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INTRODUCTION

The present volume brings together seven articles by scholars from the Czech Republic, Italy, Latvia, and Poland. Some were recently presented at two conferences organized by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation International Sinological Center at Charles University in Prague held to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of its existence. The article by Barbara Bisetto was first presented at a conference organized by Ca'Foscari University in Venice in collaboration with Beijing University, in which Charles University was also involved as a partner to both institutions.

The first four articles deal with translation issues associated with ancient Chinese texts, approaching them from different perspectives and with different further agendas. In doing so, the authors attempt to mediate a better understanding of ancient Chinese culture. The starting point of these explorations is the awareness of the limits of our present knowledge. Contextualized close reading is employed as the main tool for exploring the possibility of translating ancient Chinese culture into our current conceptual frameworks and making better sense of ancient China today.

Lukáš Zádrapa, translator of the complete *Hanfeizi* and *Xunzi* into the Czech language, outlines a vast lexical field of terms within the broadly defined concept of 'norm' in his exploration of the (un)-translatability of ancient Chinese texts. The author dubs this study an "introductory survey," even though it is highly detailed and draws from a vast amount of material. In it he indicates directions for further research, gathers basic material, and outlines a broadly based complex methodology rooted in the methods of cognitive linguistics as well as in classical philology. The author uses rich data from a variety of sources important for the history of Chinese thought and society, which enable him to present a broad picture of the distribution of the "norm-words" under investigation and their different usages in different textual contexts. On this basis he also proposes a tentative typology reflecting different streams of early Chinese thought. In the appendix he provides all relevant ancient Chinese 'norm' terms with a translation and brief explanation.

Kateřina Gajdošová's research adds to the ongoing debate about the nature of "philosophy" in ancient China. She sides with those who have recently challenged the assumption that ancient Chinese thought is "acosmotic" and somehow radically different from Western philosophy. Through close readings of relevant passages in excavated manuscripts she offers a microstudy of cosmological inquiry in early Chinese thought and juxtaposes it with Greek pre-Aristotelian traditions. She demonstrates the analogous points between

early Chinese and Greek thought and in doing so implicitly suggests the possibility of translating between these two cultures.

Questions related to understanding and translating ancient Chinese concepts are also at the core of the second article by Dušan Vávra. His exploration, however, is much narrower; it concentrates on the much discussed first chapter of the *Laozi* and its key concepts. The main argument here is that proper understanding of a concept can be arrived at only by its proper contextualization. This means going beyond the usually adopted framework of a sentence, a chapter, or a book. For Vávra the syncretic nature of the *Laozi* is the point of departure for his inquiry, and he theorizes that given the presumed discursive diversity of the *Laozi*, specific passages have to be interpreted in relation to different discourse traditions presented in a variety of other ancient texts. Thus, he aligns the passage under discussion with the *Guanzi* and the *Hanfeizi*, and through comparison he arrives at a possible innovative understanding of the meaning of the key concepts in this chapter. He also critically examines existing translations and eventually proposes his own English version of this proverbially enigmatic text.

Marcin Jacoby also proposes innovative translations of the word *yuyan* 寓言, which is both an ancient term encountered in the *Zhuangzi* and a concept that emerged in modern Chinese literary history. Jacoby approaches Chinese *yuyan* from a comparative perspective and uses Ruben Zimmermann's study of the parables of Jesus as his point of reference. By examining the contents and function of *yuyan*-type narratives in early Chinese philosophical texts within this framework, the author proposes that a more suitable translation of this term is "parable" instead of the more common "fable." A closer look at the "parables" in the *Zhuangzi* follows, in which their content, the embedding of *yuyan* in wider literary structures, and the systematic construction of the central persona of the presumed author, Zhuangzi, are all analyzed. This study reveals the book's literary and philosophical achievements.

These four probes into ancient Chinese philosophy, each with a relatively well-developed comparative dimension, are followed by two articles addressing the phenomenon of translation within Chinese language and culture itself. Barbara Bisetto explores a fourteenth-century explicatory commentary on the poetry of eighth-century poet Du Fu as a case of intralingual translation. She places her discussion informed by general theories of intralingual translation within the context of the Chinese commentarial tradition. Examining in detail the commentaries that explain the meaning of Du Fu's "Qiu xing ba shou 秋興八首" or "Autumn Meditations" cycle, she observes two main tendencies: either a direct explanation with mainly pedagogical aims, or a kind of translation of the poetic original into prose, where also new literary preoccupations are involved. In the end, she also assesses the impact of these tendencies on the way they make the original understood.

Frank Kraushaar's article discusses a recent Taiwanese film adaptation of a medieval Chinese story about the female assassin Nie Yingniang 聶隱娘. The author offers a new interpretation of the film informed by intimate knowledge of the original story (or rather stories, because the film adopts motifs and themes from at least two sources) and its historical background. Unlike Barbara Bisetto, Frank Kraushaar does not ponder theoretical translation issues, although his comparative reading of the source texts and the film in fact also presents a special type of translation that is made within the same language

space between different artistic forms and much more distant moments in time than the commentaries in Bisetto's article.

The last contribution to this volume by Ondřej Klimeš turns to contemporary China and explores the cultural soft power of the People's Republic of China and its national image-building project. The author engages in a close reading of Chinese texts as the basis for further analysis. Working mainly with official sources from the period of Xi Jinping's leadership, the author presents the rationale, values, and instruments of China's cultural soft power strategy. He details how the explicit subordination of culture to political goals has so far undermined the CPC's efforts to present China as a major cultural power.

In the addendum to this volume an article by Leo Ou-fan Lee dedicated to Jaroslav Průšek is included, in which the author offers a rereading of groundbreaking research on modern Chinese literature by Jaroslav Průšek whose theoretical insights have made profound impact on the discipline and have remained a constant source of inspiration for Chinese literature studies. This essay is based on the author's presentation during a gathering in Prague organized by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation International Sinological Center to commemorate Jaroslav Průšek's anniversary in 2016.

Olga Lomová

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STRUCTURAL METAPHOR AT THE HEART OF UNTRANSLATABILITY IN ANCIENT CHINESE AND ANCIENT CHINESE TEXTS: A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE CASE OF THE LEXICAL FIELD OF 'NORM'

LUKÁŠ ZÁDRAPA

ABSTRACT

The article is an initial complex study of the lexical field NORM in Ancient Chinese with focus on the classical (Warring States) period. It attempts to bring together as many terms with the meaning 'norm, standard, rule' as possible, classify them according to their origin and conceptual background and describe them from various perspectives, including the etymological and metaphorical one. A brief comparative glimpse on the state of affairs in Ancient Greek and Latin is offered at the end of the text, and further directions of research are suggested.

Keywords: Ancient Chinese; lexicology; lexical field; normativity; comparative study

Introduction

It is not uncommonly asserted that virtually any utterance or expression in one language can be expressed in another language, although it may be at the expense of elegance, brevity, or pregnancy. Although this claim may be true of isolated sentences or utterances of basic everyday communication, when we focus on discourse, the linguistic conceptualization of important social and cultural domains, and the networks of structural relations between lexical units matters become more complicated. When translating an Ancient Chinese text, one can rely on various means to convey its original sense, including, for example, footnotes, yet there is one phenomenon that seems, at least to me, to confound even the best of translators – namely structural, or, more broadly, conceptual metaphors. Succinctly put, the translator is often forced to choose either the literal or the figurative meaning of a given word in an Ancient Chinese text, and the words in the target language employed to render the literal and figurative meanings are often different and unrelated. Thus, the reader of a translation is deprived of knowing that what appear to be completely different words, though with related meanings (this relatedness being usually far from self-evident), are in fact just different meanings or even semantic nuances of one single word in the source language. Although this consequence may seem trivial, it is the main cause of the relative untranslatability of discourses because they are built upon conceptual systems shared by the speakers of a given language.

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Although the terms *conceptual metaphor* and *structural metaphor* (actually a type of conceptual metaphor) were introduced by Lakoff and Johnson in their 1980 seminal work and since then elaborated within several strains of cognitive linguistics, the role of figurative extensions (metaphor and metonymy) had been well known long before, both in structuralist lexical semantics and classical philology.[1] This study is not crucially dependent on any particular theoretical model, but it loosely refers to the discourse on conceptual metaphor and metonymy among cognitive linguists, as it provides the most up-to-date, and terminologically convenient account of the conceptual metaphor, and also extends into non-linguistic disciplines. Moreover, this cognitive perspective deservingly emphasizes the cognitive dimension of human language and its use and addresses the issue of conceptualizing reality, which is of primary importance for us who aim to capture the structural asymmetries between Ancient Chinese and European languages.

On the basis of my own experience, both with reading and translating pre-imperial Chinese texts, I have decided to demonstrate the role conceptual metaphor plays in language and culture in general, as well as, quite naturally, in the rendering of some key structural elements of these texts untranslatable into other languages and cultures by examining the vast array of terms subsumed under the lexical field of NORM.[2] Indeed, one is astonished how rich the Ancient Chinese lexicon in this domain is, and this extravagant abundance will be exposed below. Of course, modern English and other modern European languages in general, as well as Latin and Ancient Greek, do possess a certain array of norm words, such as *norm*, *law*, *standard*, *rule*, *pattern*, *model*, *order*, *instructions*, and other terms indicating a norm that must be followed, they cannot be compared to Ancient Chinese, where the domain of general words for a norm or standard based on figurative extensions of the many kinds of measuring devices that exist is much richer.[3] Not only is the terminological richness in this domain impressive, but the very topic of norms was one of the most popular in ancient writing; words relating to it can be found in all types of texts irrespective of the strain of thought they represent, from the earliest times up to the end of the Warring States period.

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1 An immense body of literature examining figurative extensions from the perspective of lexicology and theory exists. Modern linguistic descriptions of these phenomena in Ancient Chinese can be found in monographs on lexicology or lexicological semantics in that language, e.g., Zhào Kèqín 1995, Jiǎng Shàoyú 2005, or Zhāng Liánróng 2000. Of course, this topic is quite popular and has also been dealt with in innumerable articles typically focusing on case studies.

2 Surprisingly, little attention has been given to studying the Ancient Chinese lexicon systematically as a reflexion of the conceptual system of Ancient Chinese. In the West, Christoph Harbsmeier has worked most on this issue; he has been investigating several specific concepts, frequently from a comparative perspective, for years and, with the assistance of many distinguished scholars, has been creating the Thesaurus Linguae Sericae database intended to facilitate precisely this kind of analysis and record its results (cf. Harbsmeier 1999, 2003, 2010, or 2015). A similar approach, but one with more emphasis on etymology and palaeography, can be found in Behr's studies (cf. 2009 or 2015). As far as recent publications are concerned, cf. also, e.g., Schwermann 2011, Goldin 2008, 2011, Ames 2011, von Falkenhausen 1996, or Kern 2001. Earlier papers on selected aspects of ancient Chinese philosophical vocabulary exist, of course; I refer the reader to the extensive literature on the history of Chinese thought for further details. Substantial research on Ancient Chinese normativity has been conducted (cf. Roetz 1994, 2005) and is of relevance for the subject of this article, but cannot be seriously discussed due to limited space.

3 See also De Reu (2010).

I originally intended this article to be a deep-delving and, ideally, comprehensive study on the issue, with most if not all aspects addressed in considerable detail. Although an extensive body of Western scholarship on normativity exists (little of which, however, focuses on linguistic issues, as far as I know),[4] to my knowledge the present study is the first of its type. My initial idea, however, turned out to be completely unrealistic as it would require writing a full-size book. Such a monograph may materialize in the future, but for the time being I have created an introductory survey in which I have gathered basic material and indicated possibilities for further research. In doing so, I rely on extremely robust textual material: I manually selected and examined all occurrences of every norm word adduced in this paper from the corpus of pre-imperial[5] transmitted texts available in the Academia Sinica Tagged Corpus of Old Chinese combined with the Thesaurus Linguae Sericae database; in addition, in order to learn about the state of affairs in early times and to compare it to the *Book of Documents* and *Book of Songs*, I consulted the convenient anthology of bronze inscriptions *Jīnwén jīnyì lèijiǎn* (2003).[6]

Living and dead metaphors

Metaphor and metonymy are involved at different levels of linguistic semantics. These two phenomena are interrelated and the distinction is typically a matter of degree, but two extreme points should be in principle distinguished: a dead metaphor or metonym, surviving secretly only in the etymology of a given word, and a living, fresh metaphor or metonym, which starts, for example, as a simile. An ample array of intermediate stages exists between these two poles, the conceptual metaphor being one of them. This type of metaphor is obviously based on figurative mapping from one conceptual domain onto another. Its character is still recognizable for the speakers of the language, though frequently only after they pay closer attention to it, but, on the other hand, has long become well entrenched, conventionalized, and thus lexicalized. This fading of the figurative effect is, of course, a gradual process. Living rhetorical and conceptual metaphors and metonyms consist in the projection of the more basic meanings of a word into other spheres. If the figurative nature of a certain meaning becomes practically undetectable by the average speaker, it is accessible only through historical semantics. In this study,

[4] The Western literature on normativity is immense (cf. Thomson 2008, Kelsen 1990, Kripke 1982); ideally, it should be taken into account, but once again, this task must be undertaken in future research.

[5] I will not go into the discussion about the authenticity and dating of Ancient Chinese texts. This study is based on an extensive selection of transmitted texts (apart from a few exceptions) that are considered as representative of the preimperial period by relatively conservative scholars (see, e.g., Loewe 1993, Brooks and Brooks 2015, Qū Wànlǐ 1964, 1983), with some overlaps with the Early Han period. The list of texts can be found at the beginning of the appendix along with the abbreviations of the titles used in the overview of the distribution of particular words. The details of dating the texts should not hinder the basic objectives of this study, because at this stage of research I have employed a very coarse-grained diachronic stratification (basically preclassical up to Warring States, Warring States, and Han, i.e., very roughly 1000–450–220–100 BC); in fact, the observations made here may, to a large extent, be read without the diachronic perspective, with the focus more on the texts and their groups, their style, and (tentative) affiliation with a certain strain of thought.

[6] I would like to express my gratitude to both anonymous reviewers, who have greatly contributed to the improvement of my article. Of course, all mistakes that might have been left in the text are exclusively mine.

I focus mainly on concept of the half-dead, half-living conceptual metaphor I mention above partly because it is typical of the Ancient Chinese philosophical discourse, in which reviving and updating partially worn-out metaphors and metonyms, as well as constructing new ones, is extremely popular.

The figurative extension hidden in etymology is typically a matter of the relationship of one word to other words, and, most importantly, to the lexical root the word is derived from. It is the 'literal' or word-formative meaning of the word we are usually interested in, as well as the family of words based on the same root. It is quite common not to conceive of the relationship between the word-formative and actual lexical meaning of a derived word as a figurative extension. Yet I would still say that the word-formative motivation is a kind of conceptualization of one thing on the background of other things, and in this sense belongs to the domain of research on conceptual metaphor, though as a quite special type. Here, I resort to etymologizing largely when the lexical meaning of a word is not obviously based on a figurative extension; in such cases I attempt to discover such possible motivation with the means of historical semantics and etymology. Being aware of the perils of the *etymological fallacy*, I also embrace the view that one should avoid the *etymological fallacy fallacy*, that is, an approach denying any significance of a word's etymology for its synchronic semantics and its understanding by the speakers of the language.[7] On the other hand, if the normative meaning clearly displays a figurative relationship to a more literal meaning of the word, I do not explore the word's etymology, though it naturally does have one (and could be dealt with in a more extensive study).

In any case, the task of ascertaining the etymologies of Ancient Chinese words is seriously hampered by the state of research. In comparison with Indo-European comparative linguistics, Sino-Tibetan comparative linguistics and Chinese etymology are grossly underdeveloped, and, as a consequence, only a minority of Ancient Chinese words has a reliable etymology to date.[8] Only one comprehensive handbook drawing on advanced reconstructions of Old Chinese exists (Schuessler 2007), although the etymologies of many words have been analysed in recent monographs (Sagart 1999, Baxter and Sagart 2014), as well as in quite a few articles by other historical linguists of Chinese. I have chosen to rely on the model of Old Chinese phonology characterized by the six-vowel hypothesis, which has become the standard in the West as represented in Baxter's works (above all, Baxter 1998), and on the reconstruction of Old Chinese morphology as represented by Western scholars such as Axel Schuessler, Laurent Sagart, William Baxter, Zev Handel, Wolfgang Behr, Guillaume Jacques, and Edwin G. Pulleyblank, as well as by a handful of Chinese scholars working in a similar framework, such as Pān Wùyún or Zhèng-Zhāng Shàngfāng. I do, however, occasionally consult older, more conservative

[7] As far as the domain of Ancient Chinese terms in concerned, I refer here specifically to Wolfang Behr's balanced attitude exposed in his study on the key concept of *rén* 仁 (2015: 200). Cf. also a shorter article on the same topic and in the same vein by Mei Tsu-lin (1994), speaking very fittingly about "morphology of ideas".

[8] See, e.g., Handel's summary of the state of the field of Sino-Tibetan comparative linguistics (2008). Modern Chinese etymology is in a sense still in its infancy, though it can draw on a range of valid observations and basic approaches coming from the domain of traditional Chinese philology, especially as represented by the authors of its "golden age" (eighteenth cent.). Although it has been developed somewhat in the twentieth century, it has been partially hindered by the state of reconstruction of Old Chinese pronunciation.

Chinese sources (such as Wáng Lì 1982), including premodern ones, on which modern historical studies Ancient Chinese semantics depend.

Ancient Chinese words in the lexical field of 'norm'

We can open our survey into the Ancient Chinese normative lexicon with a quotation from the *Ěryǎ* or *Approaching towards Correctness* (Ch. *Shìgǔ* 釋詁 or *Explaining the Old Words*), which is considered the oldest extant Chinese "dictionary" or "onomasticon," but is actually a compendium of glosses to the canonical texts, mostly to the *Book of Odes* (possibly third cent. BC or somewhat later[9]):

典、彝、法、則、刑、範、矩、庸、恆、律、戛、職、秩, 常也。
Diǎn, *yí*, *fǎ*, *zé*, *xíng*, *fàn*, *jǔ*, *yōng*, *héng*, *lǜ*, *jiá*, *zhí*, *zhì*[10] mean 'constant (standard)'.

柯、憲、刑、範、辟、律、矩、則, 法也。
Kē, *xiàn*, *xíng*, *fàn*, *bì*, *lǜ*, *jǔ*, *zé*[11] mean 'standard'.[12]

Some of these words are only marginally attested with these meanings, such as *kē* 柯 or *zhí* 職. But in general, all of them are interesting for us because they include words with various etymological and figurative backgrounds, which emerge from the analysis of the material explored in this study. Thus, here we can encounter words connected with constancy (*yí* 彝, *yōng* 庸, *héng* 恆, *cháng* 常, very probably also *diǎn* 典), with measurement and measures (*jǔ* 矩, *lǜ* 律), with moulds and models (*xíng* 型,[13] *fàn* 範), or with order (*zhì* 秩). *Fǎ* 法 and *zé* 則 belong to the commonest terms in this domain, but they do not yield to a satisfactory explanation of their origin, and the source of *jiá* 戛 and *bì* 辟 remains unclear as does that of *xiàn* 憲.[14]

The lexical macrofield under investigation constitutes a complexly structured category, with a core and periphery, radial extensions, and overlaps with other categories, precisely as the cognitive theory of categorization would predict (Lakoff 1987, Langacker 1987). Thus, we have prototypical norm words whose semantic content is concentrated on the very notion of normativity and which simply mean 'norm, rule', but with certain

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[9] For a discussion about the dating see e.g. Coblin 1972 or Carr 1972.

[10] In the reconstructed pronunciation: *[t^{ʂ}ə[r]ʔ, *[l][ə]j, *[p.k]ap, *[ts]^{ʂ}ək, *[ɢ]^{ʂ}eŋ, *[b](r)omʔ, *[k]^{w}(r)aʔ, *loŋ, *[g]^{ʂ}əŋ, *[r]ut, *k^{ʂ}rik, *tək, *lik, *[d]aŋ.

[11] In the reconstructed pronunciation: *[k]^{ʂ}ar, *q^{h}ar-s, *[ɢ]^{ʂ}eŋ, *[b](r)omʔ, *[N]-pek, *[r]ut , *[k]^{w}(r)aʔ, *[ts]^{ʂ}ək.

[12] The word *fǎ* 法 has several meanings, including 'standard', 'model', and 'law', and its semantics has been discussed repeatedly; see Goldin 2011. I chose to employ here the more neutral term *standard*, but different translations are not ruled out either.

[13] For the sake of clarity, I write the word *xíng* 'mould > model' with the normalized modern character 型, except for direct quotations, even though it is usually written simply as 刑 even in transmitted texts (bronze inscriptions usually have just the phonophoric 井 – which, by the way, poses an unpleasant problem for Baxter's reconstruction: 刑 *[ɢ]^{ʂ}eŋ, but 井 *tseŋʔ; Zhèng-Zhāng Shàngfāng's solutions work better here: *geeŋ and *skeŋʔ). It is quite possible, however, that both words are related.

[14] Cf. Schuessler 2007 under the respective entries.

sematic overtones that distinguish these synonyms from each other. Semantic analysis of certain words reveals normativity to be one possible meaning. There are also words in the semantics of which normativity is only one of the components of a varying degree of prominence. It is then not easy to cut off the concepts that already do not belong to our category, but this emerges from the very nature of the category and conceptual categorization in general. There is thus certainly a difference between words like 1. *norm* or *rule*, 2. *pattern (to be followed)*, *(right) method (to be employed)*, 3. *decree*, *order*, or *instruction*, and so forth. In fact, normativity is systematically implied in Ancient Chinese, for example, in *dào* 道 'way, method' > 'the right way to be followed', *xìng* 行 'conduct' > 'proper conduct', or *wàng* 王 'to become the king' > 'to become the true king'; this kind of systematic semantic extension is, after all, a conspicuous feature of the language. When collecting the data for my survey, I tried to capture a broader category of norm words, including words denoting instructions, yet I am aware that determining whether a term implies normativity involves arbitrary decision-making and that, therefore, this category can be defined in many ways.

Quite naturally, words with specific word-formative or figurative backgrounds have different semantic overtones and are woven into different conceptual, discursive, or ideological contexts. It is thus expectable that there may be a correlation between a text or group of texts, or a period of time and the genre favoured for norm words therein. For a better understanding of Ancient Chinese *Begriffsgeschichte*, it would be advisable to trace the diachronic as well as diatextual patterns of distribution of the various types and subtypes of normative terms. Although I roughly outline these patterns in this survey, they deserve much more attention and care than I can afford here, and therefore a more complex statistical analysis and detailed annotation have been left for another occasion.

A tentative typology of norm words in Ancient Chinese

The typology I present below, which is based on the systematization of the data obtained from the corpus, is only a preliminary scheme open to modifications, corrections, or rearrangements. Be that as it may, the main dividing line runs between measurement-derived words and other words, among which the most prominent group is derived from the model-pattern metaphor, which is in a sense the opposite of the measurement-based metaphor. This crucial opposition, as it emerges from the texts, will be discussed below.[15]

[15] The reconstructions for these words, with the exception of the words reconstructed already above, are as follows: 凡 *[b]rom, 式 *l̥ək, 率 *s-rut-s, 理 *m(ə).rəʔ, 文 *mə[n], 章 *taŋ, 經 *k-lˤeŋ, 緯 *[g] ʷə[j]-s, 綱 *kˤaŋ, *jì* 紀 *k(r)əʔ, 維 *ɢʷij (? < *ɢʷuj), 統 *tʰˤuŋ-(s), 貫 *kˤon-s, 軌 *kʷruʔ , 極 *[g](r) ək, 序/敍 *s-m-taʔ, 數 *s-roʔ-s, 倫 *[r]u[n], 類 *[r]u[t]-s, 舊 *N-kʷəʔ-s, *dào* 道 *lˤuʔ-s, 術 *Cə-lut, 程 *l<r>eŋ, 度 *[d]ˤak-s, 揆 *[g]ʷijʔ, 權 *[g]ʷrar, 衡*[g]ˤraŋ, 稱/秤 *mə-tʰəŋ-s, 量 *[r]aŋ-s, 概 *[k]ˤə[t]-s, 準 *turʔ, 規 *kʷe, 繩 *Cə-m.rəŋ, 墨 *C.mˤək, 儀 *ŋ(r)aj, 表 *p(r)awʔ, 臬 *ŋˤet, 正 *teŋ-s, 方 *paŋ, 義 *ŋ(r)aj-s, 節 *tsˤik, 檢 *[k]r[a]mʔ, 稽 *kˤij, 幅*p<r>ək, 令 *riŋ-s, 命 *m-riŋ-s (dialect: *m-r- > *mr-, *-iŋ> *-eŋ), 禁 *kr[ə]m-s, 訓 *l̥u[n]-s (dialect: *l̥- > x-), 的 *[t-l]ˤewk, 質 *[t]<r>ip-s, 禮 *[r]ˤijʔ, 體 *rˤijʔ.

MODEL, such as *xíng* 型 'casting mould > model', *fàn* 範 'bamboo mould > model > rule',[16] *fǎ* 法 'model > law' (possibly related to *fán* 凡 'general pattern'), *shì* 式 'form > model'; *yí* 儀 'measure',[17] *zé* 則 'model, rule' (etymology unclear; Duàn Yùcái [1988: 179] suggests that the original meaning was to 'categorize things' according to what Xǔ Shèn says[18]); less clear: *shuài* 率

STRUCTURE GENERALLY, *lǐ* 理 'structure, order > rule, principle'

SUBTYPES OF STRUCTURE:

PATTERN, such as *wén* 文 '(a type of) pattern'[19] and *zhāng* 章 '(a type) of pattern'
subtype of patterns: prominent linear objects as guidelines: THREAD AND ROPES, such as *jīng* 經 'warp', *wěi* 緯 'weft', *gāng* 綱 'head-rope of fishing net', *jì* 紀 '(main) head of silk thread',[20] *wéi* 維 'rope', *tǒng* 統 'main silk thread', *guàn* 貫 'string'
also: *guǐ* 軌 'tracks', tentatively *jí* 極 'ridgepole'

ORDER, such as *xù* 序/敍 'order', *zhì* 秩 'order'

NUMBER, such as *shù* 數 'number > method'

CATEGORY, such as in *lún* 倫 'category' and *lèi* 類 'category', both > 'rules of conduct'

CONSTANCY, or possibly CONSTANT PATTERNS, such as *yí* 彝, *cháng* 常, *héng* 恆, *diǎn* 典, *yōng* 庸, all meaning, apart from other things, 'constant, usual > constant (pattern > rule)', *jiù* 舊 'old'

WAY, such as *dào* 道 'way', *shù* 術 '(a kind of) way'

MEASUREMENT:

chéng 程 'measure (in general)', *dù* 度 'length measure', *kuí* 揆 'direction measure', *quán* 權 'weight', *héng* 衡 'arm of steelyard > balance', *chèng* 稱/秤 'steelyard', *liàng* 量 'volume measure', *gài* 概 'levelling stick', *zhǔn* 準 'level', *guī* 規 'compass', *jǔ* 矩 'carpenter's square', *shéng* 繩 'carpenter's rope', *mò* 墨 'ink line (for straight sawing)', *lǜ* 律 'tuning pipe', *biǎo* 表 'marking pillar, gnomon',[21] perhaps *niè* 臬 in the sense 'gnomon'

RIGHTNESS, STRAIGHTNESS, such as *zhèng* 正 'upright > norm', perhaps *fāng* 方

PROPRIETY, such as *yì* 義 'social or moral appropriateness'

CONTROL, RESTRICTION, such as *zhì* 制 'control > regulations, system, regime', also of the rather moderating type – *jié* 節 'bamboo joint > restrain(t); rhythm, standard, rules of conduct, moral integrity';[22] possibly also *jiǎn* 檢 'examine, restrain > laws, statutes' and *jī* 稽 'examine; control' (both once in a binome), *fú* 幅 'cloth width (standard) > standard'

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[16] The etymology of *fàn*, written most adequately with the character 笵, is far from certain, but it has been traditionally (since the *Shuōwén jiězì*, s. v.) understood to originally mean a bamboo variant of a mould. There is also the word *xíngfàn* 刑笵/刑范 'mould' attested in *Xúnzǐ* 16.1.1.

[17] However, one of the many meanings of this word is 'measure; measuring device', so there is a connection to another group of words. In any case, these meanings seem to be peripheral and secondary.

[18] Although there exist several hypotheses about it – cf. Boltz 1990 or Takashima 1987.

[19] Cf. von Falkenhausen 1996 or Kern 2001.

[20] The etymology of *jì* is not as straightforward as it might appear; in premodern glosses, it appears as if it originally had a verbal meaning ('to sort/arrange silk'); see Duàn Yùcái 1988: 645. Unger and Behr have argued that is in fact a *k- prefixed version of the word *lǐ* 理 in its original meaning 'to draw boundaries' (see Behr 2005).

[21] 'Marking pillar, marking pole' is a common meaning of the word, 'gnomon' is a less frequent specialization of that meaning (cf. e.g. *Guǎnzǐ* 30.1.4, 35.1.82, *Lǚshì chūnqiū* 2.5.1.1, 15.8.2.1, 25.6.5.1, *Xúnzǐ* 27.2.1, *Zuǒzhuàn* 7.12.2.67).

[22] Cf. Zhāng Liánróng 2000: 204.

DIRECTION, such as *fāng* 方 'direction > method', or straightness 'rectangular, straight, upright > (right) method'?
DECREE, such as *xiàn* 憲 'decree', *lìng* 令 'order', *mìng* 命 'order', *jìn* 禁 'prohibition'
INSTRUCTION, such as *xùn* 訓 'instruct, instruction'
(TARGET, such as *dì* 的 'target', *zhì* 質 'target' [unconventional metaphor])

One could add *lǐ* 禮 ('rites') somewhere to this overview; its etymology, however, is unclear.[23] If forced to do so, I would tentatively put it under *propriety*. Generally, I do not aim at delving deeper into prominent philosophical and long-discussed terms such as *dào* 道, yì 義, *lǐ* 理, *wén* 文, or *lǐ* 禮 (and some others). They have been dealt with extensively and in high detail in the literature on the history of Chinese thought. This study has a different goal and the larger picture plays the dominant role here, in which these terms are merely single items of the same importance as the others.

Etymological notes:

Etymologies worthy of our attention can be found for some of the items above. For example, the secondarily normative term *lǐ* 理 'structure, order, arrangement', reconstructed as *m(ə)-rəʔ by Baxter and Sagart, appears to be related to the verb *chí/zhì* 治 'order/rule' (*lrə, lrə-s), at least according to Sagart 1999 (see also Schuessler 2007 s. v. *zhì* 治), but it is almost surely cognate with the large group of words derived from the root *rə: cf. *lí* 釐 'administer/order' *rə, *shì* 事 'affair/serve' *m-s-rə-ʔ-s, or *s-lrə-s, *shǐ* 使 'deploy/cause' *s-rə-ʔ, *s-rə-s, *lì* 吏 'executive official' *rəʔ-s, *shì* 士 'freeman/official' *n-s-rə-ʔ, and *shì* 仕 'serve in office' *m-s-rə-ʔ. The nature of the relationship between *lrə and *rə in the present Baxter-Sagart system remains a moot point.

Further, the word *xùn* 訓 'instruct, instructed', reconstructed as *ɬun-s, has been long known to belong to the word family including *xún* 循 'follow' Schuessler *slun, Baxter-Sagart sə-lun (which itself is an important verb in the realm of normativity), 順 *shùn* 'conform, obey' *m-lun-s, Baxter-Sagart Cə.lun-s (again a word endowed with an inherent normative moment), as well as *xùn* 馴 'tame' Baxter-Sagart *sə-lun (NB instead of Modern pronunciation *xún*; cf. Zhāng Liánróng 2000: 198).

However, the most revealing are the members of the word family derived from the root *yóu* 由 'follow' *lu, or from different roots very probably somehow (but closely) related to and ultimately cognate with it at least in Proto-Chinese. These expressions constitute an array of salient norm words: *dào* 道 'way' *Cə-lˤuʔ, *shù* 術 'way > method > political technique', Baxter-Sagart *Cə-lut, Sagart *m-lut, *shù* 述 'follow' with the same pronunciation (see Behr 2011: 24–27, who formulated this very promising and actually straightforward etymology; see also Huáng Shùxiān 2009, Wèi Péiquán 2009).[24] Further, there are several words from the *m-lut group: *shuài* 率 'lead' *s-rut-s; *lǜ* 律 'regulation, norm' *rut, Bodman *lut; and *yù* 聿 'follow(ing), then' Schuessler *lut, Baxter-Sagart *m-rut, N-rut. The archaic word *dí* 迪 *lˤuk 'follow; road, reason, plan', characteristic for the *Book of Documents*, might be related as well. Of course, the precise nature of the

[23] It seems, however, to be cognate with *tǐ* 體 'structure, body'.
[24] There are many more studies on various aspects of this prominent lexical field, and especially, as one would expect, on the semantic development of *dào* – cf. at least Wú Dān 2013, Liáng Yīqún 2012, Guō Jīngyún 2009, Bāo Zhìmíng 2008, Páng Pú 1994, or Sūn Xīguó 1992.

l-/r- distinction must be first determined: different reconstruction systems and their subsequent versions indicate l- and r- almost randomly in some cases (cf. also Schuessler 2015), and thus I can maintain that these words based on *-rut- and *-lut- according to the above-mentioned reconstructions pertain to the identical root. The alternation -u(ʔ)/-ut is of a more serious nature. These codas are clearly distinguished in all modern reconstructions of Old Chinese and there is no productive morphological process of t-suffixation posited for the Old Chinese period by Sagart and his followers. However, Schuessler (2007: 70) describes the Proto-Sino-Tibetan to Proto-Chinese suffix **-t, which would be relevant in this case, even though its precise function in *lut/*rut, and thus the mutual relationship between *lu and *lut/*rut remains to be seen. The same is true of *dí*; however, even Schuessler lists it under *yóu* (for the pre–Old Chinese suffix **-k, cf. Schuessler 2007: 68).

A proper abundance: the disyllabic normative lexicon

The monosyllabic words presented above, though already quite an impressive set, constitute only a smaller part of the whole normative lexicon under investigation; in fact, most of them occur more often as the building blocks of disyllabic compounds, the abundance of which is truly amazing. One quick look at the list in the appendix will tell much.

There are two basic types of compounds – coordinate and subordinate (Packard 1998: 12–15, Zádrapa 2017a). They are not, however, of equal value and significance. Coordinate compounds consist of two (exceptionally three) synonyms or words of the same category, the inherent semantic differences between which are neutralized and the meaning of the entire compound becomes generalized.[25] Most, if not all, of these compounds have the basic abstract meaning 'norms/standards (of all kinds)', although the meanings of the original components may survive and imbue a specific semantic overtone, as I argue in this paper. Thus, the disyllabic word *yíbiǎo* 儀表, composed of the words 'model, standard' and 'marking pillar, gnomon', both with a well-established figurative meaning of 'standard, norm' when occurring on their own, simply means 'norms, standards (in general)'. Coordinate compounds are also relatively easily identified as single unitary words, primarily because of their semantics.

Subordinate compounds, on the other hand, tend to retain the meaning of their components and the distinction between them and the usual attributive syntagmas are often elusive. In the expression *xiāndiǎn* 先典, consisting of the adjective 'former' and the noun 'standard', the modifier *xiān* could be considered a syntactic element (for more information on this type of compound, see Wǔ Zōngwén 2001: 264–295; for more on the difficulties of identifying compounds, see Wǔ Zōngwén 2001: 71–147). If the compound has the structure *noun + norm word*, where the first noun is in the genitive case, it is very close to a syntagma; such constructions usually mean something like 'the standards/rules of/for N', and one can certainly expand along these lines almost freely. Thus we have *wùlǐ* 物理 'rules of (all) phenomena' < 'thing' + 'structure, pattern > order (> principle) > rules',

[25] There are hundreds of such compounds recorded in the Thesaurus Linguae Sericae database, typically with the gloss 'N of all kinds'.

but also *shìlǐ* 事理 'rules of affairs' < 'affair' + 'structure, pattern > order (> principle) > rules', and several others of this type; the possibility of further formations is, in principle, open. As far as adjectival modifiers are concerned, we frequently encounter semantically near-empty words, such as *dà* 大 'great', which just underlines the importance of the norm; we also have such modifiers as *jiù* 舊 'old', *xiān* 先 'former', or *cháng* 常 'constant', which combine easily with the nouns because norms are typically construed as constant and often as inherited from the past, and some of the norm words are directly anchored in the conceptual domain of constancy.[26] Numerals are another popular modifier, either real (though often symbolic) or near-empty, indicating merely plurality or even totality – usually *bǎi* 百 'hundred'; while instances of the latter type may be considered compounds, those of the former type may be better seen as syntactic phrases, although they are tagged as words in the Academia Sinica corpus.

Disyllabic compounds are typical of the Warring States texts and their distribution will be discussed below.

Metaphors kept alive and revived

A considerable amount of passages in Warring States texts reveal, right before our eyes, the metaphorical momentum of norm words, which could have been hidden from us because of the lexicalization and fading out of the original figuration. They are invaluable for re-enacting – in a much neater manner – the original mental process that eventually led to setting up the mapping from one conceptual domain to another. Sometimes a word literally denoting a kind of physical measure is found in a text in a metaphorical context as a simile, but it is not attested elsewhere as a lexicalized metaphor; thus it seems that this particular word did not develop an abstract normative meaning. These cases are interesting instances of a term's unexploited figurative potential, especially given that these expressions very often co-occur with similar words that actually developed into full-fledged general norm words, which can be observed below (e.g., the merely metaphorical *chǐdù* 尺度 'foot' + '(length) measure' vs. the fully developed *quánhéng* 權衡 'weight' + '(arm of) steelyard').

Here I would like to quote some of the many metaphorical uses of "measuring words", although it is not easy to choose the most instructive ones from such an immense selection. I have tried to pick longer passages with concatenations of figurative uses or quasi-definitions. The terms to which I would like to draw the attention of the reader are in bold face. I use available published translations into English, but with the caveat that their precision varies from author to author and from passage to passage. Compare:

> 世之為治者, 多釋**法**而任私議, 此國之所以亂也。先王縣**權衡**, 立**尺寸**, 而至今**法**之, 其分明也。夫釋**權衡**而斷輕重, 廢**尺寸**而意長短, 雖察, 商賈不用, 為其不必也。故**法**者, 國之**權衡**也, 夫倍**法度**而任私議, 皆不知類者也。不以**法**論知能賢不肖者, 惟堯, 而世不盡為堯, 是故先王知自議譽私之不可任也, 故立**法**明**分**, 中**程**者賞之, 毀公者誅之。

[26] It may be of interest that, e.g., *jiù*, but largely also *xiān*, combine mostly with the norm words related to the ideas of model, instructions, constancy, etc., but not measurements. This certainly makes sense.

賞誅之**法**, 不失其**義**, 故民不爭。授官予爵, 不以其勞, 則忠臣不進。行賞賦祿, 不稱其功, 則戰士不用。(*Shāngjūnshū*, Xiūquán, 14.5)

Those who are engaged in governing, in the world, chiefly dismiss the **law** and place reliance on private appraisal, and this is what brings disorder in a state. The early kings hung up **scales with standard weights**, and fixed the **length of feet and inches**, and to the present day these are **followed as models** because their divisions were clear. Now dismissing **standard scales** and yet deciding weight, or abolishing **feet and inches** and yet forming an opinion about length – even an intelligent merchant would not apply this system, because it would lack definiteness. Therefore, laws are the **standard scales** of a state. Now, if the back is turned on **models and measures**, and reliance is placed on private appraisal, in all those cases there would be a lack of definiteness. Only a Yao would be able to judge knowledge and ability, worth or unworth without a **model**. But the world does not consist exclusively of Yaos! Therefore, the ancient kings understood that no reliance should be placed on individual opinions or biased approval, so they set up **models** and made the distinctions clear. Those who fulfilled the **standard** were rewarded, those who harmed the public interest were punished. The **standards** for rewards and punishments **were not wrong**, and therefore people did not dispute them. But if the bestowal of office and the granting of rank are not carried out according to the labour borne, then loyal ministers have no advancement; and if in awarding rewards and giving emoluments the respective merits are not weighed, then fighting soldiers will not enter his service.[27]

故明主使其群臣不遊意於**法**之外, 不為惠於**法**之內, 動無非**法**。**法**所以凌過遊外私也, 嚴刑所以遂**令**懲下也。威不貸錯, 制不共門。威制共則眾邪彰矣, **法**不信則君行危矣, 刑不斷則邪不勝矣。故曰:巧匠目意中**繩**, 然必先以**規矩**為**度**;上智捷舉中事, 必以先王之**法**為比。故**繩**直而枉木斲, **準**夷而高科削, **權衡**縣而重益輕, 斗石設而多益少。故以**法**治國, 舉措而已矣。**法**不阿貴, **繩**不撓曲。**法**之所加, 智者弗能辭, 勇者弗敢爭。刑過不避大臣, 賞善不遺匹夫。故矯上之失, 詰下之邪, 治亂決繆, 絀羨齊非, 一民之**軌**, 莫如**法**。(*Hánfēizǐ*, Yǒudù, 6.5)

And similarly the enlightened ruler sees to it that the ministers do not stray beyond the law, and that they do not show generosity [even] within the law, that in everything they do they follow the law. Through formidable laws one prevents transgressions and keeps egotism away; through strict punishments, one has orders carried through and inferiors chastised. Authority must not be imposed from two sources, and control must not go through a common gate. When authority and control are shared in common, then all the kinds of wickedness will show themselves; when the law is not reliable, then the ruler's actions are precarious; when corporal punishments are not decisive, then wickedness will not be overcome. Therefore it is said: The skilful carpenter will hit the **ink-line** by visual intuition, and yet he certainly first takes **the circle and the square** as his **standard**; the superbly competent man will act gingerly and get everything right, and yet he certainly takes the **laws** of the former kings for comparison. Thus as long as the **ink-line** is straight then warped wood will end up straight; as long as the **water balance** is even, great unevennesses will be levelled off; as long as the **scales** are evenly hung then weights will be levelled out; as long as bushels and stones are standardised, quantities will be levelled out. Thus ruling a state by use of the **law** is simply a matter of carrying out standard measures. The **law** does not pander to the noble, the **ink-line** does not get all bent according to what is crooked. Where the **law** applies, the

[27] Tr. J. J. Duyvendak 1928.

crafty cannot make their excuses and the courageous will not dare to fight against it. The physical punishing of transgressions should not spare great ministers; the rewarding of the good should not bypass the ordinary person. As for correcting the ruler's oversights, as for pursuing subordinates' wickedness, as for sorting out insubordinacy and unravelling mistakes, as for removing the superfluous and evening out the incorrect, as for uniting the **tracks** for the people to follow, nothing is as good as the **law**.[28]

禮之於**正**國家也, 如**權衡**之於輕重也, 如**繩墨**之於曲直也。(*Xúnzǐ*, Dàlüè, 27.41.1, parallel with *Lǐjì*, Jīngjiě, 26.1.12)

The relationship of **ritual principles** to the **correct governance** of the nation is like that of the suspended **balance and steelyard** to the determination of weight or that of the **darkened marking line** to straightness.[29]

國無**禮**則不正。**禮**之所以**正**國也, 譬之猶**衡**之於輕重也, 猶**繩墨**之於曲直也, 猶**規矩**之於方圓也, 既錯之而人莫之能誣也。(*Xúnzǐ*, Wángbà, 11.3.1)

If a state lacks **ritual principles**, then it will not be rectified, for **ritual principles** are the means whereby to **rectify** the state. This is analogous to the **steelyard** for the measurement of weight, the **blackened marking-line** for determining crookedness or straightness, or the **compass and square** for testing squareness and roundness. When they are set up as standards, then no one can deceive him.

是故子墨子言曰:「古者聖王為五刑, 請以治其民。譬若絲縷之有**紀**, 罔罟之有**綱**, 所連收天下之百姓不尚同其上者 也。」(*Mòzǐ*, Shàngtóng shàng, 11.4.1)

Therefore, Mozi said: The sage-kings of old devised the five punishments to rule the people in order to be able to lay hands on those who did not identify themselves with their superiors – a device of the same nature as **threads** are tied into skeins and a net is controlled by a **main rope**.[30]

用民有**紀**有**綱**, 壹引其**紀**, 萬目皆起, 壹引其**綱**, 萬目皆張。為民**紀綱**者何也?欲也惡也。(*Lǚshì chūnqiū*, Yòngmín, 19.4.4.2)

In employing the people, there are **small lines** and a **main cord** just like those found in a net. With a single tug of the **small lines**, the net is lifted; with a single pull of the **main rope**, the net is made taut. What are the **small lines and main rope** in handling the people? They are desires and aversions.[31]

子墨子言曰:「我有天志, 譬若輪人之有**規**, 匠人之有**矩**, 輪匠執其**規矩**, 以**度**天下之方圜, 曰:『中者是也, 不中者非也。』今天下之士君子之書, 不可勝載, 言語不可盡計, 上說諸侯, 下說列士, 其於仁義則大相遠也。何以知之?曰我得天下之明**法**以**度**之。」(*Mòzǐ*, Tiānzhì shàng, 26.8.1)

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28 All translations from the *Hánfēizǐ* by C. Harbsmeier (n. d.), Thesaurus Linguae Sericae.
29 All translations of the *Xúnzǐ* by John Knoblock (1988–90).
30 Tr. W. P. Mei 1929.
31 This whole passage is actually rhymed: *-ang in *gāng* 綱 and *zhāng* 張 and *-əʔ in *jì* 紀 (NB the modern pronunciation does not conform to the Middle Chinese one with regard to the tone) and *qǐ* 起.

