associated the crowd with ducks, etc. All these reasons show that behind these stories, which seem like a comedy, lurks something more. Through the animal realm, Lu Xun tries to direct

our attention to the disease called the “old way in perpetuity” (Denton 1996: 102). With the theme of men-eating society, transferred to the animalistic realm, Lu Xun presented the problem inherent to the Chinese society of that time, which prevented Chinese youth from imposing their ideas in order to change the society. Owing to an extended use of symbols, Lu Xun’s short stories carry a universal message that transcends the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> century China.

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## China's New Poetry or Into the Mist

Maja LAVRAČ\*

### Abstract

The late 1970s and early 1980s represent a period of important innovation in the development of contemporary Chinese poetry. As this was highly personal and experimental, it soon became characterized as being “misty” or “obscure”. A new generation of young poets questioned the Chinese cultural tradition and expressed the need for its re-evaluation. They tried to re-examine the meaning of literature, and while doing so, they based the foundation for their poetry on the tradition and the spirit of personal freedom and democracy of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement (1919), having been at the same time strongly influenced by the Western modernist poetry, in which they found alternative fresh ideas.

**Keywords:** misty poetry, obscure, *Today*, Bei Dao, Gu Cheng, Yang Lian

### 1 Introduction

The late seventies and early eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century represent a period of important innovation in the development of contemporary Chinese poetry. As this was highly personal and experimental by nature, it soon became characterized as being “misty” or “obscure”. But, in fact it was simply new, a new embodiment of the Chinese spirit, which was born out of a strong need and desire to challenge the orthodoxy of the entire post-1949 era.

Since the Tian'anmen incident in 1976, known also as the April 5<sup>th</sup> Movement, poetry began to tell the truth. In December 1978, big character posters appeared in three places in Beijing: on the wall at Xidan, known as Democracy Wall, on the wall of the Ministry of Culture, and on the gate of the offices of the official

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magazine *Poetry*. A year later, these posters were transformed into a magazine form entitled *Today*. It was a non-official literary journal founded by a new generation of young poets, and featuring poetry, prose, literary criticism and translations of foreign literary works.

These poets, Bei Dao, Mang Ke, Shu Ting, Gu Cheng, Yang Lian, just to name a few of them and probably the most important of them lived through the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution and became highly disillusioned by it. Though *Today* was banned after a few months of its founding, they went on with their writing, and today many of them are living and publishing their work abroad. They can also be called a “Lost Generation” since they lost their youth during various ideological campaigns that were waged throughout the eighties against “Spiritual Pollution” (1983) and “Bourgeois Liberalism” (1986) to discredit the writers and other artists and their works.

The new poets demand freedom of expression, i.e. the creative freedom of the poet.

Unfortunately, their demands have been constantly suppressed. They emphasize the independence of literature from politics. For them, literature is no longer a tool for class struggle, but a mirror with which to see oneself. They are explorers of restricted areas in art and politics, they explore relationships between individuals and society, dive into the human nature and investigate the self. That does not mean they do not respect the ancient master poets, on the contrary, they do respect them very much, yet they do not continue with their ancient methods. In general, they question the Chinese cultural tradition and express the need for its re-evaluation. They try to re-examine the meaning of literature, and while doing so they base the foundation for their poetry on the tradition and spirit of personal freedom and democracy of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement (1919) being at the same time strongly influenced by the Western modernist poetry in which they found alternative fresh ideas. Indeed, in foreign models, they discovered a rich source of self-renewing creative power. In this way, their poetry represents a new stage of pluralistic creative experiment, and can be thus also called alternative poetry. It is namely very original and experimental in everything, in language, syntax, structure as well as in imagery. The poets actually create their own world, a world full of authentic inspiration and passion. Their poetry is beyond doubt a voice of a new modern generation; it is expressing its needs and ideals and thus speaking for itself. Indeed, these poems vibrate with the feeling and spirit of their times.

The new poetry is real. It moves from the objective reality to the subjective reality. The poet turns from the external reality and looks inwards, forming his images in accordance with his own feeling and sensibility. This poetry is not misty at all, but is rather an awakening or a refreshing revival of an aesthetic consciousness. In this sense, this new kind of poetry can also be called a revolution.

The following statements of some famous “misty” poets are the best descriptions of their poetry.

Bei Dao:

I try to apply the cinematic device of montage to my own poetry in order to produce the effect of imagistic collision and swift transition. (Yeh 1991: 79)

Gu Cheng:

When perceiving or expressing something, the poet has little use for logic, judgement, classification, and casual relationships. He forgets connections between things instantaneously like electricity. (ibid.)

Yang Lian:

Poetry does not explain; it simply is. (ibid.)

After years and years of domination by Maoist ideology, the new Chinese poetry finally succeeded to return to art, i.e. to rediscover its sense of artistic value, to become itself – to be literature. It symbolizes the alienation and frustration experienced by the young poets after the Cultural Revolution, and their poems are permeated with their struggle for hope, survival and human dignity. They are portrayals of their fears and doubts and helplessness.

For these new poets, poetry is a medium for the revelation of the soul. They sometimes express their feelings and emotions very directly since they see the significance of poetry in recovering the human self. Or according to Gu Cheng, what makes this new poetry so new is that there appears in it a “self”, a self with the special features of modern youth. He believes that this new “self” is born precisely on the ruins of the old.

The new poets advocate a self with a modern character, since they believe in human rights, human free will and that man should be his own master. This is a truly vital self, one endowed with dignity, intellect and a complex inner life.

According to them, this new kind of poetry is important not because of its content but primarily because it discloses the poet's feelings. And when a poet can communicate his feelings to the reader, he has succeeded in fulfilling the purpose of his work.

As innovators or walkers on new paths, the "obscure" poets have developed an individual, private symbolism by allowing themselves an unlimited freedom of expression. They are not afraid to lay open sensitivity towards their own needs and to show their critical spirit. By emphasizing the relationship between the poet and the outside world and by disclosing the internal contradictions in life they have endowed their poetry with the complexity of life.

As mentioned before, this new generation of poets was distinctly influenced by Western modernism, i.e. by the current literary trends in Europe as well as in the United States. They were very fond readers of such poets as Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarme, Heine, Yeats, Pound, Eliot and Amy Lowell, just to name a few of them. Besides, they had the courage to deny the old revolutionary poetic tradition and to break with its techniques and modes. In order to disclose the fundamental truth of human existence, they engaged in search for a new poetics. They reintroduced a free verse which can be found in the poetry of the thirties, yet clearly under a strong Western influence. There is a lot of ambiguity in this new poetry. Compressed images of indirect, dreamy nature are often unclear, and they are supposed to be that way in order to stimulate the reader's mind, to arouse his imagination. In fact, the meaning is supplied by the reader and his ability or inability to interpret a certain poem.

Also the technique is new. It is based on symbolism, and the poems obviously reveal a certain abstract composition, and quite often look like a random association of ideas and images. Form is nothing less but an extension of content. Rhythm and rhyme are usually neglected, and the use of irregular lines and frequent omission of punctuation simply represent the vibration of the poet's feelings, thus emphasizing his original diction.

"Misty" poetry has often been attacked and criticized for being obscure, i.e. difficult to understand, or even incomprehensible. The established poet Ai Qing argues that it does not serve the people and that it fosters spiritual pollution like individualism, alienation and self-expression, and thus represents a great threat for the younger generation. Obviously, he is worried that the so called obscurity could be nothing else but simply a mask for criticizing the present government. Not to

mention the most severe opponents who went so far as to accuse the new poetry of being too westernized proclaiming it a betrayal of the Chinese cultural tradition.

Yet any more open-minded reader would agree that the problem is not obscurity or difficulty in understanding. The meaning of this new kind of poetry namely can not and should not be easily understood when reading it for the first time. As we all know, it has never been easy to understand poetry or man. When reading a “misty” poem, the reader often finds himself in a situation when he has to figure out for himself the unspoken implications of unclear, mysterious lines, i.e. he has to or should be able to see the moon through the mist. And this is precisely why the poems of this new generation of younger poets are so challenging and thought-provoking.

On the following pages, I would like to introduce three prominent figures among the “obscure” poets, namely Bei Dao, Gu Cheng and Yang Lian, and discuss briefly the fundamental features of their work.

## 2 Bei Dao (1949– )

Bei Dao is a pen name of Zhao Zhenkai, a co-founder of the unofficial literary journal *Today*, whose work after 1986 could not be published in China. He is probably the best known figure and one of the most controversial authors among the new poets. Being aware of the constant repressiveness of the Chinese political regime, he rejected it and became an outsider.

His reaction to the political and social pressures embodies the central force behind his poetry which is permeated with bitterness, despair, and steadily deepening pessimism. His poems are not so much politically engaged as they are honest statements of his personal concerns endowed with humanist philosophy like respect for basic human needs and human relationships, belief in man’s dignity, identification with the lost and the suffering, etc. In searching for the self and trying to disclose the true nature of the self, his poems carry universal meaning.

Indeed, Bei Dao displays great courage while speaking with his own voice about his hopes and fears, and thus clearly breaking with the tradition of the post-1949 era. For him, art (poetry) is the only possible way of transformation or solution for his painful suffering.

**Requiem** for the victims of June Fourth

Not the living but the dead  
under the doomsday-purple sky  
go in groups  
suffering guides forward suffering  
at the end of hatred is hatred  
the spring has run dry, the conflagration stretches unbroken  
the road back is even further away

Not gods but the children  
amid the clashing of helmets  
say their prayers  
mothers breed light  
darkness breeds mothers  
the stone rolls, the clock runs backwards  
the eclipse of the sun has already taken place

Not your bodies but your souls  
shall share a common birthday every year  
you are all the same age  
love has founded for the dead  
an everlasting alliance  
you embrace each other closely

in the massive register of deaths

(McDougall and Chen Maiping 1991: 11)

Bei Dao is a culture hero. The young educated Chinese see their own personal griefs and skepticism embodied in his poems. They share his concerns about the life and death of the human spirit. In *Requiem*, however, written a few days after June 4<sup>th</sup>, there is a sense of faith and hope: it was hard for anyone in those days not to believe that this brutal use of terror must soon bring about the downfall of its perpetrators. (McDougall and Chen Maiping 1991: xi)

### 3 Gu Cheng (1956–1993)

During the Cultural Revolution Gu Cheng was exiled to the countryside. While working as a swineherd for four years, he started to write for himself and decided to become a writer. He published his first poems in *Today* in 1979. He, too, could not escape being a target of various campaigns against “spiritual pollution” and “bourgeois liberalism” since 1983. He moved to New Zealand where he also died. Once he said that all he wants is peace and a chance to be a shepherd.

Gu Cheng’s poetry is highly personal and experimental. He likes to experiment with diverse poetic forms and themes, from the political to the lyrical to the mystical. For him, poetry and life are one and the same, and the more man knows, the greater becomes his despair. He started writing poetry out of a political experience of his country, and though there is a political content in his early poems which made him famous, he does not consider himself to be a political poet since this is not the main intent of his work. Most of the time, he is on a search for the roots of the Chinese individual trying to find words for what can be felt but can not be said.

#### Far and Near

You

now look at me,

now look at the clouds.

I feel

you are very far when you look at me,

very close when you look at the clouds.

(Yeh 1991: 82)

The poem is one of sadness and loneliness. We can feel there is a certain distance and lack of communication between the two of them, the speaker and the unidentified “you”.

It is clear that their relationship is withering away. The poem reveals a paradox embodied in the image of clouds. Usually, clouds appear to be far away, but not in this poem. Here they appear to be near. On the other hand, the “you” appears to be far away and not close to the speaker what we would normally expect. This paradox together with the juxtaposition of two opposite perspectives endows the poem with unique character.

#### 4 Yang Lian (1955– )

Yang Lian started to write poetry in 1976. Eleven years later, in 1987, his works were banned, and in 1989 he emigrated to New Zealand. Since 1993 he is living in London.

He is strongly committed to history and regards the individual self as the basis for the interpretation of history of which the individual is an integral part. In other words, in his eyes, each individual is a part of the history of mankind. Therefore, he regards poetry as a medium for the disclosing of the soul. His poems, greatly inspired by Nietzsche and his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and Lu Xun's *Wild Grass* as well as by his own generation and their optimism for love and hope amid bleak Chinese reality, are direct expressions of the heart's rhythm. According to him, life is a forest surging defiantly out of filthy soil and flowing in a raging torrent towards the sea.

In his collection of poetry entitled *Masks and Crocodile*, Yang Lian is exploring a new set of ideas and developing new techniques in a highly personal voice. The collection encompasses two parts of thirty poems, each of them compressed into six short lines. Endowed with powerful, haunting and grotesque



images, the poems reveal the complexity of thought and many layers of meaning. Yang Lian believes that language can be made to serve the author. And this is precisely what he is trying to achieve in his work. For him the innovative use of language is one of the most important factors for the conscious act of poetry. Indeed, his poetry may well be considered poetry about poetry.

In the preface to *Masks and Crocodile*, Yang Lian wrote:

I wonder whether or not I actually wrote these poems? These words, mysterious Chinese characters, are each and every one an old house and within their four walls countless time has ebbed away. I go to say something but on the page of white paper there are the reverberating echoes of someone else. Poets have confronted poetry in this way for a thousand years.

Perhaps poetry never exits. It is only an expanse of loneliness, like the quiet loneliness of birds singing at dawn. Words are born in this way and thus have silence as their ultimate brilliance:

The myriad phenomena is blue

The blue of when I no longer exist.

Perhaps the poet can only like a phantom perpetually wander from word to word and from mask to mask, forever in search for the other self awaiting in another time and in another place.