> Mozi said: The will of Heaven to me is like the **compasses** to the wheelwright and the **square** to the carpenter. The wheelwright and the carpenter measure all the square and circular objects with their **square and compasses** and accept those that fit as correct and reject those that do not fit as incorrect. The writings of the gentlemen of the world of the present day cannot be all loaded (in a cart), and their doctrines cannot be exhaustively enumerated. They endeavour to convince the feudal lords on the one hand and the scholars on the other. But from magnanimity and righteousness they are far off. How do we know? Because I have the most competent **standard** in the world to **measure** them with.[32]

Equally worthy of attention are passages in which the meaning of the word is stretched between the literal and figurative poles: the word is basically employed in the literal sense, but in a normative context which adds clear metaphorical overtones to it, breaking thus ground for a gradual abstraction of the term. These instances represent a bridge to the fully figurative meaning (but sometimes are just a re-evocation of the original literal meaning).[33] These instances are not easily identifiable, as one is never sure to what extent the word is meant metaphorically. They represent a large portion of all occurrences of norm-related words in the corpus and should be carefully studied in their own right. Compare:

> 「故曰, 徒善不足以為政, 徒**法**不能以自行。《詩》云:『不愆不忘, 率由舊章。』**遵**先王之**法**而過者, 未之有也。聖人既竭目力焉, 繼之以**規矩準繩**, 以為方員平直, 不可勝用也; 既竭耳力焉, 繼之以六**律**, **正**五音, 不可勝用也;既竭心思焉, 繼之以不忍人之政, 而仁覆天下矣。(*Mèngzǐ*, Lílóu shàng, 4A.1.2)

> Hence we have the saying: 'Virtue alone is not sufficient for the exercise of government; **laws** alone cannot carry themselves into practice.' It is said in the Book of Poetry, 'Without transgression, without forgetfulness, following the **ancient statutes**.' Never has any one fallen into error, who **followed** the **laws** of the ancient kings. When the sages had used the vigour of their eyes, they called in to their aid the **compass, the square, the level, and the line**, to make things square, round, level, and straight: the use of the instruments is inexhaustible. When they had used their power of hearing to the utmost, they called in the **pitch-tubes** to their aid to **determine** the five notes – the use of those tubes is inexhaustible. When they had exerted to the utmost the thoughts of their hearts, they called in to their aid a government that could not endure to witness the sufferings of men – and their benevolence overspread the kingdom.[34]

Finally, it is of eminent importance for the study of this lexical field to analyse concatenations and the parallelism of norm words used with a fully abstract meaning, as well as, of course, the definitions and quasi-definitions of these terms, which is a popular strategy of argumentation in Ancient Chinese texts in general. Again, such passages are truly abundant and prove once more the key position of the entire conceptual and lexical field under investigation. Compare:

> 古之王者, 知命之不長, 是以並建聖哲, 樹之風聲, 分之采物, 著之話言, 為之**律度**, 陳之**藝極**, 引之**表儀**, 予之**法制**, 告之**訓典**, 教之防利, 委之**常秩**, 道之以**禮**, 則使毋失其

[32] Tr. W. P. Mei 1929.
[33] See Harbsmeier (2015: 527) on the inseparability of literal from figurative meanings.
[34] Tr. James Legge 1872.

土宜, 眾隸賴之, 而後即命, 聖王同之, 今縱無**法**以遺後嗣, 而又收其良以死, 難以在上矣 (*Zuǒzhuàn*, Wéngōng, 6.3.4)

The ancient kings, knowing that their life would not be long, largely established the sagely and wise (as princes and officers); planted their instructions in the soil of the manners (of the people); instituted the several modes of distinguishing rank and character; published excellent lessons; made the **standard tubes and measures**; showed (the people) the **exact amount of their contributions**; led them on by the **rules of deportment**; gave them the **rules of their own example**; declared to them the **instructions and statutes** (of their predecessors); taught them to guard (against what was evil) and obtain what was advantageous; employed for them the **regular duties** (of the several officers); and led them on by the **rules of propriety**; thus securing that the earth should yield its proper increase, and that all below them might sufficiently depend on them. It is after they had done all this that those ancient kings went to their end. Succeeding sage kings have acted in the same way. But now, granting that duke Muh had no such **example** to leave to his posteriority, yet when he proceeded to take away the good with him in his death, it would have been hard for him to be in the highest place.[35]

使天下皆極智能於**儀表**, 盡力於**權衡**, 以動則勝, 以靜則安。(*Hánfēizǐ*, Ānwēi, 25.2.1)

If one makes the whole world exert all their competence on the **'standard'**, if they put in all their effort into the **'objective weighing'**, if then they take action they will succeed, and if they stay inactive they will be at peace.

程者、物之**準**也, **禮**者、**節**之**準**也;**程**以立**數**, **禮**以定**倫**;德以**敘位**, 能以授官。凡**節奏**欲陵, 而生民欲寬;**節奏**陵而文, 生民寬而安;上文下安, 功名之極也, 不可以加矣。(*Xúnzǐ*, Zhìshì, 14.6)

Measures are the **standards** of things. **Ritual principles** are the **standards** for **obligations**. **Measures** are used to establish **modes of calculation**, **ritual principles** to determine the **constant relationships**, inner power to **assign each his proper place**, and ability to assign official positions. It is a general principle that in handling the **obligations of one's office and in making reports** strictness is desirable, and in providing a living for the people generosity is to be desired. **When official obligations and reports** are strictly maintained, the result is good form. When the people are provided a generous living, the result is security. When the upper classes have good form and the lower classes security, this is the acme of accomplishment and fame, for it is impossible to add anything to it.

儀者, 萬物之**程式**也。**法度**者, 萬民之**儀表**也。**禮義**者, 尊卑之**儀表**也。故動有**儀**則令行, 無**儀**則令不行; (*Guǎnzǐ*, Xíngshìjiě, 21.1.118)

Good form sets the **pattern of conduct** for all things. **Laws and procedures** set the **standards of good form** for people as a whole. **Rules for propriety and righteous conduct** set the **standards of good form** between the honored and lowly. Therefore, if [the ruler's] movements adhere to **good form**, his orders will be carried out. Otherwise they will not.[36]

[35] All translations from the *Zuǒzhuàn* by James Legge 1872.
[36] All translations from the *Guǎnzǐ* by A. Rickett (1985).

法律政令者, 吏民**規矩繩墨**也。夫**矩**不正, 不可以求方。**繩**不信, 不可以求**直**。(*Guǎnzǐ*, Qīchén qīzhǔ, 52.1.31)

Laws, administrative statutes, and official orders, are the **compass, square, and marking line** of government functionaries and the people. If the **square** is not true, one cannot expect it to produce squareness. If the **marking line** is not stretched tight, one cannot expect it to produce **straightness**.

明主者, 一**度量**, 立**表儀**, 而堅守之, 故**令**下而民**從**。**法**者, 天下之**程式**也, 萬事之**儀表**也。吏者, 民之所懸命也;故明主之治也, 當於**法**者賞之, 違於法者誅之, 故以**法**誅罪, 則民就死而不怨。以**法量**功, 則民受賞而無德也, 此以**法**舉錯之功也。(*Guǎnzǐ*, Míngfǎjiě, 46.1.56)

The enlightened ruler unifies his **procedures and measurements**, establishes his **standards**, and steadfastly observes them. Therefore, when **orders** are handed down, the people **follow** them. **Law** sets the **pattern** for the empire and the **standards** for all undertakings. Civil functionaries become the ones who post his commands. Now, the enlightened ruler, in maintaining good order, rewards what accords with the **law** and punishes what violates it. Hence when he uses the law to punish the guilty and people are killed, there is no resentment; when he uses the **law** to **measure** merit and people are rewarded, there is no sense of gratitude. This is what is accomplished by putting the **law** in place.

A structural metaphor could or even should be reflected in the collocability of the terms with verbs, for example. Nevertheless, very little is to be gained from Ancient Chinese: norm words tend to co-occur with general verbs that do not depend on the original literal semantics or etymology of the respective norm words. Certainly, one can encounter an array of verbs with the basic meaning of 'follow', for example, *yóu* 由, *zūn* 遵, *xún* 循, *cóng* 從, *shù* 述, *zǔshù* 祖述, *yuán* 緣, *shuài* 率, and also *dí* 迪, some of which are etymologically cognate with certain norm words (see above, the roots *lu, *lut/*rut, *luk, and *lun), but apart from them, the choice of verbal predicate is relatively free.[37]

Diachronic and diatextual distribution

As already mentioned above, the inquiry into the distribution of particular norm words as well as of their types and subtypes across the texts can reveal diachronic transformations and synchronic differences in the conceptualization of norms and the whole normative discourse. Given the large numbers of the norm words I register, and, above all, given the number of their occurrences in the corpus, I attempt only to present an

[37] Except for 'follow' verbs and many other verbs, the subsequent verbs typically occur in the predicate: *yǒu* 有 'have', *wú* 無 'have not', *shǒu* 守 'observe', *shòu* 受 'accept', *yòng* 用 'employ', *zhī* 知 'understand', *xíng* 行 'carry out', *shèn* 慎 'pay careful attention', *shěn* 審 'examine', *shùn* 順 'conform to', *yīn* 因 'rely on', *cāo* 操 'take in hand, operate', *lì* 立 'establish', *shè* 設 'set up', *zhì* 制 'make', *zhì* 置 'set up', *bù* 布 'announce', *dé* 得 'succeed', *shī* 失 'fail', *fǎn* 反 'go against', *wéi* 違 'go against', *bèi* 背 'turn one's back on', *guò* 過 'surpass', *shì* 恃 'rely on', *zhí* 執 'hold', *wò* 握 'grasp, hold', *zhǎng* 掌 'hold', *jìn* 盡 'exhaust', *lóng* 隆 'deeply respect', *xí* 習 'practice', *xiū* 修 'cultivate', *shì* 釋 'put aside', *shě* 捨 'put aside', *qì* 棄 'abandon', *fèi* 廢 'abandon', *huǐ* 毀 'destroy', *míng* 明 'clearly understand/propagate', *zhèng* 正 'make correct', *píng* 平 'make level/just', *yī* 一 'unite', *tóng* 同 'unite', *biàn* 變 'change', *yì* 易 'change', and *gé* 革 'change'.

overall overview of the basic trends and patterns of distribution that emerge from this material. In fact, many passages deserve closer attention and commentary, and perhaps even a small case study. Moreover, one must realize, among other things, that the occurrences of these words may represent instances of their various semantic uses – literal, figurative, freshly metaphoric (in a simile, for example), or symbolic – and, what is worse, they sometimes blend into each other or effect distinct semantic overtones (this phenomenon can also be observed in the examples quoted in previous section). A detailed, comprehensive display of the data and their analysis is beyond the scope of the present study, as is the fine-grained statistics necessary for such analysis. Therefore, I will limit myself to an overview capturing the most important trends.

Let us first look at the inventory of norm words attested in the earliest texts from my sample, which I deliberately chose in order to have a diachronic counterpart to the Warring States material:

Bronze inscriptions (BI): *shuài* 帥/率,[38] *shuàixíng* 帥型, *shuàiyòng* 帥用, *xíng* 井=型, *jīng* 巠=經, *bì* 辟, *jí* 亟=極, *zéshàng* 劃 (=則)尚, *lǐ* 禮, *xiàn* 憲

The Book of Documents:
Earliest chapters: *fǎ* 法, *niè* 臬, *lún* 倫, *jiá* 戛, *xíng* 型, *diǎn* 典, *yì* 義, *shuài* 率, *bì* 辟, *dù* 度, *jí* 極, *jì* 紀, *yíxùn* 彝訓, *fēiyí* 非彝, *shì* 式, *xùn* 訓, and perhaps *zhǔnrén* 準人 'officers of law'
Intermediate chapters: *xíng* 型, *yì* 義, *niè* 臬, *diǎn* 典, *lún* 倫, *fǎ* 法, *cháng* 常, *yí* 彝, *dù* 度, *biàn* 卞, *xùn* 訓
Late chapters: *xíng* 型, *diǎn* 典, *lún* 倫, *yì* 義, *cháng* 常, *xù* 敍, *zhì* 秩, *lǐ* 禮, *xiàn* 憲, *shuài* 率, *zé* 則, *jí* 極, *yí* 彝, *jiùfú* 舊服, *shuàidiǎn* 率典, *yílún* 彝倫, *bǎikuí* 百揆, *lǜ* 律, *dù* 度, *liàng* 量, *héng* 衡, *fàn* 範, *fǎdù* 法度, *diǎnxíng* 典型, *jìgāng* 紀綱

The Book of Songs:
According to sections:
Guófēng: *dù* 度, *cháng* 常 (tentatively)
Yǎ: *jiù* 舊, *zhāng* 章, *jiùzhāng* 舊章, *diǎnxíng* 典型, *zé* 則, *jīng* 經 (v), *gāng* 綱, *jì* 紀, *gāngjì* 綱紀 (v), *wéi* 維 (v), *yíxíng* 儀型, *dù* 度, *chéng* 程, *cháng* 常, *lún* 倫, *xiàn* 憲, *xùn* 訓 (v), *lǐyí* 禮儀, *shì* 式, *xíng* 型
Sòng: *yíshìxíng* 儀式型, *zé* 則, *diǎn* 典, *cháng* 常, *xùn* 訓 (v), *lǚ* 履 = *lǐ* 禮, *xíng* 型

According to metaphorical background:
model-structure-pattern: *shì* 式, *jiù* 舊, *zhāng* 章, *jiùzhāng* 舊章, *xíng* 型, *diǎnxíng* 典型, *yíshìxíng* 儀式型, *zé* 則, *jīng* 經 (v), *gāng* 綱, *jì* 紀, *gāngjì* 綱紀 (v), *wéi* 維 (v), *yíxíng* 儀型

[38] There is a problem with the reading of the word written as 率; modern dictionaries usually indicate the reading *lǜ* for the meaning of 'standard' or something similar, and sometimes even identify the character as a variant for *lǜ* 律. But given the fact that the word is obviously sometimes written as 帥 in bronze inscriptions, the character standardly having only the pronunciation *shuài*, I prefer to render it as *shuài*. Moreover, both the reading *lǜ* and *shuài* are based on the root *-rut-/-lut-, with *shuài* being distinguished from the former only by the prefix **s*- and the suffix **-s*.

constancy: *diǎn* 典, *cháng* 常
category: *lún* 倫
instruction: *xiàn* 憲, *xùn* 訓 (v)
measurement: *dù* 度, *chéng* 程
other: *lǐyí* 禮儀, *lǚ*[39] 履 = *lǐ* 禮

Overlap of BI and the earliest parts of the *Documents*: *shuài* 帥/率, *bì* 辟, *xíng* 型, *jí* 極
Overlap of BI and the *Odes*: *dù* 度, *xíng* 型, *diǎn* 典
Overlap of all three early sources: *xíng* 型

One can easily notice that in all these corpora, measure-related norm words are rather scarce, although not absent altogether. The prevailing metaphoric backgrounds include the MODEL-STRUCTURE-PATTERN subgroup in first place, followed by CONSTANCY and INSTRUCTION, and some miscellaneous others. This observation is basically true of the late chapters of the *Documents*, where, however, several measure-related terms appear, such as *lǜ* 律, *liàng* 量, *héng* 衡, and *fǎdù* 法度, making these sections intuitively reminiscent of Warring States texts. *Dù* 度 seems to be a very basic general norm word across all texts encountered from the very beginning, as do some other ubiquitous terms with different backgrounds (*fǎ* 法, *cháng* 常, etc.), but it is not dominant in this discourse. In my opinion, this pattern of distribution is its characteristic feature and can be explained with reference to by and large purely historical social-cultural developments. If we look at all the data presented in the appendix, we can observe that the same metaphors were the principal normative metaphors of the Zhōu aristocratic culture and of its 'Confucian' appropriation, embodied in such texts as the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Mèngzǐ*, or the *Zuǒzhuàn* and *Guóyǔ*. Although the overall picture of distribution is extremely complex, MEASUREMENT stands out as the opposite pole, representing the principal metaphor of the newly (early to mid–Warring States) emerging ideologies of state administration (referred to as the "pragmatic" or "legalist" strains of thought), represented by such texts as the *Shāngjūnshū*, the *Hánfēizǐ*, and also, in a different manner and only to a certain extent, the *Xúnzǐ*, as well as the all-embracing *Guǎnzǐ*. Naturally, it is also simply the language of a new urban society born from the far-reaching reforms and transformations of the Warring States period, of cities inhabited by craftsmen, merchants, and many other specialists possessing command of various techniques.[40]

At this stage of research, several general observations have emerged from the chaos of the available data. As a matter of course, some lexical units have a specific distribution that reveals their connection with a certain type of discourse; some terms may be limited merely to one single text, being fully or nearly a *hapax legomenon*. In contrast, some particular texts may be quite specific with regard to the occurrence of norm words, but not all in the same way: it is expectable that texts representing different strains of thought display a preference for partially different normative figurations. The *Xúnzǐ* is highly

[39] The pronunciation *lǚ* does not conform to the Middle Chinese pronunciation of the word, which should give modern *lǐ*; *lǚ* is reconstructed as *rij-ʔ, *lǐ* as *rᶜij-ʔ, and thus, they are supposed to have been homophonous except for the syllable type A/B distinction.
[40] See Yú 2003 or Lewis 1999.

remarkable though in its own right for containing an unparalleled range of normative terms. At first sight the *Guǎnzǐ* appears to be similar in this respect, but in fact, the frequent presence of the title in the lists of the texts a given term occurs in is most probably caused by its composite, syncretic nature (and, of course, its length), which is not quite the case of the *Xúnzǐ*, though both books are of relatively late origin (late Warring States). Thus, the texts tell us much about the terms, and vice versa the terms inform us about the character of the texts.

Distributional analysis is naturally and necessarily only relative. But even terms that clearly prefer a certain type of discourse usually occur in admixtures of different textual and intellectual traditions. Again, this is to be expected, as only special technical terms are strictly limited to particular texts or environments. The Ancient Chinese texts I have examined largely contain non-specific language and do not indicate a particularly high degree of technical specialization. As a consequence, analysis, especially preliminary analysis, reveals rather general trends and tendencies, or possible semantic overtones; moreover, the results may be distorted by various random factors related to the character of our corpus. A deeper analysis is far beyond the scope of this article: one would have to study the combinatorics of constituents of disyllabic words in the light of their diachronic and diatextual distribution, both from formal and semantic perspectives (I touch upon this issue above when introducing the basic types of compounds). A very wide array of semantic issues remains to be formulated and addressed, including the level of abstraction in relation to the relative semantic distance and compatibility of the constituents. When one look on the data in the appendix, it would seem promising to start with apparently (and, of course, to a large extent subjectively) unusual compounds, such as *yífǎ* 儀法, because the distance is greatest in their case, but eventually a full-fledged theoretical framework would need to be developed and comprehensively applied on the data. This task would have to involve a better, more detailed description of the conceptual category of NORM that covers its inner structure, carefully distinguishes core norm words from mixed and peripheral domains (INSTRUCTION, etc.), and maps their mutual relationships and overlaps with other conceptual fields.

It is interesting to note that some norm words are attested exclusively, or nearly so, in explicitly metaphorical contexts. They can appear repeatedly in one text or in several texts (as can be seen from the list in the appendix, this kind of behaviour is mostly true of monosyllabic terms[41]). Such words should be in principle distinguished from the other types of terms that feature at least somewhere as more or less abstract words: their figurative meaning is already conventionalized and lexicalized. This, however, does not mean that both these types of figuration cannot pertain to the same environment and have the same metaphorical background. For example, the normative figurative meaning of some measurement-based words is well entrenched to the point that the original metaphor may already be unrecognizable to the average speaker, whereas similar words from the same group are found with a normative sense only temporarily in a simile or similar

[41] It is obvious from the data that the rapidly growing disyllabic vocabulary based on measurement words often covers more abstract meanings, whereas older monosyllabic words tend to retain their literal meaning, though sometimes side by side with a figurative meaning and metaphorically exploited.

environment without traces of lexicalization. Finally, other words from the same group may never appear in an abstract normative context, always denoting actual measurement tools – *sua fata habent verba*.

Some norm words are, on the other hand, used only or predominantly verbally: although in this study I focus on nominal expressions, that is, designations for various types of normative concepts, I sometimes register verbally used lexemes as well, primarily when there seems to be an extremely close relationship between them and clearly nominal lexemes. Such connections typically arise when the expression in question is the verbal use of a word that occurs elsewhere as a noun (for word-class flexibility in Ancient Chinese, see Zádrapa 2011 or 2017b), or when a word itself does not occur as a noun but its constituent parts or closest synonyms do. Their inclusion can be then considered informative; in any case, the situation would require greater elaboration.

To start off with an example, I tried to figure out which norm-denoting words occur predominantly in the texts of the *rú* 儒, or "ritualist" or "Confucian", discourse, and which are typical of "legalist" discourse.[42] Although this perspective seems to involve extreme simplification, I believe that such an initial step may demonstrate the applicability of the method and its potential merits (and naturally also point out any complications and limitations); the systematic fine-grained analysis of the collected material is a matter of future research.

When looking at monosyllabic words either as independent words or compound constituents, we discover, besides ubiquitous general terms, a group of words or word constituents occurring only, or primarily, in the "ritualist" or "traditionalist" discourse. The *Xúnzǐ* belongs to this strain of thought, but is peculiar in including, or perhaps even introducing, many other expressions not found elsewhere. It is significant, though not unexpected, that they largely belong to non-measurement, non-technicist backgrounds typical for soft-power approaches to ruling society, including instruction (only weakly represented in the other set). I register the following units:

MODEL: *xíng* 型 'casting mould > model', *fàn* 範 'bamboo mould > model > rule', *shì* 式 'form > model', *zé* 則 'model, rule'

PATTERN: *wén* 文 '(a type of) pattern', *zhāng* 章 '(a type) of pattern'

PROMINENT LINEAR OBJECTS as guidelines: *jīng* 經 'warp', *gāng* 綱 'head-rope of fishing net', *jì* 紀 '(main) head of silk thread', *tǒng* 統 'main silk thread', *guàn* 貫 'string'; *jí* 極 'ridgepole'

CATEGORY: *lún* 倫 'category', *lèi* 類 'category', both > 'rules of conduct'

CONSTANCY: *yí* 彝 'constant', *diǎn* 典 'constant', *jiù* 舊 'old'

[42] I am aware of the controversy surrounding this distinction, but this matter cannot be entirely avoided. I do not intend to deal here with the heavily disputed issues of different strains of thought and traditions in ancient China, and arguments about the correct terminology and the proliferation of new, supposedly much more suitable and much less misleading terms. For my present purposes, I take the "ritualist" tradition to be represented by the ancient canonical books, ritualist works (the various "Rites"), the historiographic works of the *Zuǒzhuàn* and *Guóyǔ*, the works traditionally connected with great "Confucian" thinkers (the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Mèngzǐ*, and with certain reservations, the *Xúnzǐ*), and writings traditionally understood as supporting to some extent "Confucian values", such as the *Yànzǐ chūnqiū* or, in part, the *Lǚshì chūnqiū*. In contrast, the legalist discourse is primarily represented by the *Shāngjūnshū* and *Hánfēizǐ*, but it is largely typical of the *Guǎnzǐ* as well and overlaps with other non-ritualist traditions.

PROPRIETY: *yì* 義 'social or moral appropriateness'
CONTROL, RESTRICTION: *jié* 節 'bamboo joint > restrain(t); rhythm, standard, rules of conduct, moral integrity' *fú* 幅 'cloth width (standard) > standard'
INSTRUCTION, such as *xùn* 訓 'instruct, instruction'
MEASUREMENT: *kuí* 揆 'direction measure', (*zhǔn* 準 'level')[43]

I find this overall and relatively rough scheme telling; it demonstrates the promise of studying the peculiarities of normative discourse in other groupings of texts using the same method, though ideally in a much more sophisticated manner.

A comparative glimpse

Although a comparative study of the analogies and asymmetries between Ancient Chinese on one hand and Ancient Greek and Latin on the other would be very useful, such an inquiry is far beyond the scope of this paper, although the issue should be carefully addressed in the future. However, I would like to suggest some comparisons that might indicate further research directions and draw attention to its potential merits. Let us consider the following facts:[44]

The Chinese *jǔ* 矩 is the literal equivalent of the Latin *norma* 'square; norm'; it is highly remarkable that the root of this word (**ǵneh$_3$* 'to know') is the same as in the Greek *gnōmōn* 'pointer, gnomon' (Beekes 2010: 273 s. v. *gignōskō*), which has a Chinese parallel, namely, *biǎo* 表, an important norm word.

The closest word to the Ancient Chinese *fǎ* 法 'law, model' in Greek is possibly *nomos* 'law' (Beekes 2010: 1006 s. v. *nemō*), which is based on the root **nem* 'to take' (Gr. *nemō* 'to distribute'); the Latin word *numerus* 'number; rhythm; rank; class, category; order, duty etc.', with overlaps to other Chinese normative terms, is its cognate (de Vaan 2008: 419), and, at the same time, its meaning can be directly rendered by the Ancient Chinese *shù* 數 'number > method'. The Latin counterpart is *lēx* 'law', based on the root **leǵ* 'to gather, collect' (de Vaan 2008: 337), which is also found in the preeminent Greek key term *logos* 'word, speech, thought, reason, proposition, principle' (Beekes 2010: 841 s. v. *legō*); *logos*, in turn, appears to be close in meaning to such ancient Chinese words as *dào* 道 'the right way, method'[45] or *lǐ* 理 'structure, order'. None of the Ancient Chinese norm words are, as far as I know, derived from a root with this meaning.[46] Thus, we do encounter some interesting connections, but they are highly asymmetrical.

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[43] This type of measurement device is untypical, being an indicator rather than measuring devices in the narrow sense.
[44] For the meanings of the Latin and Ancient Greek words, I rely on the entries from dictionaries digitalized as part of the Perseus Project (Lewis and Short 1879, Lewis 1890, Liddell and Scott 1940, Liddell and Scott 1889).
[45] For a comparative study on *dào* and *logos* see Yáo Xiǎopíng 1992.
[46] But one could think of a connection between Ancient Chinese *lún* 倫 'category' and the relatively rare word *lún* 掄 'to choose'.

The family of Greek words based on the root **deiḱ* 'to point out', Ancient Greek *deiknȳmi* 'to show', such as *dikē* 'justice', *dikaios* 'just', *dikaiosynē* 'justice', *paradeigma* 'pattern, example' (Beekes 2010: 309 s. v. *deiknȳmi*), and their cognates, such as the English *token*, has no simple parallels in Ancient Chinese, which has many different words for paradigm, or pattern or model (*paradeigma*). None of these terms seem to be based on such a root, though the etymologies of many Ancient Chinese expressions are uncertain. Nonetheless, the Greek etymological connection between justice and a model might be quite interestingly mirrored in the Chinese pair *yí* 儀 *ŋ(r)aj 'standard, model' and *yì* 義 *ŋ(r)aj-s 'social propriety, righteousness', itself perhaps derived from *yí* 宜 *ŋ(r)aj 'appropriate, deserved', that is, if the words are related.[47]

The ancient Chinese terms *dào* 道 'way > right way, right methods' and *shù* 術 'way > method, technique', both metaphorical extensions of 'way', perhaps based on the root **lu* (*yóu* 由), have their less prominent counterpart in the Greek *methodos* 'method, system' with a similar range of meanings, which stems from *meta* 'along'+ *hodos* 'way' (the root **sod* 'to walk, go', Beekes 2010: 1046 s. v. *hodos*), and the even less important Latin *iter* or *via*, both 'way', with the same semantic extension as the English *way*.

In Ancient Greek and Latin, and also in other Indo-European languages, there is a large and conceptually exceedingly important word family ultimately derived from the root **h₂er* 'to fit, fix, put together';[48] many of these terms have good translations into Ancient Chinese (sometimes multiple ones due to polysemy), in which they represent noteworthy norm words. The etymologies of these words, however, differ, and they do not constitute an interrelated network. Compare the Ancient Greek *arithmos* 'number' (*shù* 數); *aretē* 'virtue' (*dé* 德); *harmoniā* 'harmony' (*hé* 和) (see Beekes 2010: 123 s. v. *arariskō*, 128 s. v. *areskō* and *aretē*, 131 s. v. *arithmos*, 135 s. v. *harmonia*); *ratiō* '(among many others:) fashion, method; reason, propriety, law, rule, order' (several Ancient Chinese synonyms), and Latin *rītus* 'rite, manner, mode, way' (de Vaan 2008: 524) (e.g., *lǐ* 禮); *ordō* 'order, right order' (de Vaan 2008: 434) (e.g., *xù* 序/敍); and *ars* 'art, skill, conduct, science' (de Vaan 2008: 55) (e.g., *shù* 數 or *shù* 術, or *jì* 技 – all with the meaning 'art, technique').[49]

A similar group of normative terms is ultimately based on the root **h₃reǵ* 'straighten, right, just', possibly via the extension 'to stretch out an arm' > 'to show' > 'to lead, to give orders', again with asymmetrical parallels in Ancient Chinese – compare the Latin *rēctus* 'right' (*zhèng* 正 'right, correct > norm'), *rēgula* 'ruler; rule' (*shéng* 繩 'carpenter's rope' can be considered a somewhat more distant analogue), and also *rēx* 'king' (for all see de Vaan 2008: 517 s. v. *regō*) and its derivatives and cognates in some other Indo-European languages, such as the English *right* and the German *Recht* ('right, law') and all their abundant derivatives related to law, as well as the German *rechnen* ('to count'), the translation of which into Ancient Chinese is *shǔ* 數.

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47 Cf. Zádrapa 2014, or Jia and Kwok 2007.
48 The closest parallel may be *yí* 儀 and *yì* 義, both derived from *yí* 宜 'appropriate, fitting'.
49 I suggest these equivalences on the basis of an approximate synonymy between the words.

Further, the Latin norm word *modus* 'measure, method, way' has a perfect counterpart in the Ancient Chinese *dù* 度, as it is based on the root **med* 'to measure' (de Vaan 2008: 384), and many less perfect but still very good counterparts in the multitude of Ancient Chinese words for various kinds of measuring devices. The Latin terms *iūs* 'right, justice, duty' and *iūstus* 'right, just' have a good counterpart in the Ancient Chinese *yì* 義, but the etymological connections do not offer any revealing parallel, as the Latin words are ultimately based on the root **h*$_2$*ey* 'vital force, life' (de Vaan 2008: 316), or more precisely on its derivative *h*$_2$*óyu*. The Latin *formula* 'small pattern, mould > rule, method' is analogous to *xíng* 型 and the rare *fàn* 範, but, of course and expectedly, with a somewhat different figurative radiation of the central meaning. Other Latin words for a rule, *praescriptum* and *praescriptiō* 'precept, order, rule', stem from *prae* + *scrībere* 'to write', and, as far as I know, have no parallels in Ancient Chinese.

The following Latin and Greek words can be found among the correlates of Ancient Chinese *xùn* 訓 'instructions', and perhaps *xiàn* 憲 'statutes', although they do not seem to indicate the same word-formative motivation:

All meaning, among other things, 'instruction':
disciplīna < *discipulus* 'disciple' < *dis* + *cap-ulus* (**keh*$_2$*p* 'to seize, grab') (de Vaan 2008: 172 s. v. *discipulus*, 89 s. v. *capiō*)
īnstructiō < *īnstruere* 'to set in order, to instruct' < *stru* (**strew* 'to spread') (de Vaan 2008: 592 s. v. *struō*); *īnstrūmentum* 'device' is based on the same root (*ibid.*)

All meaning, among other things, 'decree', all transparent deverbative formations:
īnstitūtum < *īnstituere* 'to institute, to regulate' < ultimately *stā* (**steh*$_2$ 'to stand') (de Vaan 2008: 589 s. v. *stāre*)
statūtum < *statuere* 'to impose a condition or law upon one, decree, order', based ultimately on *stā* as well
dēcrētum < *dēcernere* 'to decide, decree' < *dē* + *cern*, **krei* 'to separate, discern' (Latin *crīmen* 'verdict, crime', *certus* 'determined, certain'; Greek *krīnō* 'to separate, distinguish, decide', *krīsis* 'decision, judgement') (de Vaan 2008: 110)
dogma < *dokeō*, **dek̑* 'to take, perceive' (Latin *docere* 'teach', *dīgnus* 'worthy', *decet* 'it is suitable', *decor* 'what is seemly, grace, ornament', *discere* 'to learn'; Greek *doxa* 'notion, opinion') (Beekes 2010: 320 s. v. *dekhomai* and 344 s. v. *dokeō*, de Vaan 2008: 176)
axiōma < *axiō* 'to deem worthy' < *axios* 'worthy' < *agō*, **h*$_2$*eǵ* 'to drive' (Beekes 2010: 111 s. v. *axios*)
praecēptum < *praecipere* < *prae* + *cap-* **keh*$_2$*p* 'to seize, grab', meaning also 'maxim, rule, order' (de Vaan 2008: 89 s. v. *capiō*)

Conclusions

It should be clear after this exposition that translations of Ancient Chinese texts into modern European languages cannot but fail to render the conceptual metaphors crucial for the normative discourse. When one translates various Ancient Chinese words into

English as "norm", "rule", and so forth, there is a painful awareness that these "norms" may be quite different norms, for example, in the *Shūjīng* on one hand and the *Guǎnzǐ* on the other. However, this problem is not only associated with translating particular passages – translators necessarily fail to convey systematic relationships, the whole complex network with its own structure and own rules that cannot be reasonably rendered in a relatively distant language.

This article is a preliminary study of the conceptual and lexical field of NORM. Much work remains to be done to investigate it in closer detail and in all its complexity, not to mention to make a well-founded comparison with the state of affairs in ancient and modern Europe. The material is extraordinarily extensive, as demonstrated by the overview in the appendix, and the only way to thoroughly exploit it is to use the old, lengthy "manual" method of closely reading each occurrence of a norm word in its broader context and evaluating it from the different perspectives outlined in this article. Passages in which symbolic, metaphoric, and half-concrete/half-abstract meanings come into play are especially elusive but crucial; they should be analysed extensively and in high detail, as they open the way to the very core mechanism of figurative derivation in this domain and to the conceptual foundations of the whole lexical and conceptual field, which in turn shape the given discourses. I am not aware of any study of this kind on any lexical field in Ancient Chinese. This lack of literature might be an excuse for the fact that this paper is certainly sketchy in many places and, on the whole, draws the reader's attention to hopefully interesting data and possible methods of interpretation rather than presents neatly sorted results and extensive conclusions, for which a monograph would be a better format.

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APPENDIX

± = not especially typical example
d = definition
a = abstract
m = metaphoric
c = concrete
s = symbolic
v = (only) verbally
adj = adjectively
? = dubious case
! = well attested, good examples

Shū = *Shūjīng*, *Shī* = *Shījīng*, ZY = *Zhōuyì*, ZL = *Zhōulǐ*, YL = *Yílǐ*, LJ = *Lǐjì*, ZZ = *Zuǒzhuàn*, GY = *Guóyǔ*, LY = *Lúnyǔ*, ZGC = *Zhànguócè*, MD = *Mòzǐ*, Zh = *Zhuāngzǐ*, XZ = *Xúnzǐ*, HF = *Hánfēizǐ*, LS = *Lǚshì chūnqiū*, GZ = *Guǎnzǐ*, LZ = *Lǎozǐ*, SJS = *Shāngjūnshū*, YZ = *Yànzǐ chūnqiū*, Sūn = *Sūnzǐ*, WL = *Wèiliáozǐ*, LT = *Liùtāo*, HGZ = *Hèguānzǐ*, SHD = *Shuìhǔdì*, XJ = *Xiàojīng*, Shèn = *Shènzǐ*

Monosyllabic terms and constituents:

xíng 刑/型 ‘casting mould > model’
fàn 範 ‘bamboo mould > model > rule’
fǎ 法 ‘model > law’

Commentary to distribution:

untraced, but starting already in *Shū* and *Shī*
1x *Shū*, 1x verbally MZ
untraced, but early and most general term, incl. *Shū*

shì 式 'form > model'	*Shū*, *Shī*, ZL (±), LJ (±), LZ, GZ (strange), SHD
zé 則 'model, rule'	*Shū*, *Shī*, ZY, ZL, LJ, ZZ, GY, LY, MZ, MD
shuài 率 'model, rule'	rare; XZ, GZ
lǐ 理 'structure, order > rule, principle'	untraced in detail; very frequent in later texts; from ZY
wén 文 '(a type of) pattern'	almost everywhere, with various meanings; (a/m, c/a) ZY, ZL, GY (s), XZ (!), HF (d), LS, GZ (?), HGZ
zhāng 章 '(a type) of pattern'	*Shī* (±), LJ (±), ZZ (±), GY, Zh (±), XZ, LS, YZ (±)
jīng 經 'warp'	everywhere, starting from *Shū*, earlier rather verbally
wěi 緯 'weft'	only in compounds
gāng 綱 'head-rope of fishing net'	*Shū* (±), *Shī* (typ.), MD, HF=LS, HGZ
jì 紀 '(main) head of silk thread'	both verbally and nominally; *Shī*, ZL, LJ, ZZ, GY, MD, Zh, XZ, HF, LS, GZ, YZ, LT, HGZ, SHD
wéi 維 'rope'	*Shī* (v), ZL (v), Zh (v, ?), GZ (!), YZ (?), HGZ (?)
tǒng 統 'main silk thread'	YL (?), XZ (!), GZ (?)
suǒ 索 'rope'	ZZ
guàn 貫 'string'	XZ, but somewhat problematic, Zh dubious
guǐ 軌 'tracks'	ZZ, Zh, HF (!), SJS (adj), GZ
jí 極 'ridgepole'	*Shū*, *Shī*, maybe HF, all problematic and unreliable
xù 序/敍 'order'	*Shū*, *Shī*, ZY, LJ, ZZ, GY, MZ (±), Zh, XZ, HF (±), LS, GZ, YZ, HGZ (±)
zhì 秩 'order'	*Shū* (±), LJ (±±)
shù 數 'number > method'	untraced, extremely widespread
lún 倫 'category'	*Shū*, *Shī*, LJ, LY, Zh, MZ (±), XZ, YZ (±)
lèi 類 'category', both > 'rules of conduct'	ZY and LJ special (±), practically limited to XZ (!)
yí 彝 'constant, usual > constant (pattern > rule)'	*Shū*, *Shī*
cháng 常 'constant, usual > constant (pattern > rule)'	practically everywhere, frequent, starting from *Shī*
(*héng* 恆 'constant, usual > constant (pattern > rule)'	sometimes parallel with *cháng*, but usually 'constancy', rare)
diǎn 典 'constant, usual > constant (pattern > rule)'	*Shū*, *Shī*, ZL, LJ, ZZ, GY, MD (?), LS

yōng 庸 'constant, usual > constant (pattern > rule)'	*Shū*
jiù 舊 'old (good methods) > ancient norms'	*Shī*
dào 道'way > method > norm'	untraced, ubiquitous, general word, starting from *Shū*
shù 術'way > method > right method'	ubiquitous except for *Shū* and *Shī*
chéng 程 'measure (in general)'	*Shī* (v); XZ, HF, SJS, SHD
dù 度 'length measure'	untraced, ubiquitous, general word, starting from *Shū*
kuí 揆 'direction measure'	MZ, HF (v, ±)
quán 權 'weight'	ZL (±), LJ, GY (m), MZ (v, m), XZ (v, m), SJS (m)
héng 衡 'arm of steelyard > balance'	(*Shū* c/s), (LJ c/s), LJ (m), XZ (!), HF (m), GZ (m)
chèng 稱/秤 'steelyard'	GZ, Sūn
liàng 量 'volume measure'	untraced, ubiquitous, general, from *Shū* (s) onward
gài 概 'levelling stick'	XZ (!), GZ (?)
zhǔn 準 'level'	XZ (m), HF, GZ, Shèn (v)
guī 規 'compass'	LJ (m), MD (m), HF ("admonish"), GZ
jǔ 矩 'carpenter's square'	LJ (m), LY, MD (m), XZ (m), (LS m), GZ (m)
shéng 繩 'carpenter's rope'	LJ (m), MD (m), Zh (m), XZ (!), HF (!), Shèn, LS, SJS, GZ, HGZ
mò 墨 'ink line (for straight sawing)'	only in compounds
lǜ 律 'tuning pipe'	(*Shū* s), ZY (!), LJ (v), ZZ, GY (±), XZ (!), SJS, GZ, WL, SHD (!)
yí 儀 'indicator'	*Shī* and *Shū* misleading, meaning usually 'dignified manner'; ZZ, GY, MD, XZ (m, !), GZ
biǎo 表 'marking pillar'	LJ, XZ (m, !), HF (m, !), LS (m), HGZ (m), SHD
niè 臬 'gnomon'	*Shū*
zhèng 正 'upright > norm'	common, starting with *Shū*
yì 義 'social or moral appropriateness'	untraced, ubiquitous, beginning with *Shū*
zhì 制 'control > regulations, system, regime'	common; ZY (?), ZL, LJ, ZZ (!), GY (!), ZGC, MZ, MD, (Zh ?), XZ (!), HF, LS, SJS, GZ (!), YZ, WL, HGZ
jié 節 'bamboo joint > restrain(t); rhythm, standard, rules of conduct, moral integrity'	untraced, common word, all over later texts

(*jiǎn* 檢 'examine, restrain > laws, statutes'	only in a compound)
(*jī* 稽 'examine; control' (both once in a binome),	only in a compound)
fú 幅 'cloth width (standard) > standard'	ZZ=YZ
fāng 方 'direction > method'	common, often non-normative "method"; LJ, ZZ, GY, ZGC, LY (±), MZ (±), MD, Zh (±), XZ, HF, LS, GZ
xiàn 憲 'decree'	*Shū*, *Shī*, ZL, LJ, GY, ZGC, MD, GZ
lìng 令 'order'	ubiquitous, general word, starting from *Shū*
mìng 命 'order'	ubiquitous, general word, starting from *Shū*
jìn 禁 'prohibition'	ubiquitous, but missing in *Shū*, *Shī* or ZY, later texts
xùn 訓 'instruct, instruction'	*Shū*, ZL, ZZ, GY, MZ
dì 的 'target'	HF (m)
(*zhì* 質 'target'	only in a compound)

Disyllabic words:	**Commentary to distribution:**
wénzhāng 文章 < 'pattern' + '(a kind of) pattern'	(ZGC ?). XZ (c/a, !), HF (c/a), YZ (c/a)
wénlǐ 文理 < 'pattern' + 'structure, arrangement'	1x LJ, all XZ (!)
biǎoyí 表儀 < 'marking pillar' + 'standard'	ZZ, XZ, GZ, HGZ
yíbiǎo 儀表 < 'standard' + 'marking pillar'	HF, GZ
dùchéng 度程 < 'length measure' + 'measure'	(LJ=LS s)
fǎchéng 法程 < 'model' + 'measure'	LS
chéngshì 程式 < 'measure' + 'pattern, model'	1x SJS, 3x GZ
guǐchéng 軌程 < 'track' + 'measure'	GZ
lǜchéng 律程 < 'tuning pipe' + 'measure'	SHD
quánchèng 權稱 < 'weight' + 'balance'	XZ, GZ
chèngliàng 稱量 < 'balance' + 'volume measure'	GZ
jiùfú 舊服 < 'old' + 'rules'	*Shū*
jiùzhāng 舊章 < 'old' + 'regulations (< patterns)'	*Shū*
jiùdiǎn 舊典 < 'old' + 'standards'	ZZ, GY, LS

jiùfǎ 舊法 < 'old' + 'models, laws'	ZZ, GY
jiùcháng 舊常 < 'old' + 'constant rules'	GY
jiùguàn 舊貫 < 'old' + 'rules (< string)'	LY (±)
quángài 權概 < 'weight' + 'levelling stick'	(LS s)
yílún 彝倫 < 'constant rule' + 'category'	*Shū*
yíxùn 彝訓 < 'constant rule' + 'instruction'	*Shū*
fēiyí 非彝 < 'not be' + 'constant rule'	*Shū*
yíxiàn 彝憲 < 'constant (rule)' + 'statutes, rules'	*Shū*
xíngbì 刑辟 < 'punishment' + 'law'	ZZ, GY, XZ, HF, YZ
fǎfèn 法分 < 'model, law' + 'division; status'	GZ
fǎzhèng 法正 < 'model, law' + '(upright >) norm'	XZ
fǎlìng 法令 < 'model, law' + 'order'	LJ, ZGC, MD, XZ, HF (!), LS, LZ, SJS (!), GZ, Sūn, LT, HGZ, WZ
fǎxíng 法刑 < 'model, law' + 'punishment'	GY, HFZ
xíngfǎ 刑法 < 'punishment' + 'model, law'	ZZ, GY
fǎjìn 法禁 < 'model, law' + 'prohibition'	HF, GZ, LT
fǎbì 法辟 < 'model, law' + 'norm, law'	HF, GZ
gùfǎ 故法 < 'old, former' + 'model, law'	HF, LS
chángfǎ 常法 < 'constant' + 'model, law'	ZZ, GY, XZ, HF, GZ, YZ, WL, Shèn
jìnfǎ 禁法 < 'prohibition' + 'model, law'	HF
jìnfǎlìng 禁法令 < 'prohibition' + 'model, law' + 'order'	SJS
dàofǎ 道法 < 'right way, method, norm' + 'model, law'	XZ
lǐfǎ 禮法 < 'ritual standards' + 'model, law'	XZ
bǎikuí 百揆 < 'hundred' + 'measure'	*Shū*, ZZ
kuídù 揆度 < 'measure' + 'length measure'	HGZ
diǎnxíng 典型 < 'standard' + 'model (< mould)'	*Shū*, *Shī*, GY, MZ, XZ
shuàidiǎn 率典 < 'norm' + 'standard'	*Shū*
diǎnlǐ 典禮 < 'standard' + 'rite'	ZY
diǎnyào 典要 < 'standard' + 'key point'	ZY
diǎncháng 典常 < 'standard' + 'constant rule'	ZY

xiāndiǎn 先典 < 'former' + 'standard'	YL
numeral + *diǎn* 典	
genitive + *diǎn* 典	
xùndiǎn 訓典 < 'instruction' + 'standard'	ZZ, GY
lìngdiǎn 令典 < 'good' + 'standard'	ZZ
sìdiǎn 嗣典 < 'inherit' + 'standard'	GY (±)
diǎnfǎ 典法 < 'standard' + 'law'	Zh, GZ
diǎnzhì 典制 < 'standard' + 'regulation'	XZ
dàlún 大倫 < 'big' + 'category'	LJ (±), LY (±)
lúnlǐ 倫理 < 'category' + 'structure' (,)	LJ
lúnlèi 倫類< 'category' + 'category'	XZ
lúnděng 倫等 (?) < 'category' + 'degree'	GZ
lúnliè 倫列 (?) < 'category' + 'row, rank'	MD
bǎisuǒ 百索< 'hundred' + 'rule (? < rope)'	XZ
jiéwén 節文 < 'regulation, moderation' + 'pattern'	LJ, XZ
jiùwén 舊文 < 'old' + 'pattern'	(XZ – rather concrete use)
jīngjì 經紀 < 'guideline (< warp)' + 'guideline (< silk thread)'	LJ, XZ, LS, GZ, YZ, LT
dàjīng 大經 < 'great' + 'guideline (< warp)'	LJ, ZZ, LS, GZ
jīnglǐ 經理 < 'guideline (< warp)' + 'structure'	XZ
numeral + *jīng* 經	
jīngwěi 經緯 < 'warp (> guideline)' + 'weft (> guideline)'	often verbally, ZZ, GY, Zh, XZ
chángjīng 常經 < 'constant' + 'guideline (< warp)'	ZGC, GZ
jīngshì 經式 < 'guideline (< warp)' + 'model'	Zh
jīngchén 經臣 jīngsú 經俗 jīngchǎn 經產	GZ
jīngcháng 經常 < 'guideline (< warp)' + 'constant rule'	GZ
jīngzhì 經制 (v) < 'organize (< warp)' + 'regulate'	WL (v)
jīnglìng 經令 (v) < 'organize (< warp)' + 'order'	WL (v)
jīngfǎ 經法 < 'guideline (<warp)' + 'law	HGZ

lǐjīng 禮經 < 'ritual standards' + 'guideline (< warp)'	ZZ, XZ
shànjīng 善經 < 'good' + 'guideline (< warp)'	ZZ
shìjīng 事經 < 'affairs' + 'guideline (< warp)'	HF
numeral + *shù* 術	
genitive + *shù* 術 (large amounts)	
fǎshù 法術 < 'law' + '(ruling) method'	ZGC, HF (!), SJS, GZ, Shèn
yàoshù 要術 < 'key' + 'method'	XZ
shùshù 術數 < 'method (< way)' + 'method (< number)'	HF, GZ, HGZ
jīngshù 經術 < 'guideline (< warp)' + 'method'	*Sùwèn*
dàoshù 道術 < 'right method (< way)' + 'method (< way)'	MD, Zh (!), XZ, HF, LS, GZ, YZ
fāngshù 方術 < 'method' + 'method (< way)'	XZ, LS
běngāng 本綱 < 'basis' + 'head-rope of fishing net'	HF
zhǔnshéng 準繩 < 'level' + 'carpenter's rope'	MZ (c/a), LS (m), GZ (m)
shéngzhǔn 繩準 < 'carpenter's rope' + 'level'	GZ rather concretely
zhǔnrén 準人 < 'level > norm, law' + 'people'	*Shū*
shéngmò 繩墨 < 'carpenter's rope' + 'ink lines'	ZGC (±), MZ (m), Zh, XZ, HF, SJS (!), GZ
mínjì 民紀 < 'people' + 'guideline, rule (< silk thread)'	LJ, GZ
jìlǜ 紀律 < 'guideline, rule (< silk thread)' + 'rule (< tuning pipe)'	ZZ
jìjí 紀極 < 'guideline, rule (< silk thread)' + 'rule (< extreme)'	ZZ
jìtǒng 紀統 < 'guideline, rule (< silk thread)' + 'guideline (< main thread of silk)'	GY
numeral + *jì* 紀	
dàjì 大紀 < 'great' + 'guideline, rule (< silk thread)'	GY, LY

dàojì 道紀 < 'right method' + 'guideline, rule (< silk thread)'	LZ (±)
běnjì 本紀 < 'basic' + 'guideline, rule (< silk thread)'	GZ (?)
zhèngjì 正紀 < 'correct' + 'guideline, rule (< silk thread)'	GZ
gāngjì 綱紀 'hear-rope of fishing net' + 'guideline, rule (< silk thread)'	*Shī* (v), XZ
sìwéi 四維 < 'four' + 'guideline (< rope)'	GZ
wéigāng 維綱 < 'guideline (< rope)' + 'guideline (< head-rope of fishing net)'	Zh, GZ
zhìdì 質的 < 'target' + 'target'	XZ (m)
dìgòu 的彀 < 'target' + 'shooting range'	HF (m)
zhèngdì 正的 < 'norm (< correct)' + 'target'	HF (m)
guǐliàng 軌量 < 'track' + 'volume measure'	ZZ (±), but strange
bùguǐ 不軌 < 'not' + 'track'	ZZ
guǐyí 軌儀 < 'track' + 'standard'	GY
guǐjié 軌節 < 'track' + 'regulation'	HF
guǐdù 軌度 < 'track' + 'measure'	ZZ (v), LS
guījǔ 規矩< 'compass' + 'carpenter's square'	LJ (m), MZ (m), MD, Zh (m), XZ, HF (m, !), LS, GZ, YZ
guīshéng 規繩 < 'compass' + 'carpenter's rope'	XZ
numeral + *cháng* 常	
genitive + *cháng* 常	
dàcháng 大常 < 'great' + 'constant rule'	Zh
gǔcháng 古常 < 'ancient' + 'constant rule'	YZ
yǒucháng 有常 < 'have' (or prefix?) + 'constant rule'	*Shū*
héngcháng 恆常 < 'constant (rule)' + 'constant rule'	GY
gùcháng 故常 < 'old, original' + 'constant rule'	Zh, HF
numeral + *jí* 極	
mínjí 民極 < 'people' + 'law (< extreme)'	*Shū*, ZL
tiānjí 天極 < 'heaven' + 'law (< extreme)'	GZ (?)

bǎidù 百度 < 'hundred' + '(length) measure'	GY
zhìdù 制度 < 'regulation' + '(length) measure'	LJ, ZZ, GY, XZ (!), SJS, GZ, WL
dìngdù 定度 < 'fix' + '(length) measure'	GZ
fǎdù 法度 < 'law' + '(length) measure'	*Shū*, ZZ, ZGC, LY, Zh, XZ, HF (!), SJS, GZ (!), LT, Shèn, HGZ, SHD
dùchéng 度程 < '(length) measure' + 'measure'	(LJ=LS c/s)
dùliàng 度量 < '(length) measure' + '(volume) measure'	LS (s), GY, MZ, XZ (!), HF (!), SJS, GZ, Shèn, HGZ
dùyí 度儀 < 'length measure' + 'gnomon, indicator'	GZ
dùshù 度數 < 'length measure' + 'number (> method)'	ZL, LJ, Zh, HF (!), SJS, GZ, HGZ
lǜdù 律度 < 'regulation (< tuning pipe)' + '(length) measure'	ZZ, GZ
yìdù 義度 < 'social propriety' + '(length) measure'	Zh
shùdù 數度 < 'number' + '(length) measure'	ZY (s), (ZL), Zh (±)
dédù 德度 < 'virtue' + '(length) measure'	ZZ, but spurious
quándù 權度 < 'weight' + '(length) measure'	ZL, GZ
liàngdù 量度 < '(volume) measure' + '(length) measure'	ZL
fǎshì 法式 < 'model, law' + 'model, pattern'	Zh, XZ, LS, GZ
jīnshì 矜式 (v) < 'advocate' + 'model, pattern'	MZ
chángshì 常式 < 'constant' + 'model, pattern'	GZ
yíshìxíng 儀式型 (v) < 'model, standard' + 'model, pattern' + '(mould >) model'	*Shī*
jiǎnshì 檢式 < 'laws, statutes (< control < examine)' + 'model, pattern'	GZ
jīshì 稽式 < 'laws, statutes (control < examine)' + 'model, pattern'	LZ
fēiyì 非義 < 'be not' + 'social propriety'	ZZ
bùyì 不義 < 'not' + 'socially proper'	LJ, ZZ, ZGC, MZ, XZ, HF, LS (!), GZ, WL, XJ
rényì 人義 < 'man' + 'social propriety'	LJ

lǐyì 禮義 < 'ritual propriety' + 'social propriety'	ZY, LJ, ZZ, GY, ZGC, MZ, Zh, XZ (!!), HF, GZ, YZ, HGZ
lǐyì 理義 < 'structure, order' + 'social propriety'	MZ, LS, GZ
numeral + *yì* 義	
gōngyì 公義 < 'public' + 'propriety'	MD, XZ, HF, Shèn
fēnyì 分義 < 'social role' + 'social propriety'	XZ
dàyì 大義 < 'great' + '(social) propriety'	ZY, LJ, ZZ, GY, Zh, XZ, LS, GZ, YZ, LT
generally many genitives + *yì* 義 and *yì* 義 + noun	
zhèngyì 正義 < 'correct > correctness, standard' + 'social propriety'	XZ, LS
fǎyì 法義 < 'law' + 'social propriety'	HF, HGZ
gāoyì 高義 < 'lofty' + 'moral principles'	ZGC, Zh, HGZ
chángyì 常義 < 'constant' + 'principles'	GZ
tōngyì 通義 < 'general' + 'principle'	MZ, XZ
jiéyì 節義 < 'social rules' + 'social propriety'	GY, GZ
yìzhèng 義正 < 'social propriety' + '(correct >) norm'	MD, GZ
yìfǎ 義法 < 'social propriety' + 'law'	MD, XZ
yìshuài 義率 < 'social propriety' + 'norm'	*Shū*
yìlǐ 義理 < 'social propriety' + 'order, correct structure'	LJ, HF, LS, GZ, YZ
yìlǐ 義禮 < 'social propriety' + 'ritual propriety'	GZ
dàoyì 道義 < 'right method (< way)' + 'socially proper conduct'	ZY, LJ, XZ, GZ, YZ
*yìdào*義道 < 'socially proper conduct' + 'right method (< way)'	LJ, GZ
lǜlìng 律令 < 'regulations (< tuning pipe)' + 'order'	ZGC, SHD
fǎlǜ 法律 < 'law' + 'regulations (< tuning pipe)'	Zh, HF, LS, GZ, SHD
lǜguàn 律貫 < 'regulations (< tuning pipe)' + 'guidelines, system (< string)'	XZ
zhènglǜ 正律 < '(correct >) norm' + 'regulations (< tuning pipe)'	SJS
dàlǜ 大律 < 'great' + 'regulations (< tuning pipe)'	SJS
xiànlǜ 憲律 < 'statutes' + 'regulations (< tuning pipe)'	GZ

shìlǜ 事律 < 'affair' + 'regulations (< tuning pipe)'	GZ
yònglǜ 用律 < 'employ(ed)' + 'regulations (< tuning pipe)'	SHD
numeral + *yí* 儀	
zhèngyí 正儀 < '(correct>) norm' + 'standard'	XZ
dàyí 大儀 < 'great' + 'standard'	GZ
fǎyí 法儀 < 'law' + 'standard'	MD, GZ, YZ
yíxíng 儀型 < 'standard' + 'model'	*Shū*
yídì 儀的 < 'standard' + 'target'	HF
yífǎ 儀法 < 'standard' + 'law, model'	MD, YZ
yízé 儀則 < 'standard' + 'rule'	Zh
yíjié 儀節 < 'standard' + 'regulation, rules'	ZZ
héngyí 衡儀 < '(arm of) steelyard' + 'standard'	GZ
lǐyí 禮儀 < 'rites' + 'standard'	ZL, LJ, XZ
jiézhì 節制 < 'regulations, rules' + 'regulations'	XZ, WL
zhìjié 秩節 < 'order' + 'regulations, rules'	LJ
dàjié 大節 < 'great' + 'regulations, rules'	ZZ, GY, LY, XZ, YZ
dàzhāng 大章< 'great' + 'pattern'	GY
tǒnglèi 統類< 'guideline (< main thread of silk)' + '(category >) rule of conduct'	XZ, special
běntǒng 本統 < 'basis' + 'guideline (< main thread of silk)'	XZ
tǒngshuài 統率 (v) < guide (< main thread of silk)'' + 'guide'	(LS)
zhìliàng 制量 < 'regulation (< control)' + '(volume) measure'	GY
zhìshù 制數 < 'regulation (< control)' + 'method (< number)'	XZ
fǎzhì 法制 < 'law' + 'regulation (< control)'	LJ, ZZ, GY, HF, LS, SJS (!), GZ (!!), WL, Shèn, HGZ
many genitives + *zhì* 制	
héngzhì 恆制 < 'constant' + 'regulation (< control)'	GY

shèngzhì 聖制 < 'sage' + 'system of regulation'	LS
lǐzhì 禮制 < 'rites' + 'system of regulation'	LJ, XZ, GZ
quánzhì 權制 < 'weight' + 'regulation (< control)'	SJS 1x
zhìlìng 制令 < 'regulation (< control)' + 'order'	ZZ, ZGC, SJS, GZ
zhèngquán 正權 < '(correct >) norm' + 'weight'	XZ (m)
héngquán 衡權 < '(arm of) steelyard' + 'weight'	ZGC, Zh, XZ, HF, LS, SJS, GZ, WL, Shèn, SHD
quánliàng 權量 < 'weight' + '(volume) measure'	(ZL c/a), LY
quánhéng 權衡 < 'weight' + '(arm of) steelyard'	SHD
shùliàng 數量 < 'number' + '(volume) measure'	(XZ c/a)
xiànlìng 憲令 < 'statute' + 'order'	ZZ, GY, HF, GZ
xiànfǎ 憲法 < 'statute' + 'law'	GY, GZ
xiànzé 憲則 < 'statute' + 'rule'	ZL, GY
xiànshù 憲術 < 'statute' + 'right method (< way)'	GZ
xiànzhāng 憲章 (v) < 'statute' + 'pattern'	LJ
lǐxiàn 禮憲 < 'ritual standards' + 'statutes, rules'	XZ
chángxiàn 常憲 < 'constant' + 'statutes, rules'	*Shū*
chéngxiàn 成憲 < 'completed, fixed' + 'statutes, rules'	*Shū*
dàshù 大數 < 'great' + 'method (< number)'	LJ, ZZ, GZ (±), LT, HGZ
běnshù 本數 < 'basic' + 'method (< number)'	Zh
fǎshù 法數 < 'law' + 'method (< number)'	XZ, HF, GZ
chángshù 常數 < 'constant' + 'method (< number)'	ZGC, XZ
shùyào 數要 < 'method (< number)' + 'key point'	ZL
fǎzé 法則 < 'law' + 'rule'	LJ, ZZ, MD, Zh, XZ (!), LS, WL, HGZ

many genitives + *zé* 則	
bǎizé 百則 < ‘hundred’ + ‘rule’	GY
běnzé 本則 < ‘’ + ‘rule’	GZ
xùnzé 訓則 < ‘instructions’ + ‘rules’	GY
lǐzé 禮則 < ‘ritual norms of conduct’ + ‘rules’	ZZ
qiánxùn 前訓 < ‘former’ + ‘instructions’	GY
míngxùn 明訓 and similar	GY
gǔxùn 古訓 < ‘ancient’ + ‘instructions’	*Shū*
dàxùn 大訓 < ‘great’ + ‘instructions’	*Shū*
jiàoxùn 教訓 < ‘instruction’ + ‘instructions’	ZZ, GZ, YZ
xiàxùn 夏訓 < ‘Xià’ + ‘instructions’	ZZ
xùncí 訓辭 < ‘instructions’ + ‘formulations’	ZZ, GY
yíxùn 遺訓 < ‘leave over’ + ‘instructions’	GY
dàfāng 大方 < ‘great’ + ‘method’	Zh, LS, LZ
wěifāng 偽方 < ‘deceive’ + ‘method’	LT, rather non-normative “method”
fǎfāng 法方 < ‘model’ + ‘method’	XZ
fāngshù 方術 < ‘method’ + ‘method (< number)’	Zh, XZ, HF, LS
fānglüè 方略 < ‘method’ + ‘strategy’	XZ
fāngjì 方技 < ‘method’ + ‘technique, art’	MD
fāngzhèng 方正 < ‘upright’ + ‘correct’	HF
fāngxīn 方心 < ‘upright’ + ‘thinking, attitude’	GZ
yìfāng 義方 < ‘social propriety’ + ‘method’	ZZ, GY
gōnglǐ 公理 < ‘(pro)-public’ + ‘structure, pattern > order > rules’	GZ
sīlǐ 私理 < ‘(pro)-private’ + ‘structure, pattern > order > rules’	GZ
many genitives + *lǐ* 理	
dàlǐ 大理 < ‘great’ + ‘structure, pattern > order > rules’	XZ, HF, LS, GZ
shìlǐ 事理 < ‘affair’ + ‘structure, pattern > order > rules’	XZ
chénglǐ 成理 < ‘complet(ed)’ + ‘structure, pattern > order > rules’	Zh
tínglǐ 廷理 < ‘courtyard’ + ‘structure, pattern > order > rules’	HF

dìnglǐ 定理 < 'fix(ed)' + 'structure, pattern > order > rules'	HF
wùlǐ 物理 < 'thing' + 'structure, pattern > order > rules'	HGZ
zhìlǐ 治理 < 'order' + 'structure, pattern > order > rules'	HF
fēilǐ 非理 < 'not be' + 'structure, pattern > order > rules'	GZ
zhènglǐ 政理 < 'political measure' + 'structure, pattern > order > rules'	GZ
tiáolǐ 條理 < 'system, order' + 'structure, pattern > order > rules'	MZ (±)
chánglǐ 常理 < 'constant' + 'structure, pattern > order > rules'	HGZ, HF, Shèn
dàolǐ 道理 < 'right way' + 'structure, pattern > order > rules'	Zh, XZ, HF (!), Shèn, ZGC
zhènglǐ 正理 < 'upright, correct (> norm)' + 'structure, pattern > order > rules'	HF, GZ
many genitives + *dào* 道 'way > method > right methods'	
bùdào 不道 'not' + 'way > method > right methods'	ZZ, GY, MD
fēidào 非道 'not be' + 'way > method > right methods'	XZ
dàdào 大道 'great' + 'way > method > right methods'	LJ, ZZ, MZ, Zh, XZ, HF, LS, LZ, GZ, WL, Shèn, HGZ
zhèngdào 正道 'correct' + 'way > method > right methods'	LJ, XZ, HF, GZ, Shèn
duāndào 端道 'correct' + 'way > method > right methods'	HF
zhìdào 至道 'ultimate' + 'way > method > right methods'	LJ, ZGC, Zh, XZ, GZ, LT, HGZ
miàodào 妙道 'superb' + 'way > method > right methods'	Zh
míngdào 明道 'bright' + 'way > method > right methods'	LZ
yàodào 要道 'key > crucial point' + 'way > method > right methods'	ZGC, XJ
shéndào 神道 'supernaturally efficient' + 'way > method > right methods'	ZY

chángdào 常道 ‘constant’ + ‘way > method > right methods’	ZGC, XZ, HF, LZ, GZ, Shèn
shùdào 術道 ‘way > method’ + ‘way > method > right methods’	XZ
dàoběn 道本 ‘way > method > right methods’+ ‘basis’	ZL
dàoguàn 道貫 ‘way > method > right methods’ + ‘string > basic method’	XZ

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THE TURN TOWARDS PHILOSOPHY IN THE EARLIEST COSMOLOGIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELECTED EXCAVATED WARRING STATES-PERIOD MANUSCRIPTS AND PRE-SOCRATIC FRAGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Excavated texts from the fourth century BC bring new elements previously thought missing in the earliest Chinese thought. They develop cosmological theories comparable to those found in the pre-Socratic tradition, especially in processual thinkers such as the Milesians and Heraclitus. The article explores the resemblances, suggesting that the Eastern and Western thought may have not been so radically different at the beginning. On both sides, the texts attest to a new stage of intellectual independence of an individual, using strikingly similar patterns of explanation and means of expression.

Keywords: early Chinese thought; cosmology; metaphysics; excavated texts; pre-Socratics; Anaximander; Anaximenes; oneness; process philosophy

The excavated texts from the Warring States period have brought substantial new material to the ongoing debate on whether the earliest Chinese thought should be treated as philosophy in the sense established in the Western tradition. The earliest cosmologies, as well as the intense questioning of the structure and functioning of the universe, expressed in fourth-century-BC texts such as the *Tàiyī shēng shuǐ* 太一生水, *Héng xiān* 恆先, and *Fán wù liú xíng* 凡物流形, represent an important turn towards the intellectual independence of the individual: these works lay out cosmological dynamics for an individual to accept through intellectual understanding, and subsequently, this understanding can guide how individuals adapt their actions to the whole of the universe.

In ancient Greece, a similar turn took place with pre-Socratic thinkers, most notably the Milesians and Heraclitus, giving birth to the tradition of what we today regard as philosophy. If we try to do justice to pre-Socratic fragments and disentangle them from the heavy terminological burden of Aristotelian, Platonic, and Peripatetic interpretations, we discover striking similarities with the above-mentioned Chinese texts, both on the level of expression and concerns involved. Also, the comparative perspective shows how, on both sides, researchers deal with similar methodological challenges related to the textual linguistics of fragmented material.

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Newly discovered cosmologies and the Chinese philosophical narrative

The Warring States-period texts excavated towards the end of the twentieth century brought new stimuli to the ongoing debate about the "philosophical relevance" of ancient Chinese thought. This debate, as has been pointed out,[1] is plagued by ideological and emotional arguments. The question of "philosophical relevance" easily becomes a question of the superiority of one history-of-thought narrative over another. As a result, Chinese scholars often try to forcibly adapt their interpretation of ancient Chinese texts to the framework of Western philosophical discourses. In this context, it might be useful to treat "philosophy" not as a highly worshipped value label but rather as the indication of a specific genre or type of questioning.

The recently discovered texts of the *Tàiyī shēng shuǐ* 太一生水 (TYSS), *Héng xiān* 恆先 (HX), and *Fán wù liú xíng* 凡物流形 (FWLX), dated roughly to the mid-fourth century BC, contain elements that have previously been thought missing, or at least marginal, in the development of Chinese thought: cosmological inquiry and the questioning of the nature and structure of the Universe as a *cosmos*, or a well-ordered whole, from the perspective of an independently thinking individual. These elements challenge the belief that Chinese thought is somehow radically different from Western and that therefore the two cannot be compared.[2] Hall and Ames have even proposed a neologism, *acosmotic*, to emphasize the difference between ancient Chinese and Greek thought:

> The classical Chinese are primarily *acosmotic* thinkers. By 'acosmotic' we shall mean that they do not depend in the majority of their speculations upon either the notion that the totality of things (*wan-wu* 萬物 or *wan-you* 萬有, 'the ten thousand things') has a radical beginning, or that these things constitute a single-ordered world (Hall and Ames 1995: 184).

Today, this position is being widely re-evaluated. The excavated texts, such as the TYSS or HX, are considered to contain the earliest examples of cosmogonic and cosmological thought. In the light of these texts, some previously neglected pieces of well-known received texts are being rediscovered and reinterpreted. The Nèiyè (*Guǎnzǐ*), *Zhuāngzǐ*, *Lǚshì chūnqiū*, and *Huáinánzǐ* contain interesting cosmological passages. Moreover, thanks to the fairly reliable dating of at least some of the excavated material, these elements seem to have appeared as early as the mid-fourth century BC. Some scholars even talk about a "cosmogonic turn" or a "fundamental shift in the philosophical terrain" of early Chinese thought.[3]

Is Chinese cosmology metaphysics?

In the debate about whether such a "turn towards philosophy" really took place, we often encounter questions about elements of metaphysics, transcendence, permanence, and

[1] Cf. Defoort 2001.
[2] Cf., e.g., Mote 1971; USA: Knopf 1971; Hall and Ames 1995, or Hall and Ames 1998.
[3] E.g., Perkins 2016.

truth in ancient Chinese thought. To the detriment of the debate, these concepts are often applied vaguely and without taking into account their historical context. The late Professor Yu Jiyuan, in his article 'Is Chinese Cosmology Metaphysics?' (Yu 2011), summarizes the confusion caused by the inconsistent use of terms such as *metaphysical* and *cosmological* when it comes to ancient Chinese thought. He poses an important question: If Chinese thought supposedly lacks interest in metaphysical pursuits, being preoccupied with merely practical affairs (the functioning of the human world and society), how can it still have cosmological concepts? Are Chinese cosmologies not metaphysical? If not, what does it tell us about our understanding of the relationship between cosmology and metaphysics?

Building on this inspiration, I would like to suggest that metaphysics may not be the most appropriate reference frame when it comes to the earliest cosmological questioning, both in ancient China and Greece. We should be aware that metaphysics as a special discipline was born together with the specific Aristotelian perspective. Aristotle himself understood it as a special type of science that studies "the first causes and principles of things" or "being qua being" (*to on hēi on*). Metaphysics[4] is not concerned with the different aspects (*to symbebēkos*) of this "being", understood as an entity (*to on*), but with its substance (*ousia*), explained through its principles, and causes (*archai kai aitiai*):

> πανταχοῦ δὲ κυρίως τοῦ πρώτου ἡ ἐπιστήμη, καὶ ἐξ οὗ τὰ ἄλλα ἤρτηται, καὶ δι᾽ ὃ λέγονται. εἰ οὖν τοῦτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία, τῶν οὐσιῶν ἂν δέοι τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς αἰτίας ἔχειν τὸν φιλόσοφον (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4, 1003b20).
> Now in every case knowledge is principally concerned with that which is primary, i.e. that upon which all other things depend, and from which they get their names. If, then, substance is this primary thing, it is of substances that the philosopher must grasp the first principles and causes (Aristotle, Metaphysics 4, 1003b17–19, tr. Tredennick 1933).

This quote hints but slightly at Aristotle's specific approach, which is based on a very different kind of questioning: the question here is not "what there is" but rather "what can be correctly known and how." Such an approach naturally takes "entities" as the point of departure and searches for the underlying stable structures behind them. Thus, the world is ontologically split into two layers: behind the changing and incidental aspects of a thing, there is its substance, or essence, which makes it what it is. This "crack in reality" later developed within the Peripatetic school into a more pronounced dichotomy between two layers of reality: the layer of changing aspects accessible through perception and a deeper layer accessible through thought, one of invisible substance and primary causes. In line with Plato, metaphysics as a primary science became concerned with the realm of eternal validity behind the veil of changing appearances.

The language of being

The conceptual framework of Western philosophy is so deeply rooted in Aristotle's vocabulary that it is almost impossible to talk philosophy, especially metaphysics,

[4] More precisely 'the first philosophy'; the title originally just reflected the ordering of Aristotle's works (*meta ta physika*).

without talking Aristotle. In the twentieth century, Martin Heidegger encountered this problem when trying to retrace the earliest roots of philosophy – the point where this specific type of questioning gradually emerges from religion, myth, and poetry. In his lectures on the pre-Socratics, he sought to disentangle their thought from the Aristotelian and later Peripatetic interpretation. In discussing the origins of metaphysics, Heidegger observes that metaphysics is concerned with entities as distinct from "being" itself. "Being" is not thematized. Unlike Aristotle, he sees in some of the pre-Socratics (the Milesians, Heraclitus) a stage where entities are not yet conceptualized as distinct from their being and are essentially "one" – not in the monistic sense of 'one entity' or 'one kind of entities', but as 'one (way of) being'.[5] At this stage, the concept of entity is not yet sufficiently stabilized and it blends with being itself. Yet, as Heidegger points out, the truth can arise as *alētheia* ('non-covered') only in the uncovering light of being, whereas in the metaphysical realm truth is only accessed as true cognition (*epistēmē*) and true statement.[6] A discourse immersed in being itself – not yet reduced to an entity – constitutes a different genre that, in my view, may be more relevant for describing the early pre-Socratic and early Chinese cosmological concepts in question.

Oneness or "one being" of the cosmos in the Milesians

When referring to his Milesian predecessors of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, Aristotle reports that they posit "one" as the principle and origin of all things – in his interpretation, this "one" (water, *aēr*, *apeiron*) is *archē*, or a primary cause, and within Aristotle's distinction of four types of causes, it is the material one. The "one" from which everything arises is therefore interpreted as *primary matter*, or *hylē*. As we can see, for Aristotle such cosmology is incomplete because it lacks an explanation of movement and force behind the process of the generation of all things.

If we now look at Anaximander's and Anaximenes's cosmologies through Heidegger's eyes, we may find a different "one": a "one" that is neither thing, nor entity, nor its material cause. The following fragment from Simplicius is probably the most direct testimony about Anaximander's "one", or *apeiron*:

> λέγει δ' αὐτὴν [ἀρχὴν] μήτε ὕδωρ μήτε ἄλλο τι τῶν καλουμένων εἶναι στοιχείων, ἀλλ' ἑτέραν τινὰ φύσιν ἄπειρον, ἐξ ἧς ἅπαντας γίνεσθαι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς κόσμους· (B 1) ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσίς ἐστι τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν, ποιητικωτέροις οὕτως ὀνόμασιν αὐτὰ λέγων (Anaximander, fr. A9/B1 – Simplicius, In *Physica* 24, 13, DK 12a9).
>
> He [Anaximander] says that it [*archē*] is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but some other boundless nature, from which come into being all the heavens and the worlds in them. And the source of coming-to-be for existing things is that into which destruction, too, happens **according to necessity; for they pay penalty and retribution to**

[5] Cf. Heidegger 1967.
[6] Cf. Heidegger 1931.

> **each other for their injustice according to the assessment of time**, as he describes it in these rather poetical terms (Anaximander, fr. B1 – Simplicius, In Physica 24, 13 (DK 12a9), tr. Kirk 1957: 105).

Anaximander's *apeiron*, presented by Simplicius as *archē*, is often translated as "infinite" or "boundless".[7] Tradition sees this fragment as the first example of "conceptual abstraction, in essence metaphysical," (Havelock 1983: 53) or even as the first occurrence of the concept of infinity (Nietzsche, Diels). Sometimes it is read as "infinite space".[8] Yet the use of the word in Anaximander's time was much closer to 'boundless', 'lacking boundaries', 'undefined', or even 'wrapped up in itself in a way that no end can be reached'. When we look at the above example, this 'boundless nature' is something from which all things, being defined and possessing boundaries, arise and into which they perish when these boundaries dissolve. Their complementarity and mutual interdependence is evocated through the image of penalty and retribution. The "one" or "boundless" is the guarantee of justice, in the sense that everything arising from it as definite is indebted to the rest of the whole and will eventually repay this debt by returning to it. Behind this principle of justice is the idea that all phenomena are essentially "one being", their existence is interconnected, and the being of any one of them is indebted to the being of the others.

Anything that becomes defined within the undefined "one" necessarily brings about its opposite. For every A, there is a non-A. These two are complementary and inseparable, being essentially "one". Anaximander's cosmology contains examples of such interacting opposites:

> ἐνούσας γὰρ τὰς ἐναντιότητας ἐν τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ, ἀπείρῳ ὄντι σώματι, ἐκκρίνεσθαί φησιν ᾽Αναξίμανδρος, (…). ἐναντιότητες δέ εἰσι θερμὸν ψυχρὸν ξηρὸν ὑγρὸν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα (Anaximander, frag. A 9/2 – Simplicius, In Physica 150, 22–24).
> Anaximander says that the opposites are within the substance that is a boundless body, and that they separate from it. (…) The opposites are hot, cold, dry, wet, and other.[9]

A distinctive feature of Ionian cosmologies, present also in Anaximander, is perpetual motion. Change and motion are seen as fundamental characteristics of the world as accessed through our everyday experience.

> οὗτος μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴν καὶ στοιχεῖον εἴρηκεν τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον, πρῶτος τοὔνομα καλέσας τῆς ἀρχῆς. πρὸς δὲ τούτωι κίνησιν ἀίδιον εἶναι, ἐν ἧι συμβαίνειν γίνεσθαι τοὺς οὐρανούς (A 11 – Hippolytos, *Refutatio* I, 6 ,1–7, tr. Kirk 1957: 105).
> He [Anaximander] said that the principle and element of existing things was the *apeiron*, being the first to use this name for *archē*. In addition to this he said that motion was eternal, in which it results that the heavens come into being.

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[7] Contrary to the traditional view that Anaximander uses the nominalized form *to apeiron*, Couprie and Kočandrle argue that this nominalization appeared only with Aristotle and his followers, and that *apeiron* should be understood as an adjective, i.e., as "undefined/boundless X"; cf. Couprie and Kočandrle 2017.

[8] Kahn 1994: 223: "The Boundless is in fact what we call infinite space (…) But this space is not as yet thought of in the abstraction from the material which fills it."

[9] Any unreferenced translations are my own (shorter excerpts or excerpts where a traditional translation is modified to demonstrate an idea of the text).

For Anaximander, the tension and interaction of opposites is itself the explanation of change and movement. Opposites remain the "one being" of the whole cosmos and, as such, maintain each other in a dynamic equilibrium. Through their interaction, different modes of being arise as distinct – for example, the heavens on one hand and the earth on the other; hot, bright heavenly lights and dark, damp earthly depths, and so forth. However poetic or mythical Anaximander's cosmology may sound, it in fact leads to very concrete proto-scientific considerations about the nature of the physical world, astronomy, meteorological phenomena, and so forth.

Moreover, the whole process of generating differences from differences, down to the level of the subtlest phenomena, is not situated in the remote mythical past but is ongoing and continues to repeat itself. The movement of the opposites is as eternal as the rest of the undivided whole. The undivided whole, being essentially at rest and without change, is paradoxically a source and guarantee of the perpetual movement of the opposites. That is why the "one/boundless" can be characterized as "everlasting and unageing" (*aidion kai agērō*)[10] and surely has divine connotations, as observed by Aristotle:

> καὶ τοῦτ᾽ εἶναι τὸ θεῖον· ἀθάνατον γὰρ καὶ ἀνώλεθρον, ὥς φησιν ὁ Ἀναξίμανδρος καὶ οἱ πλεῖστοι τῶν φυσιολόγων (Anaximander, fr. B 3 – Aristotle, *Physics Book* III, 4; 203b13).
> Further they identify it with the Divine, for it is **'deathless and imperishable'** as Anaximander says, with the majority of the physicists.

In the case of Anaximenes, the candidate for the "one" would be *aēr*. The situation is a bit different here: *aēr* is the term otherwise used for air as one of the elements, or more correctly, as one of the "simplest bodies" (*hapla sōmata*) of which the world is composed. Yet Anaximenes seems to use it differently, in a way that preserves characteristics similar to *apeiron*: it is all-encompassing and nothing is outside of it; it is boundless and undefined, and from it all things arise; and its "oneness" is what holds the cosmos together ontologically:

> ᾽Αναξιμένης δὲ Εὐρυστράτου Μιλήσιος, ἑταῖρος γεγονὼς ᾽Αναξιμάνδρου, μίαν μὲν καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν ὑποκειμένην φύσιν καὶ ἄπειρόν φησιν ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνος, οὐκ ἀόριστον δὲ ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνος, ἀλλὰ ὡρισμένην,[11] ἀέρα λέγων αὐτήν· διαφέρειν δὲ μανότητι καὶ πυκνότητι κατὰ τὰς οὐσίας. καὶ ἀραιούμενον μὲν πῦρ γίνεσθαι, πυκνούμενον δὲ ἄνεμον, εἶτα νέφος, ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ὕδωρ, εἶτα γῆν, εἶτα λίθους, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα ἐκ τούτων. κίνησιν δὲ καὶ οὗτος ἀίδιον ποιεῖ, δι᾽ ἣν καὶ τὴν μεταβολὴν γίνεσθαι (Anaximenes, frag. A5/1 = Simplicius, In Physica 24, 26, tr. Kirk 1957: 144).
> Anaximenes, son of Eurystratus, of Miletus, a companion of Anaximander, also says that the underlying nature is one and infinite like him, but not undefined as Anaximander said but definite, for he identifies it as air; and it differs in its substantial nature by rarity and density. Being made finer it becomes fire, being made thicker it becomes wind, then cloud, then (when thickened still more) water, then earth, then stones; and the rest come into being from these. He, too, makes motion eternal, and says that change, also, comes about through it.

[10] Anaximander, fr. B 2 – Hippolytos, *Refutatio* I, 6, 1.

[11] In this fragment, the description of *aēr* as definite has to be attributed to Simplicius's (Theophrastus's) reading – he would regard *aēr* not as *apeiron* but as one of the *hapla sōmata* and therefore defined; yet in the same fragment, the other *sōmata* are explained as variations of *aēr*.

Compared to Anaximander, the focus may be shifted from the "stabilizing role" of the "one" to the "mobilizing role": at the same time, *aēr*, as all-encompassing, is itself the energy and vehicle of change and movement. It also guarantees the temporal stability of phenomena, in the same way as the soul (*pneuma*) is believed to preserve the unity of a human being. Different stages of being derive from it through rarefaction and condensation (*manotēs*, *pyknotēs*).

Oneness in recently excavated cosmological texts

If we now use this interpretive key to read the early cosmological texts, specifically in the *Tàiyī shēng shuǐ* 太一生水, we can observe a comparable dynamics of opposites arising from the "one", or *tàiyī* 太一:

> 太一生水, 水反輔太一, 是以成天。天反輔太一, 是以成地。天地[復相輔]也, 是以成神明。神明復相輔也, 是以成陰陽。陰陽復相輔也, 是以成四時。四時復[相]輔也, 是以成滄熱。滄熱復相輔也, 是以成濕燥。濕燥復相輔也, 成歲而止。
> The great one gives birth to the water. The water returns and assists the great one, thereby completing the heavens. The heavens return and assist the great one, thereby completing the earth. The heavens and the earth [again assist each other], thereby completing the spiritual and numinous. The spiritual and numinous again assist each other, thereby completing yin and yang. Yin and yang again assist each other, thereby completing the four seasons. The four seasons again assist each other, thereby completing the cold and the hot. The cold and the hot again assist each other, thereby completing the wet and the dry. The wet and the dry again assist each other, completing the yearly cycle, and that is where it stops.

Following Anaximander's example above, a proposed key to interpretation here would be not to regard the stages of cosmological development as entities but rather as modes of being that are in fact "one being" of the undifferentiated whole. The entire system holds together ontologically, guaranteed by "oneness". The fact that the "one" seems to remain continuously present within the changes supports this reading:

> 是故, 太一藏於水, 行於時, 周而又[始, 以己為] (slip 6) 萬物母, 一缺一盈, 以己為萬物經。
> That is why the great one is present in the water, moves with the seasons, returns in circle and [begins anew, making of itself] (slip 6) the mother of all things. Now emptying and now filling, it becomes the warp of all things.

In the *Fán wù liú xíng*, the idea that the "one" is tangibly present and directly accessible in our immediate experience is even more pronounced:

> 是故一, 咀之有味, 嗅[之有臭], 鼓之有聲, 近之可見, 操之可操。
> Therefore, the one can be tasted when chewed; its scent can be perceived when smelled; it makes sound when clapped; it can be seen when approached; it can be managed when an attempt is made to manage it (tr. Chan 2015).

In the TYSS, opposites arise together with boundaries and, within the 'one' as a whole, define each other through lack and abundance:

不足於上]者, 有餘於下, 不足於下者, 有餘於上。
That which is deficient above has a surplus below; that which is deficient below has a surplus above (tr. Cook 2012).

In another Warring States-period cosmological text, the *Héng xiān* 恒先, more is said about the undifferentiated state of being, which can be also understood as the "one/boundless":

恒先無有, 樸、靜、虛。樸, 大樸。靜, 大靜。虛, 大虛。自厭不自忍。
At first, there is constancy, there is no defined being. It is simple, still, and empty. Its simplicity is Great Simplicity, its stillness is Great Stillness, its emptiness is Great Emptiness. It fulfils itself without repressing itself.

The undefined "one" is characterized as simple, still, and empty, that is, lacking any prominent feature or definition. Still, this very lack of definition is what makes it great and majestic. The use of *dà* 大 (or *tài* 太 in *tàiyī* 太一) suggests that the "undefined one" has a superior ontological status. Similarly to Anaximander, it can be understood as divine.[12]

As soon as a delimited area (or a limit or a boundary) appears, opposites arise on each side of it, and, being essentially "one", these opposites define each other. Again, it is not necessary to regard the stages of cosmological sequence as some kind of entities:

域作。有域焉有氣, 有氣焉有有, 有有焉有始, 有始焉有往。
Boundary[13] arises. Since the boundary is there, there is *qì*. Since *qì* is there, there is something defined. Since something defined is there, there is beginning. Since beginning is there, there is returning.

The image of *qì* 氣, the vehicle of change that perpetuates the movement and interplay of opposites, highlights the dynamics of generation through mutual definition. As such, it is strongly reminiscent of *aēr*, including the evocative image of condensation and rarefaction:

濁氣生地, 清氣生天。
Turbid *qì* gives birth to the earth; clear *qì* gives birth to the heavens.

The role of an individual seeking to understand

When we put aside the special interpretive framework that we have used so far, the above cosmological sequences may well be read only as evocative poetic images. Also, their close connection with the mythical and religious context cannot be denied. It is not by accident that we find the few earlier examples of cosmology in mythical and mantic contexts (e.g., the *Zhōuyì*). But what makes these early Warring States texts unique as a genre and brings them closer to their distant pre-Socratic counterparts is the role

[12] References to *tàiyī* 太一 as a deity and an object of worship are well attested. Cf., e.g., Allan 2003.
[13] *Huò* 或 is frequently read here as *yù* 域 'territory, delimited area'; on reading *yù* as 'boundary', see Zhū Yuānqīng 2007.

attributed to an individual who seeks to understand and explain the structure of the universe.

The *Fán wù liú xíng* 凡物流形 opens with a series of intense questions that have no match in other texts from this period. To cite only a few:

> 問天孰高, 與地孰遠歟? 孰為天? 孰為地? 孰為雷神? 孰為帝? 土奚得而平? 水奚得而清? 草木奚 得而生? 禽獸奚得而鳴? 夫雨之至, 孰唾津之? 夫風之至, 孰噓 吸而迸之?
> One asks of Heaven, what is it that makes it high, and of Earth, what is it that makes it far? What is Heaven made of? What is Earth made of? What is the Spirit of Thunder? What is God? Why is the Earth flat? Why is water clear? Why do grass and the woods grow? Why do the beasts and birds cry? When the rain comes who is spitting? When the wind blows who is inhaling and exhaling? (Tr. Chan 2015)

These intense questions reveal an inquiring mind that seeks new and better answers – not ones imposed on it from a position of authority (from a ruler, priest, or shaman, or through some mythical account), but ones that can be intellectually grasped and accepted or rejected on one's own accord. They attest to a certain stage of intellectual maturity. As Aristotle famously observes, philosophy – desire for knowledge for the sake of knowing – arises precisely with this new type of questioning:

> διὰ γὰρ τὸ θαυμάζειν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ νῦν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἤρξαντο φιλοσοφεῖν, ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὲν τὰ πρόχειρα τῶν ἀτόπων θαυμάσαντες, εἶτα κατὰ μικρὸν οὕτω προϊόντες [15] καὶ περὶ τῶν μειζόνων διαπορήσαντες, οἷον περί τε τῶν τῆς σελήνης παθημάτων καὶ τῶν περὶ τὸν ἥλιον καὶ ἄστρα καὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς γενέσεως.
> It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters too, e.g. about the changes of the moon and of the sun, about the stars and about the origin of the universe (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book I, 982b11–16, tr. Tredennick 1933).