When I can no longer recognize my own face, I recognize all other faces; when all words recede far into the distance, a line of poetry remains in my hands. (Lee 1990: 40)

From *Masks and Crocodile*:

## **MASKS**

### **1**

Masks are born of faces

copy faces

but ignore faces

masks are born on blank pages  
cover the blankness  
but still there is only blankness  
(Lee 1990: 41)

## **CROCODILE**

### **13**

Sitting alone deep at night  
many crocodiles steal onto the bank  
like intangible poems  
  
crawling between fingers  
under masses of grass and leaves  
unknowingly you are being eaten

(Lee 1990: 93)

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## **Intercultural Encounters**



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## **A Chinese View on the Cultural Conditionality of Logic and Epistemology: Zhang Dongsun's Intercultural Methodology**

Jana S. ROŠKER\*

### **Abstract**

Recognizing the fact that comprehension, analysis and transmission of reality are based on diversely structured socio-political contexts as well as on different categorical and essential postulates, offers a prospect of enrichment. Thus, this article presents an analysis and interpretation of one of the first Chinese theoreticians, working in the field of intercultural methodology. Although Zhang Dongsun (1886–1973) can be considered as one of the leading Chinese philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, his criticism of Sinicized Marxist ideologies marked him as a political dissident and he was consequently consigned to oblivion for several decades; only recently has his work been rediscovered by a number of younger Chinese theorists, who have shown a growing interest in his ideas. Although he is still relatively unknown in the West, Zhang definitely deserves to be recognized for his contributions to Chinese and comparative philosophy. The present article focuses on his extraordinary ability to introduce Western thought in a way which was compatible with the specific methodology of traditional Chinese thought. According to such presumptions, culture is viewed as an entity composed of a number of specific discourses and relations. The article shows how the interweaving and interdependence of these discourses form different cultural backgrounds, which manifest themselves in the specific, culturally determined structures of language and logic. It also explains the role of traditional elements in his cultural epistemology.

**Keywords:** cultural epistemology, language, logic, Chinese philosophy, intercultural methodology

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## 1 On the Cultural Conditioning of Cognition

As an academic discipline, Chinese studies were established within the context of discussions on Orientalism, which laid the foundations of and conditioned the colonialist approach to the study of cultures which do not derive from the so-called Western tradition. This is why the criticism of elements of Orientalism in sinology is also the criticism of the violent nature of the classic relation between knowledge and authority. Within this framework, every comparison is also inevitably an interpretation based on a system of values, the contents of which are determined by the ideology of material progress, and whose methodology is that of European formal logic. The acritical use of a scientific analysis which is, in itself, a result of specific historical processes and their related social organizations and structures, can prove to be a perilous and misleading exercise.

Over the past few decades, the theoretical streams of contemporary Chinese studies and modern Chinese philosophy have devoted increasing attention to investigating and comparing the substantial and methodological assumptions of the so-called “Eastern” and “Western” traditions<sup>1</sup>. However, the comparison and understanding of so-called foreign cultures is always linked to the issue of differences in language, tradition, history and socialization processes. The interpretation of various aspects and elements of non-European cultures always involves the geographic, political and economic position of the interpreter, as well as that of the object being interpreted.

Irrespective of the question as to where the concern for the “clarification” and “determination” of similarities and differences of both epistemological systems arises<sup>2</sup>, the search for a dialogue has always been determined by constant attempts to supersede and resume the limits of knowledge, and walks a fine line between

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<sup>1</sup> In the present work, the terms “Eastern” and “Western” as categorically interpretative models are not used in a rigidly political or geographical sense, but as notions that stem from a reflection on the distinction between transcendental and immanent metaphysics. The concept “Western” means the area of culture and civilisation which has been defined by the three Abrahamic – Semitic religions, i.e. Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The most important characteristics which these religions have in common are: transcendentalism, monotheism (or the Trinity in Christianity), singularity (the monopoly of validity), universality (universality of validity), individuality (which has been constituted by a separate and independent existence of the Self, inhabited by the soul) and the idea of immortality. None of these elements can be found in discourses of immanent metaphysics, which are prevalent in so-called “Eastern” civilisations. (Galtung 1994: 7) When the term “Western” is applied to language, it indicates the languages of the Indo-European group.

<sup>2</sup> In European sinology, most researches are an attempt to seek for a solution to the “crisis of European philosophy”. However, both “Western” and Chinese thinkers are motivated by the search for their own cultural identity through reflection of the “Other”.



revelation and acceptance, narration and interpretation<sup>3</sup>. The constantly growing number of studies in this area is due to, among other things, the increasingly urgent need to clarify the methodological foundations of the modern theory of science, which must keep abreast of the technological and political developments of modern societies.

Over the past few decades, the previously<sup>4</sup> “absurd” assumption that the “Western” theory of knowledge does not constitute the sole, universally valid epistemological discourse, something which would have been unthinkable for the majority of “Western” theorists less than a century ago, has now become a generally recognized fact among most present-day cultural exponents and communities. It has become clear to most people that “Western epistemology” represents only one of many different forms of historically transmitted social models for the perception and interpretation of reality (Sloterdijk 1996: 89). However, despite the growing number of issues related to “Western” cultural identity, nearly every “Western” incursion into the field of Chinese studies remains essentially comparative, because virtually all intercultural research is based on a cognitive reflection on a subject which has been expressed in terms of its respective language and culture.

Failing to take into account the specific conditions determined by different historical, linguistic and cultural contexts inevitably leads to misinterpretations of the object being examined. Unfortunately, in current intercultural research, it is still common to project elements of the contents and forms of discourse which have been overshadowed by the dominant political (and thus also economic) power, upon the object being considered. This is true even in the case of investigations and interpretations of contents which arose in different circumstances and in differently structured social and cultural contexts. This danger has also been recognized by a number of modern and contemporary Chinese scholars, engaged in researching and re-examining traditional Chinese philosophical thought. In the foreword of his book on traditional Chinese logic, Prof. Cui Qingtian writes<sup>5</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> Although (not coincidentally) the present time is characterised by intense debates on intercultural hermeneutics, serious inquiries into this topic are still quite rare in the “Western” world (which is hardly accidental either).

<sup>4</sup> In the colonial and postcolonial period.

<sup>5</sup> All original quotations from Chinese texts have been translated into English by the author.

To compare Chinese and Western logic means to look upon them as independent phenomena, each determined by its own culture. If we take into account their respective cultural backgrounds, we can still observe many of their congruities; but we must also pay attention to the large number of elements which constitute their decisive differences. Only on this basis will we be able to discern common features as well as the specific characteristics of particular traditional forms of logic. Comparing means searching for common properties but, even more importantly, it means being able to distinguish the basic differences which underlie such conformities. Only by acknowledging differences can we comprehend the manifold nature of logic, its history and the laws of its development. (Cui 2001: 9)

Despite the tendency towards openness and interdisciplinary approach, the discourses of modern science and humanities are still predominantly determined by the paradigmatic network which serves the interests of the “New World”. Cui therefore criticizes the paternalistic discourses which still represent the generally accepted valuation criterion not only in Western, but also in Chinese comparative research (the obligatory logical method for such evaluation is, of course, that of “Western” formal logic, although this is never explicitly stated by the author<sup>6</sup>) as follows:

Viewing a certain type of logic primarily as something which should be similar to, or even identical with some other type of logic cannot be considered as comparative research, but merely as imitation. Such procedures are incapable of taking into account the enormous differences between the methods of Chinese and Western logic, as well as the specific features which condition these methods. While this approach makes extraordinary efforts to discover the common traits of both methods, it adheres to only one logical tradition with which all other forms of traditional logic, including the development of new methods, must concur. This form of comparative research in the field of logic is incapable of arriving at new recognitions or achieving a creative analysis of the manifold nature of different, culturally-bounded logical traditions. It can only produce plagiarisms and bad copies of already existing methods. (ibid.)

But the pioneer of such insights into the complexity of intercultural methodology was doubtless Zhang Dongsun, a Chinese philosopher from the first half of the previous century, who’s greatest contribution was the creation and development of a modern theory of knowledge, based upon ancient Chinese and Chan – Buddhist epistemology. His plural epistemology represents a felicitous synthesis of modern

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<sup>6</sup> The reason for such discretion is, of course, the paradigmatic Chinese politeness which prevents him from expressing his criticisms directly, but only indirectly and “between the lines”.

science and traditional Chinese thought. Nevertheless, he also deserves our attention as one of the first Chinese intellectuals, who investigated questions on the cultural impacts upon cognition. His studies also provided many other valuable insights into the differences between Chinese and Western philosophy. Although his work is not well known in the Western countries, his investigations of the influence of Chinese language on the development of Chinese philosophy are very influential in contemporary China. Besides, he was the first philosopher who exposed correlative thinking as a main characteristic of Chinese philosophy and analogical argument as a specific Chinese mode of inference. Although he is still relatively unknown in the West, Zhang definitely deserves to be recognized for his contributions to Chinese and comparative philosophy (Jiang 2002: 78).

## 2 Zhang Dongsun, His Life and Work

While Zhang Dongsun can also be considered as one of the leading Chinese philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his criticism of Sinicized Marxist ideologies marked him as a political dissident and he was consequently consigned to oblivion for several decades; only recently has his work been rediscovered by a number of younger Chinese theorists, who have shown a growing interest in his ideas. During the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Zhang was one of the most influential thinkers of the Republic of China, a reputation which rested, in part, on his extraordinary ability to introduce Western thought in a way which was compatible with the spirit of Chinese tradition.

His work indicates not only a profound understanding of Western theories, but also a comprehension of the linguistic structures that condition them. At the same time, Zhang also remained rooted in his own, Chinese tradition of thought. As a youth, he benefited from a wide-ranging and exhaustive classical Chinese education, and he was one of the first philosophers who, as an alternative to Western Hegelian dialectic, developed and elaborated the traditional system of correlative thought, which was based upon Daoist philosophy, as well as upon certain theoretical paradigms of the *Book of Changes*.

The whole of his ontological and epistemological thought was also strongly influenced by the philosophy of Chan Buddhism, and his system represents one of the first coherent and complete synthesis of ancient Chinese and modern Western ideas. However, for most contemporary scholars his greatest contribution was in

his role as the first modern Chinese philosopher who created his own theoretical system, especially in the field of epistemology (Jiang 2002: 57).

In contrast to most of his contemporaries, whose work was characterized by a revisionism of traditional philosophy, Zhang's theory was a synthesis based on the assimilation of Western thought into the framework of traditional methodological and conceptual discourses.

As Chang Wing-tsit has pointed out, Zhang indisputably assimilated the most Western thought, established the most comprehensive and well-coordinated system, and exerted the greatest influence among the western-oriented Chinese philosophers'. Epistemology is the core of Zhang's philosophy, which began with a pluralistic epistemology and culminated in a cultural one. (ibid.: 66).

Zhang's pluralism was based upon a revision of Kant's philosophy, in which he followed his own system of so-called panstructuralist cosmology, which was to a certain extent also influenced by the Chan-Buddhist philosophy upon which his own worldview was based on. Zhang Dongsun's cultural epistemology was founded upon a "pluralistic theory of knowledge" (*duoyuan renshi lun*), and proceeded from the premise that knowledge was culturally determined and therefore essentially of a cultural nature, an aspect of his philosophy which still remains quite actual, especially in the field of intercultural research. His cultural-philosophical studies are based upon detailed comparative analyses of Chinese and European thought, with a special attention to the influence of linguistic structures upon various philosophical systems, and the connection between culturally determined differences and systems of logical reasoning in different traditions of thought.

Although Zhang's comparative studies of Chinese and Western philosophy were written a half century ago, they remain of great value even today. They will continue to throw light on current debates on cultural issues and to inspire comparative philosophy in our own time. (ibid.: 58)

### **3 Language and Logic: Problems of Comprehension and Transmission**

Linguistic analysis is an important part of Zhang's philosophy, and his logic is also closely connected to the logic of language. In his treatise *Knowledge and*

*Culture (Zhishi yu wenhua)*, he argues that language can help us to form our reasoning. (Li 2001: 352)

On the one hand, language creates thought, or opens new ways to it. But on the other, it also raises new problems by creating new expressions. In other words: through its expressions, language defines pathways of human thought, from which it is not easy to escape (Zhang 1995: 253).

In this respect, many interpreters of Zhang's thought believed him to be seconding Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis that language defined the mode of thought (Li 2001: 352), a concept which remains extremely problematic in academic circles today. However, Zhang distanced himself from such an interpretation, and to a Japanese critic who had accused him of advocating such a linguistic determination in his article "Differences between Chinese and Western philosophy from the viewpoint of linguistic structures" (*Cong yanyu gouzao shang kan Zhong Xi zhexuede chayi*) (ibid.), Zhang replied:

It seems that this interpreter thinks that I advocated the view that language determines thought. This is completely wrong, and this critic seems to be trapped in some old frames of thought. The fact that language cannot be seen as cause, nor as a consequence of thought, already follows from the aspect of functional relations. The contrary view, which claims that thought is the cause, and language the consequence, is equally wrong. All I said in my article was, that language, logic and philosophical thought are interdependent and interconnected (Zhang 1995: 383).

This interdependence and reciprocal influence of language and thought was the basis of all Zhang's logical and philosophical approaches, and can also be seen in his emphasis on the close connection between language and the laws of logic.

Logic was created because of linguistic problems. Therefore, logic does nothing other than try to regulate language. Why does language need regulation? Because of disputation. The beginnings of logic in ancient Greece can be found in rhetoric. Rhetoric was originally developed because of disputation; at that time, rhetoric was not yet a doctrine for beautiful speech and writing. The oldest Indian logic also arose from disputation in the sense of argumentation and counter-argumentation. In China, formal logic was never developed, but the art of disputation dates from the earliest times. Those who dealt with the art of disputation were called dialecticians. The demand for a regulation of language therefore arose from disputation (ibid: 240).

Zhang Dongsun argued that the logic of disputation (in the sense of arguments and counter-arguments, i.e. of thesis and antithesis) was also developed in ancient

Greece, and that this form of logical method was not elaborated later on because the European tradition focused on the development of formal logic instead. In the history of traditional European logic, even Aristotelian logic still implied two main methods: the method of evidences and the method of disputation; later developments, however, concentrated upon syllogisms, based upon the former method, while the latter was gradually forgotten (Li 2001: 353). A renewed research into the logic of argumentation by certain logicians<sup>7</sup> did not occur before the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

Zhang Dongsun had already stressed this aspect during the 1940's, arguing for a reexamination of the entire framework of Aristotelian logic. This was a very rare and valuable effort on his part (ibid.).