In this light, the earliest cosmologies can be seen as an attempt to provide new answers to new questions. The overall tone of the texts is exhortative: the reader is challenged to intellectually consider the proposed worldview and encouraged to look for answers within himself:

> TYSS: 君子知此之謂[智, 不知此之謂之愚]。
> A noble man who knows this, is called [wise/knowledgeable. The one who does not know this, is called ignorant].

> FWLX: 聞之曰: 能察一, 則百物不失; 如不能察一, 則百物具失。如欲察一, 仰而視之, 俯而揆之, 毋遠求度, 於身稽之.
> I have heard it said: if one is able to examine the oneness, he will not fail in any of the hundred things; if one is not able to examine the oneness, he will fail in them all. If you seek to examine the principle of oneness, look up and you will see it, look down and you will perceive it. Do not go far to seek the guidelines but examine it within yourself.[14]

[14] An even stronger exhortation of the reader is to be found in the *Guanzi* chapter 49, Nèiyè 內業, dated roughly to the same period as the excavated texts in question: "Can you be 'one' with it? Can you rec-

More importantly perhaps, the cosmologies of the TYSS, HX, and FWLX all contain significant passages about names that address their status within the cosmic whole, their generation (related to boundaries between the opposites), and their role in correctly grasping the structure of the cosmos. Naming (language and speech) appears as a key device, thanks to which an individual can assume an active role in universal becoming. But this topic is beyond the scope of this paper and will have to be developed elsewhere.

Conclusion

Euro-American civilization tends to regard conceptual thinking as its own exclusive achievement that sets it apart from other world civilizations. It has developed a particular narrative of the history of thought, one in which the earliest philosophy is viewed as a separate genre breaking away from religious, mythical, and poetic thinking in some distinct form. In searching out the beginnings of "philosophy", it is common to turn to the earliest Greek thinkers to look for the development of this strain of thought. The thought of Anaximander and Anaximenes, and even more so of Heraclitus, is often misinterpreted as some vague pre-stage of conceptual thinking, evocative maybe, but illogical and inconsistent, full of contradiction and impenetrable images. Yet, if we do not force our idea of philosophical genre onto them and recognize them as representatives of a genre in its own right, with its specific means of expression – not logical but not vague either – we may realize that they introduce a new type of questioning, a new attitude towards the relationship between the individual and the world and its structure.

We have observed that similar characteristics of this genre can be found in certain excavated Warring States texts that are otherwise difficult to categorize and interpret. Despite the huge gap between the two periods and cultural and social contexts, the Warring States thought environment may have seen a similar transition towards greater intellectual maturity and the autonomy of the individual. This autonomy does not consist in liberating an individual from the forces that govern universal becoming of the "one", but in understanding the universe. In these texts man is no longer victim of unfathomable forces, but through knowledge becomes their partner and, potentially, co-actor.

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ognize auspicious and inauspicious without recurring to divination? Can you stop? Can you cease? Can you stop looking for it in other men and get it from within yourself? Think about it and think about it, and think about it again" (能一乎?能無卜筮而知吉凶乎?能止乎?能已乎?能勿求諸人而得之己乎?思之思之, 又重思之。). Cf. also the *Zhuāngzǐ*, chapter 23 (Gēngsāng Chǔ 庚桑楚).

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TRANSLATING EARLY CHINESE TEXTS AND THE PROBLEM OF CONTEXTUALIZATION: THE EXAMPLE OF CHAPTER 1 OF THE *LǍOZǏ*[1]

DUŠAN VÁVRA

ABSTRACT

This article explores the issue of contextualization in translating early Chinese texts. It takes the example of Chapter 1 of the Lǎozǐ, which is analysed sentence by sentence with the focus on possible contexts in which the sentences can be read. Three types of contexts are distinguished in the article – immediate textual context, edited context, and discursive context. While the former two types of context (paragraph, chapter, book) are evident and naturally taken into account in any translation, it is stressed in this article that the discursive context is often overlooked or at least not regarded properly. The article argues that discursive context is crucial for translating early Chinese texts in general, and in particular an ambiguous text like the Lǎozǐ.

Keywords: *Laozi*; translation; context; textuality; Chinese philosophy

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Chapter 1[2] of the *Lǎozǐ* 老子[3] is one of the most famous pieces of early Chinese literature and also one of the most abstruse and difficult to translate. In the following, I use Wáng Bì's 王弼 received edition of the *Lǎozǐ*,[4] which reads as follows: [5]

Dào kě dào fēi cháng dào	道可道非常道
Míng kě míng fēi cháng míng	名可名非常名[6]
Wú míng tiān dì zhī shǐ	無名天地之始[7]
Yǒu míng wànwù zhī mǔ	有名萬物之母[8]
Gù cháng wú yù yǐ guān qí miào	故常無欲以觀其妙
Cháng yǒu yù yǐ guān qí jiǎo	常有欲以觀其徼[9]

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[2] Chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ* in the received version of the text (for details about the extant editions, see notes 3 and 4). In the excavated manuscripts that contain this chapter (the *Mǎwángduī* 馬王堆 manuscript and Peking University manuscript; for details, see note 3), however, the chapter is placed in the middle of the text. In both manuscripts we find the order of two parts of the text – *Dàojīng* (ch. 1–37 in the received text) and *Déjīng* (ch. 38–81) – reversed.

[3] The text is also known as the *Dàodéjīng* 道德經 (*The Canonical Book of the Way and Virtue*). It is traditionally attributed to Lǎozǐ ("Old Fellow") identified by Sīmǎ Qiān 司馬遷 as a Zhōu 周 royal archivist called Lǐ Ěr 李耳 living in the sixth c. BCE (cf. Loewe 1993: 269–271). This attribution as well as the dating is usually not accepted in modern Western scholarship, which dates the origin of the text to the Warring States period (453–221 BCE), most likely the fourth c. BCE (see, e.g., Henricks 2000: 1–5). Furthermore, it is assumed that the text underwent a centuries-long period of formation before it was fixed in the received form during the Hàn 漢 dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE). This process is fragmentally documented by the excavated *Lǎozǐ* manuscripts, namely the *Mǎwángduī* (MWD) manuscripts (early Western Hàn dynasty, 206 BCE – 9 CE), the *Guōdiàn* (GD) manuscripts (sealed in a tomb in ca. 300 BCE), and the Peking University (PU) manuscript (early Western Han). For a full translation and discussion of the *Mǎwángduī Lǎozǐ*, see Henricks 1992; Lau 2001: 155–325. For the Guōdiàn *Lǎozǐ* manuscripts, see Henricks 2000; Cook 2012: 189–322. For the Peking University manuscript, see the edition Běijīng dàxué 2012.

[4] The *textus receptus* of Wáng Bì's *Lǎozǐ* is the edition most commonly used from premodern China up to now. There are several extant editions of the *Lǎozǐ* – both received and excavated – as well as a number of modern critical editions. For an overview of the transmission of the text, see Loewe 1993: 271–286; Wagner 2003: 33–68. As for the name 'Wáng Bì's *Lǎozǐ*', it refers to the most famous and influential commentary to the text by Wáng Bì (220–249 CE). It should be noted, however, that the *textus receptus* is actually different from the text Wáng Bì used, while it is virtually identical with another famous edition of the text with commentary – the *Héshàng gōng Lǎozǐ* 河上公老子. See Wagner 2003, Loewe 1993.

[5] This wording of the chapter is Wáng Bì's *textus receptus*. We find textual variants in this chapter in the *Mǎwángduī* manuscripts, the Peking University manuscript, and the "real" Wáng Bì's *Lǎozǐ*, as reconstructed by Rudolf Wagner (2003). I add the different readings of each line in the following footnotes. Throughout this paper I quote *Lǎozǐ* chapters primarily from Wáng Bì's *textus receptus*, unless a comparison with other editions is needed. Wáng Bì's *textus receptus* is always quoted according to Lóu Yǔliè 2008.

[6] *Mǎwángduī* manuscripts (both A and B): 道可道也, 非恒道也。名可名也, 非恒名也。See Gāo 1996: 221; Lau 2001: 266. The Peking University manuscript has 道可道, 非恒道也。名可命, 非恒名也。The substitution of *héng* 恒 (which we find in both Western Hàn manuscripts) for *cháng* 常 (in all later editions) is due to a tabooing of the word *héng* after the death of Emperor Wéndì 文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE, personal name Liú Héng 劉恒).

[7] Wáng Bì's *Lǎozǐ* as reconstructed by Wagner: 無名萬物之始 (Wagner 2003: 119). MWD manuscripts: 无名萬物之始也。See Gāo Míng 1996: 222; Lau 2001: 266. PU manuscript: 無名萬物之始也。See Běijīng dàxué 2012: 144.

[8] The MWD manuscripts and PU manuscript add a final *yě* 也 to this line, like in the previous lines. See Gāo Míng 1996: 222; Lau 2001: 266; Běijīng dàxué 2012: 144.

[9] For these two lines, *Mǎwángduī* manuscripts A and B differ slightly from each other and contain several problematic characters. The two lines in the MWD reading can be summarized as follows (for details and discussion, see Gāo Míng 1996: 223–225): 故恒无欲也, 以觀其所眇。恒有欲也, 以觀其所噭。The wording in the PU manuscript is almost similar; see Běijīng dàxué 2012: 144.

Cǐ liǎng zhě tóng chū ér yì míng	此兩者同出而異名[10]
Tóng wèi zhī xuán	同謂之玄[11]
Xuán zhī yòu xuán zhòng miào zhī mén	玄之又玄眾妙之門[12]

When reading the existing translations of this text into various European languages, one basic observation can be made. The translators often include rich references to elucidate the complexities of the text at the lexical and syntactic level, as well as the complexities of the textual context (the chapter, or the *Lǎozǐ* as a whole). Seldom, however, does one encounter attempts at contextualizing individual terms or passages as belonging to specific discursive practices.[13] The textual context of the book is often preferred, which adds to the idea of the unique nature of the text (created according to the traditional dating and status of the *Lǎozǐ* as the first book of Chinese philosophy).[14] Besides, the context of "Daoism" is often employed, which is a retrospective term of doubtful value for reading Warring States texts.

The absence of discursive contextualization of individual terms or structures often results in translations that simply leave the text's vagueness not only unexplained (explanation may not be fully possible anyhow) but even untouched. I would argue, however, that the vagueness of an original text in Classical Chinese on one hand, and the vagueness of a modern translation on the other, is not the same thing – the translator always makes choices and in a vague translation these choices are simply not made clear to the reader. It must be the task of the translator to firstly understand the text itself in all its complexity and, secondly, transform this understanding into the target language (using footnotes or longer commentaries, if it is impossible directly through translation alone).

Compare, for example, the following translation of the beginning of chapter 1 by D. C. Lau (2001: 2–3):

The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way;	道可道, 非常道。
the name that can be named is not the constant name.[15]	名可名, 非常名。

In D. C. Lau's book this translation is left practically uncommented; the translator does not answer the questions his translation may evoke:

(1) "The way that can be spoken of". We can easily base our understanding of "the way" on the context of the whole *Lǎozǐ*. The *Lǎozǐ* speaks frequently of "the true way"

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[10] Wáng Bì's *Lǎozǐ* as reconstructed by Wagner lacks the initial *cǐ* 此 (Wagner 2003: 120). The same is true for the MWD and PU manuscripts, which, in addition, omit ér 而. See Gāo Míng 1996: 227; Lau 2001: 266; Běijīng dàxué 2012: 144.

[11] The MWD manuscripts connect this phrase to the previous line: 異名同胃。See See Gāo Míng 1996: 227; Lau 2001: 266. The same is true for the PU manuscript; see Běijīng dàxué 2012: 144.

[12] MWD and PU: *miào* 眇 for *miào* 妙. See Gāo Míng 1996: 222; Lau 2001: 266; Běijīng dàxué 2012: 144.

[13] For example, the words *dào* 道 and *míng* 名 have variable and very distinctive discursive uses across the 'landscape' of early Chinese texts. I argue that we should ask, in the first place, what is the particular discourse at play in the given context, and translate the term or passage in light of it. See my discussion of 'discursive context' later in this paper.

[14] In some translations, the syncretic nature of the *Lǎozǐ* is stressed – see, for example, Lau 2001: ix–xl. Still, however, D. C. Lau's concern seems to be the unique nature of the syncresis, rather than discursive diversity.

[15] We can find a very similar rendering of the first two lines in many other translations. Cf., for example, Krebsová 1997: 29; Král 1994: 39.

(as compared to other "ways"), which guides processes in nature as well as the proper ordering of society. The phrase "that can be spoken of" is problematic – the book really "speaks of" it a lot. In the context of the *Lǎozǐ* it is said repeatedly that the way cannot be "named" (*bù kě míng* 不可名), but *kě míng* is evidently different from *kě dào*.

(2) "Is not the constant way". "Constant" is a very vague term, and better contextualization of *cháng* is needed. Moreover, although there are chapters in the *Lǎozǐ* where the "true *dào*" the text speaks of is represented as something lasting from ancient times to the present,[16] many other chapters (or sometimes the very same chapters) stress its abstruseness, imperceptibility, and changeability.[17] There, we can ask, in what sense is it "constant"?

(3) "The name that can be named is not the constant name". If the meaning of "the *dào* that can be spoken of" is difficult to grasp and the "constant *dào*" too vague, this phrase then is a complete mystery. It makes no sense, and there are no other instances of "names being named" or "constant names" not only in the *Lǎozǐ* but in the whole body of early Chinese literature. Moreover, this translation obviously parallels the "constant way" and the "constant name", as if both referred to some "constant" mysterious entity. There is, however no support for this reading in the *Lǎozǐ*. On the contrary, the way is said to have "no constant name" (道無常名) in chapter 32 (Lóu 2008: 81).

Chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ* is definitely difficult to translate. In this paper I do not intend to present just another translation, and surely not one I would consider "definitive" in the sense that it solves all the problems presented by the text. Instead, my ambition is to expose the textual and discursive possibilities we must consider when reading the chapter and thus present various possible contexts in which the chapter *could be read*. Indeed when translating a text written in classical Chinese, the translator has to make choices based on four types of contexts: the lexical and syntactic context, the immediate textual context, the edited textual context, and the discursive context.

First, the text must be fully decoded on the *lexical and syntactic level*. The words and their grammatical functions must be identified. For example, in the first line of the *Lǎozǐ*, we get the following:

> *Dào kě dào, fēi cháng dào.* 道可道, 非常道。
> '*Dào* that can be dào-verbed, is not *cháng*-modified dào.'

This semi-finished translation makes the syntax of the sentence completely clear. The semantics is, however, not clear at all. Only the words *kě* 可 and *fēi* 非 can be unequivocally translated on the basis of a purely lexical and syntactic analysis. All the other words (left in *pinyin* within the English sentence above) require contextualization and cannot be translated without it.

Second, we must take into account the *immediate textual context*, which can further establish the meaning of a word. This context consists of a sentence or textual unit.[18] It

[16] *Lǎozǐ* 14; 21. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 31–32; 52–53.
[17] *Lǎozǐ* 4; 8; 14; 21; 25; 41. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 10; 20; 31–32; 52–53; 62–63; 111–113.
[18] It is difficult to precisely define the term *textual unit*. Here I tentatively define it as a piece of text structured by internal criteria – a continuous narrative or dialogue, continuous exposition on a given topic. For the problem of "textual unit", see, e.g., Boltz 2005: 50–78.

is, of course, often difficult to define what "immediate" means. I define it for the purpose of this paper simply as the section of a text that clearly forms a homogeneous statement (a piece of text that clearly "belongs together"). Usually, a sentence is a safe example of an immediate textual context, such as the following sentence from *Master Lǚ's Spring and Autumn Annals*:

> *Shāng wáng dà luàn, chén yú jiǔ dé.* 商王大亂, 沈于酒德。
> 'The Shang king was extremely disordered and sunk into the power of alcohol.'[19]

In this sentence, the modifier *jiǔ* 酒 (alcohol) contextualizes *dé* 德 in a specific, less usual manner. It makes clear that *power* (*dé*) refers here to a distinct characteristic of alcohol (its power, the threat of alcohol addiction) and not, for example, to the virtuous qualities of a sagely ruler (a common meaning of *dé*). The immediate context, however, does not necessarily answer all the questions the text elicits – the text can be vague and equivocal, like, for example, the first sentence of the *Lǎozǐ* quoted above (and chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ* as a whole too). The immediate textual context can be a longer section of a text as well – a continuous narrative, dialogue, clearly framed exposition on a theme, a whole chapter. In these cases, however, questions about the text's integrity may arise that are difficult to answer – see below my discussion of the edited context.

The immediate textual context may also include certain formal features we often find in texts written in Classical Chinese, especially various forms of parallelism.[20] These formal features are often key principles of textual construction and must be taken into account in the process of establishing meaning for a text. For example, the first two sentences of the *Lǎozǐ* are parallel, and this feature contributes substantially to the formation of the meaning of the text:

> *Dào kě dào, fēi cháng dào.* 道可道, 非常道。
> *Míng kě míng, fēi cháng míng.* 名可名, 非常名。

There are more parallel structures in chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ*, and their potential implications are complex. They will be discussed below.

Third, we must consider the *edited textual context.* All *received* early Chinese texts traditionally dated to the Warring States period (453–221 BCE) or earlier are *edited*. They certainly include a large amount of Warring States (or older) material, but some parts can be later (typically Western Hàn). Above all, though, the received form of this material in its entirety (for example, the *Lǎozǐ*) is the product of later editing during the Hàn dynasty or even later.[21] The prevalent view in the recent scholarship has it that before the Hàn, the texts circulated as relatively short textual units and were put together in various ways over centuries of circulation.[22] The excavated manuscripts corroborate

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[19] Lǚshì chūnqiū 16/1.3. Knoblock and Riegel 2000: 374.

[20] For various formal features contributing to the construction of meaning in early Chinese texts, see Gentz and Meyer 2015.

[21] On text circulation and book formation in early China, see, e.g., Lǐ Líng 2004; Boltz 2005: 50–78; Fischer 2008–2009: 1–43; Meyer 2011; Richter 2013; Defoort and Standaert 2013.

[22] It must be noted, however, that views on this question vary widely. There are influential scholars, both in China ad in Western academia, who tend to accept traditional dating and notions of authorship.

this view.[23] This interpretation means, above all, that received texts contain a great deal of heterogeneous material that may have originated at different times and in different social contexts and discursive practices.[24]

Acknowledging the composite nature of early Chinese texts has an unavoidable impact on translating them. If we read a text as a homogeneous whole, we naturally compare words and expressions across the text and build the translation within the context of the whole text. (In other words, we take the whole book as the immediate textual context.) But the composite nature of early Chinese texts problematizes this approach because different parts of the text may have originally belonged to different discourses and different textual practices, and may have even originated during different periods of time. Thus, the approach to translating early Chinese texts advocated in this paper is based on the conviction that it is the task of the translator to *retain discursive differences*, as long as they are discernible.

Having pinpointed the composite nature of early Chinese texts as a factor with crucial impact on the reading strategy we should adopt when approaching the texts, I must add the following: It does not mean that these texts cannot be read as *books* (as meaningful wholes). It only means that we must be more careful when reading a meaning into these texts. Just as we are supposed to read the texts closely, with perfect understanding of the complexities of the language in which they are written (Classical Chinese), I argue that we must be equally sensitive to the discursive practices that are at work in these texts.

Finally, the *discursive context* must be considered. For the reasons stated in the above discussion of the edited context, I believe it is necessary to establish the discursive context(s) for the text we are translating. In Classical Chinese many characters represent a number of different words with several meanings. Syntactic patterns in concrete cases are often open to multiple interpretations, and the textual context itself may not suffice to narrow the range of possible meanings either. Choosing the most appropriate meaning of a word and interpreting the syntax of a sentence often relies on correctly identifying the discourse the text represents.

The key questions we must ask when translating a text like the *Lǎozǐ* are: What are the actual discursive uses of a word, a term? Which of these are instantiated in the passage in question? In seeking out answers, it is necessary to realize that various discourses are spread across the Warring States texts and do not necessarily conform to the established classifications of "philosophical schools" or other traditional categories. While it may be viable to conceive of a "Confucian discourse", for example, it is probably less helpful to think of a "Daoist discourse", since "Daoism" is a much vaguer and more artificial category.[25] Above all, however, many early Chinese discourses are shared across classifica-

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For the *Lǎozǐ*, see, e.g., Lǐ Xuéqín 1995; Liú Xiàogǎn 1994. Liú Xiàogǎn is the main proponent of the traditional view in the West. See Liu 2014a.

[23] See especially Richter 2013: 22–35.

[24] I use the word *discourse* in the Foucauldian sense to mean a set of (usually unspoken) rules of what can be said in a given social and historical context. Foucault defines discursive practice as "a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function" (2004: 131).

[25] For problems concerning the traditional categories of "philosophical schools", see Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan 2003; Smith 2003.

tions of texts established ex post, and many do not have a "name" within the traditional classification framework.

Consider, for example, chapter 18 of the *Lǎozǐ,* where the discursive practice at play is quite evident but still, as we shall see, requires careful examination:

Dàdào fèi, yǒu rényì;	大道廢, 有仁義;
Zhìhuì chū, yǒu dàwěi;	智慧出, 有大偽;
Liùqīn bù hé, yǒu xiàocí;	六親不和, 有孝慈;
Guójiā hūnluàn, yǒu zhōngchén.	國家昏亂, 有忠臣。

When the great way is discarded, morality appears.
When there is intelligence, great deceitfulness appears.
When the clan is not in harmony, loving care for parents appears.
When the state is in disorder, loyal ministers appear.[26]

This piece of text is rather unproblematic, and it is basically translatable on the lexical and syntactic level.[27] The expression *liùqīn* 六親 presents the only problem. Most modern interpreters follow the medieval commentators, who, beginning with Wáng Bì, understood this term to mean 'the six family relations', that is, the relationships between father and son, older and younger brothers, husband and wife.[28] There are, however, a few earlier instances of this expression, dating mostly to the Hàn dynasty but also possibly to the Warring States. One of the earliest, found in Jiǎ Yì's 賈誼 (ca. 200–169 BCE) *Xīnshū* 新書 actually contains a rather detailed description of the term, which differs from that of later commentators. According to the *Xīnshū*, *liùqīn* refers to the six generations of one's clan as they stem from one "father" to the next generation.[29] The meaning of the term thus seems to be simply 'clan' (or 'kin'), similar to the more frequent *jiǔzú* 九族. The other Hàn or Warring States occurrences of the term are less specific but seem to confirm the *Xīnshū* interpretation rather than that of later commentators.[30]

A full understanding of the chapter requires discursive contextualization. The text contains substantive references to the Confucian discourse; it discusses morality (*rényì*), loving care for parents (*xiàocí*), and loyal ministers (*zhōngchén*). These three concepts associated with the Confucian discourse "appear" when another set of categories is abandoned or in a chaotic state – the great way (*dàdào*), the clan (*liùqīn*), and the state. In the context of this chapter, the *way* clearly means "order".[31] The nature of this order is not specified, although it obviously is one that existed prior to the advent of Confucian val-

[26] Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 43–45.

[27] There is, however, an important textual problem. The second line of this chapter is missing from *Lǎozǐ Guōdiàn* manuscript C (see Cook 2012: 311–313). Some modern editions (e.g., Chén Gǔyìng 2009) omit it based on the GD manuscript. The following discussion of this chapter shows, among other things, that its parallelism and overall meaning would work better without the second line. The inclusion or omission of this sentence, however, does not make a difference to the argument here.

[28] Wáng Bì: "'Six relations' refer to the relations between father and son, older and younger brothers, husband and wife." 六親, 父子兄弟夫婦也. See Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 43.

[29] See *Xīn shū* 8.4. Jiǎ Yì 2000: 317.

[30] For example, *Lièzǐ* 1.10: "There are people who leave their native village, part from their kin, abandon their family business, roam in the whole world and do not return back – what kind of people are they?" 有人去鄉土, 離六親, 廢家業, 遊於四方而不歸者, 何人哉? In: Yáng Bójùn 1979: 27.

[31] The complexities of the meanings of the word *dào* are discussed below in this paper.

ues and institutions (and is thus "more natural"). This understanding of the ideal social order is in tune with many instances of the word *dào* in the edited context (of the *Lǎozǐ* as a whole). The same can be said of the "clan" (natural organization of the large family prior to the Confucian ordering of family relations) and the "state" (the natural, or "right" organization of human society prior to Confucian-style government). We find numerous instances of the clan and the state being organized "naturally" in the received *Lǎozǐ*. In sum, this chapter critiques Confucian values and institutions – they are said to appear only when true order disintegrates. Identifying the discursive context (Confucian vs. "Laoist") is crucial for understanding this chapter.

The lexical problem concerning the expression *liùqīn* discussed above has an impact on the discursive contextualization of the chapter that should not be overlooked. Some translations of this chapter insert the following addition to the text: "When the great way is discarded, *[the idea of]* morality appears" (they also amend the third and fourth sentences in a similar way).[32] The insertion of "the idea of" (or "the concept of", "the demand of", etc.) suggests that the "natural" conditions stated in the left column of the text[33] already include the Confucian values stressed in the right column (probably in a "spontaneous", non-discursive way). It is as if Confucian family relations already existed in a "natural" state in the ideal human society, and the decline represented by Confucianism was just a less perfect way to the same goal marked by defining specific values and enforcing their realization in human society.

It is crucial to note that this common approach to the chapter is, first, brought to play solely by reading *liùqīn* as 'six family relations'. As we have seen, this reading is based on medieval commentators, Wáng Bì above all. If *liùqīn* means 'six family relations', then the Confucian web of human relations is present already in the "natural" state, at least in rudimentary form. If we, however, read this expression as 'the clan', then there is nothing necessarily Confucian about the *dào*-clan-state triad. Second, the reading of Daoist texts as a sort of "spontaneous Confucianism", in the sense that they share values with it but differ in the ways to implement them (spontaneously by human nature in the *Lǎozǐ* or *Zhuāngzǐ*, by enforcement in Confucian texts) is a specific discourse developed by *xuánxué* 玄學 thinkers in the third century CE. Wáng Bì's commentary, the origin of the "six family relations" commentarial entry to the *liùqīn* sentence, was one of the most important texts promoting this discursive practice.

Thus, two different discursive contexts are established for the chapter by choosing one of the two possible explanations of the expression *liùqīn*. In one, the chapter is read simply as a critique of Confucian values. In the other reading, it is not a critique of the Confucian values as such but only of a certain way of implementing them in human society.

In the following, I will go through chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ* sentence by sentence and term by term and try to distinguish the possible contexts into which we can read the chapter.

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[32] E.g., Henricks 2000: 112; Sehnal 2013: 139; Král 1994: 49.
[33] Except the second line, which is omitted in GD manuscript C.

***Dào kě dào, fēi cháng dào. Míng kě míng, fēi cháng míng.* 道可道, 非常道。名可名, 非常名。**

(1) *dào* 道

The character 道 refers to two words, *dǎo* (written also 導) and *dào*.[34] *Dǎo* means 'to guide, lead' (somebody). *Dào* as a noun means 'way' in the physical sense (road), and it also has several abstract meanings, including 'method' (the correct way to do something), 'order' (the correct way of doing things implemented or realized in human society, the human body, or the natural world), and 'teaching' (the correct way of doing things expressed in words). As a verb, *dào* means 'speak', and it has several other verbal meanings linked to the concept of 'way': 'regard as the right way' or 'follow as the right way', 'walk through', and 'to be in conformity with the right way'.

When denoting the natural world order, *dào* is often used in a context traditionally understood as "Daoist" and associated primarily with the *Lǎozǐ*.[35] In this discursive context, *dào* refers to hidden principles of the world (of reality as whole) and simultaneously to a source of life through which everything exists (sometimes even conceived of as a metaphysical entity beyond the empirical world). In this cosmological discourse, *dào* has the following characteristics:[36]

- It is more fundamental than other traditional cosmological categories. (It was here before Heaven and Earth, it shelters Heaven and supports the Earth, etc.)
- It cannot be grasped with senses and cognition. (It is "empty", "formless", etc.)
- It has universal characteristics; it is both big and small, and so forth. ("Unroll it, and it blankets the six directions, roll it up, and it is less than a handful."[37])
- Things are born of it and raised by it; everything becomes what it naturally is by virtue of it ("by virtue of it, mountains are high"[38]).
- If the ruler rules by means of the *dào*, the world is in order.

In sum, the *dào* is omnipresent but invisible and unknowable; it is the hidden principle or structure of reality. It is manifested in the world by the fact that the world is orderly – mountains are high, valleys are low, animals fly, fish swim, and so forth. The *dào* makes every single thing what it is. In some texts, in this context it is called the *dé* 德, 'the inner natural characteristics of every being'.[39] The *dào* is universal, the *dé* is particular; the *dé* is the *dào* in things.[40] This world-structuring power is, furthermore, usable by the sage-rul-

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[34] This short description of the semantic range of *dào* 道 is based on the Thesaurus Linguae Sericae.

[35] Dào appears rarely with this meaning in the *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子, but it is common in some later texts, like the *Huáinánzǐ* 淮南子.

[36] The most comprehensive and explicit account of this kind of cosmology is probably the "Original *Dào*" chapter (*Yuán dào* 原道) of the *Huáinánzǐ*. See Lau and Ames 1998 for a full translation of this text.

[37] "The Original Dao" (chapter 1 of the *Huáinánzǐ*). In: Lau and Ames 1998: 60–61.

[38] *Ibid.*: 62–63.

[39] *Dé* has several interrelated meanings: 'the inner natural characteristics of every being', 'inner power', or 'charisma'. All these meanings refer to substantial features of a thing or a person as manifested outwardly. The most common meaning, 'charisma' or 'virtue' of a ruler, indicates ruling by moral qualities (as manifested outwardly), in contrast to ruling by force.

[40] The idea is explicitly expressed in this passage in "Techniques of Mind I" in the *Guǎnzǐ* (the text is corrupted, as is usual in the *Guǎnzǐ*; in the following, various amendments and alternative readings have been proposed, according to Rickett 1998: 77 and Lí Xiángfèng 2004: 770–772): "The *dào* of heaven is empty and without shape. Being empty, it cannot be bent. Being without shape, it cannot be

er and can be implemented to make order in human society as well (the meanings of cosmic order and method of government are typically interrelated). In the following, I call this *dào*-based cosmology the "cosmological discourse".

When reading and translating early Chinese texts, it is often very difficult to distinguish this cosmological discursive context from more common usages of the word *dào* – a specific order or method. Moreover, the characteristics of the cosmological *dào* summarized above can sometimes be applied to a specific *dào* as well. For example, in chapter 30 of the *Guǎnzǐ*, we read the following:

> 道者誠人之生也。非在人也。而聖王明君善知而道之者也。是故治民有常道, 而生財有常法。
> The way [of right government] truly produces men but it is not inherent in them. The sage kings and enlightened rulers are those who are good in understanding this and guiding them [the people] properly. Therefore, there is a constant way in governing people and there are constant models for producing wealth.[41]

In this passage, we learn of the "constant way" (*cháng dào*), and there is also a verbal use of the word *dào*. Both these features can be reminiscent of the first line of the *Lǎozǐ*. It is only through the context of the chapter that we learn the *dào* here means a specific and practical method of government of a (broadly speaking) "Legalist" nature. *Dào* here clearly refers to specific methods of government only. Despite this, in another section of the chapter, the *dào* is said to have an "empty set-up" (*xū shè* 虛設) – it exists only when embodied in the right ruler, and it cannot be embodied in reality and thus known to everyone. The image of the hidden and mysterious way pervades many discourses on government, not only the cosmological discourse.

In the *Lǎozǐ*, we find clear examples of the cosmological discourse but also many sections describing a way of government where the presence of the cosmological discourse cannot be ascertained. The following example from chapter 25 is definitely an instance of the cosmological discourse:

> 有物混成, 先天地生。[…] 可以為天下母。吾不知其名, 強字之曰道, 強為之名曰大。
> There is a thing born out of chaos, preceding the birth of heaven and earth. […] It can be regarded as the mother of the world. I do not know its name but when forced to designate it, I call it "the way". When forced to name it, I call it "great".[42]

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opposed. This is why it permeates all things and does not change. *Dé* is the abode of dào. All things obtain it to live. The living beings obtain it so that they can perform [the behaviour allotted to them by] the essence of *dào*. Therefore '*dé*' (= the natural characteristics of a given thing) means '*dé*' (= obtain). 'To obtain' refers to the [characteristics] things obtain so that they are what they [naturally] are. When 'doing nothing', it is called *dào*. When abiding in things, it is called *dé*. This is why there is no difference between *dào* and *dé*.' 天之道, 虛其無形。虛則不屈, 無形則無所位, 無所位, 故遍流萬物而不變。德者道之舍, 物得以生。生知得以職道之精。故德者得也, 得也者, 其謂所得以然也, 以無為之謂道, 舍之之謂德。故道之與德無間。In: Lí Xiángfèng 2004: 770.
In *Hánfēizǐ* 20 (chapter "Analysis of Lǎozǐ", *Jiě Lǎo* 解老), a similar argument is made by using the opposites of *dào* and *lǐ* 理 (= 'structure'). In: Wáng Xiānshèn 1998: 146–147. For a Czech translation, see Zádrapa 2011: 275.

41 *Guǎnzǐ* 30. In: Lí Xiángfèng 2004: 563. The character 姓 in the original edition has been amended to 生, according to Lí Xiángfèng 2004: 563.

42 *Lǎozǐ* 25. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 62–63.

The following introductory sentence from chapter 37, however, can clearly be read in two ways:

> 道常無為而無不為。侯王若能守之, 萬物將自化。
> (1) The true way is constantly doing nothing and still nothing is left undone. If the dukes and kings were able to keep to it, the myriad things would get civilized by themselves.

Or:

> (2) The true way is to constantly do nothing and still nothing is left undone. If the dukes and kings were able to keep to it, the myriad things would get civilized by themselves.[43]

The idea of "doing nothing" in the *Lǎozǐ* can be applied to both the way and the ruler, and in this chapter both readings are possible. The import of the text is not changed much by choosing one translation over the other. We must be aware of the fact, however, that the former translation brings into play the cosmological discursive context, while the latter employs just the common meaning of a governance method.[44] This is an important difference, which can be less clear in and have more important consequences for the translation of other passages.

Most interpreters of the *Lǎozǐ* consider chapter 1 a clear instance of the cosmological discursive context. This view can be supported by the immediate context of the chapter – the "nameless" is described as "the beginning of all things, the mother of all things". These formulations clearly place the chapter within this cosmological discourse. The actual instance of *dào* in the first line can, however, still refer to specific governing methods. Choosing one of the discourses makes an important impact on the translation and eventually the whole meaning of the translated text. It will be demonstrated below.

The verbal form of *dào* in the first line of the *Lǎozǐ* can be translated in several ways: the way that can be *spoken of*, the way that can be *walked*, the way (the method of doing things) that can be *followed*, and the way that can be *regarded as* the true way. It is probably impossible to contextualize the expression *kě dào*, since it is not a part of a distinctive discourse. When trying to assess the possible translations of *kě dào*, we must turn to the modifier *cháng*, which can shed more light on it.

(2) *cháng* 常

Understanding the meaning of the modifier *cháng* (*cháng dào*) in chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ* is no less important than comprehending other terms. This word has several interrelated meanings that all refer to regularity and predictability (= regular, as a rule, constant, enduring, normal, common, ordinary). Since *dào* means 'order', the first choice for translating *cháng dào* should probably be "regular, unchanging order" (or regular "way", of course). This might fit well into the context of many other expressions conveying the meaning of stable order ("regular laws", for example, *cháng fǎ* 常法).

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[43] *Lǎozǐ* 37. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 90–91.

[44] The method of governance can be derived from the model of cosmological *dào*, which it clearly is in many instances in the *Lǎozǐ*. It does not change the important fact, however, that two different discourses are employed.

Cháng can also be used as an abstract noun meaning 'regularity, regular procedure, regular principles'. Consider these two examples from the *Hánfēizǐ*:

> 穆公問之曰：寡人嘗聞道而未得目見之也, 願聞古之明主得國失國何常以？
> The duke Mù [of Qín] asked him: "I have heard about the way but I have never seen it with my own eyes. I wish to hear about the regular principles by which the enlightened rulers of the ancient times gained and lost their states."[45]

> 故先王以道為常, 以法為本。
> Therefore the former kings took the way as the regular principle and the laws as their basis.[46]

These two sentences belong to a discourse (represented by the *Hanfēizi* and many other texts) that emphasizes the importance of regularity in governance. The "way" (*dào*) is a natural part of this discourse, and its regular implementation in government is appreciated.

The *Lǎozǐ* lacks comparatively clear passages. Sometimes, *cháng* is positive, but the immediate context is never clear. *Cháng* can also be negative, however, like in this passage from *Lǎozǐ* 49:

> 聖人無常心, 以百姓心為心。
> The sage does not have a constant mind-set. He takes the people's mind-sets as his mind-set.[47]

This sentence brings into play another discourse, one associated with Legalist and Daoist writings, but above all with those texts that are traditionally labelled as "Huáng-Lǎo".[48] This attribution is not without its problems,[49] but, for the sake of convenience, in the following I will call this discourse the "Huáng-Lǎo discourse". One of the principle ideas in this discourse is the absence of the ruler's "mind-set" (that is, intentions, plans, etc.), while the activity of the ruler rests in reacting to outer impulses only. In this dis-

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45 *Hánfēizǐ* 10. In: Wáng Xiānshèn 1998: 70.
46 *Hánfēizǐ* 19. In: Wáng Xiānshèn 1998: 126.
47 *Lǎozǐ* 49. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 129.
48 The attribution of specific texts to "Huáng-Lǎo" is extremely problematic, and in this paper I refer to "Huáng-Lǎo" as a type of discursive practice present in various texts classified usually as either "Daoist" or "Legalist". The most conspicuous feature of Huáng-Lǎo discursive practice can be described as using "Daoist" terms in a clearly political fashion. For a more detailed discussion of the content of "Huáng-Lǎo", see Chen and Sung 2014. The term *Huáng-Lǎo* appears several times in Sīmǎ Qiān's *Records of the Grand Scribe* (*Shǐjì* 史記) as well as in the *History of the Western Hàn* (*Hànshū* 漢書). Modern scholars often identify Huáng-Lǎo with "Daoism", as conceived of in these texts, which is supposed to be the principal understanding of Daoism during the Western Hàn dynasty. This is a political Daoism with a pronounced affinity for those thinkers identified as "Legalist". For this understanding of Huáng-Lǎo, see Chen and Sung 2014 and other chapters related to Huáng-Lǎo in Liu 2014b. The concept of Huáng-Lǎo is set against the later (Eastern Hàn and onwards) concept of Daoism based on identification of the *Lǎozǐ* and the *Zhuāngzǐ* as the principal texts (in this categorization, a larger part of the *Zhuāngzǐ* does not belong to Huáng-Lǎo, see Liu and Wong 2014). It is this concept of "Daoism" that is still prevalent today (and not that of Huáng-Lǎo, which is viewed as a distinct Western Hàn interpretation of Daoism).
49 For a thorough criticism of identifying the term *Huáng-Lǎo* with Western Hàn Daoism (see the previous note) and a different definition of the term, see Ess 1993.

course, it is wrong to be *cháng* because it is inflexible. The correct way of doing things is, on the contrary, based on flexibly reacting to changing circumstances.

So, if we get back to the first line of the *Lǎozǐ* – 道可道非常道 – how are we supposed to contextualize *dào* and *cháng* in this sentence? Based on lexical and syntactic considerations, three possible translations emerge:

(1) *Dào that can be expressed in words is not the constant dào*. In this variant, the first *dào* is negative, the second is positive ("the true way"). *Cháng* is positive too (the correct way is constant or regular). This reading assumes the true *dào* to be a regular principle or procedure, and it may be understood in the cosmological discursive context as well as in the context of specific governing methods. In this reading, *dào* refers to regularity in nature and in human society.

(2) *Dào that can be followed* (or: *walked, regarded as* the true *dào*)[50]*, is not regular dào.* In this reading, the first *dào* is positive (the true *dào*), and "*cháng dào*" is negative (regularity is unwelcomed). Again, the meaning of *dào* can be either cosmological or refer to governing methods.

(3) *Dào that can be followed (walked, regarded as* the true *dào*)*, is not an ordinary dào.*[51] This is a variant of the previous translation. Here the "true *dào*" is not denied a specific feature (regularity), like in the Huáng-Lǎo discourse, but it is simply identified as 'not ordinary'. This translation seems to reference only government methods because it is hard to imagine the difference between "true" and "ordinary" in the cosmological context.

The nature of the difference between readings (1) and (2) is significant and it must not be overlooked. It reveals the discrepancies between two discourses that inform an immense portion of early Chinese thought: human action based on following regular principles versus human action based on the proper response to changing circumstances.[52] This difference pervades a huge number of texts across various strands of Chinese thought. It is at least interesting to note that the first sentence of the *Lǎozǐ* (known as a popular text open to many interpretations) can be read in line with both these discourses.

(3) *míng* 名

Míng means 'name' (noun) and 'to name' (verb). It also means 'fame' or 'reputation' in addition to having several other related meanings. This word figures prominently in a broad and common discourse, that of "matching names and realities" (*míng shí* 名實) or "correcting names" (*zhèng míng* 正名).[53] This discourse is spread across a vast range of different texts of differing traditional classifications. It is concerned with proper "nam-

[50] These possible translations have the same impact on the meaning, and we need not distinguish them.

[51] This translation was suggested by Sehnal (2013: 80–82). Sehnal typically reads obscure passages in a way that rids them of any reference to a discursive context and establishes a sort of "down-to-earth", common sense interpretation. Cf., for example, Sehnal's reading of the first line of the famous chapter 40: "The right way produces the first thing, the first thing produces the second thing, […], the third thing produces all things." 道生一, 一生二, 二生三, 三生萬物。(Sehnal 2013: 215; translation from Czech by Dušan Vávra).

[52] The former is represented, above all, by Legalism and Confucian ritualism, the latter by Huáng-Lǎo, the five phases, or yīn-yáng discourses, many Daoist texts, especially the *Zhuāngzǐ*, and those strands in Confucianism that stress the personality of the "gentleman" (*jūnzǐ* 君子) as the source of proper decision-making.

[53] For a thorough discussion of the topic of "names and realities" in early Chinese thought, see Makeham 1994.

ing," that is, attaching the correct names to the realities encountered or achieved. In texts traditionally categorized as "Legalist", matching names (that is, appointed tasks, orders, or promises) with achievements (the results of actual work on the task) is one of the principle methods of ruling. Confucians, on the other hand, were concerned with "correcting names". They believed that well-ordered rule depended on attaching the "true" names to (primarily) social realities. In both cases, naming is not just a formal task of "giving a name". It was believed that "naming" has a direct and profound impact on order in human society.

The sentence "*míng kě míng, fēi cháng míng*" is one of the most abstruse in the whole *Lǎozǐ*. Its meaning is already unclear on the lexical and syntactic level. First, as was noted by Sehnal (2013: 82–83), the common translation of "name that can be named" is grammatically wrong. *Míng* is a transitive verb and it forms the construction 'to name (call) somebody something'.[54] Thus, a name cannot be "named", but it can be "uttered." *Míng*, however, has a different meaning. The expression "*cháng míng*" (constant name) is less clear still, and it occurs nowhere else in early Chinese literature.

The sentence is parallel to the first sentence and thus should probably be read in similar syntax. This does not help much in understanding this passage, however, because the meaning of "name" is unclear (unlike *dào*).

The text of the *Lǎozǐ* offers a possible clue for interpreting the expression *kě míng*. It is used several times in the text, and, apart from in chapter 1, it invariably refers to the *dào* that "cannot be named" (*bù kě míng*), that is, no name can be permanently attached to it. There are several instances of "naming" the *dào* as well, again with the characteristic emphasis on the provisional character of such naming.