According to Zhang, the inextricably interwoven relationship between language and logic was already evident in the system of grammatical structures; in his view, the laws of logical methods also arose from the laws of linguistic structures.

Therefore, the main function of such logic is to regulate language. Due to customary modes of expression, language does not always correspond to rational principles. Thus, it became a kind of necessity, and this method developed out of this necessity. It tried to re-establish a correspondence between language and rational principles, i.e. logic. This necessity is essentially a social one and does not arise from solely rational domains, as was thought by some later scholars (Zhang 1995: 388–389).

Here, we can see the influence of traditional Chinese epistemology which, on the basis of the relation between language and reality, tried to “rationally” (i.e. in accordance with the most appropriate structural regulation (*dao*) of language as an expression of all that exists) standardize (*chang*) linguistic structures in order to improve and harmonize political and social relations within society. However, his approach here can also be compared to some recent researches in linguistic logic, which focus upon linguistic pragmatism (Li 2001: 153–354): “In my opinion, traditional logic is a discipline which deals primarily with the intrinsic structures of human discourses” (Zhang 1995: 389).

In terms of the rules of logic, Zhang Dongsun appropriated Carnap's theory of linguistic games:

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<sup>7</sup> One of the first pioneers in this field was the Belgian logician Ch. Perelman (1912–1984).

Logic as such is a game. Its effectiveness is due to its ability to establish self-sufficient rules. The principles of symbolic logic, such as the so-called principles of permutation, addition, substitution, summation or association etc., resemble the rules of chess, where the knight can jump over the castle. The deductive system that was developed based upon these rules is essentially tautological and therefore, of course, self-sufficient and consistent. But we should realize that all such systems are essentially arbitrary. (Zhang 1995: 253)

For Zhang, the basic function of language is expressing and transmitting thought. For this reason, he established a new concept of the so-called “domain or discourse of logic (*mingli jie*)” which posited a sphere of structural principles that exist beyond the external (*waijie*) and the internal (*neijie*) worlds. This sphere was to be understood neither as some sort of formalized copy of external reality, nor as a psychological representation of the structure of consciousness. In Zhang’s view, the domain of logic was an independent and inherently consistent, autonomous, “intrinsic” structure of rules (*benyoude guize*), which was also figured as the main subject of logical research.

#### 4 The Universality and Cultural Conditionality of Epistemology

However, logic is not only a discourse of language, but also a metaphysical tool for ideologies which internally bind and knit societies and cultures together.

From the viewpoint of culture, logic, metaphysics, morals, society and politics are a unity which came into being out of the same necessities. If we break down the wall which surrounds it, we can see that what we considered to be logic, is in fact, a kind of social theory. What we considered to be metaphysics, in fact is only a question of certain morals. And what we considered to be a moral theory, in fact is nothing but a kind of political movement. In other words: each political movement needs to be based upon a certain morality. Each moral system needs to be protected by a certain metaphysics, and metaphysics, in turn, requires logic as a tool. (ibid.: 419).

Culture was thus an entity composed of a number of specific discourses and relations. The interweavement and interdependence of these discourses form the specific cultural background, which is also expressed in the structures of language and logic:

Logic arose from social needs and developed in parallel with philosophy. Therefore, logic is not universal and basic. In addition, there is no single “logic as such”, since there are many different kinds of existing logics. Who

knows, perhaps this viewpoint represents a challenge to Chinese logicians? (Zhang 1995: 388).

Hence, Zhang argued that logic was culturally determined; like language, it had developed on the basis of cognitive patterns which, at the same time, were formed by logic. Zhang very schematically distinguished four elementary forms of existing logic: the first was Aristotelian, the second mathematical, the third was the Indian logic of double negation and the fourth he named social-political logic, which included Hegelian dialectics and Marxist dialectical materialism (ibid: 387–401).

In his view, the cultural determination of logic was, to some degree, connected with the cultural conditionality of comprehension. Based on this assumption, together with elements of his pluralistic epistemology, Zhang developed his (inter)cultural theory of knowledge:

Pluralistic epistemology reveals that knowledge is not an objective reflection of external things; and pan-structuralism argues that there is no substance for us to know. Knowing does not mean representing what there is outside of us, but signifies the construction or recreation of the contents of knowledge in relation to the structures of the universe. For this reason, the need for objective elements in knowledge is obvious. How, then, are the subjective contents of knowledge decided? Zhang believed that, in addition to the common structure of human knowledge as described in his pluralistic epistemology, culture plays a significant role in forming our knowledge, and that knowledge is culturally and socially determined. Therefore, in order to discuss knowledge, we must also discuss culture. In this sense, the knowing mind is a collective mind. According to Zhang, epistemology in the past only talked about the solitary mind, but there is no solitary mind. (Jiang 2002: 68)

Based on the premise of the close connection between various languages and the cultural determination of coincidental specific modes of logical reasoning, Zhang proceeded to develop his thesis on the linguistic foundations of European and Chinese philosophy. In his view, a key factor determining the specificity of “Chinese” thought was the fact that the Chinese language (especially ancient Chinese) made no clear distinction between subject and predicate, while in morphological terms it did not add suffixes to express categories of time, gender or number) (Zhang 1995: 360). Zhang argued that this grammatical feature had greatly influenced Chinese thought. Since the subject is not distinguished in the Chinese language, the Chinese do not have the concept of a subject; because the



subject is not distinguished, the predicate is not distinguished either (Jiang 2002: 72).

In addition, the Chinese language generally does not use sentential subjects, as opposed to Indo-European languages which omitted sentential subjects only in exceptional cases.

The Chinese language does not apply subjects and omits them quite often. Therefore, we generally conclude that the subject is not particularly necessary. (Zhang 1995: 363)

Another difference is that Chinese lacks the equivalent of the expression “it”:

Neither the colloquial *zhe*, nor the classical *ci* in the Chinese language is equivalent to the English word “it”. The Chinese word *ci* merely means the same as the English word “this”. This word has its contrary: the word *ci*/“this”/ is opposed to the word *bi*/“that”/, and therefore cannot be applied as the indefinite pronoun. (ibid.)

“It” is an indefinite pronoun, but “this” is not. Chinese lacks the form “it is”. “It is” expresses only the existence of something and not its attributes, and this separation of existence from attributes is a basic condition for forming the concept of substance (Jiang 2002: 73). But the most important difference Zhang noted was that between the Indo-European expression “to be” and the Chinese word *shi*.

The Chinese language does not have an equivalent to the Western word “to be”. The colloquial *shi* does not express existence, while the ancient Chinese *wei* means the same as *cheng*, as in the English phrase “to become”. However, in the English language, the words “becoming” and “being” are contradictory. (Zhang 1995: 363)

“To be” implies “to exist” and being in existence. *Shi* (“is”) in spoken Chinese does not imply “to exist”. Ancient Chinese had the expressions *you* (“to have”) and *cheng* (“to become”), but not the equivalent of “to be”. Since Chinese lacks an expression for “to be”, it has difficulty in forming the subject-predicate propositions of standard logic (Jiang 2002: 73).

Due to the absence of the linguistic (and thus also cognitive) category “subject” (*zhuti*), and the absence of the expression “to be” in ancient as well as modern Chinese, traditional Chinese philosophy never established or developed the concept or discipline of “ontology” (*benti lun*). Therefore, classical Chinese philosophy also never developed formal logic based upon theorems (*mingti*), and

even the basic law of traditional European logic, i.e. the law of identity, (*tongyi lü*)<sup>8</sup>, was alien to specific Chinese thought.

The Chinese system of logic was not based upon the law of identity (logic without identity). Because the Western logical system of classifications is based upon the law of identity, it necessarily developed dichotomies. (Zhang 1995: 363)

However, this does not signify that traditional Chinese thought did not develop its own logic, which Zhang defined as “non-Aristotelian” logic:

Chinese thought cannot be forced into the framework of Western logic; in fact, we must recognize that logic, as it developed in China, represents a completely different system. (ibid.: 365)

Therefore, the specificity of Chinese logic can not be found in the framework of Western cognitive patterns:

If we search for contributions of Chinese logic in the framework of Aristotelian logic, we will necessarily conclude that there was no logic in ancient China (Zhang in Li 2001: 358).

Zhang Dongsun concluded that Aristotelian logic, based upon the law of identity, developed the structure of dichotomies rooted in contradictions of the type “A and not-A”. Such relations were mutually exclusive (Zhang 1995: 364):

But Chinese thought did not function in this way. Dual oppositions, such as big and small, above and below, good and evil, or presence and absence, were seen as mutually defining and interdependent. (ibid.)

The classification of the type “A and B”, however, makes it possible for something not to be A or B; such non-exclusionary distinctions were quite common in Chinese logic. Logical definitions in the Aristotelian sense are equivalents, in which the symbol of identity connects the definiendum and the definiens (ibid.). Ancient Chinese logic lacked such definitions: according to this logic, the meaning of a word can be understood or clarified by looking at its opposite. For this reason, definitions found in Western logic do not exist in Chinese logic. The meaning of a word is not made clear by a definition, but by contrasting it with its opposite. For example, a “wife” is a “woman who has a husband”, and a “husband” is a “man,

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<sup>8</sup> Zhang considered the two remaining elementary laws, i.e. the law of contradiction (*maodun lü*) and the law of the excluded third (*pai zhong lü*), merely as variations of the law of identity.

who has a wife”. This is not a strict definition but an explanation in terms of a relation (Jiang 2002: 75).

Zhang Dongsun is the first philosopher we know of, who defined the conceptual basis of specific traditional Chinese logic. Its foundations were relational propositions, just as Western logic was based upon the proposition of the subject-object structure. The correlation between dual, but complementary oppositions (such as above-below, before-behind, etc.) thus represented a specific approach of ancient Chinese logic.

Zhang named this specific logic, as it was formed and developed in ancient China, correlative logic (*xiangguan lü mingxue*) or the logic of correlative duality (*liangyuan xiangguan lü mingxue*) (Zhang 1995: 365). In contrast to the Hegelian method, which was based upon mutually exclusionary contradictions, the methods of ancient Chinese dialectical logic (*bianzheng mingxue*) represented a dynamic inter-relational process of inter-dependent and complementary poles, as could already be found in the theoretical approaches of the *Book of Changes* (ibid.). This was a very creative insight, since the logic of the *Book of Changes* was created much earlier than Moist or Dialectical Logic, which arose approximately in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Due to his ostracism during the Cultural Revolution, Zhang Dongsun’s theories were consigned to oblivion for many years. Recently, however, a younger generation of theorists has begun to rediscover his work, though often expressing reservations as to its more problematical aspects: “Some of his conclusions are invalid from the viewpoint of contemporary theory” (Jiang 2002: 75).

However, most contemporary thinkers acknowledge his valuable and often innovative contributions to the development of Chinese philosophical thought, and especially his pioneering role in the discovery and interpretation of correlative dialectic, pointing out the important fact, that he was probably the first scholar to attribute correlative thinking to Chinese philosophy (ibid: 74). As already mentioned, Zhang Dongsun was also one of the founders of the relatively new fields of intercultural philosophy and methodologies of intercultural research. His recognition that ancient Indian logic was of a different kind than Aristotelian logic, and that ancient Chinese logic was in many respects quite different from both, is doubtlessly true. His most valuable contributions are also to be found in his endeavors to elaborate the dialectical aspect of Aristotelian logic, to connect logic, language and methods of disputation, and to discover principles and formal

elements of the logic of linguistic pragmatism. Recently, many Chinese and foreign theorists began to address these questions, and their research has already produced some important results. However, Zhang was the first to see the far-reaching significance of these problems, and can be considered something of a visionary in this respect (Li 2001: 358).

Despite the fact that certain aspects of his thought are incomplete and insufficiently systematic<sup>9</sup>, Zhang Dongsun definitely deserves the attention currently being paid to his work by both Western and Chinese scholars.

Although Zhang's greatest contribution was most certainly the creation and development of a modern theory of knowledge, based upon ancient Chinese and Chan-Buddhist epistemology, and which in many respects represents a felicitous synthesis of modern science and traditional Chinese thought, we must not forget that his comparative studies of Chinese and Western philosophy helped to establish a new epistemology, according to which cognition is influenced by culture. His studies also contributed greatly to comparative philosophy itself and provided many valuable insights into the differences between Chinese and Western philosophy. Zhang's investigation of the influence of Chinese language on the development of Chinese philosophy is a very influential and pioneering work. His hypothesis that correlative thinking is a characteristic of Chinese philosophy and analogical argument is a Chinese mode of inference has been widely adopted by scholars in comparative philosophy.

## **5 Tradition in Modern Disguise**

Zhang Dongsun's cultural epistemology has been strongly influenced by traditional Chinese theory of knowledge. For him, because the ideal foundations of epistemology have been culturally conditioned, they correspond to the specific structures and concrete conditions of the society from which they originate. In classical Chinese epistemologies, the relation between man, as an existential entity endowed with consciousness, and the world, viewed either as a labyrinthine external environment or the reflection of an equally unknown subjectivity which is immanent and unique to each individual, can be defined in many different ways.

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<sup>9</sup> These deficiencies are mostly due to the fact that Zhang Dongsun was prohibited from writing and publishing during the last 25 years of his life, and therefore was unable to refine and perfect his theory in terms of style, terminology, system and essence.

Its basic structure, which is simultaneously reflected in the main postulates of several traditional theories of knowledge (Xia 1986: 67–82), has always been dependent on the motivation and purpose of the process of comprehension: in the Chinese philosophical tradition, knowledge is centered on the harmonization of Self and the world. Whereas in mainstream Western philosophy, knowledge is for overcoming the world; in the Buddhist philosophical tradition, knowledge is for overcoming the self (Cheng 1989: 207).

Of course, this kind of harmonization does not necessarily mean that all elements within the cosmic and social whole are equal. The main guide is regularity, which can be based either upon a conformity with the essential principles of the cosmic whole, or upon the hierarchically structured determination of existence, which is decisive in defining the concrete activities and the life of every single individual.