The concept of "nameless" (*wúmíng* 無名) *dào* (and, analogically, of the sagely ruler) is a constituent of the Huáng-Lǎo discourse mentioned above. In texts sharing this discourse, we can find a distinctive concept of "naming," which bears important resemblance to the *Lǎozǐ*. Consider the following quotation from "Cleansing the Mind" (*Bái xīn* 白心), a chapter from the *Guǎnzǐ* 管子.[55] This text contains many difficult and probably corrupt sections, but its basic tenet is still quite evident. The text demands cleansing and quieting (*jìng* 靜) the mind, which must be devoid of all activity and only react to external stimuli. The ruler is quiet, inactive, and "nameless" (*wúmíng*) and only judges and classifies (attaches "names") to what is happening:

> 是以聖人之治也, 靜身以待之, 物至而名之。正名自治, 奇名自廢。名正法備則聖人無事。
>
> The governing of the sage is like this: He quiets his person and thus awaits what is coming. The things come and he attaches names to them. If the names are correct, things are put in order naturally on their own. If the names are not correct, things are abandoned naturally on their own. If names are correct and laws complete, the sage has no business.[56]

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[54] E.g., 名之以誑。"They called him a fraud."

[55] "Cleansing the Mind" is one of the four "Daoist" texts from the *Guǎnzǐ*. The others are "Inner Training" (*Nèiyè* 內業) and the "Techniques of the Mind I–II" (*Xīnshù shàng* 心術上 and *Xīnshū xià* 心術下). For a translation and discussion of these texts, see Rickett 1998: 15–97.

[56] *Bái xīn*. In: Lí Xiángfèng 2004: 789. The original text amended according to Lí Xiángfèng 2004: 792–793. Cf. a similar passage in *Hánfēizǐ* 5: "Thus [the ruler] remains empty and still and awaits

上聖之人, 口無虛習也, 手無虛指也。物至而命之耳。

As for the former sages, their mouth was not engaged in empty rehearsing, their hands were not engaged in empty pointing. Things appeared and they named them, and that was all.[57]

是謂寬乎刑, 徒居而致名。去善之言, 為善之事, 事成而顧反無名。能者無名, 從事無事。審量出入, 而觀物所載。

This is called being lenient towards punishments, merely stay and wait and attach names [to things as they appear]. If [the ruler] abandons speeches about good and [instead] does good things, the things get completed and he reverts back to the "nameless". The capable ones are nameless [*or:* without fame] and in their undertakings they are without [their own] undertakings. They inspect going and entering and observe what things are carrying.[58]

In this text, the ruler is engaged in "naming", an important constituent act of his ruling practice. The ruler, however, remains hidden ("nameless", or perhaps, "without fame"), and the act of naming is presented as a spontaneous activity based on the nature of things and the circumstances of their appearance. The ruler's naming lies in properly reacting to situations at hand, without a rigid pre-established concept of naming. The ruler's being "nameless" can simply stress the fact that he is the source of naming (and is not "named" himself). It can also refer to his being without reputation. The ruler certainly engages in undertakings, but nevertheless he enacts them in such a way that his subjects have no knowledge of his ruling activity.

Can this analysis of the meaning of *míng* 名 be of any help when reading chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ*? Let us check the translations of the second line against the translations of the first line stated above. Both are clearly parallel in the original and that is our main guideline to the abstruse second line.

(1) *Dào that can be expressed in words is not the constant dào*. This translation of the first line is commonly followed by the straightforward parallel line: *The name that can be named is not the constant name*.[59] However, I really cannot see what this translation is supposed to mean. It is devoid of any context, even edited context.[60] I find the parallel between *dào* and *míng* in this rendering hopelessly obscure and I see no way to solve this problem.[61]

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what is coming. He makes names name themselves and things fix themselves. Because he is empty he understands the true essence of things. Because he is still, he understands the movements of things." 故虛靜以待, 令名自命也, 令事自定也。虛則知實之情, 靜則知動者正。In: Wáng Xiānshèn 1998: 26. For a Czech translation, cf. Zádrapa 2011: 126.

57 *Bái xīn.* In: Lí Xiángfèng 2004: 802.

58 *Bái xīn.* In: Lí Xiángfèng 2004: 794.

59 Cf. Lau 2001: 3; Krebsová 1997: 29; Král 1994: 39.

60 As noted above, the problem of *bù kě míng* exists in the edited context but always in relation to *dào*, not "name". Additionally "constant name" does not appear in the *Lǎozǐ* or anywhere else.

61 It must be noted, however, that Wáng Bì's commentary (probably the oldest extant commentary to chapter 1 as a whole) puts forth this exact rendering. Nevertheless, Wáng Bì seems to be putting the commentarial entry in a way that deliberately avoids the problem: "A way that can be spoken about and a name that can be named refer to a demonstrable process and created shape, but not to their Eternal. This is because their Eternal cannot be spoken about and cannot be named." 可道之道, 可名之名, 指事造形, 非其常也。其不可道, 不可名也。(tr. Wagner; see Wagner 2003: 120–121). Wáng Bì comments on both *dào* and *míng* simultaneously and, moreover, takes *míng* as actually referring

(2) If we read the first line as referring to governing methods (and, by extension, to the cosmology of the *dào* as well), we could arrive at the following translation, which stresses the ordering activity of the ruler in the social world: *The way that can be followed* (or: *walked, regarded as the true way*) *is not a constant (regular) way. The names that can be regarded as true (right, correct) names are not regular (rigid, pre-established) names.*

The Huáng-Lǎo discourse, employed in this translation, puts to the fore the activity of the right ruler. The way is something to be followed by the ruler and it is not fixed – the point is in responding flexibly to the changing circumstances. The "names" (or the ruler's act of naming) refer to the same order-making activity described more explicitly in the above passages from the *Guǎnzǐ* chapter "Cleansing the Mind". Again, the point is in flexible 'naming' according to the situation at hand.

The reading of the first sentence does not exclude the presence of the cosmological discourse in the text. The way that is followed by the ruler can still be the cosmological *dào*, which would assume a close parallel between the functioning of the *dào* and the ruler. This is well-attested in the *Lǎozǐ* as well as in other texts. In this reading, the cosmological meaning of the *dào* (the undifferentiated source of the differentiated, empirical reality) is linked with the concept of naming, which is analogous (naming as making order in the otherwise undifferentiated social world).

This translation has an undeniable advantage – it constructs a clear understanding of the parallel of *dào* and *míng* that is so strongly suggested by the original text, it constructs the parallel completely in all three positions of *dào* and *míng*, and, above all, it places the *Lǎozǐ* passage into a discursive context in which the terms and concepts used in the passage have a well-attested and well-defined meaning.

Wú míng, tiān dì zhī shǐ; yǒu míng, wànwù zhī mǔ. **無名, 天地之始；有名, 萬物之母。**

(1) *wú* míng 無名

The expression *wú míng* is found several times in the *Lǎozǐ*, as well as in many other texts. *Wú míng* can mean 'without fame'. As for the discourse of attaching proper names to realities, there are two possible lines of translation: "unnamed" or "being without naming". The former refers to the *dào*, or the position of the ruler. The latter refers to the *dào*'s and the ruler's lack of ordering activity towards the world. Both are common in Daoist texts and the Huáng-Lǎo discourse.

Furthermore, we can distinguish two basic connotations of *wú míng* found in different contexts: negative and positive. Negative connotations (it is wrong to be "unnamed" or "without naming") can be found in texts occupied with the need to properly name things, either in Legalist or Confucian fashion. Being "without proper naming" refers to a disordered society and chaotic state. In the *Guǎnzǐ*, for example, we find the following:

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to named things ("created shapes"). In this reading a particular *dào* (process) and a particular thing both have their "that by which" they are created, called by Wáng Bì "*cháng*" (Eternal), among other expressions. It demonstrates a common feature of Wáng Bì's commentarial practice – reducing the plethora of (often obscure) images of the *Lǎozǐ* into a well-defined set of terms. Cf. Vávra 2006.

名正則治, 名奇則亂, 無名則死, 故先王貴名。
When the naming is correct, there is order. When the naming is deviant, there is chaos. When there is no naming at all, there is death. This is why the former kings valued proper naming.[62]

Positive connotations (it is good to be "unnamed" or "without naming") can be encountered in many Daoist texts and in the Huáng-Lǎo discourse. In these texts, being 'unnamed' is a desired state but only for the ruler and the *dào*. The ruler is expected to keep in hiding and it is precisely his hidden position ("not being there": *wú* 無) that enables him to rule properly (and "name" properly, which can be interpreted as 'not naming').

In the *Lǎozǐ* (besides in chapter 1), the expression is invariably linked to the position of the *dào* or the ruler (or both):

Chapter 32:

道常無名。樸雖小, 天下莫能臣也。侯王若能守之, 萬物將自賓。[…] 始制有名, 名亦既有, 夫亦將知止, 知止所以不殆。

The *dào* is constantly without naming.[63] Although it is small in its simplicity, nobody in the world can subdue it. If the dukes and kings could keep to it, all the things would respectfully submit on their own accord. […] When we start to regulate things, names/naming will appear. Names/naming being already there, we must know how to bring it to a halt. Bringing it to a halt is the way how to not get into danger.[64]

My translation of the first sentence, "the *dào* is constantly without naming", already presupposes the "naming" discourse being at play here. Of course, the translation might as well be "the *dào* is constantly without name". However, the whole context of the chapter (the immediate textual context) strongly suggests the activity of "naming" as a means to bring the world to order (the *dào* does it without naming; the ruler cannot dispense with naming but must be able to stop it in time).

The juxtaposition of *wú míng* and *yǒu míng* in this chapter presents an important edited context for chapter 1. We will get back to it below.

Chapter 37 includes another interesting instance of *wú míng* in the *Lǎozǐ*:

道常無為而無不為。侯王若能守之, 萬物將自化。化而欲作, 吾將鎮之以無名之樸。無名之樸, 夫亦將無欲。不欲以靜, 天下將自定。

The dào is constantly without action and still nothing is left undone.[65] If the dukes and kings were able to keep to it, all the things would get civilized on their own accord. If they get civi-

[62] *Guǎnzǐ*, chapter 12, "Cardinal Sayings" (*Shū yán* 樞言). In: Lí Xiángfèng 2004: 242.
[63] Other possible translations are "The dào is constantly without name" and "The right way is to be constantly without name/naming." The translations differ in whether they stress the dào or the ruler, and the state of being nameless or the (lack of) activity of naming.
[64] *Lǎozǐ* 32. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 81.
[65] Or "The right way is to be constantly without action and still nothing is left undone."

lized and desires still emerge, we will restrain them by means of simplicity without naming. Simplicity without naming will surely lead to absence of desires. If [we] do not [deliberately] desire to quiet them, the whole world will get stabilized by itself.[66]

This chapter is in many ways parallel to chapter 32 quoted above. Here, *wú míng* is explicitly associated with the ruler's activity, which supports the idea of "naming" as a plausible framework for translating *míng*. Being "without naming" is in this chapter the correct attitude on the part of the ruler that can prevent the world from reverting to chaos. "Naming", on the other hand, would be harmful.

(2) *yǒu* míng 有名

This expression is opposite to *wú míng* and refers to the presence of fame or names (or the act of naming). In the *Lǎozǐ* it occurs twice, in chapter 1 and chapter 32. Chapter 32 brings important edited context for chapter 1; *yǒu míng* is clearly presented in chapter 32 in the context of "naming", a governing activity of the ruler (see above).

(3) *shǐ* 始 and *mǔ* 母

In chapter 1, *shǐ* ('beginning') and *mǔ* ('mother') are paralleled:

The absence of names/naming is the beginning of heaven and earth.	無名, 天地之始。
The presence of names/naming is the mother of all things.	有名, 萬物之母。

Wú míng and *yǒu míng* are evidently opposites. "Beginning" and "mother" should thus be read as opposite expressions in the same manner. "Absence of naming is the beginning of heaven and earth" can be read straightforwardly in the cosmological discursive context. The cosmological state before heaven and earth must be an undifferentiated state before anything was "born" and thus "named" (put in proper cosmological order). The relationship between *yǒu míng* and "mother" of all things is more complicated.

The expressions *shǐ* and *mǔ* are similarly linked in chapter 52:

> 天下有始, 以為天下母。既得其母, 以知其子, 既知其子, 復守其母, 沒身不殆。
> The whole world has a beginning that can be regarded as its mother. Once we get to the mother, we understand her progeny by it. Once we understand the progeny, we get back to hold on to the mother. Until the end we will not be in danger.[67]

The chapter makes clear an important distinction between "beginning" and "mother" because it makes explicit the close connection between the mother and the progeny, that is, in the cosmological framework, between the origin of things and the things. While "beginning" seems to be simply a beginning (an undifferentiated state before heaven and earth were born), "mother" refers to that beginning too, but stresses another aspect: the beginning retains a mother-like contact with the world of which it is the beginning and the mother.

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[66] *Lǎozǐ* 37. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 90–91.
[67] *Lǎozǐ* 52. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 139.

This difference is well in tune with the *wú míng–yǒu míng* distinction. "Beginning" belongs to *wú míng* (nothing yet there), while "mother" belongs to *yǒu míng*, the differentiated state (the empirical world being there). In other *Lǎozǐ* chapters, we find yet another similar distinction – that of *dào* and *dé*. Again, *dào* is associated with the "beginning", while *dé* refers to the nurturing aspect.[68]

As for the "naming", both the cosmological context and the Huáng-Lǎo context are possible frameworks of this part of chapter 1. Naming can be cosmological (the birth of things from the undifferentiated state) or connected to ruling (the birth of naming, that is, governing). Moreover, it cannot be excluded that both these discursive contexts can be applied at once.

***Gù cháng wú yù, yǐ guān qí miào. Cháng yǒu yù, yǐ guān qí jiǎo.* 故常無欲, 以觀其妙；常有欲, 以觀其徼。**

Compared to the previous section of chapter 1, this one seems to follow a similar parallelism in juxtaposing *cháng wú yù* 常無欲 and *cháng yǒu yù* 常有欲. "Being constantly without desires" can thus be understood as parallel to *wú míng* and "being constantly with desires" as parallel to *yǒu míng*. The expression *wú yù* appears several times in the *Lǎozǐ* in two immediate contexts: First, it is recommended to the ruler to keep the people "without desires" (*wú yù*).[69] Then, the *dào* is said to be, or the ruler is required to be, "without desires" in order to rule properly.[70]

"Being constantly without desires" is meant to "observe its subtle points" (*guān qí miào* 觀其妙), "being constantly with desires" leads to "observing its fringes" (*guān qí jiǎo* 觀其徼). I understand *qí* 其 here as referring to *dào* (the beginning and mother of all things), following most of the interpreters of the *Lǎozǐ*, whether pre-modern or modern ones.

The word *miào* can mean 'mystery', 'subtlety', and 'the subtle points of something'. It typically refers (just like its synonym, *wēi* 微) to something difficult to grasp by discursive thinking but crucial to understanding the given problem. Thus, I understand it as 'subtle points', that is, that what is crucial to the way and difficult to understand. It can be understood only in the specific state of "being without desires".

Jiǎo is a rare word found in chapter 1 and its interpretations vary widely. The only guidance we have is the parallelism of the text: *jiǎo* should be opposite to *miào*. In this respect, it can mean 'to be marginal, peripheral', similar to the much more common *mò* 末 (tip of a branch). Thus, I understand "observing the fringes" as insight into the furthest manifestations of *dào* in the world. Together "observing *miào* and *jiǎo*" refers to the capacity of observing reality, from its most minute subtleties the things originate in, up to the furthest fringes of reality's development.

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[68] See *Lǎozǐ* 10 and 51. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008 2008: 22–24; 136–137.
[69] *Lǎozǐ* 3. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 8.
[70] *Lǎozǐ* 34, 37, 57. In: Lóu Yǔliè 2008: 85–86; 90–91; 149–150.

***Cǐ liǎng zhě, tóng chū ér yì míng, tóng wèi zhī xuán. Xuán zhī yòu xuán zhòng miào zhī mén.* 此兩者, 同出而異名, 同謂之玄。玄之又玄, 眾妙之門。**

The last sentence of chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ* can be understood on the basis of lexical and syntactic analysis and the immediate textual context.

I present my translation first: "These two emerge together but differ in name. Together I call them mystery. Mysterious, and mysterious again, the gate of many subtleties."

I believe the interpretation of this final section is in fact the simplest of all from chapter 1, no matter how abstruse it may at first sound. The "two" can refer only to the repeated parallel "twins" from the previous part of the chapter: *wú míng – yǒu míng, shǐ – mǔ, wú yù – yǒu yù.* On the basis of the previous analyses it has already been repeatedly stated that these all express the twofold nature of the *dào*: it refers both to the primordial undifferentiated state before heaven and earth and to the nurturing state of "mother" of ten thousand things.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above analysis I present my own translation of chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ*:

> The way that can be regarded as the right way is not a constant way.
> The names that can be regarded as the right names are not constant names.
> The absence of naming is the beginning of heaven and earth.
> The presence of naming is the mother of all things.
> Therefore, by being constantly without desires we observe its subtle points,
> By being constantly with desires we observe its fringes.
> These two emerge together but differ in name; together I call them mystery.
> Mysterious, and mysterious again, the gate of many subtleties.

As we have seen throughout this paper, almost every line of this text can be translated in many ways. The translation presented here is thus one of many possible. The most important thing about this translation is not the individual decisions themselves but the way the decisions were made, by *contextualization.* Two types of contextualization were crucial in producing the translation: first, textual contextualization within the chapter (the chapter is interwoven with parallelisms that play a crucial role in the chapter's construction of meaning), and second, discursive contextualization (the first four lines were translated by finding context for its terms in other related texts).

Discursive contextualization must be emphasized as the most important method used in the translation. Several discursive contexts have been suggested for various terms in the text, especially for *dào* 道, *míng* 名, *cháng* 常, and *wú míng* 無名. Discursive contextualization is based on a reading of the *Lǎozǐ* as a part of larger discourses common in Warring States philosophical thought. The advantage of this approach lies in the disambiguation of the abstruse lines in chapter 1 of the *Lǎozǐ*. While not denying the ambiguity of this piece of text as such, the paper argues that the concrete solutions offered for the

ambiguous text can convey a clear-cut and well-established meaning within the proposed discursive context.

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PARABLE AS A TOOL OF PHILOSOPHICAL PERSUASION: *YÙYÁN* 寓言 IN THE *ZHUĀNGZǏ* IN THE CONTEXT OF LATE WARRING STATES PERIOD CHINESE LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Yùyán is an important part of the legacy of pre-Qin Chinese literature, and is widely used in persuasive texts of the late Warring States Period. These narratives closely resemble Western parables, especially of the New Testament tradition. The author discusses in detail the history and uses of the term *yùyán*, and its definitions and interpretations in modern Chinese research, concluding that 'parable' seems the closest English-language equivalent of *yùyán*. The famous philosophical work *Zhuāngzǐ* is central in this discussion. The author discusses the persuasive function of the parables in Zhuāngzǐ, and points to several distinct features of these narratives compared to other works of the period. These include wide occurrence of purely imaginative texts in a quasi-mythological setting, structural complexity, and the intriguing 'self-portrait' of the legendary Zhuāng Zhōu. As such, parables in *Zhuāngzǐ* should be treated as a distinct group within the wider parable tradition of China, retaining the original name of *yùyán*.

Keywords: *Zhuangzi*; *yuyan*; parable; fable; persuasion; pre-Qin literature; Warring States Period literature

From the perspective of literary analysis, the *Zhuāngzǐ* is the product of a particular historical period, deeply rooted in the wider context of stylistic developments in Warring States prose. As such, it exhibits certain traits that make it "typical" despite its unquestionable uniqueness. Perhaps the most visible connection between the *Zhuāngzǐ* and other works of the period is the preponderant use of *yùyán* 寓言, usually short narratives with allegorical content, which have been defined in numerous ways and have often been labelled as "Chinese fables". In the present article I shall attempt to examine distinctive traits of *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* and argue that the word *parable* seems far more suited for rendering the term *yùyán* in English in its modern understanding. I shall also reflect on the unclear identity of *yùyán*, which to some scholars form a separate, independent literary genre, while to others they represent just one of many rhetorical or stylistic devices for instruction or persuasion. *Yùyán* form about two-thirds of the content of the *Zhuāngzǐ* as we know the text today. Thus, it contains more *yuyan* than other largely parable-based works, such as the *Hán Fēizǐ* 韓非子, the *Zhànguó cè* 戰國策, and the *Lǚshì chūnqiū* 呂

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氏春秋.[1] The *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* are very distinct, and in many ways differ from those in the other texts. The purpose of this paper is to discuss these differences in the wider historical and stylistic context.

Yùyán research

Much has been written about *yùyán* in the last forty years or so, although it seems that the topic has mainly attracted researchers from the PRC and Taiwan but not so many sinologists from outside the Chinese-speaking world. Starting with Wáng Huànbiāo and his early, ground-breaking work from 1957, and followed by Gōng Mù 1984, Níng Xī 1992, and especially Chén Púqīng 1987 and 1992, a whole group of researchers who have published dozens of monographs and hundreds of articles devoted to pre-Qín parables has emerged. Most of this research concentrates on literary analysis of *yùyán*, treating them as representatives of a separate genre or at least of a distinct device employed widely by writers of the fourth and third centuries BC.

Scholars have proposed numerous definitions of *yùyán*. Although no one denies the fact that the term itself was first used in the *Zhuāngzǐ* (Chapters 28 "Metaphors" and 33 "All Under Heaven"),[2] the modern understanding of *yùyán* rests heavily on the ancient Greek tradition of the fable, which somewhat adds to the general terminological confusion. Let us briefly examine the whole situation.

The original definition of the term *yùyán* presented in the *Zhuāngzǐ* is as follows (in Victor Mair's translation): "borrowing externals to discuss something. A father does not act as a matchmaker for his son" (original: *jí wài lùn zhī; qīn fù bù wèi qí zǐ méi* 藉外論之。親父不為其子媒) (Mair 1998: 217). This definition is typically interpreted through three commentaries:

1. 'borrowing from the outside' (*jiè wài* 借外), as explained by Guō Xiàng 郭象 of the Jìn dynasty;
2. 'transferring to others' (*jì zhī tārén* 寄之他人), as explained by Chéng Xuányìng 成玄英 of the Tng;
3. 'as people do not believe us, we entrust others with it' (*yǐ rén bù xìn jǐ, gù tuō zhī tārén* 以人不信己, 故託之他人), as phrased by Guō Qìngpān 郭慶潘 of the Qīng.[3]

And so, the traditional understanding of the term *yùyán* as used in the *Zhuāngzǐ* is 'to say something indirectly in order to make it more understandable or credible'. Here, most Chinese authors also evoke the expression 'to speak of something, meaning something else' (*yán zài cǐ ér yì zài bǐ* 言在此而意在彼), which was first used by Qīng dynasty member of the literati Yè Xiè 葉燮 (1627–1703).[4]

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[1] There is also the *Lièzǐ* 列子, which exhibits many similarities to the *Zhuāngzǐ* and in half consists of *yùyán*, but because it is a later compilation of miscellaneous texts, it shall not be discussed in detail in the present paper. Of course there are also many other Hàn dynasty and later compilations that contain pre-Qín parables, especially the *Huáinánzǐ*, the *Yànzǐ chūnqiū*, and the *Shuōyuàn*.

[2] All English translations and references to chapter titles and passage numbers in the present paper are after Victor Mair's translation of the *Zhuāngzǐ* (1998). Transcriptions of Chinese words have been changed to *pinyin*.

[3] All three commentaries can be found in Guō Qìngpān's edition of the *Zhuāngzǐ* (1974).

[4] See Yè Xiè and Jiǎng Yín 蔣寅 2014. It is worth noting the existence of interesting parallels between such an understanding of *yùyán* and the *Shījīng* 詩經 and *Wénxīn diāolóng* 文心雕龍 tradition of the

Unfortunately, like several other terms found in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, *yùyán* is not used in other known works of the period. In fact, even though in the *Zhànguó cè*, the *Hán Fēizǐ*, and other texts we find stylistically similar passages to the *yùyán* of the *Zhuāngzǐ*, the term *yùyán* does not appear in any of them. Hán Fēi calls his series of parables *chǔshuō* 儲說, meaning probably 'collected stories'. The character 說 (pronounced as *shuì*) is also used across several works of the period with the meaning of 'persuade'.[5] In the *Zhànguócè*, the authors of parables are called *biànshì* 辯士, *shuìshì* 說士, or *shànshuìzhě* 善說者, terms J. I. Crump renders as "persuaders"[6] and which further attest to the importance of the character 說 in this context. Finally, in the Hàn period compilation *Shuōyuàn* 說苑, in the "Shànshuō" 善說 chapter (perhaps better rendered as "*Shànshuì*"), we can find an interesting anecdote devoted to none other than Zhuāng Zhōu's favourite rhetorical adversary, Huì Shī 惠施. He is portrayed as someone notorious for the constant use of *pì* 譬 in his speech. When the king of Wèi asks him to speak without using pì, Huì Shī declines, and responds with another *pì*, explaining:

> 夫說者, 固以其所知諭其所不知, 而使人知之。
> The persuaders use what is known to explain what is unknown, so as to make it known (Luó Shàoqīng and Zhōu Fèngwǔ 2009: 350)

But what is *pì*? In modern literary studies, *pì* is understood to mean 'metaphor'. We know, however, that historical use of this and other terms indicate very flexible, or broad semantic fields. Here, I believe *pì* relates not just to metaphor, but to allegorical communication as a whole, as do *yùyán* 喻言, *pìyù* 譬喻, *bǐyù* 比喻, and other terms used across Chinese literature throughout the ages.[7] Although these terms were used with much ambiguity, Chinese authors seem to have been highly aware of the phenomenon of allegorical communication and to have consciously used different tools of indirect discourse. There was, however, no consensus on the terms to describe such discourse, and the word *yùyán* 寓言 was used only in the *Zhuāngzǐ*.

It was only in 1902 that *yùyán* made a great comeback in the Chinese language. This term was used in the title of the first Chinese translation of Aesop's fables by the famous translator Lín Shū 林紓 (assisted by Yán Qù 嚴璩), who chose to call his work *Yīsuǒ yùyán* 伊索寓言 (Aesop's *yùyán*). In 1919, writer Máo Dùn 茅盾 (orig. Shěn Déhóng 沈德鴻) published the first collection of similar texts from the Chinese literary tradition under the title *Chinese yùyán* 中國寓言. From this time on, the term *yùyán* was used to denote both European fables and various Chinese narratives, including fables, parables, folk stories, and historical anecdotes. This is probably the reason behind the tendency of Chinese scholars to explain the newly conceptualized *yùyán* tradition of ancient Chinese literature using the English term *fable*. In fact, only a small number of preserved pre-Qín *yùyán* can be categorized as proper *fables* as understood in modern literature studies.

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simile and the metaphor (*bǐ* 比, *xìng* 興). Also, the whole Chinese dictionary and *lèishū* 類書 tradition of defining through words close in meaning and through analogy contains similar logical traits.

5 According to the Thesaurus Linguae Serica (TLS), the character 說 should be pronounced *shuì* rather than *shuō* when it has this meaning.

6 See Crump 1996.

7 Chén Púqīng (1992: 1–2) in his discussion on *yùyán* also evokes the term *yǐnyán* 隱言 used by Liú Xié 劉勰 in *Wénxīn diāolóng* 文心雕龍.

Therefore, as I argue later in the paper, the term *parable* seems much more fitting as the English-language equivalent of *yùyán*.

The terminological ambiguity in classical Chinese discourse should not be surprising, as we can find exact parallels in ancient Hebrew and Greek traditions. In both, there are numerous texts stylistically and functionally similar to the *yùyán* of the *Zhuāngzǐ* and the Warring States tradition of the parable as we understand it today. In Greek, the terms *parable* (*parabolē*) and *allegory* (*allēgoría*) were often used interchangeably to describe allegorical texts (Czerski 1993: 211); other terms used in a similar context include *enigma*, *symbol,* and *metaphor*.[8] The key term in the Hebrew tradition is *mašal* (*mâšâl*), but its meaning also oscillated between proverb, maxim, and parable (see Świderkówna 2006: 127). In New Testament exegesis, *mašal* specifically denotes the parables of Jesus, which clearly stem from Hebrew tradition but form a group of texts with distinct traits of their own. Finally, through the combination of Greek and Hebrew Biblical exegesis a connection was made between the Greek *parabolē* and the Hebrew *mašal*. In fact, the term *mašal* is translated as *parabolē* for the first time in the *Septuagint*, the first translation of the Old Testament into Greek (and at the same time into any European language). Today, both Greek *parabolē* and Jesus's *mašal* as recorded in the New Testament are commonly referred to as parables.[9]

Perhaps due to a certain reluctance of Chinese researchers to engage in Biblical studies, connections between pre-Qín Chinese parables and Jesus's parables contained in the New Testament are rarely made. At the same time, however, the Greek tradition of Aesop's fables is commonly evoked by Chinese scholars, even though Aesopian lore differs greatly from Chinese *yùyán*, or rather, the Chinese *yùyán* is a much broader term than the English *fable*. Chén Púqīng in his study of world parables *Yùyán wénxué lǐlùn. Lìshǐ yǔ yìngyòng* (Literary theory of the *yùyán*. History and usage) does mention the Old and New Testament traditions (Chén Púqīng 1992: 262–266), but fails to find similarities between Jesus's *mašal* and the Chinese *yùyán*. But the similarities are striking, both on the stylistic level, as well as in terms of social and rhetoric function.[10] Let us quote Ruben Zimmermann's definition of the New Testament parable, which is perhaps the best one:

> A parable is a short narrative (1) fictional (2) text that is related in the narrated world to known reality (3) but, by way of implicit or explicit transfer signals, makes it understood that the meaning of the narration must be differentiated from the literal words of the text (4). In its appeal structure (5) it challenges the reader to carry out a metaphoric transfer of meaning that is steered by co-text and context information (6) (Zimmermann 2009).

This definition perfectly corresponds to the characteristics of the *yùyán*, with only one minor difference: the reality of the narrative. Zimmermann further explains:

> A parable demonstrates a close relationship to reality… That which is narrated in parables could have indeed taken place in that way… Parables are clearly different from fantastic

[8] Domaradzki 2013: 59. For a similar discussion in English, see Cernuškova 2016: 138.
[9] See Bartnicki (2010: 231–239) for a detailed discussion.
[10] Unfortunately, a more in-depth comparative analysis of Chinese *yùyán* and New Testament parables falls outside the scope of this paper.

narratives (science fiction) or apocalyptic visions. This relationship to reality also differentiates them from fables, in which, for example, animals or plants can speak and act anthropomorphically or from myths, which extend beyond the general world of experience (ibid.).

As we shall see below, many Chinese *yùyán*, especially in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, are deeply rooted in the imaginary and are far from real human experience.

Does this discrepancy discredit in any way the usage of the term *parable* in the context of Chinese *yùyán*? I argue it does not. In Western literary studies there is a strong consensus that ancient Greek *parabolē* and New Testament *mašal*, regardless of their differences, can be commonly called *parables*. While Chinese pre-Qín short narratives conceptualized as *yùyán* by modern Chinese scholars include some texts that could be perhaps better defined as fables or fantasy tales, they do not overshadow the bulk of the preserved *yùyán*, which conform to Zimmermann's definition. Therefore, the close resemblance of the Chinese *yùyán* tradition to Greek and Hebrew parables indicates that the use of the term *parable* in the Chinese context is fully justifiable.

The *Zhuāngzǐ* and pre-Qín parables

As mentioned above, the *Zhuāngzǐ* belongs to a group of texts that demonstrate ample usage of parable as a tool of instruction or persuasion. In this respect, the *Zhuāngzǐ* is part of a wider phenomenon that made its mark on the prose of the fourth and third centuries BC. Although most Chinese scholars trace the history of the parable back to the metaphors of the *Yìjīng* 易經 and the *Shījīng* 詩經[11], the earliest examples of parables in their full, mature form can be found in the *Mèngzǐ* 孟子.

The appearance and popularity of the parable in the third century BC is the effect of two processes. On one hand, the rise of this genre bears witness to the rapid development of prose and discursive writing. Starting with the writings of *Mòzǐ* 墨子 and *Shāngjūnshū* 商君書, philosophical texts from the fifth to the third century BC became increasingly personalized and direct. Rather than merely preserving the verbal utterances and oral teachings of the masters, they began to function as truly discursive prose, written to be read, and building argumentation aimed at persuading readers rather than listeners. This change is demonstrated by the marked difference between works such as the *Lúnyǔ* 論語 and much of the *Mèngzǐ* on one hand, and, on the other, highly personalized and strongly persuasive works such as the *Xúnzǐ* 荀子 and the *Hán Fēizǐ*, where we almost feel as if we are debating their authors, Xún Kuàng 荀況 and Hán Fēi 韓非, respectively. Almost without exception, the later into the third century a text comes from, the more persuasive and the more personal it becomes.

The second factor behind the rise of the parable is closely linked with the first, but it is of a sociopolitical nature. With the increasing mobility of educated elites working as advisers, strategists, diplomats, and ministers of kings and nobles, competition for the most lucrative posts became the dominant force shaping the careers and lives of these erudite experts. Also, with growing tension between the states, and the emergence of

[11] See Wáng Huànbiāo 1962: 8, Gōng Mù 1984: 28–32, Chén Púqīng 1998: 6, and others.

Qín as the most powerful and expansive kingdom, the demand for knowledge among the rulers rose as well, as expertise was viewed as the most effective way to strengthen one's influence and preserve one's rule. As explicitly shown in the *Zhànguó cè*, parable became a popular tool of persuasion used in political and diplomatic discourse. More than ninety parables have been preserved in this book, in addition to a similar number of other passages that use some form of indirect, metaphorical speech. Together, they comprise nearly one-third of the *Zhànguó cè*.

The *Lǚshì chūnqiū* contains far fewer parables. This intriguing almanac was ordered by Lǚ Bùwéi 呂不韋 and was intended to have an instructive function for the Qín ruler; it therefore exhibits a very orderly structure in which there is only limited space for persuasive discourse.

Lǚ Bùwéi and Hán Fēi lived just before the brutal climax of the unification process of 'All under Heaven' under Qín rule in 221 BC. Zhuāng Zhōu, as we believe, lived a century earlier, when Qín did not yet dominate the political scene, but when the kingdoms were already engaged in ruthless rivalry and warfare. From this perspective, the wide use of *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* falls within the general tendency of prose from the period.[12]

So what exactly are the traits of a pre-Qín parable? Some easily noticeable characteristics enumerated by earlier scholars (but ones which are by no means distinctive), include

1. brief form: these parables can be as short as one sentence and rarely develop into several paragraphs;
2. embedded nature: most parables are embedded in longer narratives, usually the dialogues of historical characters;
3. concentration on human characters, rather than animals or imaginary characters: historical or legendary figures are usually evoked, as are the "common types" of contemporary China, such as "a man from Sòng".

There are, however, many exceptions to these generalizations. For example, many *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* are long, and not all are embedded. In the *Hán Fēizǐ* the majority of them function as fully-independent texts. Also main characters are not always human. In the *Zhuāngzǐ* they can be inanimate objects and imaginary beings, while the *Zhànguó cè* includes several fable-type animal stories.

Because formal descriptions failed to define Chinese parables successfully, in the late 1980s and in the 1990s scholars turned primarily to two aspects of such texts: their narrative form and allegorical content (Chén Púqīng 1987: 4). Other researchers also explored philosophical and moral messages (Níng Xī 1992: 4, also Lǐ Fùxuān and Lǐ Yàn 1998: 4–5). Thus, pre-Qín parables were found to be narrative in form and persuasive in their mode of communication. Their primary function is not informative, but rather instructive. They communicate a certain moral, philosophical, or political truth through indirect means (such as metaphor or allegory).

More recently, however, researchers in China, such as Ráo Lóngsǔn (2001), Cháng Sēn (2005), and Lín Wénqǐ (2006), have questioned such definitions as well, pointing out the open nature of pre-Qín parables and their complex and unobvious communicative value.

[12] See especially Gōng Mù 1984: 71, and Chén Púqīng 1992: 199–202.

How do the *yùyán* of the *Zhuāngzǐ* fit into the picture? Not particularly well it seems. The vast majority of pre-Qín parables is built around historical or legendary figures and events that contemporary readers were familiar with.[13] The *Zhuāngzǐ* rests heavily on characters from mythology or those that we often cannot place exactly in any known context. Jiān Wú 肩吾 and Lián Shu 連叔 from chapter 1, Nánguō Zǐqí 南郭子綦 from chapters 2, 4, 6, 24, and 27,[14] Qín Shī 秦失 from chapter 3, Bóhūn Wúrén 伯昏無人 from chapters 5, 21, and 32, Bǔliáng Yǐ 卜梁倚 from chapter 6, and many others figures concreate the world of the *Zhuāngzǐ*, but are hardly present in any other pre-Qín contexts.[15] Of course, numerous parables are built around well-known characters: kings, hermits of ancient times, and especially Confucius and his disciples (there are no less than thirty-seven *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* with Confucius as one of the main characters). Nevertheless, we can see distinctly that the bulk of *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* do not originate from the historical anecdote tradition, but are clearly creations of a literary genius of unmatched imagination. Thus, they differ greatly from the strongly political *Zhànguó cè* and from works which are built on the vast, historical knowledge of their authors, the *Hán Fēizǐ* and *Lǚshì chūnqiū*.

Another aspect that makes analysis of the *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* somewhat problematic is the fact that not all of them can be clearly interpreted from the didactic or even persuasive point of view. We have no trouble explaining why the authors of the *Zhànguó cè*, the *Hán Fēizǐ*, and the *Lǚshì chūnqiū* use particular parables. They are either well embedded in historical context (as in the *Zhànguó cè*) or in discursive context (as in the *Hán Fēizǐ* and the *Lǚshì chūnqiū*). The *Zhànguó cè* usually reveals the actual practical effect of a given parable (for example, a ruler changing his decision about an important issue or the increased effectiveness of a given action). In the *Hán Fēizǐ*'s "Chǔshuō", parables are grouped according to topics, which make their persuasive goal extra clear. In the *Zhuāngzǐ*, on the other hand, the reader is often left in the dark as to the true persuasive intention (possible interpretations?) of a certain *yùyán*. Let us just mention two passages about Nánguō Zǐqí (passage 4 of chapter 6 "The Great Ancestral Teacher", and passage 9 of chapter 24 "Ghostless Xu") as two examples of texts that can be interpreted in several ways and cannot be reduced to simple tools of rhetoric persuasion.

The *Zhuāngzǐ* is a very special piece of literature in respect to its use of parables as well. This fact was pointed out by Ráo Lòngsǔn (2001), who calls for separating the *yùyán* tradition in the *Zhuāngzǐ* from all other pre-Qín parables. Ráo concludes that in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, the *yùyán* function as a separate, independent genre, while in other texts of the period parables (in his words "*zhūzǐ yùyán* 諸子寓言", or 'parables of the masters') are nothing more than a persuasive, stylistic device (Rao Longsun 2001: 200–205). To further underline this difference in the English language, I propose using the term *parable* to describe all pre-Qín allegorical narratives as defined by Zimmermann, and reserving the

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[13] In this way they fit closely with Zimmermann's definition of "fictional text that is related in the narrated world to known reality"; see Zimmermann 2009.

[14] The alternative names of Nánbó Zǐqí 南伯子綦, Nánbó Zǐkuí 南伯子葵, and Dōngguō Zǐqí 東郭子綦 probably refer to the same person.

[15] With the exception of the *Lièzǐ*, in which many of these characters also appear, including Nánbó Zǐqí 南伯子綦 and Bóhūn Wúrén 伯昏無人. These commonalities are not surprising because both texts share many passages and show close affinity in theme and style.

untranslated term *yùyán* to refer to the very unique parable tradition of the *Zhuāngzǐ*. In this way, the term *yùyán* can symbolically "find its way back" to the original context in which it first appeared in the Chinese language.

The unique traits of the *Zhuāngzǐ's yùyán*

The *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* possess three unique features that set this work apart from other writings from this period: the wide occurrence of purely imaginative narratives in a quasi-mythological setting, structural complexity, and the intriguing "self-portrait" of Zhuāng Zhōu himself.

Eighteen *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* can be labelled as "pure fantasy", nine of which are hardly in any way connected with ordinary human experience. They epitomize literary creativity and imagination. Perhaps the most widely known are the short passages about boring holes in Wonton (Húndùn 渾沌; *Zhuāngzǐ* 7.7) and the Amorphus (Xiàngwǎng 象罔) finding the Yellow Emperor's lost pearl of mystery (*Zhuāngzǐ* 12.4). Without elaborating too much on the content of each of these fascinating and intriguing passages, let us just list the main characters: Penumbra and Shadow (Wǎngliǎng 罔兩 and Jǐng 景, respectively; 2.13; 27.6), Anonymous (Wúmíngrén 無名人; 7.3), Vast Obscurity (Hóngméng 鴻蒙; 11.5), the Wind (Fēng 風; 17.2), Wearcoat (Pīyī 被衣22.3), and Nonexistent Existence (Wúyǒu 無有; 22.8).

The form of these passages is consistent with other parables, but the content puts them on a completely new level of abstract thinking. As such they have absolutely no parallels in pre-Qín literature. This small sample from chapter 22 "Knowledge Wanders North" demonstrates their unique nature:

> Resplendent Light inquired of Nonexistent Existence, saying, "Master, do you exist or do you not exist?"
> Not getting an answer to his question, Resplendent Light looked at the other's sunken, hollow appearance intently. For a whole day, he looked at him but couldn't see him, listened to him but couldn't hear him, groped for him but couldn't grasp him.
> "The ultimate!" said Resplendent Light. "Who else could attain such a state? I can conceive of the existence of nonexistence, but not of the nonexistence of nonexistence. And when it comes to the nonexistence of existence, how can one attain such a state?" (Mair 1998: 220)

Some *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* are embedded in larger narrative passages, as is the case with other texts of the period, and are clearly used to enhance the persuasive force of argumentation. This device is often employed in the *Zhànguó cè*, where parables usually depend heavily on specific situational context. In the *Zhuāngzǐ*, on the other hand, many *yùyán* function as fully independent texts. Some, such as chapters 30 "Discoursing on Swords" and 31 "An Old Fisherman" in their entirety, can even be considered short stories of their own right.

There are, however, many others that are shorter and embedded in larger narrations. Apart from the more typical form of embedding present in the *Zhànguó cè* and other pre-Qín texts, some *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* are embedded in a very intricate way. In three

instances, two separate *yùyán* are placed in the very same passage.[16] The last passage of chapter 19 "Understanding Life" contains an interesting example of "double embedding". The whole passage is written as a parable and tells the story of one Sūn Xiū 孫休, who visits Biǎn Qìngzǐ 扁慶子 asking for instructions. After Sūn leaves, Master Biǎn converses with his students, and answers one of their questions using a *yùyán* on a bird kept captive by the ruler of the Lǔ state. This *yùyán* is embedded in the whole passage, which itself is a typical *yùyán*, hence the double embedding.[17]

Perhaps the most interesting internal passage structure found in the *Zhuāngzǐ* is that of the very opening. The first two passages contain one *yùyán* each, but these *yùyán* are embedded in a complex structure, which can be broken down schematically as follows:

1. story 1: Kūn and Péng
2. story 2: Péng
3. example 1: boat versus mustard seed = a question of scale
4. *yùyán* 1: cicada and dovelet versus Péng
5. example 2: going for a trip to the suburbs versus a long journey = a question of scale
6. explanation
7. example 3: mushroom = short life
8. example 4: locust = short life
9. example 5: tortoise Dark Spirit = long life
10. example 6: cedrela tree = long life
11. example 7: Progenitor Péng = short life, a question of scale
12. story 3: Kūn and Péng
13. *yùyán* 2: marsh sparrow versus Péng
14. explanation
15. example 8: Master Sòng = a sage, but also limited
16. example 9: Lièzǐ = a master, but also limited
17. concluding message: "the ultimate man has no self, the spiritual person has no accomplishment, and the sage has no name." (Mair 1998: 5–6)

Three versions of the story of Péng and Kūn are provided, and the notion of scale and point of view is illustrated through no less than nine different examples and two *yùyán* (or perhaps two versions of the same *yùyán*).[18] These two passages arguably offer one of the most complex narrative structures found in pre-Qín prose. Also, one cannot help but wonder how badly the concluding message fits into the whole philosophical argument. This attests to the fact that the text as we know it today must have gone through numerous editorial changes.

As observed by Lì Fùxuān and Lǐ Yàn, the *Zhuāngzǐ's yùyán* feature one more unique trait in comparison to other works of pre-Qín prose – the intriguing "self-portrait" of Zhuāng Zhōu himself.[19] In other texts of the period, authors appear in two ways: they

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[16] These are the following passages: 17.4, 20.5, and 24.5.

[17] For some reason, the passage is excluded from this chapter in Victor Mair's translation of the *Zhuāngzǐ*, whereas it is present in all main Chinese editions of the text.

[18] Example is a simple device drawing parallels and showing similarities. It thus differs from parable due to lack of narration and, most of all, lack of allegorical content.

[19] Lǐ Fùxuān and Lǐ Yàn 1998: 102. Given the complicated history of the *Zhuāngzǐ* like that of any other ancient Chinese text, the presumed "self-portrait" has to be understood as a quality of the text, not necessarily as the "autobiography" of one single author.

are either interlocutors in dialogues or their appearance and behaviour is described indirectly by their disciples, who in this way build his image. We can find hundreds of examples illustrating the first case, as a large part of pre-Qín philosophical and political prose is in the form of dialogues. The second case is clearly visible in the *Lúnyǔ*, where Confucius's habits (his refusal to sit on an unevenly spread mat or to nap during the day), behaviour towards others (sympathy, forgiveness), character (humour, eagerness to study), and so forth are recounted by disciples. But it seems that only in the *Zhuāngzǐ* can one encounter the presumed author as a consciously created literary character. Twenty-seven passages are devoted to Zhuāng Zhōu, not including the description in chapter 33 "All Under Heaven", which is clearly a later addition. Ten of them explore the relationship between Zhuāng Zhōu and Huì Shī 惠施 (Huìzǐ 惠子) and record (often with much humour) their philosophical disputes. Others give anecdotes about the master, which of course might not be true (it is almost certain that most of them are later interpolations), but that paint a vivid picture of the eccentric thinker.

Zhuāng Zhōu is portrayed as a hermit who despises fame and career and looks down on authority; he prefers to fish in the Pú River rather than accept a post at the court of Chǔ (*Zhuāngzǐ* 17.5) and refuses a similar offer likening it to a sacrificial ox prepared for slaughter (32.13). He is portrayed as a sage indifferent to death, whether his own (32.14) or that of his dear wife (18.2). He understands human minds and hearts perfectly, ridiculing the pride and cowardice of "sages" (21.5) and exhibiting mistrust towards the true intentions of despotic rulers (32.12). Finally, he is pictured as a person full of sharp wit and inner pride despite suffering poverty (20.6, 26.2, 32.5).

Two other interesting passages can be found in chapter 20 "The Mountain Tree". In the first one, a disciple challenges Zhuāng Zhōu about the contradictory experiences of "the usefulness of being useless" (or "worthlessness and worthiness" in Mair's rendition). Two examples are given – one of a big, old tree and one of a pair of geese. The tree is not felled by a woodcutter because of its seeming uselessness as a source of timber. One of the two geese must be slaughtered. When a host has to choose which one of the two to butcher, he chooses the one that does not honk, as it is, in a way, "less useful" than the other one. And so, while a tree survives because of its uselessness, a goose loses its life for the very same reason. Zhuāng Zhōu laughs and admits that there is no absolute recipe for success in his teachings: "I suppose I'd rather find myself somewhere between worthlessness and worthiness… [although] it can't keep you out of trouble." (Mair 1998: 187) Another anecdote, similar in tone, is recorded in passage 8 of the same chapter. Zhuāng Zhōu watches animals hunt one another, each forgetting about its own safety while pursuing prey and thus falling victim to bigger predators. Ironically, he does not notice that by focusing on the animals he is making exactly the same mistake; he is caught in the act by a park watchman, who takes him for a poacher, and needs to flee. Zhuāng Zhōu is shown as a keen observer, but also as an absent-minded and perhaps slightly clumsy man. Both passages are humorous, painting a very friendly, down-to-earth, and humble picture of the poet-philosopher.

In this context the *yùyán* of the *Zhuāngzǐ* demonstrate a very unique approach to the notion of the author, who not only tries to instruct or persuade us through the use of allegorical narratives, but also decides to "walk into" the very stories themselves. It would be difficult to find similar parables in the *Hán Fēizǐ* or the *Lǚshì chūnqiū*. There is but one similar narrative in the *Zhànguó cè*, "Zōu Jì fěng Qí wáng nà jiàn 鄒忌諷齊王納諫" in

the first chapter of the Qí Strategies, where Zōu Jì 鄒忌 recounts to King Wēi of Qí what happened to him at home and uses the story as a tool of persuasion. It is, however, just a singular example, and one which structurally resembles a humorous anecdote more than a typical parable.

Conclusion

Parables as defined by Ruben Zimmermann occur in many major pre-Qín works of literature, including the *Zhuāngzǐ*, which through the wide use of *yùyán* proves to be well anchored in the history of discursive prose of the fourth and third centuries BC. At the same time, the *yùyán* tradition in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, with its focus on the imaginary, diverges somewhat from Zimmermann's definition and is also clearly distinct from other pre-Qín parables. Therefore, treating the *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* as a very special type of Chinese parable seems fully justified.

While discussions continue among scholars on whether pre-Qín parables as such can be treated as a separate literary genre or rather as a stylistic device only, the *yùyán* of the *Zhuāngzǐ*, whether a separate genre or just a tool of instruction, arguably represent the highest literary achievement of the time. The *yùyán* develop in the *Zhuāngzǐ* in a particular, spectacular way. They demonstrate a complex and heterogeneous structure, an unrivalled richness of themes, and the unmatched imagination of the (real or presumed) author, whose intriguing "self-portrait" is presented to the reader. Most importantly, the *yùyán* of the *Zhuāngzǐ* usher in a new standard of philosophical prose, where all limits on form, imagination, and concept are lifted. Thus, the *yùyán* in the *Zhuāngzǐ* prove to be much more than mere tools of persuasion, but rather a way to move philosophical essay-writing to new realms of imagination and abstract thinking.

At the same time, the *Zhuāngzǐ*'s *yùyán* do not cease to be highly effective rhetorical devices. The images created, whether it be the huge, "useless" tree or the many others not mentioned explicitly in this paper, make a lasting impression on the reader and are indeed exceptionally persuasive.

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COMMENTARY AND TRANSLATION: EXPLORING THE *DU LÜ YANYI* 杜律演義*

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a preliminary discussion of the status of translation practices embedded in the commentarial entries of the Yuan dynasty anthology *Du lü yanyi* 杜律演義 [Explanation of the Meaning of Du Fu's Regulated Verse] by Zhang Xing 張性. The research moves from a definition of 'translation' that extends beyond the prototypical discourse on the relations between different languages to encompass more varied discursive processes and products within a single language and more extensively within the field of metaliterature. As a case study, the paper examines the characteristics of the commentarial entries appended to two poems of the sequence "Qiu xing ba shou 秋興八首" [Stirred by Autumn] in the anthology *Du lü yanyi*. It analyses how the commentarial notes are related to units or whole portions of the poetic prototext, and for what purpose. As a result, the paper brings to light the juxtaposition and the combination of two fundamental approaches to the mediation of the prototext: one leaning towards commentary by way of explanatory reformulations, and the other leaning towards translation in the form of imitative reformulations.

Keywords: Commentary; intralingual translation; prose reformulation; simplification; *Du lü yanyi*; Du Fu reception

> The process of diachronic translation inside one's own native tongue is so constant, we perform it so unawares, that we rarely pause either to note its formal intricacy or the decisive part it plays in the very existence of civilization.
>
> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 1998, 29–30.

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Steiner's quotation in the epigraph reminds us that matters of translation are relevant not only to the relationships between different languages, but also, and to some extent in a very pivotal way, to phenomena within a single language, hence the significance of intralingual translation.[1] Steiner addresses this issue from the point of view of diachronic variation, but his perspective can be validly extended to other dimensions (diastratic, diamesic, diaphasic) as well.

These phenomena, as Steiner suggests, go mostly unrecognized, or at the very least underrecognized, and above all they are rarely discussed in terms of "translation". To some extent this neglect downplays the role of translation as a fundamental communicative practice within any given linguistic and cultural reality, and in some cases it may constrain the study of the past to a "monolingualism" that is hardly plausible.

In ancient and premodern China, as in other civilizations, translation practices in the form of glosses, paraphrases, and rewritings represented a common component of scholarly work in the commentarial tradition. In literature on commentaries, however, the study of these practices as translational phenomena and their significance in terms of translation practice are relatively marginal topics, usually relegated to a secondary level. In this study, I contend that these phenomena deserve more attention and that the analysis of the different approaches to verbal reformulations within single texts or larger groups of texts could yield valuable (albeit still hypothetical) information on the nomenclature of the commentarial tradition in diachronic and synchronic perspective.

In this paper, I first propose a preliminary outline of the theoretical framework of my research approach and then move to an analysis of the commentary on the poems of the sequence "Qiuxing ba shou" 秋興八首 (Stirred by Autumn) by Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) in the Yuan anthology *Du lü yanyi* 杜律演義 (Explanation of the Meaning of Du Fu's Regulated Verse, hereafter DLYY) by Zhang Xing 張性. Rather than being a point of arrival, this study aims to represent a point of departure for more elaborate analyses of the status of translation practices within commentarial literature.

Commentary, translation, and metatext

In the last two decades, increased interest in studying the role of commentaries in ancient and premodern China has emerged in the West. This interest sprang from the observation that commentarial writing represents, as highlighted by Gardner, "a standard, even dominant, mode of scholarly and philosophical discourse for Chinese literati", and that research into the long and dynamic traditions of literary and philosophical writings "must begin – in a systematic and historically sensitive manner – to take account of the vast commentarial corpus" (Gardner 1995: 397). Therefore, several publications examining the characteristics of individual or collected commentaries that shed light on the position of this genre in the traditional system of scholarly writing have appeared.

In critical discourse, however, commentaries are commonly discussed in relation to exegesis and hermeneutics, while minor attention is paid to their relevance to matters of

[1] The notion refers to the categorization of the translation types advanced by Roman Jakobson in his seminal 1959 essay on the linguistic aspects of translation. See Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", reprinted in Jakobson 1987: 428–435.

translation. The term *translation*, for example, considered both as process and as product, is rarely indexed in scholarly works on commentaries, while, on the other hand, research on translation and translation history seldom refers to data retrieved from commentarial literature. There are, however, a few notable exceptions, such as the works of Wagner (2000, 2015). In his study of Wang Bi's commentary on the *Laozi*, Wagner singles out translation, and more specifically "intralingual translation", as a fundamental commentarial strategy, while in a more recent paper he openly advocates the need to discuss matters of commentary and translation within the framework of the communication process, highlighting the role of commentators as "brokers of meaning" alongside translators, teachers, and other professional figures. As he aptly observes, "the translator and the commentator plow the same field" (Wagner 2015: 490).

The idea that commentary and translation are proximate, similar fields was not unknown in premodern criticism. We find an interesting instance of this perspective in the opening remarks to the chapter on *xiaoxue* 小學 (philology) in the *Dongshu dushuji* 東塾讀書記 (Records on Reading by the Eastern School) collection by Qing dynasty philologist Chen Li 陳澧 (1810–1882):

> 詁者, 古也。古今異言, 通之使人知也。蓋時有古今, 猶地有東西, 有南北, 相隔遠則言語不通矣。地遠則有翻譯, 時遠則有訓詁。有翻譯則能使別國如鄉鄰, 有訓詁則能使古今如旦暮, 所謂通之也, 訓詁之功大矣哉![2]
>
> *Glossing* (*gǔ* 詁) is like *ancient* (*gǔ* 古). Languages from past and present are different; to connect them is to allow people to understand.'[3] In time there are past and present, as in space there are East and West, South and North. They are distant from each other, and therefore their languages are not mutually comprehensible. In case of spatial distance, there is translation; in case of time, there is glossing. Through translation it is possible to consider different countries as fellow villagers. Through glossing it is possible to consider past and present as morning and evening. This is what is called to connect them. How great is the achievement of glossing!

Chen Li builds his argument on the authority of Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) and his view on lexical glossing, but he further enhances it by noting the comparability of glossing and (interlingual) translation (*fanyi* 翻譯) in terms of motivating causes and intended outcomes. However simplistic his formulation might be, there is merit in his suggestion that commentary and translation are similar in the communicative function they aim to achieve in a shared awareness of *distance*[4] and dissimilar in relation to their primary focus on either time or space.[5] The use of the term *tong* 通 is in my view par-

[2] Chen Li, "Xiaoxue," in *Dongshu dushuji*, juan 11, 1a. Digital edition of the text in Beijing University Library available at https://archive.org/details/02096557.cn (accessed 25-06-2016).

[3] This quotation is from Kong Yingda's subcommentary (*shu*) to Mao's edition of the *Shijing* (*Maoshi zhengyi*, juan 1). See http://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=84776 (accessed 03-03-2017).

[4] According to Cesare Segre, a third fundamental dimension must be added to the chrono-geographical one. This third dimension is culture, and together with time and place it envisages an "epistemic distance": "Commentary is the gauge of difficulties in communication. The most obvious case is that of the chronological or geographical distance between sender and receiver: ancient texts or texts in other languages are most frequently embellished by a commentary. We could talk, more aptly, of epistemic distance: it would consider the cultural distance, alongside the chrono-geographic one." (Segre 1993: 264).

[5] It may be of interest to note that, in a short essay dedicated to the theme of communication and society, Roman Jakobson defines in very similar terms the role of language as a communicative tool:

ticularly interesting because, while it conveys a sense of channeling and connecting, it also entails the removal of hindrances – that is, things that may prevent the possibility of knowledge.[6]

Besides a communicative dimension, commentary and translation also share a common metaliterary (Holmes) or metatextual nature (Popovič, Torop), or in other words, both activities (as processes and as products) have a second-degree relationship with a (real or presumed) text or group of texts.[7] The perspective elaborated by Holmes is particularly relevant for the subject of this study because in his analysis of the variety of metaliterature that a poem can accumulate, he explicitly places prose translation and verse translation (or the metapoem) in a contiguous position, at the intersection between interpretation and literature.

Commentary and translation are therefore in a relation of similarity because they strive for the same communicative function and are also in a contiguous position from the perspective of the kind of relation they establish with a text. It is from this perspective that I aim to consider their interplay in the premodern anthology *Du lü yanyi*.

Reformulation in the commentarial notes of the anthology *Du lü yanyi*

DLYY is an anthology of 151 poems selected from the corpus of Du Fu's heptasyllabic regulated poetry.[8] Each poem is followed by a commentarial note written by the hand of Zhang Xing, a late Yuan dynasty scholar hailing from Jiangxi who probably flourished in the middle of the fourteenth century. The work is also known by the alternative titles *Qiyan lüshi yanyi* 七言律詩演義 (Explanation of the Meaning of Heptasyllabic Regulated Verse) and *Du lü qiyan yanyi* 杜律七言演義 (Explanation of the Meaning of Du Fu's Heptasyllabic Regulated Verse); extant editions of the anthology date to the Ming dynasty. During the early Ming period, a very similar work started to circulate under the name of the more famous Yuan poet Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348) with the title *Du lü Yu zhu* 杜律虞註. However, arguments against the authenticity of this work and its attribution to Yu Ji, and claims upholding authorship by Zhang Xing, were already formulated at the end of the fifteenth century (see Zhong Zhiwei 2005: 263–267, Xu Guoneng 2015: 68–70). It is nonetheless a fact that the edition published under the

"When speaking of language as a communicative tool, one must remember that its primary role, interpersonal communication, which bridges space, is supplemented by a no less important function which may be characterized as intrapersonal communication. […] While interpersonal communication bridges space, intrapersonal communication proves to be the chief vehicle for bridging time." See Jakobson 1985: 98.

6 To some extent, the term *tong* may offer another perspective from which to consider the process of translation. This perspective would not be limited only to the figure of "transfer" rooted in the term *translation*, which as Stecconi has pointed out can be misleading, but would also consider the condition of opening a channel for communication by removing what (at a certain time) may prevent the possibility of circulation. For the view of Stecconi on the figure of "transfer", see Stecconi 2004: 21. In the Thesaurus Linguae Sericae the term *tong* is included in the group for 'communicate' (accessed 15-08-2017). I am grateful to Olga Lomová for bringing this reference to my attention.

7 See Holmes 1970: 91–105; Popovič 1975 (It. tr. 2006); Torop 2010 (It. transl. 2010).

8 All references from the DLYY in this study are taken from the photostatic edition published by Taiwain Datong shuju in 1974.

name of Yu Ji achieved great popularity during the Ming dynasty, in terms of number of editions and readership,[9] and thus it actively contributed to the popularity of its commentarial style.[10]

Previous studies on the DLYY have already pointed out the singularity of Zhang's work compared to earlier collections of Du Fu's poetry, particularly in relation to the structure of the commentarial notes. If it is true that the large corpus of richly annotated editions of Du Fu's poetry that were compiled during the Song dynasty is indicative of the high esteem in which the Tang poet was held by contemporary literati, it is also a sign of the level of knowledge required to fully grasp the poet's imagery and a mark of its difficulty. As suggested by Ji Hao, the traditional form of the "annotation", focused on explaining difficult terms and identifying intertextual references, meritoriously pays attention to every minute detail of each poem but at the same time might lead to the loss of the "big picture" (see Ji Hao 2017: 107). Unlike in earlier models, in his notes Zhang limited the use of lexical and exegetical glosses to a minimum and devoted greater effort to conveying the meaning of each poem or couplet by fully or partially reformulating it in prose.

A detailed analysis of the features of the commentarial notes in Zhang's work extends beyond the scope of this study, and for the moment I limit my considerations to briefly describing a typology of his commentary. Commentarial entries can be classified according to the following categories based on specific content and style: (i) lexical and intertextual glosses, which provide information on specific terms and expressions or explain literary and cultural references; (ii) brief expositions of the general meaning of a poem; (iii) partial or full paraphrases of a poem, which consist of fragmentary prose reformulations of single verses or couplets, sometimes linked through an explicit reference to the jargon of poetic criticism (e.g., *hanlian* 頷聯, *jielian* 結聯, etc.), or of a paraphrase of the whole text; (iv) explanatory notes on the formal structure of the poem; and finally (v) references to other editions, for example, to contest the use of a particular term.[11] In the Ming dynasty edition that serves as the base of the present study, the first and the last of these categories are usually marked with a white circle either before or after the specific textual note to visually separate it from the more explanatory parts.

Explanatory components (particularly points ii and iii on the above list) constitute the bulk of the commentarial entries and are arguably the defining traits of the *yanyi* 演義 category referred to in the title.[12] In what follows I provide a description of the characteristics of these components in relation to the poetic sequence "Qiuxing ba shou", which offers a good starting point for a preliminary investigation of the role of translation in Zhang Xing's commentarial approach. Being a series of eight poems, it allows the comparison of multiple texts, but at the same time it safeguards against the risks of working with a large corpus. On the other hand, given its thematic cohesion, it offers the possibil-

[9] The work spread to Korea and Japan.

[10] See Luo Lu 2004: 320–321. On the complementarity of the two works, cf. Ji Hao 2017: 106–107.

[11] Zhong Zhiwei (2005: 268–278) divides the commentarial notes into two main groups, "neizhu" 內註 (internal annotation) and "waizhu" 外註 (external annotation), further subdividing each group into different kinds.

[12] I expand on this notion in a forthcoming work provisionally titled "Intralingual Translation and the Making of the *Yanyi* Textual Category", which is part of the project "Intralingual Translation, Diglossia and the Rise of Vernaculars in East Asian Classical and Premodern Cultures" that I have developed with Rainer Lanselle.

ity of considering if and how the global vision of the sequence may affect interpretative and translational practices.

The sequence is classified under the "Shixu" 時序 (Time) category.[13] Unlike in earlier collections, Zhang Xing did not split the series by inserting the poems into different categories, and thus he actively contributed to highlighting the structural continuity of the individual texts (see Ji Hao 2017: 106–107).

As I mentioned above, the explanatory part of the commentarial note is opened by a short explanation of the general meaning of the poem, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

1) 此詩因見峽中秋景而起興略及長安故園而末極言之 (DLYY, 31)
   In this poem, [the poet], inspired by the view of the mid-autumn scenery at the gorges, touches upon his homeland in Chang'an, and in the end speaks about it in detail.
2) 此詩因見夔府晚景而望長安極言其思歸之切也 (DLYY, 32)
   In this poem, [the poet], after seeing an evening scene in Kui prefecture, gazes towards Chang'an, and speaks to the utmost about his yearning desire to return.
3) 此詩公因坐江樓見秋景而自傷命薄不如長安之少年也 (DLYY, 34)
   In this poem, the poet, because he sits in the river pavilion and sees the autumn scenery, laments that his fate is miserable and not like his youth in Chang'an.
4) 此詩專為長安之變更因秋有感而懷思長安自祿山之破至于代宗之世朱泚亂之吐蕃陷之乘輿播越而公久客巴蜀故云 […] (DLYY, 35)
   In this poem, because of the disaster in Chang'an, and furthermore because of the autumn season, [the poet] is moved and thinks back to Chang'an. From its fall by the hand of An Lushan to the chaos caused by Zhu Ci at the time of Daizong, when the Tibetans seized it and the emperor fled, the poet was living as a stranger in Ba and Shu and that is why he said […].
5) 此詩用長安事以起興末乃自嘆而懷舊也唐自明皇尊玄元聖祖頗以神仙為事然高宗龍朔三年改大明宮為蓬萊宮已有慕仙之意故此篇借周漢神仙事起興 (DLYY, 36)
   In this poem, [the poet] uses the events in Chang'an to evoke feelings and in the end he sighs over himself, full of nostalgia. During the Tang, since the "Bright Emperor" started to venerate the "Divine Ancestor of the Mysterious Origin", they were giving great attention to deities and immortals, but already in the third year of the Longshuo reign, when the Emperor Gaozong remodeled the Daming Palace into the Penglai Palace, there was already the idea of worshipping the immortals. For this reason, this piece takes matters of immortals of the Zhou and Han periods as a source of inspiration.
6) 此詩思曲江而作也 (DLYY, 37)
   This poem was composed thinking of the Twisting River.
7) 此詩因昆明池之景而嘆其今不得見也 (DLYY, 38–39)
   In this poem, because of the scenery of the Kunming Pond, [the poet] sighs that he nowadays cannot see it.
8) 此詩專為渼陂之景而作按通鑑郭子儀引三千騎自御宿川循山而東北出藍田以向長安公渼陂詩云水面月出藍天關又云下歸無極終南黑可以見昆吾御宿乃渼陂相近之

[13] The DLYY anthology classifies the selected poems according to twenty-one thematic categories, following an organizing principle that was already popular during the Song dynasty. See Ji Hao 2017: 97. In some of his commentarial notes, Zhang Xing refers explicitly to the collection of Du Fu's poetry edited by Huang He 黃鶴 (Song dynasty), which is also thematically arranged into a total of seventy-two categories. This edition probably served as the primary source of the Yuan commentator.

地紫閣又終南山之峰名臨乎陂上者也蓋公自長安而往遊渼陂必道經昆吾山御宿川行乃至則見峰陰入陂所謂半陂以南純浸山是也 (DLYY, 40)

This poem is dedicated to the scenery of Meipi. According to the Comprehensive Mirror, Guo Ziyi led three thousand cavalry from Yusu Brook following the hills to exit at Lantian in the north-east, towards Chang'an. In the poem of "Meipi"[14] the poet says: "On the water's surface the moon comes out over Indigo Fields Pass" and again "Receding downward endlessly is the blackness of Mount Zhongnan." It is evident that Kunwu and Yusu are places near Meipi. Purple Tower is the name of a crest overlooking the lake. When the poet went travelling from Chang'an to Meipi, he had to pass through the Kunwu Mountains and Yusu Brook to see the shadow of the crest entering into the lake. This is what it said: "The southern half of the reservoir is purely soaking the mountain."

The introductory part typically focuses on the link between the contextual situation and the poet's feelings, and it gives contextual details useful for understanding what stands behind the composition of the poem (as in excerpt 8 above).

The text that follows this explanatory introduction retells the content of the poem, presenting various degrees of correlation with the first part: from more explanatory reformulations, in which the commentator intervenes in the text to stress a particular point in order to make it more evident (e.g., tracing it back to the general meaning indicated in the introductory part), to more imitative reformulations, in which the commentator almost withdraws from the verbal surface of the prose text and shortens (and sometimes effaces) the distance between his explanatory text and the poem.[15] It should be noted that this last case is usually marked by the presence of a metalinguistic marker such as *yan* 言 or *yun* 云 at the beginning of the reformulation.[16] A continuum of options occupies the middle position between the two forms of explanatory and imitative reformulations in a mixed text format.

The commentarial note added to the first poem of the series presents a good example for examining the interplay of the two forms. The poem reads as follows:

玉露凋傷楓樹林,	Jade-white dew withers and harms forests of maple trees,
巫山巫峽氣蕭森。	On Wu Mountain and in Wu Gorges, the atmosphere, bleak and dreary.
江間波浪兼天湧,	Between river's margins the waves churn level with sky,
塞上風雲接地陰。	wind-driven clouds over passes touching earth in shadow.
叢菊兩開他日淚,	Chrysanthemum clumps twice have bloomed forth tears of another day,
孤舟一繫故園心。	a lonely boat tied up once and for all a heart set on its homeland.
寒衣處處催刀尺,	Everywhere clothes for cold weather hasten ruler and blade,
白帝城高急暮砧。	Walls of White Emperor Castle high, pounding block urgent in dusk

(tr. Owen 2016: 353).

[14] It refers to the ballad "Meipi xing" 渼陂行 [Meipi: A Ballad] by Du Fu. See Owen 2016: 132–135. In the following part of the commentarial note, the text marked off by inverted commas refers to quotations from Owen's translation of "Meipi xing".

[15] Here I adapt, with some changes, the classification of reformulations into "reformulation à visée explicative" and "reformulation à visée imitative" formulated by Catherine Fuch (1994: 7–12).

[16] On the use of *yan* in commentary, see also Wagner 2000: 276–281.

The first part of the commentarial note opens with three glosses to explain the use of the terms *yulu* 玉露 (jade-white dew), *guyuan* 故園 (homeland); *Baidicheng* 白帝城 (the walled town of the White Emperor):

> 玉露露至秋則白故園指長安也杜氏之先在城南杜曲白帝城公孫述自號白帝故築城於夔州 (DLYY, 31)
> *Yulu*: At autumn dew is white. *Guyuan* indicates Chang'an. The ancestors of the Du family were in Du qu, in the southern outskirts of the city. *Baidicheng*: Gongsun Shu styled himself as the White Emperor and built a walled town in Kuizhou.

The note continues with a brief explanation of the general meaning of the poem (see excerpt 1 from the above list) and moves then to the reformulation. The underlined parts in the following text indicate passages in which the commentator openly engages in prose reformulation to provide causal links, additional information, and further explanations of difficult passages, as well as critical interpretations:

> 露凋楓葉至於滿林則秋深矣故巫山巫峽之氣肅殺而蕭森也峽江之間波浪蹴天楚塞之上風雲匝地此皆蕭森之氣公因此自嘆留夔已經兩秋故云叢菊之開我當感此而揮淚矣然下峽孤舟則猶滯此一繫我故園之心也他日言向日也一繫言始終心在故園而身滯舟中繫身即所繫心也末言人家感此秋氣蕭森亦備寒衣故曰白城中擣衣之聲天寒歲暮愈關情矣安得不形於嘆咏哉 (DLYY, 31)
> Dew withers maple leaves until it covers the whole forest, this means that it is late autumn. For this reason, the atmosphere on Wu Mountain and in Wu Gorges is desolate and dreary. Amid the River of the gorges, the waves dash to the heavens. Over the passes of Chu, wind-driven clouds surround the earth. These are all indications of the desolate atmosphere. Moved by this scene, the poet sighs to himself [that] he has already been in Kuizhou for two years and therefore says, "the bloom of Chrysanthemum clumps, as I see them I shed tears." Thus a lonely boat heading down the gorge still lingers here drawing together my feelings for the homeland. *Ta ri* means 'former days'. *Yi xi* means 'all along'. The heart is at the homeland while the body is constrained on the boat. The constrained body actually means that the heart is constrained. At the end it says, "'The people are feeling the dreariness of the autumn's air and have started to prepare the winter clothes." Therefore, it tells of the sound of pounding clothes in the White Emperor Castle. The weather is cold, the year is ending, [everything] is more and more moving. How would it be possible not to express all this in sighs and verses?

By comparing the reformulated parts in the above text with the corresponding parts in the original poem, it is possible to observe the following:

i) recurrent shifts from connotation to denotation, as in the following cases: the term *yulu* 玉露 'jade-white dew' becomes simply *lu* 露 'dew', *daoshang* 凋傷 'withers and harms' is reduced to the single verb *dao* 凋 'withers', and the expressions *cui daochi* 催刀尺 'hasten ruler and blade' and *ji mu zhen* 急暮砧 'pounding blocks urgent in dusk' are substituted by the more common terms *bei hanyi* 備寒衣 'prepare the winter clothes' and *dao yi* 擣衣 'pounding clothes';
ii) the insertion of synonymous terms to intensify in a very direct manner a particular description, as exemplified by the use of the term *xiaosen* 蕭森 'bleak and dreary' in the second verse, which in the reformulation is preceded by the synonym *susha* 肅殺

'desolate and dreary', a term commonly associated with *qi* 氣 to describe the atmosphere during the autumn and winter seasons;

iii) some (albeit weak) instances of parallelism, as in the case of the second couplet, which maintains a parallel structure in the reformulation as well:
峽江之間波浪蹴天 Amid the River of the gorges, the waves dash to the heavens.
楚塞之上風雲匝地 Over the passes of Chu, wind-driven clouds surround the earth.

The co-occurrence of these elements is particularly significant. On one hand, the prevalent shift from connotation to denotation is an important mark of general simplification that indicates reformulation, and the same can be said for the transformation from poetry into prose as well. As pointed out by Zethsen in her studies on intralingual translation, the process of simplification centers around the parameter of knowledge and points towards the general ability or level of expertise that is required to access the prototext (see Zethsen 2009: 795–812). In the case of the reformulated text above, the shifts from connotation to denotation, and to a minor extent, from poetry to prose, produce a highly functional text, which reduces the complexities of the metaphorical language in order to make it comprehensible and in order to allow the reader to eventually return back to that language with a higher level of expertise.[17] On the other hand, the attention, however minimal, paid in the reformulated text to formal elements (parallelism) and semantic amplification (i.e., the focus on the description of autumn, which is the inspirational element of this piece and the whole series) reveals an effort to balance the predominance of the dimension of meaning with a consideration for some basic elements of the poetic mode (form and imagery). The fact that this balancing act is achieved within the boundaries of the reformulated text and its intermingling with considerations on the functional aim of the derived text is in my view particularly relevant in terms of the translational approach of the reformulated text.

Besides the explanatory model exemplified by the note to the first poem,[18] which features the repeated, visible involvement of the commentator in the reformulated text, other examples in the sequence present very minimal commentarial intervention thereby revealing a more mimetic approach to reformulation. The commentarial notes to the second, fourth, and fifth poems of the series can all be considered illustrations of this kind of imitative recasting. The second poem reads as follows:

夔府孤城落日斜,	On Kuizhou's lonely walls setting sunlight slants,
每依北斗望京華。	then always I trust the North Dipper to lead my gaze to the capital.
聽猿實下三聲淚,	Listening to gibbons I really shed tears at their third cry,
奉使虛隨八月槎。	accepting my mission I pointlessly follow the eighth-month raft.
畫省香爐違伏枕,	The censer in the ministry with portraits eludes the pillow where I lie,
山樓粉堞隱悲笳。	hill towers' white-plastered battlements hide the sad reed pipes.

[17] The possibility to immediately turn back to the original text is constitutive of the commentarial format and has a fundamental effect on the status of translation within commentarial literature. Similarly to bilingual editions, it envisages a way of reading that requires or stimulates constant comparison and complementarity between the original text and the metatext. Cf. Karas 2007: 137–160.

[18] Similar cases can be found in the commentarial notes added to the third, sixth, seventh, and eighth poems of the sequence.

請看石上藤蘿月，
已映洲前蘆荻花。

Just look there at the moon, in wisteria on the rock,
it has already cast its light by sandbars on flowers of the reeds (tr. Owen 2016: 353).

Zhang's commentarial note opens with a series of annotations on the intertextual references and allusions used in the poem:

> 荊州記曰巴東三峽猿聲啼至三聲聞者垂淚張騫奉使西域博物誌載每年八月見槎來因乘之到天上此非張騫事公每合用之畫省指尚書省也尚書郎入直給女侍二人執香爐燒熏以從粉堞城上女墻以白土塗之 (DLYY, 32)
>
> The *Jingzhou ji* (Records of Jingzhou) says: At the three gorges in Badong, when the gibbons cry, those who listen end up shedding tears at their third call. Zhang Qian accepted orders and went for his mission in the Western territories. According to the *Bowu zhi* (Records of the Myriad Things), every year in the eighth month, when he saw that the raft had arrived, he would ride to the sky. These events are not related to Zhang Qian, but the poet uses them together every time. *Hua sheng* indicates the Department of State Affairs. When the Minister entered in service, two dames were allowed to follow holding an incense burner. *Fen die*: On the city wall, the battlements were plastered with white clay.

Following is the introductory explanation of the meaning of the poem (see excerpt 2 above) and then the reformulation introduced by *yan* 言 (it says):

> 夔城孤立當日斜之時公登臨其上言我每依北斗而望在其下欲歸長安而未得也嘗聞峽中猿啼三聲客淚自墮今我在此則實聞之而下淚矣嘗聞張騫八月乘槎奉使今我秋不得歸則八月乘槎之事成虛矣我雖檢校工部員外郎而與尚書省入直之香爐相違遠者以病之故但聞此城樓之上雉堞之間笳聲隱隱為可悲也不特此耳適間方見日斜即今請看石上之月已映荻花而明光陰代禪如此其速豈不尤可悲哉 (DLYY, 32–33)
>
> Kuizhou's walls stands isolated, at the time when the sun slants, the poet climbs upon them, saying: "I always trust the North Dipper to lead my gaze to look [at what is] under it, wishing to return to Chang'an, but still cannot achieve it yet. I've learned that at the gorges, when the gibbons cry, at their third call tears naturally fall down from travelers' eyes. And now that I really listen to them while standing here, I shed tears. I've learned that in the eighth month Zhang Qian rode the raft to accept his orders and carry out his mission. But now that, in autumn, I am not able to return, the fact of riding the raft in the eighth month has become pointless. Although I am Acting Vice-Director of the Ministry of Works, I am separated away from the censer used in the Department of State Affairs when entering in service, because of an illness. Merely to listen to the melancholic sound of the reed pipes among the crenellations on these towers is so sad. But this is not the only reason. A moment ago, [I] saw the sun slanting, and now just look there at the moon above the rock, it has already cast its light on the flowers of the reed. Light and shadow [i.e., day and night] replace one another at such a speed, how could it not be even more sorrowful?"

Apart from the reference to the poet as *gong* 公 in the opening line, and maybe the interpretative remark by the commentator disguised in the final rhetorical question, the text of the reformulation reveals here a more marked tendency to shorten the distance between the two texts, and between the reformulated text and the reader, to the point that even new elements introduced for explanatory purposes, such as making explicit that the expression *fuzhen* 伏枕 'the pillow where I lie' refers to an illness that prevents the

poet from fulfilling his official duty, are seamlessly incorporated into the text. The most evident sign of this imitative mode is represented in this case by the recurrence of the pronoun *wo* 我 'I', which is used four times in the text of the reformulation to refer to the persona in the poem. The use of *I* in the reformulated text makes explicit that the persona talking in the poem is the poet and that his voice is the one conveyed in the reformulation as well. Finally, as in the case of the first note, in this text the parallelism of the second couplet is reproduced in the reformulated text as well.

Conclusion

The preliminary analysis of the notes added to the poems of the "Qiuxing ba shou" sequence in Zhang Xing's work has shown the juxtaposition and the combination of two main approaches to the mediation of the prototext (as well as of its author and his world): one leaning towards a direct explanation, the other towards intralingual translation in the form of prose reformulation. If both approaches are based on a common and fundamental condition of distance, they differ in the possibilities they offer to the reader to come to terms with this condition. On the one hand stands the simple acknowledgment of its existence and of the commentator's role in its mediation: what is said supplements the original to facilitate understanding, focuses on something particularly relevant, or provides a summary outline of a portion of text. On the other hand stands the attempt to bridge the distance by offering the reader an optional reading, saying something in a different way. This reading reveals its translational character not just at the surface level of meaning, but also, and primarily, at the deeper level of the residue that this meaning creates. There is certainly an immense distance in metaphorically saying *cui daochi* 催刀尺 'hasten ruler and blade' and explicitly saying *bei hanyi* 備寒衣 'prepare the winter clothes', but once the relationship between these two expressions is established, its properties and meanings can be explored.

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FIGHTING SWAYING IMBALANCES OF POWERS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF SPIRITUAL FREEDOM IN TANG TALES INTO INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM IN HOU HSIAO-HSIEN'S *THE ASSASSIN*

FRANK KRAUSHAAR

ABSTRACT

The appearance of Hou Hsiao-hsien's 侯孝賢 film The Assassin in 2015 and its distinction the same year with the Best Director's award at the film festival in Cannes has launched an avalanche of confused and confusing reviews in print-media and on the internet. This partly may have been due to the gap between expectations the film's attribution to the *wuxia* genre generated in the public and what actually Hou expects from his audience. Despite an unmistakable historical contextualisation at the heart of power-struggling between the Tang imperial court and the ruling house of Weibo, a state that manages to assert its de facto independence behind a diaphanous diplomatic veil of loyalty, the story of the young female assassin Nie Yinniang develops into a sphere of its own, which seems to extend beyond the confines of history and strongly suggests a freedom unspeakable within the intellectual parameter of Tang. This paper traces back the film's narrative based on Tang dynasty tales and its cinematic language, and arrives at an interpretation related to contemporary social and political topics such as the female/male body and violence. It also touches upon the cross-strait relations' issues and the "Western" idea of freedom expressed in an apparently traditional Chinese narrative context.

Keywords: Hou Hsiao-hsien; The Assassin; Tang *chuanqi*; Taiwan cinema; gender; freedom

Although today the *chuanqi*[1] "Nie Yinniang" 聶隱娘 has been transmitted to the wider Chinese-reading public in the collection of Tang tales compiled by Wang Bijiang 汪辟疆 in 1936 which contains many of the early literary fiction classics from late medieval China, the text itself can hardly be called a classic in the proper sense. Rarely mentioned by Western sinologists and so far outside the focus of traditional and modern critics from

[1] The term *chuanqi* 傳奇 is historically complex. Here, it refers to a new genre of urban prose that arose in the eighth and ninth centuries in the Tang capital and other major centres of commerce and bureaucracy. Although the authors of these stories refer, or pretend to refer, to factual events and real personalities, the intervention of "strange" (*qi* 奇) beings or supernatural powers is the most crucial factor in the development of the storyline. Thus, interaction between narrative and fictional elements seems to be a defining element of the genre. However, modern twentieth-century literary critics accentuate the fictional nature of this prose type and its innovative potential.

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East Asia, "Nie Yinniang" by Pei Xing 裴鉶 also indirectly questions the general preoccupation with romance as a fictive prism of society's desires that seems to be commonplace in the modern perception of *chuanqi*. With a single exception, the *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* lists only amorous stories among the "notably influential" *chuanqi* and notes that in general "sympathy lies with young and aspiring officials or with those who have withdrawn from the official life" (Nienhauser 1986: 356). In fact, withdrawal from "the human world", or from any form of social engagement, is a motif so popular in Chinese traditional literature that even the female hero in Pei Xing's tale ultimately withdraws from the human realm. On the other hand, the figure of the young female assassin, of which Nie Yinniang is the literary archetype, became popular again in the so-called women's fiction (*nüzi xiaoshuo* 女子小說) of the early twentieth century as a symbol of modernist radicalism. In this context, the female assassin clearly stands for political engagement in a violent sense, not for withdrawal from the human world (Tsu 2008: 167–195).

However, the fact that Pei Xing chose to depict a young woman as the protagonist in a scenario that would otherwise be dominated by men without indulging in her erotic charms contributes greatly to the exceptional nature of the tale. Stephen Owen in his essay "Romance" states: "These Tang stories [of romance] do not represent the social facts of the demimonde; they represent the culture of the demimonde embodied in fictions that are motivated by its deepest concerns" (Owen 1996: 133). If we accept that romance in the elite society of late-eighth-century Chang'an was understood as a metaphor for the "deepest concerns" of society, then the meaning that unfolds in the story of the female assassin Nie Yinniang is likely to concern unspoken thoughts, fantasies, and longings that linger under the surface of language as a means of social communication.

It seems that director Hou Hsiao-hsien and screenwriter Chu Tien-wen approached "Nie Yinniang" and the film's other literary source, "The Story of Hong Xian" (*Hong Xian zhuan* 紅線傳), attributed to Yuan Jiao 袁郊 (ninth century AD), from the angle of contemporary literary criticism, putting the character of the female assassin on the same level as the much more famous "fragile scholar" figure.[2] Scholars widely agree that the experimental nature and allusive breadth of many Tang *chuanqi* in general not only stimulated the contemporary reader to whom they were first directed to reflect upon the experience of their own age in a more pluralistic manner but have since then never ceased to have an impact on the literary production of later ages. Because romance is highly valued in both the traditional Chinese view and the modern perception of the genre, *The Assassin* meant a significant shift in the cultural perception of literary tradition in the contemporary Sinophone world.

The literary archetype

Since Sima Qian's "Biographical Sketches of Assassin-Retainers" (*Cike liezhuan* 刺客列傳) in chapter 86 of the *Shiji*, the narrative material subsumed under the topic of

[2] For a comparison of the "fragile scholar", a concept invented by cultural anthropologist Song Geng to designate the object of a study published in 2004, with the female assassin, see further below.

assassins, in as far as its protagonists mostly linger between open violation of the law and propriety and secretly legitimate personal motives, also evokes associations with the demimonde. Their fortunes are similar to those of the protagonists of romantic Tang tales who, in their freely elected relationships, most often seem to luckily escape the dangerous twists and turns of fate, but sometimes are straightforwardly led to mental ruin or death. The best-known examples are "The Story of Huo Xiaoyu" (*Huo Xiaoyu zhuan* 霍小玉傳) and "The Story of Yingying" (*Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳). To kill or die for someone, or to be a star-crossed lover, both mean sacrificing one's life for a transcendent goal. As in the *Shiji* account of Zhuan Zhu 專諸, who murders his ruler on the order of the ruler's son and sacrifices himself for the future prestige and prosperity of his own children, who are likely to be promoted to high positions by their father's sponsor, the virtue of the assassin-retainer lies in making himself indispensable for his master the very moment the master faces the obstinate resistance of social norms against his own will. It is merely in the mutuality of this master-client relationship (*zhu* 主 – *ke* 客) that self-interest and selfless love outweigh each other, and thus this apparently egoistic bond becomes comparable to that of an erotic relationship on a give-and-take-basis and, potentially, may result in family fortune. Thus, the virtue of the assassin, which lies in his personal staunchness rather than in his "moral" nature, nevertheless stems from a reciprocal relationship as an elementary precondition of morality. It is for this reason in Sima Qian's account that the assassin Yu Rang 豫讓, after his last master – who had esteemed him more than any of his previous sponsors – is defeated and killed and his corpse abased by the victor, exclaims: "As the knight-errant dies for the one who knows him so the woman presents the one who takes delight in her with her beauty!" (*Shi wei zhi ji zhe si, nü wei yue ji zhe rong* 士為知己者死, 女為說己者容).[3] Whereas beauty is seen as a sacrifice to sustain a heterosexual erotic relationship, death is not feared by those engaged in platonic love (between men). The 'transcendent goal' in both types of erotic relationships is, of course, not extramundane in the sense of classical metaphysics but in the sense of the otherness or strangeness (*qi* 奇) of the beloved one. Thus, in the perception of Tang-era cosmopolitans educated in the letters, lovers who have chosen each other may have had something in common with assassins.

Owen hints at this commonality in his 1996 essay, in which he insinuates that the paradigm of romance calls for variations: "Balances of free choice and compulsion play an important role in romance narrative, as they do in all Mid-Tang attempts to represent spheres of autonomy" (Owen 1996: 134). Theorizing about autonomy makes the story of Nie Yinniang comparable to other Tang-era fictional romances, which have thus far attracted much more critical attention. Nie Yinniang's fate, like the fates of the protagonists in the two romance stories mentioned above, unfolds in a succession of almost coincidental events; however, unlike the emotionally overwhelmed, rakish lovers of Cui Yingying or Huo Xiaoyu, this heroine autonomously – and therefore unexpectedly – avails herself of each possibility to go around another bend on a winding path that will eventually take her into the realm of mountain-wandering, cloud-soaring immortals, which is the utopian Daoist vision of ultimate freedom. In Tang *chuanqi*, this realm is

[3] Han Zhaoqi 2008: 3582. Christopher Lupke has made similar observations previous to my own. See Lupke 2016: 217.

located beyond the limits of a world that incessantly ruins itself, as demonstrated by the fate of Nie's former lord's son who, in the final episode of the story, proves unable to realize her warnings.

Likewise, Yuan Jiao's Hong Xian ultimately escapes from a banquet (the social world) under the pretext of being drunk (having transcended social obligations) and leaves behind the disruptions she appeared to have overcome by her previous selfless intervention in what seemed an unfolding scenario of just another disastrous game of political intrigue. The two female assassins make their ultimate decisions autonomously, following an imperative free of any desire for personal gain that would hold them down in the human realm. Ascending to immortality for both means to become impersonal.