It is no accident that this postulate of harmonic regulation became the principal ideal guideline for philosophical discourses in ancient China. This basic revision of classical Chinese thought took place during a turbulent and critical period of economic and political transition, in which various local rulers of relatively small feudal and culturally, linguistically and economically diverse states were engaged in a power struggle. Classical Chinese philosophy was therefore established upon a narrow foundation, which combined the hegemonic tendencies of various local warlords on the one hand, with the conflicts between different, but parallel modes of production, on the other. Against a background of different value- and belief-systems, this motley conglomerate of agrarian, nomadic, artisan and semi-mercantile cultures also included a variety of languages and writings. It was only natural, therefore, that the hegemonic tendencies of the various holders of power would demand a unified ideology. The formation and preservation of this ideology was thus conditioned by a unified perception of reality. Because most members of society were in that critical period in which they were also victims of conflicts among opposing systems and social structures, this form of unification was also intended to provide a basic framework for social security.

Human reflection, as expressed within the most influential currents of classical Chinese thought, is therefore based upon the individual's awareness of their own position within the integrality of the world; no one has been thrust into it "from outside", for the birth and growth of each individual is part of the totality of being. The individual is conditioned by a specific human understanding, which is not

only defined at the level of sensory perception, but also includes cognitively, i.e. linguistically determined thought.

Here, we can sense the leitmotiv of Zhang's cultural epistemology. The basic difficulty with the ancient Chinese epistemological theories has namely been emerging precisely at this point, involving the interpretation and transmission of reality that served as the basis for social interactions. The harmonic regularity that represents the elementary postulate for a process of comprehension which is applicable a priori, has in this context naturally been linked to questions of language and its relation to reality.

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## **The Encounter Britain-India: An Example of Adjustment to Imperialism**

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### **Abstract**

When Britain undertook to colonize India, it was quick to realize that it was faced with quite a special case in its history as a colonizing power: the subcontinent was the cradle of an ancient and highly complex civilization, which made it all the more difficult to administer, especially in the specific domains of politics and market economy. This short study aims to look into the various ways in which the necessary adjustment to the new situation was achieved – not only by the conquered, but also by the conqueror.

**Keywords:** Britain, India, encounter, adjustment imperialism, economy

### **1 Introduction**

With the battle of Plassey in 1757, British imperialism started taking hold on the Indian sub-continent. The old conqueror, namely the Mughal dynasty, was conquered in its turn through the British East India Company. A totally new situation was created, with the arrival of a new and different kind of imperialism that was there to stay. The credo of the civilizing mission was often trumpeted in an attempt to justify the formidable invasion – a justification that could have been made unnecessary by the military superiority of the invaders. So it was mainly in the economic and political domains that the war had to be fought. After examining the situation in pre-colonial time, we look into the different phases of the

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adjustment – phases that roughly correspond to the different attitudes and reactions of the two parties in the new order of things.

## 2 General Background

### 2.1 The European Context

European interest in the other parts of the world in general and in India in particular seems to have been prompted by what is commonly referred to by historians as “the crisis of feudalism” in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Different scholars have attempted to pinpoint the causes of this crisis; the most widely accepted theory is that of Edward Perroy who explains the situation by a chain of causes and effects that led to an economic stagnation. The peasants, overexploited by the landlords, resorted to a series of rebellions all over Europe<sup>1</sup>, thus overthrowing the hegemonic rule of feudalism. The solution to the problem was twofold: commerce and agriculture had to be improved; and for this to be feasible, both land and marketable products had to be found. New colonized areas were to provide the land, and the products were readily found in the form of precious metals, slaves and spices. To have a clear idea of what the Europeans went to India for, let us hear Immanuel Wallerstein about what the situation was like, later in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

At this epoch, the relationship of Europe and Asia might be summed up as the exchange of preciousities. The bullion flowed east to decorate the temples, palaces, and clothing of Asian aristocratic classes and the jewels and spices flowed west. (Wallerstein 1974: 41)

Among these Asian aristocratic classes, those of India were, of course, widely represented.

As for the way the Europeans entered India, we can say that they did so both peacefully and through the use of force, the latter alternative being by far the most important one. Indeed, although Europe at the time was said to be technologically backward, this was only on the agricultural plane. In terms of weaponry, the

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<sup>1</sup> Conf. the French *Jacquerie*, a peasant rebellion staged in 1358 against the nobility during the captivity of King Jean Le Bon in England. In England itself, King Richard II in 1381 had to face a massive revolt launched by peasants who were clamoring, among other things, for the abolition pure and simple of serfdom.

continent was well advanced as a result, possibly, of the hunting traditions of the nobility on the one hand, and on the other, the need to suppress peasant revolts or to ward off barbarian invasions. The “factories”<sup>2</sup> the Europeans built all along the Asian coasts and which were characterized by the famous canon-equipped fortifications prove that, most of the time, they entered India at gunpoint.

The consequences of this expansion for Europe were colossal. It resulted in the creation by Europe of what Wallerstein calls a “capitalist world economy” (Wallerstein 1974). But the commerce with India flourished within a much wider system spread all along the coasts of Western Europe, Africa, Asia, and as far as the eastern shores of China. From this system Europe drew wealth, power and prestige.

## 2.2 The Indian Context

When Vasco da Gama arrives in Calicut in 1498, he finds India with about the same level of development as the European nations; although certain practices like *suttee*<sup>3</sup> were described as cruel and backward, the community in general rested upon a highly sophisticated social and economic structure. It was divided into castes (or *jati*) in which people were grouped according to their occupations: thus, in an ordinary Indian village, we have *Brahmans* (priests), *Kshatriyas* (warriors), *Vaisyas* (traders), *Shudras* (farmers), which are the main higher classes, so to speak, and at the very bottom, the famous Indian-specific caste of “untouchables” (or *Dalit*). Contrary to the latter group, the Brahmans are revered, even held to be a God-created caste. This, of course, is only the visible part of the iceberg, for there is a host of other castes and sub-castes.

It is to be noted that even today, although the system has been largely outlawed by modern legislation, it survives in a variety of subtle forms that look quite offensive to foreign eyes – among other things, ignorance and extreme poverty that keep thriving in one of the emerging economies of the world.

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<sup>2</sup> According to *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, a *factory* is a trading station where “factors”, that is agents, reside and transact business.

<sup>3</sup> Indian custom consisting, for a widow, in burning herself either on the funeral pyre of her dead husband or in some other fashion soon after his death (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). Made illegal by the British, it has now fallen out of use.

There was, however, the other side of the coin, and that looked a lot brighter. Speaking of the economy, we can say that although it was tightly linked to the caste system, observers were always struck by the high standard of organization it had reached. We notice, for instance, that it operated at two different levels: at village level, the common feature was the *jajmani* system which was aimed at self-sufficiency and which consisted in the sharing of crops and the exchange of services – a kind of communal life. On the other hand, the State itself was kept going through a sophisticated system of land revenue collection based on revenue farming and prebend. Here, the *mansabdar* (or revenue collector) played a key role of transmission belt between the peasants and the crown. The crafts also occupied a paramount position in the Indian economy. Its cotton and silk items were known worldwide, and exported to the European countries, including England itself. Raychaudhuri, speaking of the Dutch merchant Francisco Pelsaert who is known to have conducted business in the region long before the English, states that “He [Pelsaert] mentioned a hundred different crafts in Agra, which was probably an understatement” (Raychaudhuri 1983: 20).

This Indian textile industry is characterized by two highly important features. Firstly, it was ancient and was established as a major, thriving activity long before European intervention, that is to say in the pre-raj era. Here is, in quite a poor French, what an online document says about it:

Les textiles indiens ont influencé des textiles d'autres régions de l'antiquité par l'ère moderne. Un type de tissu imprimé de coton, calicot appelé par Européen (après un centre indien de textile appelé Calicut), a été exporté d'Inde vers l'Europe en grande quantité au 16<sup>ème</sup> siècle. (*Femme blouse*)

Secondly, and as a consequence, its development was entirely based on Indian technology and know-how. According to Raychaudhuri:

The magic hand of the master craftsman did one particular job at a level of almost incredible excellence, applying skills transmitted down the centuries (Raychaudhuri 1983: 20).

But this Indian expertise went far beyond the textile industry. It also covered the domains of art and architecture, which constitute the most conspicuous achievements of that civilization. It has been established, for example, that no less than 22 Indian artistic, architectural and cultural sites are registered as UNESCO world heritage. Among these the Ellora Caves (registered 1983) near Aurangabad, Maharashtra, and dating back to ancient India (AD 600 to AD 1000); the Bhuddist

Monuments (1989) at Sanchi near Bhopal, dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, and the more recent ones including the Taj Mahal (1983), the Agra Red Fort (1983), the Fatehpur Sikri (1986), and so on and so forth. What is even more interesting about these monuments, however, is that they transcend the visible artistic beauty they exude, reaching up to the higher spheres of the spiritual and the moral. Here is what an observer says about them:

Not only is the Ellora complex a unique artistic creation and a technological exploit but, with its sanctuaries devoted to Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism, it illustrates the spirit of tolerance that was characteristic of ancient India (*Unesco*).

Now if, as I am much inclined to do, we consider that tolerance is one of the cardinal values of world civilization, we can easily accept that India's was a greatly advanced civilization at the time of European incursion, this in spite of the recurrent religious feuds that are now pestering the region.

### **3 India under British raj**

#### **3.1 The Pacific Co-existence**

When the British landed on the Indian coasts in 1601, they found India in the same social conditions described above. But the economic condition had somewhat changed. Their predecessors, the Portuguese, had reopened the Indian economy to European commerce (before colonization, there was a link with the African and Arabian worlds through Muslim merchants). There were already some “factories” on the coasts which served as ports of entry for European items (mainly gold and silver), and also as ports of exit for Indian goods (mainly cloth and spices).

Between 1600 and 1700, there was some degree of tolerance, what we can call a pacific coexistence between Indian and European merchants, the latter trying to adjust to the existing system. In Raychaudhuri's words:

The participation of Asian, particularly Indian, merchants to this trade which had suffered in the sixteenth century owing to Portuguese efforts to control it at gunpoint, revived and expanded (Raychaudhuri 1983: 25).

Still, according to him:

By and large, the companies latched onto the existing commercial organization for the procurement of their supplies and it coped with their demand quite comfortably without undergoing any major modification (Raychaudhuri 1983: 27).

Moreover, the European merchants used the services of agents, bankers and brokers who knew the country and its system better.

## 3.2 Collaboration

### 3.2.1 In the Economic Field

The definition of “collaborate” by the *Webster’s Dictionary* reads as follows:

To willingly comply with, co-operate with, or assist enemy forces occupying one country – usually with an implication of treacherous dealing in distinction from passive acquiescence. (*Webster’s Dictionary*)

Apart from the fact that this definition implies a situation of war, it seems quite appropriate here. The category of people who were most likely to collaborate were those who shared the same interests with the British. Among others, we can mention the traditional ruling class – *rajahs*, princes and the aristocracy in general, their subordinates such as the *zamindars*<sup>4</sup>, the *banias* (or merchants), the bankers, etc. On the other hand, there were the professional groups who worked for money and did not care who the boss was: among them the *sepoys*<sup>5</sup>, the *kayasthas* (or scribes), etc.

Not to be overlooked in this issue of collaboration are also some rich families that had long been established in the textile business, for example those bearing the prestigious names of Tagore and Kasimbazar. Raychaudhuri has this to say about them:

He [Dwarakanath, the most notable member of the junior branch of the Tagore family] provided from time to time indigo and silk to the English Company, established some indigo factories of his own during the indigo boom of 1823–1825, and later some silk factories.

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<sup>4</sup> The *zamindari system*, run by the *zamindars*, was established and used by the Mughals to collect Islamic taxes from peasants.

<sup>5</sup> The *sepoy* is defined by the *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* as “a native of India employed as a soldier by a European power, esp. by Great Britain”. It is these native “modern” soldiers who staged the famous 1857–1858 *Sepoy rebellion* against British tyrannical rule.

The Kasimbazar family was also for long connected with the silk business, mainly provision of raw silk and silk goods to the English Company. (Raychaudhuri 1983: 111)

In some cases, the hydra-like system extended its tentacles far beyond individuals and families, reaching up to the ruling spheres of the rajahs and their courts: for example, with the 1765 Treaty of Allahabad, Emperor Shah Alam had gone so far as to appoint the East India Company as his *diwan*<sup>6</sup> for the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

### 3.2.2 In the Political Field

At the political level too, this collaboration had existed since the time when the Indians realized that the Europeans had become a force to be reckoned with. Thus, back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the puppet Nawab of Bengal Mir Jafar, with the help of the British, had usurped the throne of Siraj-ud-Daulah<sup>7</sup>.

After the final defeat of the Marathas in 1818 and the fall of the Sikhs in 1848, the situation had somewhat changed: the British had by then become the sole masters of the Indian sub-continent. As Peter Marshall put it, “the company was at the same time soldier, general administrator, tax collector and merchant” (Marshall 1988: 102).

Obviously, this was too much for a single entity to handle. So the Company needed the collaboration of the classes mentioned above; and these classes also needed its collaboration, if only for their legitimation. There was clearly an exchange of benefits in this case.

During the upheaval of 1857 and those of the 1900s, the collaboration still involved about the same categories of people. To quote Gyanendra Pandey:

At this more advanced stage of the struggle, the peasants also identified more clearly the forces that were ranged against them. In Faizabad, the targets of the peasants’ violence spread out from the talukdars and their direct agents to patwaris, small zamindars, large cultivators and the high castes in general (Pandey 1988: 89–129).

<sup>6</sup> *Diwan*: “a chief officer or steward, such as a minister of finance in Indian traditional system” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*).

<sup>7</sup> Siraj-ud-Daulah was the Nawab (1756–1757) who lost Bengal to the British as a result of the battle of Plassey.

Sometimes, however, collaboration did not involve direct dealings with the British. It took on more sophisticated forms: those who opposed or retarded in any way the Nationalist Movement were stigmatized as collaborators: for example, those who opposed the formation of sections of the Movement in their areas.

It is to be noted here that the sepoys and the police were the last group of collaborators but not the least, in the sense that they belonged in organized structures directly administered by the conquerors.

It is also interesting to note that there is clear difference between collaboration and accommodation. The latter attitude is usually observed when one side finds the other so strong that it has to adapt itself or disappear. The adaptation is often made at heavy costs; this was, for example, the situation of many princes who, willy-nilly, accepted what historians call *subsidiary alliance system* – a doctrine introduced in 1798 by Lord Wellesley, Governor General of India from 1797 to 1805. In accordance with this doctrine,

Indian rulers under British protection suspended their native armies, instead maintaining British troops within their states. They surrendered control of their foreign affairs to the British. In return the East India Company would protect them from the attacks of their rivals (*Subsidiary...*).

So at the start of the encounter, there prevailed not only mutual tolerance between the two protagonists, but even some kind of collaboration – both the positive and negative forms. This situation was, however, bound to change as time went by and de facto colonization settled in.

### **3.3 Reversal: Resistance and Confrontation**

#### **3.3.1 In the Economic Field**

The notion of resistance is defined by *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* as “any opposing or retarding force”.

First of all, let us mention that on the whole, the goals pursued by the *Mughal* emperors and the Europeans were so similar that after the power had effectively passed into the hands of the British, there was a kind of continuity. This was apparent mainly in the economic sector, with the same system of tax collection going on.



Between 1700 and the mid-1800s, however, the situation took quite a different turn, mainly for two reasons: on the one hand, the power of the *Mughal Emperor* was fast waning and, on the other hand, Britain had begun to be industrialized. This meant that the British had a lot more leeway in their commercial activities. Indeed, the balance of power had by then largely turned in their favour, and the so called *Golden Firman*<sup>8</sup> was no longer in force. Besides, the commerce of textiles was reversed as a result of the mass production process made possible by the famous industrial revolution. This was an unprecedented situation which constituted a serious threat to the long-established Indian textile industry.

It is to be noted here that, for a long time, the Company and the British Government in India had been practically the two sides of the same coin; and that, before the Charter Act of 1813<sup>9</sup> came with contrary dispositions, the Company had developed an economic and commercial system that was entirely monopolistic and domineering in essence.

It is needless to say that Britain was then exclusively in command of the sector of banking and services, a sector in which it has always excelled. This was already what we can call a kind of “normal” monopoly, given the fact that Britain was the power that modernized and expanded it in India. As for the ordinary type of monopoly, it was meant to cover not only the two principal export products, namely silk and cotton, but also a few secondary items such as salt, opium and saltpetre (Raychaudhuri 1983: 288); and it was meant to apply at all stages in the process, from production to exportation. All sorts of rules and regulations were therefore developed and ruthlessly enforced by the Company to the detriment of Indian producers. “In the late 1770s and the 1780s,” says Tapan Raychaudhuri about one of the most prosperous periods for the silk industry:

the so-called *contract system* brought in its wake *indenture regulations* [emphases added] binding the artisans to sell exclusively to the Company – a measure intended to deny them any improvement in their bargaining position as a result of the boom of the 1780s (Raychaudhuri 1983: 288).

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<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, the *firman* was simply the equivalent of a royal decree, mainly in Ottoman Turkey and in some Oriental countries such as Iran, Mughal India, etc.

The *Golden Firman* was a specific *firman* which had been granted back in 1632 in order, theoretically, to protect the Company’s interests, but in actual fact condoned the collection of customs duties from it.

<sup>9</sup> The Charter Act of 1813 officially abolished the exclusive monopoly of the Company in India.

The all powerful institution is even known to have developed an elaborate system of coercion and sanctions meant to make the monopoly a reality on the ground. This was reflected in its desire to destroy native units of production: for example, referring to the silk reeries of Bengal, Raychaudhuri describes them as “an institution which the company had to destroy by force after Plassey as it was a challenge to their ambitions of monopoly” (ibid.: 23). But it did not use force only, it also used some tactics: after 1753, the crucial turning point, it started to circumvent the native intermediaries and deal directly with the producers through its own intermediaries, or agents.

As for the forced selling the peasants and artisans were submitted to, it was only the tip of the iceberg: the *zamindars* and *gomasthas*<sup>10</sup> were free to use all sorts of illegal methods such as, among other things, the remeasurement of the cultivated plots or the resettlement of the *ryots*<sup>11</sup> in case any cheating was suspected, and even the distraint of the crops and other properties of the defaulting ones. Interestingly enough, all these practices were made possible by official regulations (mainly VII of 1799 and V of 1812) (Raychaudhuri 1983: 139).

Then, after the Company had been formally thrown out of the system, the gap it left had to be filled, for nature, as is well known, abhors a vacuum. This is when a third thief in the form of private companies – the famous *Agency Houses*<sup>12</sup> – appeared on the scene of export trade. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they rapidly expanded, acquiring considerable leeway. As Raychaudhuri further suggests:

it appears that in 1830 only six Agency Houses owned or managed 65 per cent of the vessels belonging to the port of Calcutta, and all the dockyards used by larger ships, and the collieries and the only textile mill in Bengal (Raychaudhuri 1983: 20).

These companies, however, did not have the caliber of the Company, nor did they have its experience in the field. So they had to find a way to adjust; they decided to unite for at least two major objectives: form a block against the old native

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<sup>10</sup> “Gomastha described an Indian agent of the British East India Company employed in the Company’s colonies, to sign bonds, usually compellingly, by local weavers and artisans to deliver goods to the Company” (*Gomastha...*).

<sup>11</sup> A peasant or cultivator of the soil (*New Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*).

<sup>12</sup> The firm Watson & Co in the silk industry is a case in point.

businesses that were not ready to clear the stage, and avoid competition among themselves. This was the system known as “collective monopoly”<sup>13</sup>.

### 3.3.2 In the Political Field

In any case, though, there was a great difference under the raj because everything had become more strict due to two fundamental elements: first, the phenomenal administrative capacity of the Europeans, based on an intimate knowledge of the region and a unique sense of order and control; second, the general census of the 1870s meant to better grasp the colony’s assets in terms of both persons and goods, and, of course, to administer more efficiently. This allowed for harsh revenue assessments and heavier taxes upheld by all the economic and political deciders of the new order. The resentment that resulted among the peasants gave rise to frequent riots and rebellions. In this respect, two major events that deserve special attention are to be mentioned: the 1857 Sepoy rebellion, and the nationalist Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, which culminated in the Quit India Movement of 1942–1944. The 1857 rebellion was, of course, started by a precise social group, the *sepoys*, and on precise and specific grounds which were supposedly religious<sup>14</sup>. But in actual fact, it was an expression of the general discontent of the masses and as such, it involved people of different backgrounds. When it got out of the barracks, the movement became chiefly a peasant action carried out under the direction of what certain mainstream historians called the “natural leaders”, that is the *zamindars*, *mansabdars*, *talukdars*<sup>15</sup>, etc.

What is interesting to note, though, is that the movement was so popular that, in many areas, the ordinary people did not wait for “the natural leaders” to supervise them. This is the view defended by subaltern historians. Gautam Bhadra, for example, notes that “there were several instances of lower status individuals who stood up and took the lead in the insurrection”. He mentions four such

<sup>13</sup> *Collective monopoly* is defined as “an agreement among a group of competing price makers to restrain competition among themselves”. The attractive side of it is that “it secures an advantage for its members by lessening or eliminating the scope for substitution among their products”. (Scitovsky 2003: 378)

<sup>14</sup> The story goes that, within the framework of their different activities as soldiers, the *sepoys* were led to touch cow grease – an act that was strictly forbidden by Hinduism which was the avowed faith of most of them.

<sup>15</sup> These are all titles that were held by officials in the *Mughal* tax collection system.

individuals, namely Shah Mal, Devi Singh, Gonoo and Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah. And to make it clear that they did hail from a low social level, he goes on to add the important precision that these peasant-leaders, such as Devi Singh, were “barely distinguishable from their followers” (Pandey 1988: 123).

As for the Quit India Movement of the 1940s, it was the continuation of the Non-Cooperation Movement started earlier in the 1920s by Mahatma Gandhi. It was based on the principles of civil disobedience in the form of passive resistance and non-violence, summed up in the concept of *satyagraha*<sup>16</sup>. Its leaders seem to have tried to take advantage of the war situation to drive the British from India. In spite of the credo of non-violence, here again, the movement got out of control and quickly became a mass action. This time, even women and children were involved in various activities carried out within the framework of the struggle. Professor Paul Greenough, who looked closely into the history of the movement, states that “as early as October 11, 1942, *Biplabi* gave instructions of self-defence to village women...”, and goes on to add that:

Despite the initial success of mass attacks on police stations in Tamluk, the heroes according to *Biplabi* were not the Congress leaders of the huge crowds – and certainly not the People – but the handful of innocent women and children mowed down by police firing (Greenough 1983: 353–386).

In addition to these various riots and rebellions meant to directly counter the British through actual physical violence, some non-violent attitudes were also observed which were ultimately aimed at retarding the British enterprise. Among other attitudes, we can mention the refusal to work, to vote and to pay taxes: the latter form of resistance was mainly resorted to by certain *zamindars*, who knew better than anyone else that the whole system rested upon money, and that an important part of that money came from revenue collection.

#### 4 Conclusion

As is well known, Britain had the largest colonial empire on earth. But the experience it had in India is quite unique. For example, the way the colony acquired its independence is totally different from the way, say, African colonies acquired theirs – offered in some cases almost as a gift, and in others at gunpoint

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<sup>16</sup> *Satyagraha*: “A politico-religious movement initiated in 1919, favouring passive resistance and non-co-operation as means of opposing abuses” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*).

with liberation wars waged by guerrilla forces. The spirit of the Mahatma allowed the whole process to unfold in a relatively peaceful manner through the Quit India Movement, without independence wars as such.

But it is the economic situation that illustrates better the specificity of the encounter between Britain and India. In spite of the fact that Britain was militarily superior and was therefore able to exert an unfair form of competition, it had to reckon with the colony which had a long manufacturing experience, mainly in the silk and cotton textiles. So the adjustment ended up taking a mutual form, with the stronger side devising ways and means to deal with the weaker one, rather than the latter doing everything to satisfy the desires of its new master.

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## **Reinterpretations of Logic and Science**





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## Should the History of Chinese Mathematics be Rewritten?<sup>1</sup>

MA Li\*

### Abstract

More than one and a half decades have elapsed since the Zhangjiashan archaeological findings showed excitingly that a new collection of mathematical texts on bamboo strips were excavated, dating earlier than the then earliest known and most influential Chinese mathematical classic *Jiu Zhang Suan Shu*. Now that the contents of the findings have finally been made available to the world outside of the group of archaeologists involved, should the history of Chinese mathematics be rewritten? After comparing the new material with the *Jiu Zhang Suan Shu* I believe that the place of the *Jiu Zhang Suan Shu* remains an irreplaceable cornerstone in the history of Chinese mathematics; however, the *Jiu Zhang Suan Shu* can no longer be seen as the earliest sources for the mathematical knowledge therein.

**Keywords:** history of Chinese mathematics, *Suan Shu Shu*, *Jiu Zhang Suan Shu*

### 1 Introduction

It has by now fairly widely known that there is an East Asian equivalent of Euclid's *Elements*, called *Jiu Zhang Suan Shu* (hereafter *JZSS*) 九章算術 (*Nine Chapters on Mathematics*). Quite different in style from the *Elements*, the *JZSS* served as a model for mathematics in China and, more widely, East Asia, for more than a millennium. Its influence is comparable to that of the *Elements* in the

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<sup>1</sup> This text is an edited English translation of an invited lecture delivered at Uppsala University on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Some technical details are omitted to fit the majority readers of the journal. I thank Professor S. Kaijser, then chairman of the Swedish Mathematical Society for the invitation, and everybody in the audience who contributed with stimulating questions and discussions. The dinner party afterwards was also memorable. I am grateful to Professor K. Carlitz for her valuable help in editing the text.

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Western world. As one of the ten mathematical classics compiled in the Tang Dynasty (Qian 1963), the level of mathematical sophistication exemplified in the *JZSS* is higher than that from other Chinese mathematical classics of later periods.

In the *JZSS*, 246 problems are divided into nine chapters according to the methods applied to solve these problems. After the presentation of one problem or several problems of the same type showing variations, correct answers are offered, in some cases followed by explanations of the solution procedures. The book was used as a mathematical textbook in East Asia for centuries. It was a common practice to learn mathematics by reading this book and writing commentaries on it. Some of the commentaries, predominantly those of Liu Hui have become an integral part of the *JZSS* (263 CE), providing explanation and justification of the rationale and methods used in the book.

Neither the authorship nor the exact date of compilation of the *JZSS* is known. Presumably, generations of scholars contributed to the collection and selection of the problems, classification according to solution procedures, correction of mistakes, and so on. Although it has been generally accepted that the work can be dated from the first century BCE to the first century CE, the exact date has been unsettled (see for example, Guo 1990, Li 1990, Needham 1959, Qian 1964, etc.). I believe that close to the end of the first century CE is a reliable dating for the completion of the work (Ma 1996).

In spite of this uncertainty, the *JZSS* was long regarded as the earliest work specifically devoted to mathematics that has survived from China. However, the situation changed due to archaeological findings from central China where a new collection of mathematical texts on bamboo strips was unearthed.<sup>2</sup>

The excavation took place at Zhangjiashan near Jiangling County in Hubei province from December 1983 to January 1984. Three tombs catalogued as M247, M249, M258 were unearthed. More than a thousand bamboo strips were found from M247, almost two hundred of them relevant to mathematics. On the back of one of these strips are the three characters *Suan Shu Shu* 算數書 (to be abbreviated as *SSS* below), which have been used by the archaeologists as the title of this collection and translated into English as a *Book on Arithmetic*.

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<sup>2</sup> I thank my teacher Professor Du Shiran 杜石然 who spoke to me about the findings when his book (Li and Du 1963) was being translated into English in the 1980s.