Distance, silence, and slowness

The narrative laconism of the literary text obviously defies any temptation of the author to spoon-feed his audience. This feature lends to Nie Yinniang's story a transparency I do not hesitate to call magic and which as such is splendidly recaptured in Hou Hsiao-hsien's adaptation. Unlike Hou's heroine, the Nie Yinniang of Pei Xing's story does not demonstrate any "difficulty communicating verbally and communing with others" (according to one critic, such behaviour might otherwise indicate Asperger's syndrome; Lupke 2016: 220). Like all typical *chuanqi* characters, however, she remains frugal in her use of speech but can express herself straightforwardly and without hesitation when she is compelled to make crucial decisions. These features of the protagonist strike the reader of the Tang tale in a similar manner as the silence that accompanies and creates distance from action sequences in the film captivates the spectator. This silence deliberately slows down the film's pace of action. The first scene establishes a certain dynamic to action sequences that sees energetic movement transform into wind. Nie Yinniang, tasked with assassinating a military commander, leaps out of a roadside thicket, slicing her victim's throat. He slumps down on his horse before falling into the grass; this movement is immediately converted into the swoosh of a breeze rustling through tall willow trees. From this very first moment of the picture, wind is a peregrine companion of human action, blowing curtains and lush vegetation and flickering candlelight, but never interfering directly. This device is a cinematic adaptation of the poetic *yuanfeng* 遠風, the "far-going wind", a metonym for changes/transformations (*bianhua* 變化) that do not mingle with human purpose but follow upon and are borne by great shifts in timely conditions concocted somewhere far beyond the scope of human subjectivity. However, there seems to be a clear interconnection between this windborne distance and the slowness in the way that things come to pass and in the way the camera establishes distance, yet at the same time remains intimately involved in the dynamics of each shot. Several of the numerous visual motifs expressing the flow of *qi* 氣 ('vital breath, atmospheric as well as organic') originate in lyrical poetry, such as lush foliage and blooming trees in the spring wind, or – more frequently in the film as a whole – transparent curtains wavering in the breeze, haze wafting at the shores of silent waters, and meadows withering in autumnal mountains. The transparent curtains wavering in the breeze (*shulian* 疏簾) are particularly pronounced and owe their efficacy to the fact that the invisible moving power

(of wind or *qi*) transcends the frame of the camera. As Victor Fan opines, this type of shot calls to mind "that the camera and the viewer are part and parcel of the general environment that we observe, and from which we see our own reflection" (Fan 2015). Later, we will discuss Fan's evaluation of *The Assassin* as a "mirror" and its spiritual function to "illuminate the heart" (*zhaoliang xinling* 照亮心靈).

Two tales intertwined to make a new story

For those not familiar with both *chuanqi* the filmmaker drew from, I shall now briefly summarize their plots and main characters before continuing to investigate critical structures and narrative paradigms of *The Assassin* that cannot be discovered and explained without picking up on allusions to these earlier works.

Pei Xing's story "Nie Yinniang" recounts the life of the daughter of historical figure Nie Feng 聶鋒, a general of the quasi-autonomous province of Weibo 魏博, whose leader at the time was Tian Ji'an 田季安 (781–812), grandson of the notorious Tian Chengsi 田承嗣 (705–779), a former henchman of An Lushan 安祿山 (c. 703–757), whose rebellion and ephemeral Yan dynasty 燕朝 (756–762) convulsed the eighth-century Chinese world. At the time the story was taking shape – first as urban gossip and later in the written form authored by Pei Xing – it was well-known that Tian Chengsi, thanks to his wit and cruelty, had managed to maintain the autonomy that An Lushan once had granted him by paying lip service to the sovereignty of the Tang court after it had succeeded in gradually re-establishing its political power. Thus, Nie Yinniang's father, Nie Feng, was in the service of a ruling house that was sanctioned by the imperial court as a part of its system to "rule the *tianxia* 天下", literally 'the All-under-Heaven', and whose claim of autonomy, especially concerning the right of hereditary rulership, remained challenged by continuing interventions from the imperial government.

However, the story presupposes this historical context and does not elaborate on its details. Not even Tian Ji'an is explicitly mentioned by name because the author strictly focuses on the figure of Nie Yinniang. The six-year-old Nie Yinniang is kidnapped on the threshold of her parents' house by a Buddhist nun, who five years later returns the girl to her home as an accomplished assassin. When Nie Yinniang reveals her fate to her worried parents, she gradually loses their trust and love. This ultimate loss of family intimacy must have embittered her even more. In recalling her years in the nun's custody, she tells her parents that she once failed to carry out an assassination that had been ordered by her mistress because she pitied the child her would-be victim held in his arms. The nun returns Nie Yinniang to her family due to her "humane failure". Under these circumstances, she decides to marry a young peddler, whose only skill is mirror polishing; when her father dies shortly thereafter, she becomes a retainer in the ruler's (Tian Ji'an's) household. However, when she is commissioned to assassinate Liu Changyi 劉昌裔 (752–813), a powerful military leader and at the time the loyal governor of a neighbouring province, she meets in her victim a man of superior spiritual power and, surprisingly, does not hesitate to switch loyalties. After Nie successfully uses her magic skills to overcome two assassins dispatched by Tian Ji'an to take revenge for her treachery, she and her husband continue life as Liu's retainers. Years later, Liu is appointed to a high government office

in Chang'an, whereupon Nie decides to leave his service and – after gaining his consent to pay a maintainable rent to her husband – abandons the world of men in search of an "accomplished person" (*zhiren* 至人) in the mountains. As the story draws to an end, Liu suddenly dies and is buried in the capital. Nie is reported as having shown up at the burial among other guests. Then, more than a decade later, Liu's son, on his way over a mountain pass in Sichuan, meets Nie again. Nie, who already seems to have reached a stage of Daoist self-perfection (immortality) warns him to resign from office and presents him with drugs to avoid forthcoming calamities. He, however, ignores her warnings and, soon after, dies. The final remark assures the reader that, from then on, no one would ever again hear of Nie Yinniang.

Compared to Pei Xing's narrative laconism, the style of Yuan Jiao's "The Story of Hong Xian" differs significantly. Hong Xian initially appears as an extraordinarily talented maid, serving in the household of Xue Song 薛嵩 (d. 773), another former henchman of An Lushan, who had also returned under the dominion of the imperial court and become an enfeoffed military governor (*jiedu shi* 節度使) of the loyal province of Luzhou. In contrast to Nie Yinniang, Hong Xian's personality shows no signs of obstinacy and her personal fate is not exposed to the reader's eyes from the very beginning. Initially, Hong Xian appears only as an extraordinary female servant because she possesses qualities that one would not expect from a "simple maid" (*qingyi* 青衣), such as musical and intellectual skills as well as intuitive intelligence.

After introducing Hong Xian's character, Yuan Jiao makes an excursion into the political background of the age with its swaying imbalances of regional powers that the imperial court strove to manage by building and maintaining family networks between leading clans. Xue Song, a member of such a network, senses that his daughter's father-in-law, Tian Chengsi (the governor of quasi-autonomous Weibo), is planning to attack him. Hong Xian intuitively understands her master's distress, approaches him in an undisturbed moment and, upon gaining his confidence, reveals herself as an "unusual person" (*yiren* 異人), a term that implies the possession of supernatural powers. Thanks to her abilities, Hong Xian reaches Weibo the same night and finds Tian Chengsi asleep in his palace. But instead of kidnapping or killing him on the spot, as the reader might expect of her because upon her departure from Luzhou she was depicted dressed in the style of a professional assassin and armed with a dagger, she intuitively decides to steal a golden box lying on the floor next to his bed that contains the "Eight Characters" (*bazi* 八字) and some jewellery.[4] After having returned with her plunder to Luzhou, she reports everything to Song and in conclusion exclaims: "Feeling worried, I left; filled with joy, I return"[5] (*you wang xi huan* 憂往喜還) (Wang Bijiang 2008: 261). Thus, she left for her mission full of distress because of the perfidious plot planned by Tian against Song, but eventually returned full of joy because in a crucial moment her intuition showed her the way to resolve the problem without bloodshed.

[4] According to the translator of the story Cao Weiguo, the Eight Characters "indicated the year, month, day and hour of a person's birth, each consisting of a Heavenly Stem and one Earthly Branch". Compare Nienhauser 2010: 13, footnote 48. In fact, the information contained in the Eight Characters refers to the cosmological existence of a person. One who possesses this information might be able to foresee coming events, evaluate options and non-options, and, thus, interfere in the fate of the original owner, which explains Tian Chengsi's consternation.

[5] Modified translation after Cao Weiguo, Nienhauser 2010: 15.

Song understands his servant and orders a messenger to swiftly return the box to Weibo, an action that deeply moves the already desperate Tian Chengsi, who apologizes to Song in a letter sent back to Luzhou and immediately calls off his murderous plans. At this point of the story, Hong Xian appears as an unexpected saviour in a disastrous world. It seems, however, as if a single deed sufficed to complete her mission, and soon after the two neighbouring provinces reconcile, Hong Xian declares her intention to leave Song. To justify her decision, she reveals to Song her own fate, which is conditioned by her previous incarnation as a male healer. It turns out that her heroic deed was intended as repayment for sins she had committed in a previous life. Thus, she concludes that the time had come to "withdraw myself from the mundane world and rest my heart on that which transcends secular affairs" (Nienhauser 2010: 21). And so she does soon after in the midst of a farewell banquet that Song has arranged in loving respect for his former maid who had saved him and his like from the impending carnage that would have been the only logical outcome of the tensions produced by their own greed and vengefulness.

Hong Xian is a model of virtue and, in the way she carefully observes and approaches her master from her very inferior position in his household, even displays a certain handsomeness. In comparison, Nie Yinniang remains obstinate, brittle, even queer, from the beginning to the end, when she forgoes insisting on her warnings to the son of her beloved master Liu Changyi, leaving him to his ruin. Her behaviour can be explained by her characteristics, which are highly specific for the heroes of Tang tales. She resolutely fights the cruelty of a fate she alone can face, and, regardless of others, she pursues a path that is more complicated and certainly more individualistic than Hong Xian's exemplary road to salvation. I believe the discrepancies between the two stories have been meticulously explored and skilfully exploited by filmmaker Hou Hsiao-hsien and his scriptwriter Chu Tien-wen in an attempt to fuse them into a new character, the Nie Yinniang of *The Assassin*, which bridges the millennium between the crisis of the world of the Tang and ours.

A critique of the historical narrative as political metaphor

Hou and Chu intentionally complicated the storyline of *The Assassin* by interweaving many details from the two Tang tales that were briefly summarized and discussed above. Both take place in the same historical setting, during an epochal stalemate in the tense political power struggle between the imperial court in Chang'an and an autonomous ruler, the hereditary governor of Weibo province, which also involved several other provincial governors in the region, both loyal and autonomous. What many historians of the Chinese empire (and of modern Chinese national history) interpret as a political dilemma during the late eighth century and the first half of the ninth century was actually a textbook example of realpolitik. The imperial court and the hereditary house of the rulers of Weibo, the Tian clan, had entered into a contract of sorts that would enable both to save face, notwithstanding mutual intrigues instigated by either of the two sides to subtly optimize its own position. In fact, this historical balance of power can help

reflect on current-day tensions emerging under the umbrella of the One-China policy (*yige Zhongguo zhengce* 一個中國政策) in the contemporary context of regional and global politics.

Of the two literary texts, "The Story of Hong Xian" alone elaborates on the political complications in the aftermath of the An Lushan rebellion (755–763) by explicitly mentioning the imperial court's diplomatic efforts at building a system of diplomatic marriages between provincial clans, whose leaders, very often former supporters of An Lushan, could not be forced to abdicate their positions as quasi-hereditary rulers who had to be formally recognized by the imperial government. By resorting to kinship diplomacy, the court, however, palliated, rather than resolved, the problem of mutual rivalry and potential violence between the elite clans, and, as we have seen earlier, this state of affairs led to the vital problem faced by Hong Xian. Hong Xian's heroism is clearly displayed against the backdrop of turmoil between provincial powers and in the general context of gossip about intrigues, slander, and conspiracy among members of high society in the provinces and in the capital.[6] Thus, aspects of Hong Xian that are absent from the literary version of Nie Yinniang, such as the charity Hong still bears from her former life as a healer and her pity for those who are willing to harm others, are fused into the character of Hou and Chu's Nie Yinniang, who, in face-to-face-situations, appears aloof, almost numb, but as an emotional subject remains deeply intertwined with the fate of the world she was born into. The historical imbalances of power that roiled relations between the imperial court and regional elites generated a culture of slander, intrigue, and assassination plots which produced an environment that can easily be compared with today's atmosphere of wariness bordering on anguish, as well as of latent cynicism, that dominates relations between the two political, and increasingly also cultural, rivals on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The Assassin is far from being a mere adaptation of the literary text whose Chinese title it borrows. Brian Hioe does not err in judging that *The Assassin* follows in a series of productions that, over the past fifteen years since Zhang Yimou's *Hero*, have sought to blur the boundaries between 'martial arts' film and art film (Hioe 2015). But Hioe clearly overemphasizes the importance of a film's use of political metaphor for helping it achieve art film status. Although Hioe's assumption may adequately apply to Zhang's *Hero*, the political agenda of the Pro-Unification Left is hard to distinguish in the metaphorical language of *The Assassin*. Unquestionably, however, imbalances of political power have a strong impact on the classical human dilemma embodied by Hou's main character. The allusive style and principles of selection applied by Hou in his references to both literary sources reveal a psychological dichotomy. It is rooted in the desire for love, which for both main characters, Hong Xian and Nie Yinniang, is a desire to become recognized by those who can appreciate them (*zhi ji* 知己), and by those to whom they belong, and a yearning for freedom of choice, which ultimately leads both of them to leave the human world.

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[6] The most recent and probably one of the most topical discussions of the problem of fictionality and narrativity in Tang *chuanqi*, which, in a way, contradicts the discussion about the legitimacy of reading a political metaphor in *The Assassin*, has been produced by Sarah M. Allan (2014); see especially chapter 2, "Filling the Gaps: Tales on and against History" on pages 0–118.

The historical backdrop and the main characters

In the second half of the eighth century, An Lushan's rebellion had exhausted the country, decimated its population, sparked a dangerous migration of impoverished refugees, and destroyed mutual trust between the regional elites as well as between these elites and the imperial court. The mid-century rebellion created a moral vacuum in the minds of those who had survived civil war and experienced the ensuing disorder. These events can perhaps be legitimately compared with the series of brutal dictatorships East Asia and many other regions of the world suffered for several decades during and after World War II.

Military commanders were commissioned with upholding "standard rules" in the provinces and controlling potentially disloyal elements. Cruelty was often considered a practical, indispensable tool wielded by rulers to maintain order. But the arbitrary use of power had negative consequences, and to mitigate them the court sought to encourage marriages between imperial clan members and provincial elites as well as between the families of military governors or *jiedushi* 節度使 (literally: 'those charged with upholding standard rules'). This method, it seems, led to greater success than that acknowledged in the mainstream historical narrative, which presents a political history of the Tang empire after the suppression of An Lushan's rebellion in which central power is in permanent decline. As a matter of fact, from the 820s until 880, an overwhelming majority of provincial governors were again directly appointed by the imperial government (Tackett 2014: figure 4.2). Therefore, in a recent study on the crisis of medieval Chinese aristocracy Nicolas Tackett suggests that 'the dynasty remained relatively stable until quite late in the 9th century' (Tackett 2014: 145). If we accept his view – which seems well grounded – then the historical situation becomes even more interesting. Historians write about *Hebei jiushi* 河北舊事, or "Hebei-custom",[7] with respect to the exceptional autonomous status of the three provinces located on the territory of present-day Hebei; here, the position of governor was inherited during practically the entire period beginning with the rebellion and ending with the final collapse of the dynasty. According to Tackett, none of the three clans ruling these de facto autonomous provinces had a history of sons having served as officials under the Tang and had almost no active ties with the empire's heart of power brokerage, the "capital marriage network". These autonomous lineages were founded by military leaders who had sided with An Lushan during the period of open civil war shortly after the mid-eighth century. As we have seen in "The Story of Hong Xian", Weibo's founding father, Tian Chengsi, in fact figures as the main character in an intermarriage network between the governors of autonomous and loyal provinces initiated by the court in a strategical attempt to appease the territories to the north and south of the lower Yellow River valley. With the exception of such periodical and more or less successful attempts to gain more influence via intermarriage, the central government's role in the politics of the region was often that of a mere bystander.

In the plot of *The Assassin*, the cinematic character of Princess Jiacheng (Jiacheng gongzhu 嘉誠公主), the mother of Tian Ji'an, and her twin sister in the film, the Daoist

[7] The term goes back to Charles Allen Peterson's study "The Autonomy of the Northeastern Provinces in the Period Following the An Lu-shan Rebellion" (Peterson 1966). See Tackett 2016: 151.

nun who educates Yin'niang and later orders her to assassinate Tian Ji'an, personify the schizophrenic political constellation, a theme that lurks under the surface of the narrative. In Christopher Lupke's words, Jiacheng

> was the daughter of Emperor Daizong of the Tang (代宗; 727–779), and the princess's brother, Dezong 德宗 (742–805), betrothed her to Tian Xu [governor of Weibo to whom she bore Tian Ji'an] as a way of maintaining amity between Weibo and the central court. This becomes a crucial plot in the film because Princess Jiacheng is portrayed as a forlorn woman, living outside her own land with no one to share her culture, and she is extremely lonely (Lupke 2016: 221).

It is as if, in the meanwhile after her death, Princess Jiacheng's loneliness had spread among those closely related to the court of Weibo. During her first encounter with her returned daughter, Nie Yinniang's mother, Nie Tian shi 聶田氏, gives her a broken jade ring and explains its meaning as a symbol of rupture between Princess Jiacheng and her own imperial family, which had sent her to Weibo to improve relations with the court. Soon after the princess's arrival, Nie Tian shi continues, she sent her imperial entourage back to the capital and decided to stay alone as the wife of the governor of Weibo. "From that moment on", she tells her daughter with a sigh, "the court was the court, and Weibo was Weibo". After the ultimate severance of the princess from her imperial family, the princess devoted her life to her son and husband. But she had already sacrificed what must be seen as her free will because the rupture had been forced upon her by the contradicting political interests of others, and her personal decision to stay loyal to her husband reflects her lack of interest in becoming involved in political machinations. Thus, Nie continues to tell her returned daughter the story of the

> Blue Bird Dancing in Front of a Mirror, in which a blue bird is caged by a king – a parable of her [Princess Jiacheng's] own entrapment. The bird refuses to sing for three years, when one day the king offers her a mirror and asks her to dance. Upon seeing her own image, she lets out one last cry and dies. The reflection that the blue bird sees is her incarcerated self, and she dies in her state of imprisonment (Fan 2015).

In this central parable the entanglement of love, freedom, and death on a human level is apparent. It is the core of the aesthetic and psychological dynamics that form human relations in the film and urge Nie Yinniang to make the decisions that free her from being governed by the interests of others.

After Jiacheng's death and during the concrete time period covered by the plot of *The Assassin*, political affairs in Weibo became even more complicated. In one scene Tian Ji'an, confronted with the imperial government's policy of pinpricks, listens to his advisors in his palace's audience hall, but soon proves unable to bear their debate on whether to take a more affirmative stance or to try to actively avoid getting roped into a military confrontation provoked by the imperial court.[8] It is not clear which adviser's doctrine

[8] This depiction of Tian Ji'an's behaviour and character is by and large congruent with the way he is portrayed as a cruel ruler who lacks self-control in *Universal Mirror of Governance* (*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, *juan* 238) by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086).

enrages him most. He seems overburdened with his responsibility as a ruler. Hardly understanding himself anymore, he grows angry.

This scene makes the most obvious allusion to contemporary cross-strait relations. It is hard to imagine that a viewer familiar to any degree with the official and unofficial political discourse on the legitimacy of the de facto independent state of the Republic of China would miss the parallel while listening to one of the disputing advisers explain that violent action from the side of the Tang court to overthrow Weibo, despite successful precedents elsewhere, could only fail "because the ruler and government of Weibo enjoy the trust and full support of the population".

This is one – and in my understanding the only – spot in the film where contemporary political problems shine through the dense historical texture of the plot in a scene that seems to reflect a historical situation. This narrative ambiguity bears some resemblance to the traditional literary technique of "satirizing the present by referring to the past" (*yi gu feng jin* 以古諷今). It is worth noting that Tian Ji'an's eruption only silences the advisors but does not seem to entail resolute action.

Nie Yinniang and Hong Xian

What kind of woman is Nie Yinniang? Hou's character outwardly differs from all other female characters in the film. Tian Ji'an's wife in the film, Tian Yuan shi 田元氏, calls her the 'black female knight-errant' (*hei nüshi* 黑女士) and later appears as a knight-errant herself, but whether she does so to protect her own children (and the state?) or to satisfy her jealousy remains unclear. Nie's outfit flouts the court fashion of lush, coloured robes, her sparingly adorned hairstyle differs radically from the "cloud-style" fashionable in the milieu of Tang-dynasty high society, and – in stark contrast to the meticulous work that was spent on every historical detail of dress and furniture as well as on aspects of language and gesture – her slim body bears not even the slightest resemblance to the Tang concept of female beauty. According to van Gulik, the men of the era "liked sturdy women, with round, chubby faces, well-developed breasts, slender waists but heavy hips" (Gulik 2003: 188). The authors of Tang tales preferred a kind of aristocratic or exotic beauty that Nie Yinniang obviously lacks; likewise the audience of such stories enjoyed gossiping about the power this beauty could have on effeminate young men, who lusted after such women. Nie, veiled in a black garment whose darkness blends into that of her glossy long hair, carries herself with an unwavering bearing that expresses enigmatic, unyielding resolution; therefore, she could almost be interpreted as a female counterpart of the popular "fragile scholar", whose bodily appearance "with his narrow shoulders, frail physique, slim waist, and tender gesture, is highly feminized" (Geng 2004: 69). This makes the main figure of *The Assassin* appear even stranger in the eyes of the spectator who bears in mind the stereotypical gender roles of Tang *chuanqi* narration.

By referencing Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, Song Geng in her study *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture*

> reveals the body as an object of knowledge and as a target for the exercise of power. "The body is shown to be located in a political field, *invested with power relations which render*

> *it docile and productive, and thus politically and economically useful*… a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved." This procedure of training or coercing bodies is done through the technique of power termed 'discipline' by him [Foucault]. The political technology of the body thus links power relations, knowledge and the body (Geng 2004: 69–71).

In this sense, Nie Yinniang's body is almost overdisciplined. During her years as the nun's apprentice, a time when she reached sexual maturity, she remained isolated from society, with the exception of a few other girls who were also trained by the nun. Thus emancipated from social and political power relations between the sexes, she is trained to kill smoothly and without leaving traces. But the fraud inherent in this independence from social and gender hierarchies can be observed at the very beginning of the film, when Nie is presented as the "docile and productive" instrument of her nun-mistress, a hidden player in a major power game. In fact, she appears trapped in her disciplined and invincible body, and the story Hou tells is one of growing subversive hesitation in playing the role assigned to her. Employing this practice of hesitation helps her ultimately succeed in undermining the "political technology of the body", allowing her to proceed on her heroic path to freedom obtained through her personal strategy of non-action (*wuwei* 無為).[9]

Now, let us return to Nie's antagonist, female assassin Tian Yuan shi, who was mentioned briefly at the beginning of this section. It is important to note that her true identity, the zealous wife of Tian Ji'an and a mother determined to defend her children, whom she probably deems threatened by Nie Yinniang's incursions into the palace, can only be revealed by the viewer by decoding her facial expressions hidden behind a mask. In her first scene, she appears alone in the palace park, pacing back and forth in search of her antagonist and holding a long, curved dagger (Nie's only weapon is an almost invisibly short knife) without uttering a single word. Her purple robe differs starkly from Nie's black garment, and in several other details, her outfit recalls the description of Hong Xian as she prepares herself for setting out on her mission: "She combed her hair into a *wuman* 烏蠻 bun,[10] clasped with a golden phoenix hairpin, dressed herself in short robe with purple embroider, tied on a pair of light shoes with green silk ribbons, strapped a dragon-patterned dagger around her breast, wrote the name of the God of the Grand One on her forehead."[11] Hong Xian is talented and well educated, serving her patron, a governor, in offices that would have been the privilege of male aspirants. Later, sexual ambiguity turns out to be part of her identity as she declares herself the female reincarnation of a learned healer who had inadvertently killed a pregnant woman and two male embryos in an attempt to cure the would-be mother. Thus, her existence as a mean female servant is explained as a form of atonement for a sin committed in a former life;

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[9] The crucial function of this hesitation/non-action in the plot may be *the*, or at the very least, one reason why "Hou and company changed the Buddhist nun from the original Tang text to a Daoist priestess in the film version" (see Lupke 2016: chapter 6, endnote 11, 228).

[10] Translator's note: "*Wuman* was a minority nation which lived in the south-west of Tang China. The '*wuman*' bun is to comb one's hair into a high bun on the top of the head." (See Nienhauser 2010: 10, footnote 38.) This description seems, at least in part, to coincide with the hairstyle Yuan Tian Shi wears as an assassin in the film.

[11] Tr. Cao Weiguo (Nienhauser 2010: 10).

her former vow as a healer to "save the world from calamities" (*qiu shiren zaihuan* 救世人災患) also accounts for her eagerness to protect and save her patron from misfortune and to prevent the greater calamities that might be caused by unleashing the political conflicts looming over him. The complex nature of Hong Xian's motives is obviously echoed in the character of Tian Yuan shi as a female assassin, because her jealousy as a wife must be intertwined in some way with remorsefulness – she had been placed at Tian Ji'an's side despite his engagement to Nie Yinniang – and at the same time with concern for the future of the state and its de facto ruling house whose patriarch has come under direct threat.

Both characters, Nie and Hong, clearly differ from the archetypical femme fatale famous from Tang *chuanqi*; Hong, however, bears certain traits of an alternative literary archetype, the female beauty in *caizi-jiaren* 才子佳人 (scholar-beauty)[12] tales, best represented by Lady Li (*Li Wa* 李娃) in Bo Xingjian's influential story. Not unlike Lady Li, Hong does great things by serving her male counterpart in a most unselfish manner. However, the relationship between Hong Xian and her patron is not romantic. She is initially a simple servant before disclosing her magic powers, with which she offers to help her patron who has found himself in great trouble. In the end, she forsakes her patron's offer to stay in his household and departs under false pretences from her farewell banquet. Hou's Nie Yinniang has even less in common with Hong Xian than the original literary character in Pei Xing's tale. Nevertheless, in a psychological reading of the plot, Tian Yuan shi, bearing several of Hong Xian's traits, appears to be the protagonist's alter ego. Thus, the climax of the film occurs when the two women, both emotionally attached to Tian Ji'an, meet as two assassins in a birch grove. They seem to have used telepathy to find each other and do not exchange a single word before, during, or after the fight. Clearly, Tian Yuan shi is the one who seeks confrontation first, by exceeding the limitations imposed on her by her social roles of the heir apparent's mother and the ruler's wife. During the duel, she lashes out several times against her adversary until the latter, in a counterattack barely perceptible on screen, slashes Yuan's golden mask. An alter ego once unmasked loses the hidden power provided by a facial covering. After the fight, these two similar characters separate, each walking her own way out of the grove.

Successive decisions

In Pei Xing's tale, Nie Yinniang seems particularly apt to make decisions completely on her own. In this story, five life-changing decisions are made; the first, the Buddhist nun's decision to kidnap the girl, and the third, the Weibo ruler's (Tian Ji'an's) half-hearted decision to take Nie Yinniang, of whose skills he has only the faintest idea, together with her husband into his household after the death of her father, were not her own. Initially, her hesitance to kill cannot be properly described as *her* decision, but rather as her inability to obey the order of a person who had stolen her childhood to destroy the life of another innocent person. This idea remains unspoken in the literary tale, but the film

[12] For a more detailed investigation into this literary genre from a gender- and body-culture studies perspective, see Geng 2004, which focuses on romance fiction.

explicitly demonstrates that Nie is aware of the fact that another person had stolen the right of her parents and, thus, disrupted her development by depicting her return to her former master in the mountains for a final farewell before travelling back to a place of her *personal* choice to re-establish the autonomy she lost the moment it had been taken from her parents. (In the Tang tale it is on the contrary in the mountains where she departs from the human world to join the realm of immortals). However, in the eyes of some critics, Hou's Nie, by ultimately returning to that ulterior and perhaps utopian land at the other end of the tunnel, practices "aesthetic escapism".[13] I disagree with this widespread understanding; this misjudgement resonates with the wholesale neglect of classical, premodern literary aesthetics due to the domination of twentieth-century ideological stereotypes. Instead, we should consider the act of "returning" (*gui* 歸) to a place that opposes the hitherto experience of reality as a poetic *gesture of making one's own, free choice*, to which the plot ultimately amounts. This gesture is the quintessence of Nie's rigid engagement with a social and political environment whose logic of violence has exploited her.

The second decision in the Tang tale, the first one she makes alone, comes as a surprise to everyone except herself. One day, a peddler appears at the same door where several years before the Buddhist nun had begged for alms. He is young and unsuspecting, and Nie, in open violation of protocol, declares her will to marry him: "This one may become my husband" (*ci ren ke yu wo wei fu* 此人可與我為夫) (Wang Bijiang 2008: 271). She shows no passion at all for the man, and at first it seems she merely sees in him an opportunity to change her primary social status because she feels her parents have lost true affection for her. On the other hand, she responds so rapidly that she obviously does not have the time for deliberation and instead of acting on careful calculation, she acts on intuition. This time her queerness happens to be in accordance with the resigned mood of her father, who only fears the murderous skills of his daughter and is relieved to get her out of the house. Soon after this turning point in her life, her father dies, and she and her husband continue their existence under the custody of Tian Ji'an (whom the tale does not mention by name).

The fourth decision is made a few years later, when Tian experiences trouble with the chief of a neighbouring commandry, one that maintains closer relations with the court, and decides to send Nie Yinniang and her husband to assassinate his rival. On their arrival at the gate of their declared victim's residence, Nie Yinniang again intuitively perceives his extraordinary skills and his sympathetic nature, which in her mind may substitute for the family intimacy she had lost years ago: "Vice-chancellor Liu must be a genius. If he would not be one, how could he have recognized me?!" (劉僕射果神人, 不然者, 何以洞吾也). At first Liu resolutely rejects this idea: "This must not be. Each loves his patron; this is a common human thing!" But Nie Yinniang knows more than "common human things", and Liu ultimately accepts her statement.

Her final decision comes after her new, self-chosen patron Liu has been appointed to an office at the imperial court. Given the fact that she had voluntarily chosen to abandon her previous patron, the quasi-ruler of autonomous Weibo, in favour of the governor of a loyal province whom she subsequently defends against attempts from Weibo to take revenge, her indifference about her master's promotion is rather unexpected as was her

[13] See Hioe 2015: "Conclusion: A Flight from Politics into Aesthetics."

resolution a few years earlier to change social affiliation without being authorized. Also, her implicit decision to "delve into mountains and waters in search of an accomplished person, however, not without asking for a bit of a pension for her husband" (*zi ci xun shan shui, fang zhiren, dan qi yi xu gei yu qi fu* 自此尋山水, 訪至人, 但乞一虛給與其夫) contravenes the rules. She also does not seem inclined to discuss the decision with her husband. At this point in the tale, however, Pei Xing adapts his Nie Yinniang to the literary scheme of the Daoist hero who seeks to leave the world. With her last, stunning decision, she has fulfilled her mission in the literary cosmos produced by Tang culture and can leave the stage to become an impersonal hero of immortality (Daoist transcendent freedom).

It must be acknowledged, however, that the main character's line of action is motivated by two mutually engaged factors: disillusioned self-awareness and a strong intuition, which together trigger a sense of *personal* liberty that was unheard of among the standard values of Tang society. The Nie Yinniang of the tale is depicted as a subject who gradually gains control over fateful decisions until she can make them independently. With the last of her decisions – not to accompany Liu Changyi to the capital, but to forsake all social bonds, including wedlock, and to "go into the mountains" (*ru shan* 入山) – she personally stands up to and rejects imperial (and society's) power over her own body, liberating herself and achieving the impersonal freedom Tang society's spiritual culture seems to have valued so much higher than moral purity or righteous conduct.

This-worldliness and freedom

Both tales that have been reworked and merged to create the film's screenplay end with the literary trope of escaping from the world of the narrative into a spiritual void; the film, however, at least as I perceive, does not. Recalling Hioe's quite assertive suspicion that "*The Assassin* may be Hou's attempt to flee into an aesthetic wonderland as a way of avoiding confronting political reality" (Hioe 2015), I feel it now appropriate to address the fact that in the film Nie Yinniang never really escapes the dilemma of her cruel fate. She does, however, seem to avoid being consumed by it.

At first sight Hou seems to completely ignore Nie Yinniang's husband in the tale, a "young mirror polisher" (*mojing shaonian* 磨鏡少年). The film, however, features a young man, who first appears along the roadside amid the carnage of a fight between soldiers from Weibo and their adversaries. At this very moment, it seems Nie's father, Weibo general Nie Feng, is posed to die as yet another victim of the political hazards all protagonists are equally exposed to. Barely armed with a wooden pole, the youngster courageously jumps into the fray and manages to protect the general before Nie Yinniang suddenly arrives to turn the tide. Then, this company of three continues travelling through landscapes both lush and desolate until they pass through a long cave reminiscent of the one which in Tao Qian's (365–417) utopia "Peach-blossom Spring" (*Taohuayuan ji* 桃花源記) leads from a world dominated by dynasties, officials, and history to a realm free from all such matters. After the group arrives in a village somewhere inside this new landscape, whose grand mountains and valleys remain unstained with the gaudy colours of flying banners, robes of travelling entourages, or sophisticated architecture,

the young lad sits down among the peasants *to polish mirrors* and to amuse the locals. In an illuminating reading of this scene, Victor Fan interprets *The Assassin* as conveying an ideal central to Zen (or in Chinese, *Chan*) Buddhism: *mingxin jianxing* 明心見性, 'illuminate the heart', thus allowing *nature* to reveal itself:

> … The film cuts to a long shot of the mirror polisher demonstrating his work to a group of children. After he removes the dirt from the surface of a mirror, the children see their reflection. Contrary to the blue bird, which lets out her last cry upon seeing her state of incarceration, the children see in the mirror *nature* that illuminates from within themselves. In this sense, Yinniang and the mirror polisher are not forming a romantic relationship; rather, they are letting go of all relationships, setting themselves free from human troubles and sufferings (Fan 2015).

Inconsistent with Fan's assumption that Nie Yinniang and the mirror polisher in Hou's film reject forming a relationship in order to transcend human suffering is Nie's intense, passionate quest for freedom, not in a metaphysical, but rather in an individual sense. Compared to her counterpart in the Tang tale, her proper character is modern because she does not need to get married to the mirror polisher in order to obtain a new, if only intermediate social status as a wife, nor does she seek out a better patron whose personality is more worthy of her own talent. These moves within the social texture of traditional Tang society are absent from the plot of the film. Hou's Nie Yinniang approaches her fate – the cruelty of which is equal to the cruelty of her own, highly professionalized art of assassination – from an angle of radical worldliness. Her stalwart hesitance to carry out the assassinations she has been tasked with means a rejection of the impersonal cruelty that eliminated her childhood and the emancipation of her individual humanity from what her nun-mistress ultimately calls the "Way of the Sword" (*jiandao* 劍道), or as I call it *the prerogative of violence in a world of swaying imbalances of power*. Gradually liberating her body from the impertinence of being "politically useful" in others' interests, she reveals an unfaltering desire to cut her own path through a world whose fate is as unpredictable as the winds that pervade its landscapes. Ultimately, it is this unpredictability which like a mirror reflects free will as the unconditional property of the individual.

Conclusion

Christopher Lupke has called *The Assassin* a "beautiful rendering of a classic, even clichéd, topic", "a story of tragic love undermined by politics", and "an excursion into the complicated details of internecine historical conflict in premodern China" (Lupke 2016: 224). To his assessment I would add the main insight I gained from my attempt of a close reading of some of the main structural elements of this cinematic work. Hou Hsiao-hsien and Chu Tien-wen's reinvention of Nie Yinniang and Hong Xian in the main character of *The Assassin* (named Nie Yinniang) implies a subtle reading of the historical context of those two unusual Tang *chuanqi* as metaphors for imbalances of political power and their impact on individual freedom in a contemporary – and perhaps even universal – sense. Watching the hero disappear in the autumnal meadows of a wide valley, followed only

by companions of her personal choice, makes one think of Mill's equally timeless and laconic definition of individual freedom: "The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way."[14]

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[14] J. S. Mill, "On Liberty", quoted after Berlin 1969: 3.

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CHINA'S CULTURAL SOFT POWER: THE CENTRAL CONCEPT IN THE EARLY XI JINPING ERA (2012–2017)

ONDŘEJ KLIMEŠ

ABSTRACT

China's leaders are aware that the country's emergence as a major power in the twenty-first century is preconditioned by acquiring soft power and a favourable national image. Culture and cultural projection are seen as essential resources in international strategy, which is conceived with regard to the domestic political objectives of the Communist Party of China (CPC). This paper examines the conceptual framework of China's cultural soft power during Xi Jinping's first term as general secretary (2012–2017). Drawing mostly on official statements by central party organs, the research identifies the rationale, values, and instruments of China's cultural soft power and national-image-building strategy, and also briefly assesses the limitations of this strategy. The article finds that CPC leadership does not clearly differentiate between domestic and foreign cultural work and instead considers domestic cultural security and international soft-power-building a single ideational and discursive enterprise designed to maintain the CPC's rule and gain international acknowledgement for it. The alleged uniqueness of China's culture and civilization, and, therefore, the China development model, is the main argument of this discourse. The central leadership's concept of culture as a political instrument for maintaining power thus shows little innovation from previous eras of the CPC's cultural governance. Its impact thus remains limited by the objective of legitimating authoritarian politics and compromises the CPC's efforts to present China as a major cultural power.

Keywords: China; Xi Jinping; propaganda; ideology; cultural soft power; national image

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Introduction[1]

In the essay *The Captive Mind*, Polish intellectual Czesław Miłosz recounts how communist regimes in Central and Eastern European began to rule the minds of their subjects shortly after World War II. He writes that in order to win the acknowledgment of their citizens, "people's democracies wage[d] a struggle over the human mind. People need to be ushered to understanding; once they understand, they will also accept" (Miłosz 1992: 174). Although today's People's Republic of China (PRC) is vastly different from the Eastern Bloc of sixty years ago, in both contexts the main political actor is a communist party seeking to elicit acceptance of its rule. Not only is domestic tolerance for the regime vital for its survival in the face of multiplying challenges to its rule, but also international approval is requisite for the intention of the Communist Party of China (CPC) to make China a global leader commanding soft power equivalent to its economic might. The CPC realizes that in order to hold and project power in the Information Age, it must have a good reputation at home and abroad. Although in the new millennium the party has dedicated substantial efforts at enhancing China's soft power and national image, and indeed "China's idea of China is [now] more noticeable around the world" (Rawnsley 2015: 460), international perceptions of China remain mixed. In liberal democratic countries, to whose opinions Chinese leaders attach high importance (as this paper shows below), the country is generally viewed in a neutral or unfavorable light, while it is seen favorably by developing and non-democratic states, which value China's "non-interference" in their internal politics (e.g., CSIS 2016, Pew Research Center 2016). Nonetheless, due to its lack of soft power, China remains what has been called "a partial cultural power" (Shambaugh 2013: 165).

China's public diplomacy and efforts at engendering positive public opinion about China have been analyzed in several recent studies, which agree that the state is no longer the exclusive actor in these processes. A volume edited by Jian Wang illustrates that China's primarily political project of national image management interplays with the powerful, fluid dynamics of business and the popular national consciousness (Wang, ed. 2011: 10–11). Ingrid d'Hooghe points out the growing number of actors involved in China's public diplomacy since the early 1990s. Among state actors, she notes a horizontal proliferation of governmental and party actors and a vertical proliferation of provincial and municipal governments. She also observes the growing diversity of what she calls "non-state" actors in China's public diplomacy that generate a diverse image of China which is perceived as more interesting and genuine than the image projected by the government (d'Hooghe 2015: 132–162). Falk Hartig sees China's Confucius Institutes as an example of the post-Cold War era's "new" public diplomacy. He contrasts the "old" public diplomacy, which was primarily designed to persuade, with the new public diplomacy, highlighting its emphasis on understanding the needs of foreign countries, finding common interests, and fostering collaboration, dialogue, communication via new

[1] This study was supported by a Czech Science Foundation grant *China's Cultural Diplomacy: Role of Non-State Actors and Regional Variations* (GAČR GA5-21829S – 2015–2017). It is an outcome of the Oriental Institute's *Power and Strategies of Social and Political Order* research platform (http://power.orient.cas.cz/). The author is thankful to two anonymous reviewers, Olga Lomová, Jitka Pánek Jurková, and Adrian Zenz for valuable comments and suggestions.

technologies, and the emergence of new actors such as NGOs, advocacy groups, and non-state actors (Hartig 2016: 7).

These studies, nevertheless, agree that in spite of the new trends China's cultural diplomacy is still primarily conceived and performed by state actors. Wang finds that "China's image building project remains largely a state-centric project", while Hartig sees China's public diplomacy as a "state-centric endeavor" of the old public diplomacy. D'Hooghe notes that China's authoritarian regime greatly impacts its public diplomacy and state actors far outnumber "non-state" actors. Moreover, 'non-state' actors are not fully autonomous, but, like all other social organizations in China, are regulated, supervised, and coopted by the party-state, which ensures that their activities do not conflict official policies. Kingsley Edney examines in detail the link between the CPC's domestic propaganda and the PRC's international communication, arguing that soft power strategies are designed with a simultaneous view to strengthening the political regime domestically (Edney 2014: 101–121).

The persisting prominence of party-state actors in China's public diplomacy and its link to domestic political objectives is the starting point for this research. In other words, since the party-state remains the central actor in China's public diplomacy, and indeed in all other political processes, this research shows that culture features strongly within the CPC's ideological outlook on how to solicit international understanding and acceptance, claim international discursive space and soft power, improve national image, and project the values of the People's Republic of China. This paper, therefore, explores how the CPC's central leadership conceptualizes China's cultural diplomacy, or, in other words, how it employs culture as a resource for public diplomacy, defined by one study as a country's communication and engagement with foreign publics in order to support national interest and to facilitate or project soft power (Hartig 2016: 1, 49; for a detailed conceptual overview of public diplomacy and soft power, see, e.g., d'Hooghe 2015: 16–46, Hartig 2016: 32–56).

This article approaches the CPC's central concept of China's cultural diplomacy as a basis for concerted ideational[2] activity exerted both to reinforce domestic political order and to gain soft power abroad. The study focuses on the latest ideational design of "cultural soft power" (*wenhua ruan shili* 文化软实力) during Xi Jinping's 习近平 first term as general secretary beginning in 2012. The research purposefully draws on the monolithic official message uttered in the robotic newspeak of the CPC's central propaganda apparatus because it views these statements as a coherent and candid image of the party's cultural work and cultural diplomacy situated within the framework of both its overall ideational action and overall governance. In other words, this study explores the vision of the central leadership because this vision has a major impact on the practical doings of all political actors in the PRC. The pivotal source is Xi Jinping's keynote speech at the National Propaganda and Thought-Work Conference on 19 August 2013 (Xinhua 2013a), which can be considered the CPC's policy statement on propaganda and thought-

[2] This paper generally prefers the term *ideational* to *ideological* in reference to the CPC's post-Mao "propaganda and thought-work" (宣传思想工作) because since 1978 the party has not aimed to inculcate a "hard" abstract ideological system, but rather a set of "softer", easily comprehensible ideational concepts, such as economic development, social stability, national rejuvenation, comprehensive deepening of reforms, and so forth.

work for Xi Jinping's era of leadership (2012–?). The tenets of the speech were replicated and elaborated on in statements by the central propaganda apparatus, including leading official media and think tanks. These documents are a secondary source. The limitations of the central concept of China's cultural diplomacy are also briefly assessed at the end of this article.

Culture as ideology and propaganda in the PRC

In general, all CPC activities are organized into several major "systems" (*xitong* 系统), or policy spheres, that are coordinated in a top-down manner by the highest-ranking party leaders. Thus, the party's central leadership controls subordinate party organs and state institutions responsible for policies and processes in all policy spheres in the PRC. The layout of the systems thus conveys the party's cosmogonic vision of how its domain is ideally arranged. While there is disagreement on the number and structure of these systems,[3] there is consensus that the "propaganda, ideational, and cultural system" (*xuanchuan sixiang wenhua xitong* 宣传思想文化系统) is of major importance.