The contents of these bamboo strips were kept within the study group consisting of archaeologists for more than one and a half decades. In the beginning of this century these findings were made available to the outside world (Peng 2000, *Working group* 2000, Peng 2001).<sup>3</sup>

The title *Suan Shu Shu* does not seem to have been mentioned or cited anywhere in historical records. Another document from the same tomb was a calendar which ended in the second year of Empress Lü's reign in the Western Han period, viz. 186 BC. If the occupant of the tomb died that year the texts must have been written before 186 BC.

I chose to translate the title *Suan Shu Shu* 算數書 literally as *En bok om tal och beräkningar* (*A Book on Numbers and Computations*). The last character 書 as a noun can mean book, script etc. In this case I think it better to use the word “book” for such a large collection.<sup>4</sup>

The first character has two variants 筭 and 算, meaning to count, to calculate, to compute. Both 筭 and 算 have the stroke denoting “bamboo” on the top, indicating the most common material used for counting rods.<sup>5</sup> The lower part in 算 is a noun indicating a device while the lower part in 筭 is a verb meaning to play with.<sup>6</sup> The character 祿 consists of two 示 indicating a divine meaning.

The most literal meaning of the middle character 數 is “number” as a noun (the fourth falling tone) and “to count” as a verb (the third falling-rising tone), as in the expression *shu4 yuan2 yu2 shu3* 數源於數 (numbers originated from counting).<sup>7</sup> The first character literally corresponds to “beräkning(ar)” in Swedish; and can mean both calculation(s) or computation(s).

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Professor N. Sivin for sending me the material and for encouraging me to explore these new findings.

<sup>4</sup> For the same character as in *Luoshu* 洛書, I chose to translate it as script, although it is actually a diagram (Ma 1996, Ma 2004). Incidentally, the legendary of He Tu and Luo Shu dating Chinese mathematics to several millennia back can still not be verified.

<sup>5</sup> Indeed Chinese culture can be described as a bamboo culture. We use *yi shi zhu xing* 衣食住行, (clothing, food, living, transport) to refer to the basic necessities of life. Hats and rain capes can be made of bamboo, bamboo shoots can be eaten, houses as well as furniture can be built of bamboo and so are sedans.

<sup>6</sup> As explained in the first Chinese dictionary of the Han Dynasty (Xu 2004: 120): 筭：長六寸。計歷數者。从竹从弄。言常弄乃不誤也。算：數也。从竹从具。讀若筭。

<sup>7</sup> The character *shu* 數 as a noun also has other meanings, for example *jiushu* 九數 refers to the nine areas of mathematics prior to the formation of the nine chapters in the *JZSS*.

Arithmetic as a modern branch of elementary mathematics is *suanshu* 算術 in Chinese.<sup>8</sup> The same two characters in classical Chinese, however, refer to the whole body of mathematics as in 九章算術 *Jiu Zhang Suan Shu*, in which arithmetic as well as algebra, geometry, etc are dealt with. The character *shu* 術 alone can mean art, technique, or algorithm. I used to translate *JZSS* as *Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art*, until an occasion when I was preparing for a talk entitled “mathematics as art/science/technique”.<sup>9</sup> Indeed different aspects of mathematics can be emphasized using different translations but as far as the mathematics in the *JZSS* is concerned, the most suitable translation seems to me simply “mathematics”.

That 算術 as 算數之術 is used in ancient China for mathematics actually reflects the nature of traditional Chinese mathematics which centers on 算 and emphasizes 術. Another word used is *sunxue* 算學. From the Song and Yuan periods or the thirteenth century onwards, *shuxue* 數學 has also been used although at that time, the so-called “internal mathematics” (*neishu* 內數) as well as “external mathematics” (*waishu* 外數) were included in 數學. In 1939, the Chinese Mathematical Society decided to adopt *shuxue* 數學 as the standard term for “mathematics”.<sup>10</sup>

## 2 A Closer Look at Some Examples in the SSS

The SSS covers a variety of topics. On some strips the text begins with a heading of one to four characters. There are a total of 68 headings and one without any explicit heading (*Workig group* 2000). Mathematical problems are presented in question and answer form, as in *JZSS*. But unlike in the *JZSS*, problems are not

<sup>8</sup> I was a young student when a commented version of *JZSS* (Bai 1983) was published. At a bookshop I looked around but could not find it. A shop assistant suggested politely but mistakenly that I should try the primary school section.

<sup>9</sup> As the first translation into a Western language, the characters *suanshu* 算術 in the title was translated as “Arithmetischer Technik” (Vogel 1968).

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, 算術 (さんじゅつ, *sanjutsu*) has also been used in Japan in pre-modern times referring to the whole body of mathematics. Nowadays 算數 (さんすう, *sansū*) is in use meaning “arithmetic”, the branch of elementary mathematics, while 數學 (すうがく, *sūgaku*) is used to mean the mathematical science as well as the educational subject from junior high school onward. I thank Professor Kobayashi Tatsuhiko 小林龍彦 for interesting communications and Professor Sasaki Chikara 佐々木力 for further information that 數學 (すうがく) rather than 数理学 was adopted by the Tokyo Mathematical Society 東京数学会社 at a meeting of 訳語会 on 7 January 1881.

classified according to the methods used to solve them. Moreover, there is no explicit formulation of those methods as in the *JZSS*. Some problems do remind us of the similarity to those in the *JZSS*, and so do the headings. However, such cases are very few in number. Problems equivalent to those in the chapters 8 and 9 of the *JZSS* are completely missing in the *SSS*; in other words, no problems dealing with right-angled triangles or systems of linear equations are found in the *SSS*.

Concerning additions of two fractions, *He fen shu* 合分術 is given in the *SSS* as below:

If the two denominators are (of) the same (category), add the numerators.

If the denominators are not (of) the same (category) but

one denominator can be twice of the other, double the numerator;

one denominator can be three times of the other, three times the numerator;

one denominator can be four of the other, four times the numerator;

one denominator can be five times of the other, five times the numerator;

one denominator can be six times of the other, six times the numerator;

When the denominators are the same, add the numerators.

If they are not (of) the same (category), multiply the denominators as divisor, cross-multiply the numerators with the denominators, combine (i.e. add) them to be the dividend.

Here we can see that the description is more detailed than that given in the first chapter of the *JZSS*.

The title of the first chapter in the *JZSS* is *Fang Tian* 方田, which is often translated as *Rectangular Field*. Since that chapter deals with finding areas of various geometric figures in terms of fields, I thought “squaring fields” would be an ideal translation (Ma 1996), using “square” as a verb. Here in *SSS*, interestingly, this problem under the heading *Fang Tian* in the *SSS* is not about finding the square but rather the inverse: to find the side given the area of a square

(Ma 2004). It seems to me, therefore, that is more suitable to translate the heading as “square field” where square is used as an adjective.

This type of problems in *JZSS* belongs to Chapter four and is solved by root extraction. In *SSS*, however, it is solved by the method of excess and deficit, which is systematically dealt with in the seventh chapter of the *JZSS* (Ma 1993):

[In] a field whose square is 1 *mu*, how many *bu* is a side?

[The answer] says: side 15 and 15/31 *bu*.

The rule says: let the side be 15 *bu*, deficit 15 *bu*;

let the side be 16, a surplus of 16 *bu*.

It says: combine (i.e. add) the gain and the deficit as the divisor,

multiply the deficit numerator with the gain denominator,

multiply the gain numerator with the deficit denominator,

add [the products] as the dividend.

Considering the numerical values, let us look at the very first problem in the *JZSS* Chapter one:

Now let there be a [rectangular] field of width 15 and length 16.

Question: what is the area of the field?

Answer: 1 *mu*.

It is worth noting that the relation 1 *mu* = 240 (square) *bu* was introduced by Shang Yang in his 383 BC reform. Before that, 1 *mu* was considered to equal 100 (square) *bu*. It seems therefore reasonable to believe that both this problem in *JZSS* and the one in *SSS* were constructed after 383 BC.

If the compiler of the *SSS* is familiar with this problem, it is natural to choose the two assumptions as above, because the length of the side must be between 15 and 16. Or knowing that  $240 = 15 \times 16$  one can also divide the area by the arithmetic mean of 15 and 16 to get the same result:  $240/(15+16)$ . Interestingly, the deficit corresponding to 15 is 15 while the excess to 16 is 16.

### 3 Concluding Remarks

The recently excavated mathematical collection *SSS* has great significance for the history of Chinese mathematics. The compilation of the texts (at least some of the problems) is probably between 383 BCE and 186 BCE, a couple of centuries earlier than the *JZSS*. While *JZSS* was gradually systematized and improved through generations, *SSS* is an original first-hand document written on bamboo strips. The significance of *SSS* can therefore be compared to that of ancient Egyptian papyrus or Babylonian mathematical texts on clay tablets.

The level of sophistication exemplified in the *SSS* is generally lower than that of the *JZSS*. Mathematical problems are presented in question and answer form, as in the *JZSS*, but are not classified according to the methods used to solve them. Certain similarities between the *SSS* and the *JZSS* are undeniable, yet it seems unlikely that the *JZSS* evolved from the *SSS*. It is possible that the compilers of both texts had access to other even earlier sources in common.

Until other earlier mathematical writings in Chinese are to be found, the *JZSS* will still remain the most important and influential Chinese mathematical classic. It is worth investigating any parallels between the *SSS* and *JZSS* as well as between *SSS* and Babylonian or Egyptian mathematics.

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UDK: 16(510)

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## New Investigations in the School of Names<sup>1</sup>

WANG Zuoli\*

### Abstract:

Studies of names and argumentation from the pre-Qin period represent a precious inheritance left behind by ancient Chinese thinkers. As one of the schools from the pre-Qin period, nomenalism made a great contribution to the study of names. Modern research on nomenalism has been greatly affected by the Han Dynasty historians. However, their introduction to the school is vague. In respect to nomenalism, there are some unsolved problems that still need to be clarified and have not been noticed by many scholars. The present thesis analyses the characteristics and functions of nomenalism; it discusses the relations between nomenalists and sophists and epitomises their contributions to the study of names.

**Key Words:** nomenalism; school of names, the sophists, the study of names

In the pre-Qin period, a school that would be called “Nomenalist” (*Ming jia* 名家) did not exist. Originally “nomenalism” was used by the scholars of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C – 220). Sima Tan 司馬談 was the first person to use this phrase to indicate the pre-Qin school, and regarded it equally important to Confucianism, Daoism, Moism, legalism etc. The practice of Sima Tan was adopted by his successors, and is still used today. Nowadays, nomenalism is generally regarded as an independent school of the pre-Qin period in the research of the history of Chinese philosophy and Chinese logic. However, compared with other pre-Qin schools, nomenalism is rather peculiar.

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<sup>1</sup> The present article is a slightly changed version of a previously published article in 2005 titled “An Analysis of the pre-Qin Nomenalism.” in *Asian and African Studies* 9(2): 125–144.

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Firstly, Confucianism, Moism, Daoism and legalism all had their distinctive political or ethic stands. Deng Xi 鄧析, Hui Shi 惠施 and Gongsun Long 公孫龍, are usually taken as the main representatives of the nomenalist school. From the records found on these three men in the pre-Qin books, we learn that they did not have any common political or ethical thought which would differ from that of all other schools.

Secondly, it seems that the nomenalists had no specific research subject. Deng Xi, Hui Shi and Gongsun Long had only one thing in common, and that was that they were all famous for being good in argumentation. However, being good at argumentation is not an adequate reason for confirming a separate school, for there were also many members from other schools that were good at argumentation. Deng Xi compiled the first Chinese legislation, which was called the “bamboo law” (竹刑), while Hui Shi interpreted various natural phenomena (遍爲萬物說). Gongsun Long argued about unusual topics such as “Hardness and Whiteness” (堅白) or “White Horses” (白馬). There are remarkable differences among their interests and thoughts, from which we cannot summarise a single common subject. If a “school” has no particular political or ethical thought, nor a common research subject, it is questionable whether it can be regarded as an independent school.

Is “nomenalism” really one of the schools of the pre-Qin period? If it is, then who are the representatives of the school? And what are its principles? In the continuation I will try to offer an answer to these questions.

## **1 What is Nomenalism**

In the pre-Qin period, Confucianism and Moism were famous, and they were already commonly regarded as philosophic schools, while most other schools were labelled as such by later historians of the Han dynasty, who arranged and classified the academic thought of the pre-Qin period. Due to the different methods of classification and due to the various perspectives, the results of their research also differed. For example, Sima Tan divided the pre-Qin thought into 6 schools, while Ban Gu divided them into 10. The term “nomenalism” was firstly

used by the Hans<sup>2</sup>, so it is only natural to begin our research by discussing their works. Let us start with a look of Sima Tan's opinion.

名家使人儉而善失真；然其正名實，不可不察也....名家苛察繳繞，使人不得反其意，專決於名而失人情，故曰‘使人儉而善失真’。若夫控名責實，參伍不失，此不可不察也。

Nomenalists made people watch their words but also made it easy for them to stray away from the truth. However, their theories of correct names and actualities should not be neglected. .... Nomenalists were excessively critical and often beat about the bush (when debating with others); they made others unable to oppose their opinions. They were focused merely upon the names and neglected the human sensibilities. That is why I said they “made people watch their words but also made it easy for them to stray away from the truth”. Nomenalism advocated that the process of rectifying names should ascertain actualities (*shi* 實)<sup>3</sup> according to names in order to avoid mistakes in comparing names and actualities with each other. This (contribution) should not be neglected. (Sima 1997: 915)

On the other hand, Ban Gu described them in the following way:

名家者流，蓋出於禮官。古者名位不同，禮亦異數。孔子曰：‘必也正名乎。名不正則言不順，言不順則事不成。’此其所長也。及警者爲之，則苟鉤鈇析亂而已。

Nomenalists probably originated from officials who administrated ceremonies. In ancient times, there were various titles and ranks, and ceremonies varied accordingly. Confucius said: “It is necessary to rectify names. If the names are not correct, then speeches will not run smoothly. If speeches do not run smoothly, then jobs will not be done successively”. This was their important contribution. When fastidious people did it, they only analysed wordy disorders. (Ban 1993: 771)

As we can see, the descriptions of nomenalism given by Sima Tan and Ban Gu differ from each other. Sima Tan thought nomenalist theories were mostly about tactics of governing a country just like those of the other philosophic schools of the pre-Qin period, whereas Ban Gu seems to think that the development of nomenalism should be divided into two stages. In the first stage, its concern was

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<sup>2</sup> Here, this term refers to the people of the Han dynasty.

<sup>3</sup> Here, the Chinese character 實 is not translated with “reality”, because I want to make it clear that the character 實 can be used to refer not only to things in the natural world but also to things in human society, such as rank, duty, ceremony, law, etc. These two notions are completely different. The first cannot be adjusted according to names, whereas the second can.

focused on politics and ethics. The names it rectified were those of social ranks. However, in the second stage the school was only a group of fastidious people. They no longer cared about the political or ethical significance of rectifying names and were merely indulged in the analysis process.

The opinion, according to which the representatives of the nomenalist school were only “focused upon names and neglected human sensibilities” (專決於名而失人情) was based upon an abstract discussion of the relationship between names and reality. This discussion already departed from the discussions on political and ethical problems of the time. Most theories of the period were related to political and ethical problems. However, this does not mean that all theories from the pre-Qin era dealt with the tactics of ruling a country. Due to his understanding of the pre-Qin philosophy, which was profoundly influenced by his social and cultural backgrounds, Sima Tan viewed the nomenalist theories as tactics of ruling a country, which is quite understandable. However, we do not need to take Sima Tan’s view as a basis and regard the nomenalist theories as a system of ideas that directly served the politics of the time.

Ban Gu’s statements can probably be understood as a viewpoint, according to which the nomenalist ideas sprang out from the Confucius’ theory of rectifying names in order to rectify politics. But the true nomenalists (in the late period of Warring States) were only a group of fastidious people. According to him, they betrayed the original aim of the school and focused their attention upon the analysis of language. Ban Gu’s statement about nomenalists “probably originating from officials administrating ceremonies” should not be taken too seriously. In Ban Gu’s opinion, the nine schools (九流) of the pre-Qin period all originated from the officials of special duties in ancient times. Perhaps he reached his conclusion using certain sources that were known to him but are unknown or merely arbitrarily known to us. It is most probable that this is the case. We are not obliged to take Ban Gu’s statements as the evidence of the origin of nomenalism.

However, Sima Tan’s and Ban Gu’s statements about nomenalism also have certain things in common. Firstly, the content of the theory of nomenalism is about rectifying names (i.e. rectifying names and actualities or rectifying names and social ranks). Secondly, the methods used by the school are those of detailed examination and careful analysis. Thirdly, nomenalism focused especially on language. I will take these three points as the main characteristics of nomenalism and base the following analysis of the school upon them.

## 2 Who Were Nomenalists?

Sima Tan regarded nomenalism as one of the six schools in the pre-Qin period, but he did not point out the individuals who belonged to the school. In his encyclopedia *Han Shu's Yi Wen Zhi* 漢書·藝文志, Ban Gu listed seven names from the school: Deng Xi 鄧析, Yin Wen 尹文, Gongsun Long 公孫龍, Cheng Shenggong 成生公, Hui Shi 惠施, Huang Gong 黃公 and Mao Gong 毛公. There are no records on Cheng Shenggong, Huang Gong and Mao Gong in the ancient books, so their writings must have been lost. We have no references and hence no knowledge about them, so we have no way of truly knowing whether they were members of the nomenalist school. The *Yiwen* chapter in the encyclopaedia *Han Shu* stated, that

尹文子一篇. 說齊宣王, 先公孫龍.

Yin Wenzi is composed of one piece of writing. Yin Wen once gave advice to Qi Xuan Wang and was prior to Gongsun Long. (Ban 1993: 771)

The above-mentioned composition in *Yin Wenzi* has been lost. In today's edition of *Yin Wenzi* there are two compositions, i.e. *Da dao shang* 大道上 and *Da dao xia* 大道下. The content of the two compositions is miscellaneous and the language they use is simple to understand. It is very unlikely that they are from the pre-Qin period, thus today's edition of *Yin Wenzi* is generally considered to be a fake. It is thus not qualified to be the basis of researching the thought of Yin Wen. In the chapter *Zheng Ming* 正名 in Lü Buwei's work *Lü shi chun qiu* 呂氏春秋, there is a record of Yin Wen discussing scholars (*shi* 士) with the king Qi Min Wang 齊湣王. From the record we learn that Yin Wen was eloquent and good at detailed analysis. In addition, according to *Gongsun Longzi's* 公孫龍子 essay *Ji Fu* 迹府, when debating with Kong Chuan 孔穿, Gongsun Long cited the event of Yin Wen discussing Shi with Qi Wang 齊王. This is probably why Yin Wen was regarded as being “prior to Gongsun Long” and was listed as a member of the nomenalist school in the *Han Shu* encyclopedia. However, Song Xing 宋鉞 listed him under the *School of Tiny Proverbs* (*Xiao shuo jia* 小說家).

According to him, Yin Wen 尹文, Song Xing 宋鉞, Peng Meng 彭蒙, Tian Pian 田駢 and Shen Dao 慎道 all studied together in the academic palace of Ji Xia 稷下學宮, which was located in the State of Qi 齊國. In the chapter *Tian Xia* 天

下 of the book *Zhuangzi* 莊子, we can find a passage, in which Yin Wen and Song Xing are mentioned simultaneously. Nowadays, most researchers think that Song Xing and Yin Wen represent members of one of the three sub-schools of Huang Lao at Ji Xia (稷下黃老三派) and that the sub-school represented by Song Xing and Yin Wen mingled the thoughts of Daoism, Moism and legalism. In this event, Yin Wen cannot be noted as a member of nomenalism.

Most contemporary researchers of the pre-Qin studies of names and arguments (名辯學) are of the opinion that nomenalism is represented by Deng Xi, Hui Shi and Gongsun Long. The basis for such a viewpoint can also be found in the *Yi Wen zhi* chapter of the *Han Shu* encyclopedia. Here, these three philosophers were defined as representatives of the nomenalist school. From the analysis of other texts that mention Yin Wen, it can be concluded that if someone is regarded as a member of a certain school by the *Han Shu* encyclopedia, this is not a reliable evidence that a certain person is indeed a member of the school. Which one of them – Deng Xi, Hui Shi or Gongsun Long – was truly a member of the nomenalist school? In order to answer this question, we need to make a broader analysis.

Deng Xi, who was a contemporary of Confucius and lived in the late period of Spring and Autumn (770–476 B.C.), originated from the state Zheng 鄭. Today's edition of *Deng Xizi* 鄧析子 includes two pieces of writing, *Wu Hou* 無厚 and *Zhuan Ci* 轉辭. Most researchers regard it to be a fake, thus it cannot be used as a basis for our study. There are two reasons why Deng Xi is regarded to be a member of the nomenalist school. Firstly, Deng Xi established the *Theory of two possibilities* 操兩可之說 and secondly, he liked making strange arguments and playing with unusual statements (好治怪說, 玩琦辭). I will try to analyse whether these two points can be used as evidence that Deng Xi belonged to the nomenalist school. In Lü Buwei's book *Lü shi Chunqiu* we can find the following statement:

洧水甚大. 鄭之富人有溺者. 人得其死者. 富人請贖之. 其人求金甚多. 以告鄧析. 鄧析曰: '安之, 人必莫之賣矣.' 得死者患之, 以告鄧析. 鄧析又答之曰: '安之, 此必無所買矣.'

When the Wei river flooded, a rich person from the state of Zheng drowned. Someone found the remains. The rich person's relative wanted to buy the remains from him, but he demanded too much money. The relative told this to

Deng Xi and Deng Xi said: “Take it easy. He cannot sell the remains to others.” The person who got the remains was anxious and told the story to Deng Xi. Deng Xi said: “Take it easy. He cannot buy the remains elsewhere.” (Lü 1989: 157)

This is an example of Deng Xi’s *Theory of two possibilities*, based upon double fitting expositions. This method consists of taking different standpoints that result in different conclusions. As a technique of argumentation, Deng Xi’s double fitting expositions exerted great influence on the sophists of the late Warring States period. However, this is not necessarily related to linguistic analysis and it cannot be considered as evidence that Deng Xi belonged to the nomenalist school. Su Qin 蘇秦 and Zhang Yi 張儀 were also both skilled at making double fitting expositions, yet no one considers them to be members of the nomenalist school.

Xun Kuang 荀況 always mentioned Deng Xi and Hui Shi in the same breath, and criticised them for making strange arguments and playing with unusual statements. But Xun Kuang’s simultaneous mentioning of Deng Xi and Hui Shi cannot prove that Deng Xi belonged to the nomenalist school, for whether Hui Shi belonged to it or not is still questionable. Neither can Xun Kuang’s statements prove that Hui Shi’s thought was inherited from Deng Xi, because all the books by Deng Xi and Hui Shi have been lost and the ancient books that remain available do not provide enough material for us to know their thought in detail. Qian Mu 錢穆 analysed Xu Kuang’s statements on Deng Xi and Hui Shi and wrote:

雲惠施鄧析，猶雲陳仲史鱗，大禹墨翟，神農許行，黃帝老子。其一人爲並世所實有，別一人則托古以爲影射。

To say Hui Shi and Deng Xi is like saying Chen Zhong and Shi Qiu, Da Yu and Mo Di, Shen Nong and Xu Xing or Huang Di and Lao Zi. In every single one of these parallelisms, one person lived in the respective period, while the other person, mentioned together with the first one, was taken from the ancient times and was mentioned as a model. (Qian 1985: 19)

Deng Xi lived about two hundred years before Hui Shi. I think Qian Mu’s analysis is convincing. According to him, Xun Kuang’s mentioning of Deng Xi only serves as a model. Living in the late Spring-Autumn period, when travelling in order to study and find arguments was not yet popular, Deng Xi perhaps never heard of the topics that the sophists argued about. However, we have no evidence to prove this. Deng Xi liked creating strange arguments and playing with unusual statements. Even though this was the case, we can at most say that he was a sophist, rather

than a member of the nomenalist school. I will discuss the relationship between the sophists and the nomenalists later. So far we have no real reason to connect Deng Xi with nomenalism.

According to the records of the classical books from the pre-Qin period, Deng Xi once compiled a law, which was called “Bamboo Law”. The Zheng rulers adopted the law, but killed Deng Xi later. Deng Xi also helped other people with their lawsuits in return for rewards. Qian Mu wrote:

今鄧析，其爲人賢否不可知，其竹刑之詳亦不可考。要之與鞅起異行同趣，亦當時貴族平民勢力消長中一才士也。

Whether Deng Xi was an able and virtuous person is not known, nor are the details of his Bamboo Law. In principle, his behaviour was different from that of Yang and Qi, but their interests were the same. Deng Xi was also a talent in the power vicissitude of the aristocracy and common people. (Qian 1985: 19)

*Yang* and *Qi* refer to Shang Yang 商鞅 and Wu Qi 吳起, who changed the laws of the *Qin* 秦國 and *Chu* states 楚國 respectively. I think Qian Mu’s comment on Deng Xi is accurate. In the late Spring-Autumn period, i.e. on the threshold of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the society was unstable. Deng Xi wanted to change the political system with the use of law, and should thus be regarded as a pioneer of legalism rather than a member of nomenalism.

Hui Shi, a man from the Song state, who lived in the period of Warring States (475–221 BC), was a close friend of Zhuang Zhou. At a certain stage he also served as the Prime Minister of the Wei state 魏國 and was known for being good at argumentation. According to *Han Shu’s Yi Wen Zhi*, *Hui Zi* consisted of one composition, which had been lost. We can only obtain a spot of knowledge about him from the classical books of the pre-Qin period.

In the chapter *Jie Bi* 解 of his book, *Xunzi* 荀子 described him in the following way:

惠子蔽於辭而不知實。

Huizi was blinded by words and did not know reality. (*Zhuizi jicheng* I 1999: 198)

From the comment of Xun Kuang, we know that Hui Shi emphasised language analysis, which is one of the characteristics of the school of nomenalism. But to



make sure that Hui Shi is a representative of nomenalism, we need to know whether he took the rectification of names or the relationship between names and reality as his main subject of research.

Xun Zi's *Bu Gou* 不苟 said that Hui Shi and Deng Xi can argue about strange and difficult statements. In the chapter *Tian Xia* of the book *Zhuangzi* we can find Hui Shi's ten statements on nature (曆物十事) and twenty-one sophist statements, and Zhuangzi says that

辯者以此與惠施相應，終身無窮。

the sophists argued about them with Hui Shi all their lives. (*Zhuzi jicheng* I 1999: 372)

Because the writings of Hui Shi are lost, we have no clue of how Hui Shi proved and expounded the statements recorded in *Xunzi* and *Zhuangzi*. We also have no clue as to the relationship between the discussion of these statements and the one of rectifying names. Thus, we do not have the evidence to say that Hui Shi was a member of the nomenalist school.

The criticism of Hui Shi recorded in *Xunzi* is written in rather stern terms, sometimes even in abusive language. Comparatively, because of the friendship between Hui Shi and Zhuang Zhou, perhaps Zhuangzi's comment on Hui Shi is more suggestive. In the chapter *Tian xia* of his book we can read the following:

南方有倚人焉，曰黃繚。問天地所以不墜不陷，風雨雷霆之故。惠施不辭而應，不慮而對。

A man from the south, named Huang Liao, asked about why the sky does not fall and the earth does not sink, about the causes of wind, rain, thunder and lightning. Hui Shi answered with no hesitation and did not need to ponder on his own words and thoughts. (*Zhuzi jicheng* I 1999: 372)

He also comments, that Hui Shi has:

遍為萬物說，說而不休，猶以為寡，益之以怪，以反人為實，而欲以勝人為名，弱于德，強於物，其塗隴矣。

made theories about all things on earth, argued endlessly, still felt that this was not enough, added something to make his theory strange, took opinions opposing each other as truth, wanted to win reputation by defeating his

opponent, his theories were weak at virtue, strong at natural things. These were where he muddled. (*Zhuzi jicheng* I 1999: 372)

From *Zhuangzi*, we can conclude that Hui Shi was keen to study and discuss various natural phenomena. He might not have studied the problem of rectifying names. Even though he had studied the problem, it did not have much importance in his theory. Due to the above-mentioned reason, we should not view Hui Shi as a member of the nomenalist school.

Gongsun Long, a man who came from the Zhao state 趙國, also lived in the late period of the Warring States and was once a retainer (門客) of Ping Yuanjun 平原君. According to the chapter *Yi Wen Zhi*, in the encyclopedia *Han Shu*, his main work, *Gongsun Longzi*, is composed of 14 volumes. Today's edition of *Gongsun Longzi* consists of only 6 pieces, which are *Ji Fu* 迹府, *Bai ma lun* 白馬論, *Zhi wu lun* 指物論, *Tong bian lun* 通變論, *Jian bai lun* 堅白論 and *Ming shi lun* 名實論. Among them, *Ji Fu* was written by his successors while the remaining 5 essays can be considered as the writings of Gongsun Long.<sup>4</sup> We use these 5 essays as a basis for studying Gongsun Long's thought.

The chapter *Min shi lun* was arranged at the end of *Gongsun Longzi*. Pang Pu 龐樸 thinks that:

Ming Shi Lun is the preface to the book. It offers definitions to some basic categories, suggests the principle of rectifying names, and constitutes a theoretical system with other essays. People in the Qin and Han periods preferred to put prefaces at the ends of books, therefore Ming Shi Lun is also arranged in such a manner. (Pang 1979: 47)

I agree with Pang Pu's analysis. *Ming shi lun*, mainly discussing the relationship between names and reality and the problem of rectifying names, is the kernel of the whole book. The discussions in the remaining four essays are all closely related to the theory of rectifying names. These five essays of *Gongsun Longzi* constitute a complete theory of names. From the viewpoint of the philosophy of language, the theory of Gongsun Long is a theory of meaning. Since this is not the topic of the essay, I will not discuss it here. Gongsun Long put rectifying names at the centre of his theory and, during his study, paid great attention to the analysis of language. His theory is not directly related to the social or ethical problems of his

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<sup>4</sup> Today's edition of *Gong Sun Long Zi* was probably re-edited during the period of the Jin dynasty (晉代) (317–420).

time. We can conclude that Gongsun Long deserves to be a representative of nomenalism.

Among the “members” of the nomenalist school listed in the *Yi wen zhi* chapter of the *Han Shu* encyclopedia, Gongsun Long is the only undoubted member of the school.

### 3 Nomenalism and the Sophists

The “nomenalist school” (*ming jia* 名家) was often confused with the “sophists” (*bianzhe* 辯者). Many people think that a member of the nomenalist school is a sophist and that every sophist is most certainly also a nomenalist. In fact, the meanings and the referents of these two names are different. In the Warring State period, many people liked to argue about strange statements. These people were sophists, also called *cha shi* (察士) or *bian shi* (辯士), *ming Jia* (名家), while the nomenalist school refers to a school from the pre-Qin period, or to member(s) of that school. Indeed, all members of the nomenalist school were sophists, but not all the sophists were members of the nomenalist school. At this point, I shall briefly analyse certain social phenomena in order to clarify the relationship between nomenalists and sophists.

In the Warring States period, the kings of different states solicited the able and virtuous men, hoping to make their countries rich and strong and to consolidate their position with the help of these people. The practice of the kings provided opportunities for ordinary people to be promoted. Once appreciated by a king, a common person could get hold of the main power of the state. For example, Shang Yang 商鞅, Su Qin 蘇秦, and Zhang Yi 張儀 were all promoted to a high rank, after getting the appreciation of the kings through lobbying. Under this condition, lobbying became the main means of promotion for learned people. In order to acquire the necessary abilities and knowledge of lobbying, they needed to learn from teachers. Consequently, lobbying and studying with teachers became a kind of fashion. For example, Meng Ke 孟軻 had several hundred students, and even Tian Pian 田駢 had a hundred students. At that time, every slightly famous scholar would have his own students. One of the results of this fashion was that there were a lot of *shi* (士)<sup>5</sup> in the society. These *shi* were knowledgeable, eloquent, but not

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<sup>5</sup> *Shi* refers roughly to educated or especially trained people.

engaged in production. They were lobbying between kings, teaching students or acting as retainers of the aristocrats. Su Qin and Zhang Yi were two outstanding men among them. Their teacher, Gui Guzi 鬼谷子 was also renowned for them. However, people like Su Qin and Zhang Yi were quite rare, for most *Shi* have been forgotten.

In the second half of the Warring States period, it was fashionable for the high-ranking officials and aristocrats to keep retainers. For example, Meng Changjun Tian Wen 孟嘗君田文 from the Qi state 齊國, Ping Yuanjun Zhao Sheng 平原君趙勝 from the Zhao state 趙國, Xin Lingjun Wei Wuji 信陵君魏無忌 from the Wei state 魏國 and Chun Shenjun Huang Xie 春申君黃歇 from the Chu state 楚國 were famous for keeping retainers. Each of them kept about 3000 retainers. Although some of these retainers possessed various kinds of talent and skill, most of them were eloquent and persuasive *shis*.

In the period of the Warring States, the *shis* were very active. To them, lobbying was the ladder to promotion; eloquence was the capital for getting the appreciation of kings, senior officials or aristocrats. This is why argumentation came into fashion. It is in such circumstances that the sophists came into existence.

Xunzi divided sophists into three types:

有小人之辯者，有士君子之辯者，有聖人之辯者。

the trivial ones, the integer ones and the sages. (*Zhuzi jicheng* I 1999: 124)

Those who argued about strange topics, such as “thickness” (無厚), “hard and white” (堅白), or “white horse” (白馬), were trivial sophists (小人之辯者). They regarded argumentation as a way to practice their eloquence and show their talent. Thus, they picked out statements, which were in contrast to common sense and debated them. While debating, they made full use of their ability to devise cunning and tricky plots, and tried to defeat their opponents through various methods. Zhuang Zhou criticised sophists by saying that they:

飾任之心，易人之意，能勝人之口，不能服人之心。

confuse the minds of others, change their meanings, are capable of defeating others in words, but cannot win their hearts. (*Zhuzi jicheng* I 1999: 372)

Zou Yan 鄒衍 criticised sophists by saying that they:

煩文以相假，巧譬以相移，引人之聲使不得及其意。

used complicated language to make use of the meanings of other words, use ingenious figurative speech to shift the meanings of statements, lead away the speeches of other people to make others not able to contact their meaning. (Du 1962: 82)

These criticisms are not unreasonable. The existence of numerous sophists and the emergence of various strange statements supplied sufficient conditions for the appearance of nomenalism.

Amongst sophists, there was no lack of sagacious and knowledgeable scholars. As retainers (or teachers), these scholars needed not to worry about their living, nor to work hard on political affairs. They had the ability and condition to engage in serious academic studies. Arguments conducted them to think about a series of problems related to argumentation. Some of them focused their attention on the relations between names and put forward their theories on names. These people were nomenalists.

They were all sophists, who took part in debates about strange statements and used sophistry sometimes. But they did not invariably use sophistry. Their research on the relationship between names and reality was serious. Their theories were abstract, profound and hard to understand. Their aim of “rectifying names and reality to guide and transform the world” was only a slogan. In fact, their theories were not related to politics and ethics.

#### **4 Nomenalism and the Study of Names**

The nomenalists studied names, but they were not the only philosophical direction to do so. In the pre-Qin period, most of the schools were to some extent concerned with the problem of rectifying names. Even the Daoists, who advocated “effortlessness” (無爲), discussed the problem of names, although their attitude was negative. The studies of names of the schools in pre-Qin period involved many problems, such as rectifying names, the formation of names, the kinds of names, the relations between names and reality and the relations between names and arguments, etc. The thoughts of different schools opposed, influenced and permeated each other. Here I will briefly discuss the main developing threads of

the pre-Qin study of names, and then explain the position of nomenclature in the study of names in the pre-Qin period.

There are three main trends in the development of the study of names in the pre-Qin period. They are: a) rectifying names and status (正名位), b) rectifying legal codes and names (正刑名) and c) rectifying names and reality (正名實).

In the late Spring-Autumn period, the positions of social classes had changed greatly and the duchies fought each other. This led to a social turbulence in ancient China and the dukes (kings of deferent states) acted arbitrarily. Ceremonies and music were abused (used not complying with the old regulations). Common *shis* criticised politics recklessly. The patriarchal clan system of the Zhou dynasty, which was based upon blood relationships was destroyed. Confucius, longing for peace and prosperity of the past Western Zhou dynasty (西周 1066–771 BC) and worshipping its systems, attributed the social instability to the unconformity of names and reality, the instance of which was that kings and courtiers were only titular. Confucius regarded the restoration of *li* 禮 as his major duty and took rectifying names as the first work to rectify politics. The names that Confucius wanted to rectify were those related to social or family positions, such as “king” (君), “courtier” (臣), “father” (父) and “son” (子). Although the scope of Confucius’ discussion of names was limited to politics and ethics, he was the first person to put forth the problem of rectifying names and started the pre-Qin study of names. His thought of rectifying names in order to rectify politics went through the entire pre-Qin study of names and argumentation.

The thought of rectifying legal codes and names (正刑名) came into existence very early, and can probably be traced to Deng Xi. The thought was later adopted and developed by the school of legalism. The difference between Deng Xi and legalism is that Deng Xi was hostile to rulers while legalism gave them power. This is why Deng Xi is not regarded as a member of the school of legalism by the present researchers. Han Fei 韓非, living in the late Warring States period, incorporated legalist theories and established a complete theory of politics, which can be called *The tactics of ruling* or *The art of facing south* 南面術. In Han Fei’s tactics of ruling, rectifying legal codes and names was very important. In the chapter *Er Bing* 二柄 of his main book *Han Feizi* 韓非子, he wrote:

人主將欲禁奸，則審合刑名；刑名者，言與事也。

When a master of the people wants to prohibit deceit, he needs to examine the consistence between legal codes and names. “Legal codes” and “name” refer to what the legal codes say and do (through the people who bear names of official posts). (*Zhuzi jicheng* I 1999: 305)

And in the chapter *Nan Er* 難二, he pointed out:

人主雖使人，必度量准之，以刑名參之；以事遇於法則行，不遇於法則止；功當其言則賞，不當則誅。

Though a master can employ people, he must measure them with norms, examine them with legal codes and names. When a thing is consistent with the law, it should be allowed; when it is inconsistent with the law, it should be forbidden. If an exploit done by a certain person conforms to the words of the legal codes, the person should be rewarded, otherwise he should be punished. (*Zhuzi jicheng* II 1999: 437)

In Han Fei’s opinion, whenever a person has done things that he should not do according to the legal codes, he must be punished, even though he has achieved a certain exploit. Han Fei developed the theory of rectifying legal codes and names to its summit.

The third trend in the development of the pre-Qin study of names is rectifying names and reality. The theories of rectifying names and status and rectifying legal codes and names both directly served the politics. In opposition to them the theory of rectifying names and reality wanted “to examine the account of names and reality” (察名實之理). The names it tried to rectify were not those related to social status or law, but names of material things. Thinkers of the pre-Qin period were all, to a certain extent, concerned with the problems related to language. With the development of the study of names and argument, the theory of rectifying names and reality gradually matured and became an important constituent of the pre-Qin studies of names. Since the end of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), many Chinese scholars have regarded the pre-Qin studies of names as the theory of logic of ancient China. In fact, the theories of names that have been regarded as Chinese ancient logic are those belonging to the study of rectifying names and reality, which is only one of the branches of the studies of names from the pre-Qin period. In the late period of the Warring states, Xun Kuang, the late Moists and nomenalists made the highest achievements in examining the account of names and reality.

Xun Kuang bitterly hated the strange statements. He thought people of noble character should not take part in debates on such statements, but should stop them. However, he could not shut the mouths of others. So, he took the theory of rectifying names as a means to stop the strange statements. He wrote a thesis named *Zheng ming* 正名 in which he discussed the problems of the origin of names, their kinds and functions, principles of their formation, and the relations between names and the argument. He established a complete theory of the study of names.

The thoughts of names from the late Moism period are concentrated in *Mo Bian* 墨辯.<sup>6</sup> The scope of discussion in *Mo Bian* is broad, involving mechanics, optics, geometry, epistemology, ethics, logic, linguistics, etc. With regard to the study of names, *Mo Bian* discussed the problems of the function of names, the relations between names and reality, the types of names, etc., and explained the meanings and use of a number of concrete names. *Mo Bian*'s discussion of names is integrated with its discussion of argumentation. The authors of *Mo Bian* took "examining the account of names and reality" as one of the functions of argumentation, "showing reality with names" as an important means of argumentation. It is evident that the late Moists' study of names is closely related to its study of argumentation.

Compared with the thoughts on names of Xun Kuang and late Moism, the nomenalist study of names has a number of distinguished characteristics. Take Gongsun Long as an example. Late Moists said that "hardness and whiteness were compatible" (堅白盈), while Gongsun Long said that "hardness and whiteness are separated" (堅白離). Late Moists said that "a white horse was a horse" (白馬, 馬也), while Gongsun Long said that a "white horse was not a horse" (白馬非馬). Xun Kuang was concerned as regards the social function of language, while late Moism was concerned as regards the communicating function of language. (See Cui 1997: 210, 322) Unlike Xun Kuang and Late Moism, Gongsun Long studied a series of problems related to the relationship between names and reality and suggested a distinct theory of names. Many people think that Gongsun Long's theory is about logic. If we change the angle and view it from the standpoint of the philosophy of language, the research into the theory of nomenalism will perhaps become more interesting.

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<sup>6</sup> *Mo Bian* refers to six pieces of writing in *Mozi* concerning argument, i.e. *Jing Shang*, *Jing Xia*, *Jing Shuo Shang*, *Jing Shuo Xia*, *Xiao Qu* and *Da Qu*.



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