In fact, ideology and propaganda have been a quintessential pursuit for the CPC since its first statecraft endeavors in revolutionary enclaves in the 1930s. Ideology, which can be broadly defined as "a symbolic system of meanings and practices to embed the ruling group's beliefs in mass consciousness" (Su 2011: 310), also remains at the heart of the political system of post-Mao China. The PRC as such has been classified as an ideological one-party state, where ideology plays two legitimating roles – the governing role of legitimating the regime's policies and the political role of legitimating the regime itself (Brooker 1995: 15, 91–95). The interrelated ideational and practical aspect of ideology has also been noted by Franz Schurmann in his seminal study of ideology and organization in Maoist China. He treats ideology as a consistent yet changing "systematic set of ideas with action consequences serving the purpose of creating and using organization" through which the CPC "created a web of organization which covers all Chinese society and penetrates deep into its fabric" (Schurmann 1968: 17–8).[4]

In post-Mao China, that is, since 1978, the CPC's guiding thought (*zhidao sixiang* 指导思想) encompasses the core ideology of Marxism-Leninism and its derived operational ideologies – Mao Zedong Thought (*Mao Zedong sixiang* 毛泽东思想), Deng Xiaoping Theory (*Deng Xiaoping lilun* 邓小平理论), Jiang Zemin's Important Thinking of Three Represents (*sange daibiao zhongyao sixiang* 三个代表重要思想), and Hu Jintao's Scientific Development Concept (*kexue fazhan guan* 科学发展观), as well as all the party's other guiding principles (*zhidao fangzhen* 指导方针), principles (*yuanze* 原则), and general and specific policies (*fangzhen zhengce* 方针政策; Heath 2014: 189). Guo Sujian observes that in the contemporary Chinese Leninist party-state, ideology continues to

[3] Kenneth Lieberthal distinguishes six systems (listed in Saich 2011: 144), while Zheng Yongnian and Chen Gang identify seven major systems of the CPC's operations: military, political and legal, administrative, propaganda, united front, mass organizations, and organization and personnel (Zheng Yongnian and Chen Gang 2015: 68–9).

[4] David Shambaugh's article lists the major works on ideology and propaganda in Maoist China (Shambaugh 2007: 26).

function as both a means of legitimation and a practical base for the CPC's operation, as it guides the actions of the political elite, justifies the CPC's monopoly on truth, virtues, and power, establishes the party's moral superiority in defining and creating the new socialist moral order, and legitimates its proclaimed historical mission of building socialism (Guo Sujian 2013: 91). Ideology has an interrelated discursive function – besides being "linked to practices, institutions and organization, legitimating and operationalizing their key objectives," ideology also serves the CPC as "a means of control over key vocabularies, linking them with power systems in order to achieve goals" (Brown 2012: 53).

Ideology is no less important for the CPC after 1978 than it was in the Maoist era. Timothy Heath posits that, despite the various transformations in the PRC's politics and the CPC's more pragmatic and rational policy agenda in the post-Mao era, the party reinvigorated its ideology at the beginning of the Hu-Wen era (2002–2012). The CPC's rule is conditioned upon attributing its achievements to its political theory; the party is well aware that "the moment that the citizenry concludes that the government's policy outcomes have little to do with the party's ideology, the argument for the necessity of the CPC's monopoly on power weakens considerably" (Heath 2014: 41). Therefore, the CPC has since 1978 amended Marxist-Leninist and Maoist orthodoxy with an updated theory featuring a more pragmatic and realistic worldview through "a much thinner ideological screen". But in fact, the importance of ideology has grown in comparison to the Maoist era, as today the party-state cannot rely on the Maoist era's egalitarian ideals, mass enthusiasm, coercive violence, and the charismatic power of CPC leadership. The CPC is thus obliged to employ persuasion and manipulation to convince the public of the legitimacy of its rule, and therefore, to articulate "a well-argued and intellectually serious ideology" to support its legitimating arguments (ibid.: 42–43).

The above-described functions of ideology in the post-Mao PRC are effected through propaganda, which can be understood in a party-state context as an "attempt to transmit social and political values in the hope of affecting people's thinking, emotions, and thereby behavior" (Kenez 1985: 4). Anne-Marie Brady argues that the CPC's contemporary thought-work (*sixiang gongzuo* 思想工作) and thought-management (*sixiang guanli* 思想管理) have successfully innovated mass communications, media, and the cultural economy to create a "market-friendly, scientific, high tech, and politics-lite" form of propaganda conducive to "stability, harmony, and happiness" (Brady 2012: 1, 201). Kingsley Edney views the CPC's contemporary propaganda as efforts of the party-state to articulate desirable discourses and suppress undesirable ones. Thus, domestic propaganda seeks to reshape politics and society within the PRC, while external propaganda seeks to channel international discourses on China. In other words, domestic ideational and propaganda dynamics greatly determine China's international communication (Edney 2014: 21).

The interrelation of culture, ideology, and propaganda in the contemporary Chinese party-state is not new in Chinese politics. The idea that political power derives from cultural and moral authority has been present in China's diplomacy and governance since its early beginnings. A constructed cultural, political, and historical identity of Chinese civilization (*Huaxia* 華夏) generated a sense of superiority over surrounding states, which were expected to "come and be transformed" (*laihua* 來化; Dikötter 1992: 2) by the superior culture of the central polity. Domestically, the emperor was seen as the embod-

iment of moral and cultural values, while the gentry saw themselves as entitled to rule because of their literacy, education, and morality. Rule by "culture and refinement" (*wen* 文) was theoretically preferred over rule by "military power" (*wu* 武). Late Qing literati inspired by Western models wanted to "awaken the people" (*jue min* 覺民) to modernity, to transform them, and to instill them with civic values by the means of a new press and education. The CPC was founded in 1921, partly based on the avant-garde ethos of the New Culture Movement of the late 1910s, in which intellectuals called for reevaluating China's traditional sense of itself and for embracing Western cultural, social, and political values. Throughout the 1920s, China's intellectuals increasingly related literature and arts with political ideals. Simultaneously, the Kuomintang claimed to forward both traditional cultural values and modern nationalism during its rule from 1928 to 1949.

The CPC first experimented with embedding culture in its political order in the Jiangxi Soviet of 1931–1934, which introduced cultural organizations and literacy programs as a means of political mobilization. Mao disciplined intellectuals at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in May 1942, when he discussed "revolutionary literature and art" (*geming wenyi* 革命文艺, which can be alternatively translated as "revolutionary culture"). He specifically called for the subjugation of culture to politics: "The cultural and military fronts are among the fronts where the struggle for people's liberation is fought… The purpose of our meeting today is precisely to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary apparatus as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind" (Mao Zedong 1949: 1–2). In the early PRC era (1949–1976), Mao perfected the political employment of culture and education in numerous uncompromising and anti-traditionalist campaigns, such as the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Socialist Education Movement, and the Cultural Revolution, which also carried strong anti-intelligentsia overtones. Zhou Enlai considered cultural and economic diplomacy to be the "two wings" of China's political diplomacy.

After Mao, the CPC continued to pose as a cultural and ideational authority. In the 1980s Deng Xiaoping conceptualized China's future development as encompassing "material civilization" (*wuzhi wenming* 物质文明) and "spiritual civilization" (*jingshen wenming* 精神文明). As some Chinese intellectuals were seeking to break away from the political establishment at the time, Deng launched the Campaign against Spiritual Pollution (*qingchu jingshen wuran yundong* 清除精神污染运动) to fortify the party's ideational domain against liberal ideas. In the 1990s, Jiang Zemin expanded Deng's binary division of China's future development to a tripartite system, adding "political civilization" (*zhengzhi wenming* 政治文明). As a part of the crackdown on the "superstitious" Falungong in 2000, Jiang also articulated the concept of "scientific civilization" (*kexue wenming* 科学文明), which contrasted with "superstition and ignorance" (*mixin yumei* 迷信愚昧; *People's Daily* 2000). He also included culture in his Important Thinking of the Three Represents, in which he argues that the party "represents the orientation of China's advanced culture". The concept of political civilization and the Three Represents were included in the amendments to the preamble of the PRC's constitution in 2004. In the following decade, Hu Jintao elaborated on the concept of science and introduced the Scientific Development Concept, which sought to address the income and growth dispar-

ities spawned by the tumultuous 1990s. Hu's concept also includes an ideational aspect as it seeks to shape and transform a "healthy" worldview and morality. It specifically regards "cultural construction" (*wenhua jianshe* 文化建设) as on par with the economic, political, and social development of China.

The concept of culture in the Xi era

The Xi leadership continues to stress the importance of culture in China's overall development. A new formulation was raised in the work report of the Eighteenth Congress of the CPC in 2012, which expands Hu Jintao's previous fourfold development into "five-in-one" (*wuwei yiti* 五位一体) development by including "building ecological civilization" (*shengtai wenming jianshe* 生态文明建设). The CPC continues to frame culture within its orthodox worldview as "socialist culture" (*shehui zhuyi wenhua* 社会主义文化), or "advanced socialist culture" or "progressive socialist culture" (*shehui zhuyi xianjin wenhua* 社会主义先进文化). The above-described concept of three civilizations is reflected in the CPC's belief that "the economy is the flesh and blood, politics is the skeleton, and culture is the soul of a society" (*zai yige shehuizhong, jingji shi xierou, zhengzhi shi guge, wenhua shi linghun* 在一个社会中, 经济是血肉, 政治是骨骼, 文化是灵魂; China Cadre Learning Network 2016). There is also a dialectical relationship between culture and ideology: "culture is the base and carrier of ideology, while ideology is the core and soul of culture" (*wenhua shi yishixingtai de jichu he zaiti, yishixingtai shi wenhua de hexin he linghun* 文化是意识形态的载体, 意识形态是文化的核心和灵魂; *ibid.*). Leading propagandist Liu Yunshan 刘云山 argues that "culture is a spiritual banner of a party and of a nation" and that "the building of socialist culture must be guided by Marxism" (Liu Yunshan 2010). Through Shen Haixiong 慎海雄, deputy-director of Xinhua News Agency, the party argues that China's national culture consists of "traditional culture" (*chuantong wenhua* 传统文化), "ethnic culture" (*minzu wenhua* 民族文化), "red culture" (*hongse wenhua* 红色文化), and "contemporary culture" (*dangdai wenhua* 当代文化; Shen Haixiong 2014).

Culture is also a means of legitimating the CPC's rule through fostering national sentiment, social cohesion, and loyalty to the party-state. This link is reflected in the concept of "cultural confidence" (*wenhua zixin* 文化自信). Since its first mention by Xi Jinping at the thirteenth collective study session of the politburo in February 2014, the notion has been widely debated, lately in relation to the ninety-fifth anniversary of the CPC's founding on 1 July 2016 (SCIO 2016). Cultural confidence complements "confidence in the path, theory, and system of socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi daolu zixin, lilun zixin, zhidu zixin* 中国特色社会主义道路自信, 理论自信, 制度自信). The CPC posits that the "moderately prosperous society" (*xiaokang shehui* 小康社会) it vows to build by 2021 reflects the immemorial Chinese vision of an ideal society because the concept of "moderate" (*xiaokang* 小康) prosperity appears first in the *Record of Rites* 禮記 and the *Book of Songs* 詩經, where it is translated as "tranquil" or "happy" (e.g., Legge 1876: 317). The excellence of China's culture and national might and the strength of its people justify cultural confidence and pride. In the words of Xi Jinping:

> Standing on the vastness of 9.6 million square kilometers of land, having absorbed the cultural nutrients accumulated in the long struggles of the Chinese nation, and relying on the majestic strength assembled by the 1.3 billion Chinese people, we are going our own way towards an unprecedentedly large stage with an unprecedentedly strong determination. Chinese people should have this confidence; all Chinese should have this confidence (Zhao Yinping 2016).

As the CPC is increasingly concerned with maintaining power, leadership under Xi views a growing number of domestic issues as a matter of regime security. Domestic cultural security (*wenhua anquan* 文化安全) is thus an important component of the PRC's national security (*guojia anquan* 国家安全), which also includes security in politics, social issues, science, information, technology, and all other areas of life in the PRC. An online database search reveals that Chinese scholars started publishing about cultural security in 1999 and the concept received more attention in the 2000s, gaining prominence under Xi's leadership starting in 2012. China's leaders argue that in the contemporary world, influencing people's ideational values is a more effective way of destroying a country than using military or economic power. In other words, culture is a part of the domestic ideational order, whose degradation can lead to the collapse of the regime. Following a statement ascribed to Qing reform-minded scholar Gong Zizhen 龔自珍 (1792–1841) – "in order to annihilate another country, it is necessary to destroy its history; in order to destroy a people, it is necessary to destroy its culture" (*yu yao wang qi guo, bi xian mie qi shi*; *yu yao mie qi zu, bi xian mie qi wenhua* 欲要亡其國, 必先滅其史; 欲要滅其族, 必先滅其文化) – the party sees culture as a potential political threat (China Cadre Learning Network 2016).

The concept of the CPC's domestic cultural security is closely linked to the concept of China's soft power abroad. Joseph Nye's concept of soft power has been widely debated by Chinese academics (Hartig 2016: 64–66), who have developed it into the concept of "cultural soft power" (*wenhua ruan shili* 文化软实力). It was first voiced in Hu Jintao's report to the Seventeenth Congress of the CPC in 2007, where it was considered one of the major factors determining "comprehensive national power" (*zonghe guoli* 综合国力), the sum of a country's political, economic, military, and ideational strength. The CPC's foreign propaganda therefore seeks to construct and project an international image of China as a country with both ancient and modern culture. The CPC wants China to be perceived not only as culturally significant, but also as a stable, responsible, trustworthy, and reliable partner and member of the international community.

The party also hopes to generate acceptance and support of its political system and policies. These efforts are conceived to refute what Chinese policy makers and experts customarily refer to as the "China threat theory" (*Zhongguo weixie lun* 中国威胁论) and to fight against the Western media's bias against China. Chinese leaders also seek to ameliorate the negative image the regime acquired as a result of the violent suppression of the June 1989 demonstrations, which the CPC has not yet managed to improve. China's public diplomacy therefore seeks to remove this tarnish by presenting a national image of China as a developing country in transition entailing certain difficulties, and/or as a successful model of development based on the so-called Beijing consensus focusing on economic development without necessary political liberalization. In sum, the cultural

sphere is crucially important in the CPC's domestic ideational order and its international projection. Chinese leaders' statements that "raising China's cultural soft power is a matter of national destiny" (*guoyun* 国运) are correct in the sense that it conditions the CPC's grip on power.

Raising China's cultural soft power

The Xi administration's emphasis on cultural work signals its cultural insecurity and awareness of its lack of cultural soft power. These weaknesses are acknowledged in statements claiming that although China has strengthened its cultural work, rather than being a "cultural power" (*wenhua qiangguo* 文化强国) it is merely a "major cultural country" (*wenhua daguo* 文化大国) whose cultural soft power does not correspond with its "material hard power" (*wuzhi ying shili* 物质硬实力) and its economic weight, or in other words, that "the superiority of [China's] cultural resources are not sufficiently well transferred into superiorities in cultural diplomacy" (Zhao Kejin 2014).

Boosting both domestic cultural security and international cultural soft power are part of the CPC's broader long-term objectives for improving domestic governance and raising the PRC's international status. These objectives are entailed for instance in the "Two Centenary struggle objective"[5] and the somewhat vaguer Xi Jinping trademark of "realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". Improving cultural security and cultural soft power is a part of the CPC's greater emphasis on "propaganda, ideational, and cultural work" (*xuanchuan sixiang wenhua gongzuo* 宣传思想文化工作). But while the party does generally distinguish between internal and external propaganda, its approach to domestic cultural security and cultural soft power does not draw the line very clearly and implies a transborder, globalized discursive enterprise targeting both domestic and foreign audiences.

The CPC's concept of cultural work was outlined in Xi Jinping's keynote speech at the National Propaganda and Thought-Work Conference on 19 August 2013, which can be taken as the new administration's blueprint for all ideational work. Overall, the party signals that it will intensify and innovate its external and foreign propaganda by "creating and accommodating new concepts, new categories, and new expressions, both domestic and foreign" to create more attractive, appealing, proactive, focused, cutting-edge, and in other ways updated propaganda. It promises to cultivate China's cultural excellence and cultural strength and raise its cultural soft power, with the overall objective of building China into a "socialist cultural power" (*shehui zhuyi wenhua qiangguo* 社会主义文化强国). The party also clearly recognizes the importance of China's national image and narrative, both domestically and internationally. One of the major tasks of the party's ideational work is to "grasp the discursive power" (*zhangwo huayuquan* 掌握话语权) and to make sure people "comprehensively and objectively understand China and the

[5] The "'Two Centenary' struggle objective" ('*liangge yibai nian*' *fendou mubiao* 两个一百年" 奋斗目标) is a CPC policy goal to double the 2010 GDP and per capita income of urban and rural residents and to finish building a "society of initial prosperity" (*xiaokang shehui* 小康社会) by the CPC's centenary in 2021, and to make China "a modern socialist country" that is "prosperous and strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious, and beautiful" by the PRC's centenary in 2049 (Baidu Encyclopedia 2017).

outside world". In this enterprise, the party professes to rely on "explaining China's story" (*jianghao Zhongguo gushi* 讲好中国故事) and "broadcasting China's voice" (*chuanbohao Zhongguo shengyin* 传播好中国声音; Xinhua 2013a). The Xi administration has articulated a much more assertive international strategy, which includes exporting, or at least offering, to the world the "China model" (*Zhongguo moshi* 中国模式) of development, including its values and worldview. In February 2017, Xi remarked that China should "guide" (*yindao* 引导) the international community in building a new world order and maintaining international security (China Cadre Learning Network 2017). This announcement signals the end of the "hide your capacity and bide your time" (*taoguang yanghui* 韬光养晦) low-key approach to international strategy promoted in the 1980s by Deng Xiaoping.

The party declares it will ensure domestic cultural security by maintaining its ideological leadership, cultivating and implementing socialist values, claiming and promoting the exquisite traditional culture of the Chinese nation, preventing and resisting unhealthy cultural influences, and improving overall cultural strength and competitiveness (China Cadre Learning Network 2016). This domestic cultural security strategy extends into the CPC's international cultural power strategy. Echoing central leadership's stance, Zhang Guozuo 张国祚, the head of the National Cultural Soft Power Research, Collaboration, and Innovation Center (*Guojia wenhua ruan shili yanjiu xietong chuangxin zhongxin* 国家文化软实力研究协同创新中心),[6] specifies that strengthening national cultural soft power should entail four major actions: First, the socialist core value system[7] and the socialist core values outlook[8] should be cultivated. Second, as the superiority of China's national cultural soft power dwells in its traditional culture, its essence should be promoted and guarded against potential impurities (literally "dross" *zaopo* 糟粕). Third, cultural industries should be developed. Fourth, ideational and political education in universities should be strengthened. Zhang also argues that culture is at the base of the PRC's international development strategies, such as the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. According to Zhang, only such cultural framing of the OBOR will forge "a community of common interests, destiny, and responsibility with mutual political trust, economic fusion, and cultural inclusion" (SCIO 2015).

The party has also stated how it will relate China's story, or, in other words, it has outlined its discursive strategy in constructing China's national image. It views culture

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[6] This consortium of universities, research institutes, and party and state organs was formed in early May 2015, succeeding the Chinese Cultural Soft Power Research Center (*Zhongguo wenhua ruan shili yanjiu zhongxin* 中国文化软实力研究中心). In the press, it has been lauded as a leading authority on national cultural soft power, yet the institution does not seem to have a publicly known address or website, nor does it publish a publicly available journal.

[7] The "socialist core value system" (*shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi* 社会主义核心价值体系) was adopted by the Seventeenth Congress of the CPC in 2007 and comprises 1) the guiding thought of Marxism, 2) the common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics, 3) national spirit with patriotism at the core, 4) the spirit of the times with reform and innovation at the core, and 5) the socialist concept of honor and disgrace (Baidu Encyclopedia 2017).

[8] The "socialist core value outlook" (*shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhiguan* 社会主义核心价值观) is another component of the socialist core value system. It was adopted by the Eighteenth Congress of the CPC in 2012 and consists of the so-called twenty-four-character definition: 1) value objectives on the national level (wealth, democracy, civilization, harmony); 2) value orientation on the social level (freedom, equality, justice, rule of law); and 3) value criteria on the personal level (patriotism, dedication, honesty, amiability; Baidu Encyclopedia 2017).

as the most suitable communication channel for "explaining China's story" (or, alternatively, "Chinese stories"). Glorious, ancient Chinese culture should be presented to the world in order to explain China's civilized progress and peaceful development and to elucidate the plentiful meanings of the Chinese Dream. The pivotal notion of the CPC's argument is "uniqueness" or "specificity" (*te* 特), which conceptually links China's "unique" (*dute* 独特) traditional culture with its "special characteristics" (*tese* 特色), and thus also with "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi* 中国特色社会主义). The CPC argues along the Marxist line that the country's contemporary situation is preordained by the principles of historical development. Thus, what the party portrays as the continuous and unique five-millennia-long history of Chinese civilization and culture is also what justifies the political order in the PRC. According to Xi Jinping, in constructing the narrative of China, the party should specifically elucidate the following four points (also known as the "Four Explanations" *sige jiang qingchu* 四个讲清楚):

1) The historical traditions, cultural resources, and essential national conditions of every nation are different; therefore the respective national paths to development are also different.
2) Chinese culture accumulates and nourishes the spiritual aspirations of the primordial and advanced Chinese nation.
3) Traditional Chinese culture is the precious asset of the Chinese nation and the source of its cultural soft power.
4) Socialism with Chinese characteristics is rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese culture. It reflects the Chinese people's aspirations, suits the requirements for the development and progress of China, and has ancient historical origins and an extensive practical basis (Xinhua 2013a).

A commentary on Xi's speech published by the *People's Daily* is more specific about the CPC's argumentation strategy. The "basic logic" (*jiben luoji* 基本逻辑) behind "China's special characteristics" (*Zhongguo tese* 中国特色) is that "unique cultural traditions (*wenhua chuantong* 文化传统), unique historical destiny (*lishi mingyun* 历史命运), and unique fundamental national conditions (*jiben guoqing* 基本国情) predetermine the inevitable and suitable path of China's development". This logic should be specifically "analyzed" (*jiexi* 解析) from the perspective of China's tumultuous history and the Chinese people's perilous ordeal since the beginning of modern history in the mid-nineteenth century. This starting point for argumentation is clearly chosen because, according to the CPC, the 1840s were the beginning of "a century of humiliation" (*bainian guochi* 百年国耻) inflicted on China by foreign powers. Thus, this decade marks the advent of Chinese people's struggle for modernity, prosperity, freedom, and other values the party claims to perpetrate. The party asserts that if the national strategic narrative follows the historical thread, people will develop "a scientific grasp of contemporary China and of our path, theory, and system" (*People's Daily* 2013).

At the twelfth collective study session of the CPC politburo in December 2013, Xi Jinping offered further guidance on how to "exhibit the unique charm of Chinese culture in raising national soft power". The party should be modern and innovative, employ vivid imagery to explain China's story, and use plausible and participatory communication to expound the "spirit of Chinese culture" as globally appealing and comprising both time-

less charm and contemporary values. The party should "speak through history," that is, it should utilize the resources of traditional culture, such as the treasures of the Forbidden City, China's archeological heritage, and ancient writings. It should innovate exchange in the humanities and rely on mass media, social communication, and personal communication. In constructing and transmitting China's "national image" (*guojia xingxiang* 国家形象), the CPC should strive to elucidate China as

1) a civilized power possessing a long history, an ethnically diverse yet unified national identity, and a heterogeneous yet harmonious culture;
2) an oriental power boasting clean politics, economic development, splendid culture, a stable society, a united people, and natural beauty;
3) a responsible power that contributes to humankind by effecting peaceful development, promoting common development, and safeguarding international justice;
4) a socialist power that is increasingly open, approachable, optimistic, and energetic.

In boosting cultural soft power, Xi specifically calls for increasing "international discursive power" (*guoji huayuquan* 国际话语权) and building an "external discursive system" (*duiwai huayu tixi* 对外话语体系). China's story, voice, and special characteristics should be explained through new media, and the discourse targeting international audiences should be more creative, appealing, and credible. This foreign discourse is again conceptualized as an extension of domestic ideational work, as Xi calls for stronger positive propaganda focused on China's history and culture via school education, political studies, historical research, film and television productions, literature, and other channels. Patriotic, collectivist, and socialist education should be revised so that people have a correct view of history, nation, state, and culture, and so that they strengthen their confidence in being Chinese. Thus, each out of the 1.3 billion should become a disseminator of Chinese culture, as well as of traditional, Marxist, and socialist values (Xinhua 2013b).

In sum, this survey of the Xi administration's central statements reveals that although the CPC conceptualizes culture in a number of novel ways, it, nevertheless, also continues to grasp culture as a means of fulfilling political objectives in much the same way as it has since at least Mao's consolidation of power in Yan'an in the 1940s. Such use of culture for political ends is not exceptional. The CPC's approach, however, differs from that of democratic states in that it sees legitimation as the most important function of culture, in that this legitimation is used to justify an unattractive non-democratic regime, and in that the party monopolizes domestic visions of national culture and history, while simultaneously suppressing alternative interpretations. Domestic cultural work is a vital part of ideational and propaganda work in instilling internal ideational order and garnering acceptance for the CPC's rule, while cultural diplomacy seeks to establish cultural soft power and win international acknowledgement of the regime. In other words, the CPC uses culture as a means of legitimating its regime both domestically and internationally. The legitimating role of the PRC's cultural diplomacy thus merits expanding one standing definition of China's cultural diplomacy as "foreign communication activity aiming to broadcast China's culture" (Zhao Kejin 2014). The cultural diplomacy of this non-democratic regime can be also defined as the "use of culture in public diplomacy aiming to gain international support and strengthen domestic political order".

China's public diplomacy apparatus

The legitimating function of the PRC's cultural diplomacy is revealed also by the structure of what can be called the CPC's ideational apparatus.[9] As mentioned above, CPC's cultural diplomacy falls within the "propaganda, ideational, and cultural system". Within this and all other systems, work is managed by "central leading small groups" (*zhongyang lingdao xiaozu* 中央领导小组; CLSG), the highest-ranking party institutions consisting of top leaders who head party and state institutions within the particular system. At the same time, the agendas of some CLSGs cover more than one system and therefore overlap with those of other CLSGs.[10] In contrast to the top formal organs of the CPC, such as the Politburo Standing Committee and the Secretariat, CLSGs, are informal, evolving task forces operating in non-transparency regarding their membership and operations.

Besides the CLSG for Activities Implementing the Party's Mass Line Education (*Zhongyang dangde qunzhong luxian jiaoyu shijian huodong lingdao xiaozu* 中央党的群众路线教育实践活动领导小组), the Party-Building Work CLSG (*Zhongyang dangde jianshe gongzuo lingdao xiaozu* 中央党的建设工作领导小组), and the Central Guidance Committee on Building Spiritual Civilization (*Zhongyang jingshen wenming jianshe zhidao weiyuanhui* 中央精神文明建设指导委员会), it is mainly the Propaganda and Ideational Work CLSG (*Zhongyang xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo lingdao xiaozu* 中央宣传思想工作领导小组; PIWCLSG) that organizes the party's work within the ideational system. All of the CLSGs concerned with ideational work are headed by Politburo Standing Committee member Liu Yunshan, who is often dubbed by foreign media as China's "propaganda czar". The PIWCLSG also coordinates with other CLSGs or central-level organs involved with ideational operations, for example, with the Cybersecurity and Informatization CLSG (*Zhongyang wangluo anquan he xinxihua lingdao xiaozu* 中央网络安全和信息化领导小组) or with the Political Work Department of the Central Military Commission (*Zhongyang junshi weiyuanhui zhengzhi gongzuo bu* 中央军事委员会政治工作部).

The PIWCLSG then controls the CPC Central Committee's propaganda department (*Xuanchuanbu* 宣传部), which in turn "leads" (*lingdao* 领导) or "guides" (*zhidao* 指导)[11] all party and state organs of the PRC's ideational apparatus. Through this network, the CPC is able to conduct or control all activities and means involved in communication and the spread of information, such as media, publishing, advertising, information communication technologies, social science research, education, culture, health, sport, and tourism (Shambaugh 2007; Brady 2008: 9–12). Besides domestic/internal propaganda (*duinei xuanchuan* 对内宣传), the apparatus also covers foreign/external propagan-

[9] The term "ideational apparatus" builds on Louis Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) that disseminate a particular ruling ideology. Althusser tentatively identifies religious, educational, family, legal, political, communications, and cultural ISAs (Althusser 2014: 243).

[10] One source identifies twenty-two central leading and "coordinating small groups" (*xietiao xiaozu* 协调小组), some of which were founded alongside the PRC in 1949, whereas others were established only after Xi Jinping assumed power in 2012 (Wang 2015).

[11] The term "leadership" (*lingdao* 领导) means direct tasking and overseeing, whereas "guidance" (*zhidao* 指导) implies a looser superordinate relationship, often in cooperation with another organ. In practice, the actions of a particular state organ are led and guided by more than one party organ.

da (*duiwai xuanchuan* 对外宣传).[12] The PIWCLSG thus directly controls many of the organs engaged in China's cultural diplomacy, such as the National Internet Information Office, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television, Xinhua News Agency, the National Tourism Administration, and so forth.

The PIWCLSG also articulates the ideational software of China's cultural diplomacy running on the hardware of other systems, mainly the "foreign affairs system" (*waijiao xitong* 外交系统). This system entails the Foreign Affairs Work CLSG (*Zhongyang waishi gongzuo lingdao xiaozu* 中央外事工作领导小组) headed by Xi Jinping and coordinates the work of the CPC Central Committee's Propaganda Department and External Liaison Department (*Duiwai lianluobu* 对外联络部), the State Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Commerce, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, and others. The PIWCLSG thus directly formulates or indirectly supervises the ideational message of all of China's cultural diplomacy actors.

Hartig quotes Chinese expert Han Zhaoying (Han 2010: 296) in classifying the central actors of China's public diplomacy into two categories: governmental actors and instruments conducting information programs, and actors conducting educational and exchange programs. Information actors include the State Council Information Office (*Guowuyuan xinwen bangongshi* 国务院新闻办公室, which is in fact a media outlet of the CPC's Propaganda Department), China's embassies and consulates, the Public Diplomacy Office and the Public Diplomacy Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Xinhua News Agency, China Global Television Network, China Radio International, *China Daily*, *Global Times*, and the *Beijing Review* (Hartig 2016: 84–90).

The Ministry of Education is the primary player in culture and exchange. It is in charge of the State Office of the Leading Small Group for International Promotion of Chinese Language (*Guojia Hanyu guoji tuiguang lingdao xiaozu bangongshi* 国家汉语国际推广领导小组办公室; officially translated into English as the Office of Chinese Language Council International), which manages the Confucius Institutes, "the star of China's public diplomacy" (Hartig 2016: 98). These institutes then implement a number of the Ministry of Education's other cultural diplomacy projects, such as the Chinese Bridge (*Hanyu qiao* 汉语桥) language proficiency competitions.

Another major actor of the cultural and exchange type is the Ministry of Culture, which, often through China Cultural Centers (CCC), organizes Happy Chinese New Year celebrations, China Cultural Years in collaboration with partner countries, art exhibitions, book fairs, movie festivals, and so forth. Other actors include the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA) and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC), which declare themselves to be NGOs but are closely tied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the People's National Congress. Finally, the Chinese State Forestry Administration and its China Wildlife Conservation Associa-

[12] English speakers view the term "propaganda" (*xuanchuan* 宣传) as having negative connotations, and therefore the CPC tends to use the more palatable term "publicity" in its official English translations, such as in the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the CPC.

tion, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban–Rural Development and its Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens engage in China's "panda diplomacy" (Hartig 2016: 90–93).

D'Hooghe lists other central actors involved in the PRC's public diplomacy information program, particularly the People's Liberation Army and the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Commerce, PRC leaders, and the CPC itself. She further considers "sub-state" actors (provincial and municipal governments; here, the term "sub-central" is perhaps more apposite) and "non-state" actors ("civil society" groups, individuals, such as celebrity ambassadors, business companies, "people's" diplomacy associations, intellectual elites, academic institutions, and overseas Chinese) as actors in China's public diplomacy (2015: 132–162). All the actors identified by d'Hooghe and Hartig are ideationally and operationally regulated, supervised, or coopted by party-state mechanisms. One Chinese expert underlines that almost all of the diplomatic activities conducted by so-called non-state and non-governmental organizations should "not be regarded as public diplomacy, but as a special form of traditional government-to-government or semiofficial diplomacy" (Zhao Kejin 2015: 56).

The limitations of China's cultural diplomacy

There are limitations to and contradictions within the PRC's cultural diplomacy that stem from the nature of the CPC's work. Such issues are widely debated even within China's politically sanitized intellectual establishment beyond the party's central propaganda outlets. For instance, Chinese academic debates at the end of the Hu era as summarized by d'Hooghe pointed out organizational shortcomings, such as the lack of coordination among involved actors, the shortage of public diplomacy professionals, and the absence of an institution exclusively in charge of China's public diplomacy. Some experts criticize the fact that the process is still too top-down, that China's civil society is not mature enough to play a major role, and that the growth of civil public diplomacy organizations should be encouraged by the government. Others argue that China needs to have a better sense of its own identity and needs before it starts building a national image. Others have identified Western hegemony in the global media and discourse or the lack of credibility in China's reporting and the non-appeal of China's values as the principal problems of China's public diplomacy. One academic has specifically commented that China's cultural diplomacy does not address the problem of "liking traditional China but not contemporary China, liking Chinese culture but not Chinese politics, and liking Chinese people but not the Chinese government" (d'Hooghe 2015: 125–128).

In a more recent article written in the Xi era, Zhao Kejin 赵可金, China's leading expert on public diplomacy at the Charhar Institute and the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, argues along similar lines. He points out that one of the fundamental general traits of culture is its fluidity. Referring to Xi Jinping's statement during a visit to Russia that "cultures, souls, and friendships thrive only if they are exchanged around", Zhao underlines that every country's cultural diplomacy should entail exchange and communication. Without referring specifically to the official cultural security concept, Zhao also posits that cultural soft power is only commanded by strong countries, whereas in weak countries cultural exchange can become a security issue.

Zhao sees the limitations of China's current public diplomacy as follows:

1) The excessive role of government in drafting and implementing cultural diplomacy objectives and the lack of innovative input from institutions, commercial subjects, and social organizations. The main actor should be society, and government should play only an auxiliary role.
2) Overemphasis on traditional culture and disregard for contemporary popular culture.
3) Confinement of cultural exchange to the elite layers of society and its inaccessibility to people with limited finances or possibilities.
4) Lack of foreign communication methods and perspectives on China. China's cultural diplomacy should respect the values of other cultures and should deemphasize the official institutional perspective and state interests (Zhao Kejin 2014).

Each point in Zhao's critique is directly or indirectly related to the above-illustrated fact that China's leaders conceive cultural work as an act legitimating the power of an authoritarian regime. Zhao first addresses the institutional and processual aspect of China's public diplomacy. The CPC has indeed managed to massively expand China's cultural diplomacy apparatus. A typical self-praising official evaluation of China's rising cultural influence usually lists the expansion of Confucius Institutes, cultural centers, and other state-sponsored outlets of China's soft power, which allegedly produce an avalanche of events that draw in massive audiences. The same push can be seen in the CPC's efforts to acquire tools of international discursive power; the country has raced to establish or purchase media outlets abroad in order to take control of international discourses on China. But it is questionable to what extent the institutional proliferation of cultural diplomacy and media is able to transmit a globally attractive cultural message and transform the audience's perceptions and viewpoints. When the above-quoted Shen Haixiong argues that "we have the ability to create stories of China, and we certainly also have the ability to explain stories of China" (Shen Haixiong 2014), he fails to recognize that not even a massive expansion of and innovation in the ways the CPC tells its tale of China will address the major problem – that the narrator is a dishonest authoritarian government. Stories told by dictators are uninteresting because the general audience is often well familiar with the moral of the tale of the wise and dexterous Party "sacrificing" itself for the good of its inept "subjectizens".

Zhao's plea for more non-Chinese involvement in China's cultural diplomacy bespeaks the conceptual limits of the PRC's ideational order. The dilemma of how to endow the "Chinese essence with Western practicalities" (*Zhongti Xiyong* 中體西用), which Chinese intellectuals and policy makers faced in the late nineteenth century, has reemerged today in the question of how, and indeed whether, a Leninist ideological party-state can operate in a globalized world of ideas conveyed by a burgeoning free media. On the one hand, Chinese leaders openly seek to emulate the successful cultural diplomacy and soft power of democratic countries. Zhang Guozuo argues that unlike in "Western developed countries", where cultural industries can make up to ten per cent of the GDP (with some twenty-five per cent in the US), in China it is a mere four per cent (*Qiushi* 2016). Shen quotes Churchill's famous quip that he "would rather lose India than Shakespeare" (Shen Haixiong 2014). Other models of countries with soft power are France, Japan, and South Korea. At the same time, China's leaders seek to bar the corrupting influence of "Western bourgeois and liberal culture", which can not only erode the alleged purity of

China's culture, but can also topple the entire sociopolitical order of the PRC. Similarly, Chinese political and intellectual circles' indignation at Western hegemony in global discursive space and at the alleged concerted efforts of "anti-China forces" to tarnish China's national image contrasts with the central leadership's desire to catch up with the Western approach to international communication. The CPC's central concept of cultural diplomacy is therefore trapped in the logical pitfall of imitating a phenomenon that it simultaneously views as threatening and unjust.

Another conceptual challenge for the CPC's cultural diplomacy again stems from the domestic political system. Even the CPC's very complex analysis and carefully managed adoption of selected "Western" mores of international communication sooner or later run aground of the CPC's ideological orthodoxy. A good example is the argument of Fan Daqi 范大祺 of the CPC Central Compilation and Translation Bureau (*Zhonggong zhongyang bianyiju* 中共中央编译局). Fan observes that China is being extruded from global discursive space and her national image is often misunderstood, distorted, or even "demonized". But at the same time, Fan calls for a more elaborate analysis of the response to China's international discourse. Speaking primarily about China's international political communication, he proposes to deemphasize "dull theoretical proselytizing" and instead to imitate Western models by telling stories of China's reform accomplishments or the systemic advantages of the China model. Interestingly, he also believes that "China's international political discourse can to a certain extent improve the projection of China's traditional culture" (Fan 2016). Yet it is precisely the reputation of the PRC's politics that tarnishes the image of China as an appealing cultural power. Similarly, China's ambitious international development initiatives, such as the OBOR, entail a decisively "hard" approach, that is, state-centered, top-down investment, implementation, and labor force transfer, often without regard for local labor and environmental concerns. The soft-power-building enterprise can easily misfire as it is designed to benefit primarily the Chinese side in tandem with local holders of power and capital at the expense of local society.

The CPC's embrace of traditional Chinese culture is also problematic and has been pointed out during previous administrations. Elizabeth Perry describes what she calls a "re-orientation" of propaganda since the 1990s. To reassert its ideational authority and moral credit tarnished by the June 1989 Tiananmen massacre, the party leaned away from ideological orthodoxy and instead started to portray socialism with Chinese characteristics as the successor to traditional Chinese culture and ancient civilization. The rehabilitated traditionalist and culturalist line surprisingly easily mutes the CPC's past anti-traditionalist and internationalist leanings and builds well on the party's patriotic ethos present in its ideational work since its inception in 1921. Both the culturalist and the patriotic argument became the main themes of the Patriotic Education (*aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu* 爱国主义教育) campaign launched by Jiang Zemin in the 1990s in order for the CPC to resuscitate its ideational hegemony over Chinese society. Perry calls this approach "cultural nationalism" and concludes that the effort "to commingle revolutionary and pre-revolutionary symbolic resources as though there were no inherent contradiction between Confucian 'culturalism' and modern 'nationalism' is but the latest twist in a complicated and circuitous process aimed at justifying the Communist Party's right to rule" (Perry 2013: 25). David Shambaugh moreover notes that by harping on its own uniqueness and specificity, China's national-image-building misses the point of public diplo-

macy, because the essence of soft power is "to possess national attributes that transcend one's own country and appeal to others. Here, China seems to have few responses other than 'peace and harmony'" (Shambaugh 2013: 169).

The credibility of the party's allusions to cultural history or citations from the Chinese classics is limited. The CPC's mouthpiece's quotation of Lu Xun's famous proclamation that "it is the soul of the people which is precious; only if it thrives can China truly advance" (*People's Daily* 2013) is an absurdity found customarily in authoritarian speech. Lu was an outspoken critic of Confucianism and traditionalism, but his clash with CPC propagandists in the 1930s suggests that due to his liberal and anti-totalitarian thinking he would have most likely been brutally uprooted as a poisonous weed during the first purge of "counter-revolutionary and reactionary intellectuals" had he lived past the founding of the New China in 1949. Secondly, since Lu Xun called for nourishing the nation's spiritual values, the CPC's policies have inflicted major damage on the souls of Chinese people. The official claims that China has been a pacifist cultural power since time immemorial conflicts with its history of military expansion, attested in the least by the PRC's current borders, which are largely congruous with those secured by Qing empire-building conquest. China's declared resolve to build a harmonious world is refuted by its aggressive demeanor in defending its alleged territorial integrity in border disputes in surrounding seas. The allegedly "biased" Western books on China from a century ago show that China's traditional culture and civilization commanded a much more favorable reputation at the time than does today's PRC, which has been spiritually devastated by thirty years of Maoism and thirty-five years of neo-socialism. Admiration and respect for China's traditional culture is present, for instance, in a book on the country's politics, economics, society, culture, religion, and customs written by Czech sinologist Rudolf Dvořák (1900) in reaction to the increased demand for expert information about the country after China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895).

Shen's quotation of a statement found in the *Analects* attributed to Confucius – "when distant subjects do not submit, attract them by cultivating refinement and virtue" (*gu yuan ren bu fu*, *ze xiu wende yi lai zhi* 故遠人不服, 則修文德以來之; Shen Haixiong 2014, Yang Bojun 1993: 194) – is a misinterpretation because the passage also extols the equal distribution of wealth (*gai* 蓋), harmony (*he* 和), and security (*an* 安) as necessities of effective governance. But it is precisely these qualities that are missing in today's China riven by a yawning wealth gap and low social mobility, where hundreds of millions of people are concerned more with survival than with culture. It is mainly these immediate concerns that Zhao Kejin's third critical point alludes to. The concept of harmonious society (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会), which the party claims to draw from the traditional Chinese concept of harmony (*he* 和), is more a propagandistic image of an ideal world than a serious development plan. The usage of the ancient term by CPC propagandists thus articulates the lack of harmony in today's China. There is also no basis to conclude that contemporary China has preserved its traditional culture more than other countries, and Zhao's criticism of the excessive focus on tradition in China's cultural diplomacy therefore seems valid also for the domestic debate on China's cultural identity. One attentive observer of contemporary China quotes Han Han 韩寒, a blogger once critical of the government, on the future of Chinese culture: "We can't always use pandas and tea… What else do we have? Silk? The Great Wall? That isn't China" (Osnos 2015: 176).

The credibility of the CPC's argument of China boasting a lasting and refined cultural tradition is also refuted by "seeking truth from facts" (*shi shi qiu shi* 实事求是). As elsewhere today, in China there is a correlation between cultural creativity and commercial dynamics, which is particularly evident in the party's technocratic resolve to reform the "cultural system" to profitably discharge "cultural products" (*wenhua chanpin* 文化产品) made by "cultural industries" (*wenhua chanye* 文化产业) and "cultural institutions" (*wenhua shiye* 文化事业). But in the PRC, state-supported mercantilist pressure coalesces with coercion, which seeks to purge culture of all politically subversive potential. In the Maoist era, the party's radical sociopolitical projects and anti-traditionalist campaigns wreaked immense havoc on Chinese culture. The most notorious is perhaps the "Destroy the Four Olds" campaign unleashed during the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which brought about the barbaric destruction of oceans of cultural relics, including the family mansion and cemetery of Confucius, the trademark of today's PRC's rehabilitation of traditional Chinese culture.

In the post-Mao era, the CPC's shelving of abstract communist tenets and their replacement with the dictum of development and wealth as pillars of its ideational order has led to irreversible losses in material and intangible culture. Myriad centuries-old towns and villages with traditional cultural practices surviving "construction" and "modernization" since 1949 have been razed in the reform era since 1978. The destruction of old Beijing accelerated by official efforts to portray the capital as a thriving modern metropolis during the 2008 Olympics is a case in point (Yardley 2006). Another tragic example is the razing of old Kashgar, Yarkend, and other ancient Silk Road oases, where the cultural barbarity of the communist party-state bonded with the majority nationality's repression of a dissenting ethnic minority (Levin 2014). Altogether, the post-Mao construction boom wiped out tens of thousands of historical sites, possibly more than the infamous Cultural Revolution (Branigan 2009). The propagandistic mantra that China is a large and populous country boasting a rich, ancient, and exceptional culture therefore proves self-defeating because it implies that the party's governance inflicted unparalleled damage on Chinese culture. It is precisely the cultural governance of the CPC that destroyed China's image as a cultural power.

The credibility of the CPC's cultural rhetoric is also compromised by the fact that the party keeps exerting concerted efforts at curtailing cultural expression that conflicts with its political interests. Zhao Kejin points out that culture resembles floating water in that it only releases its drive when it circulates freely in a society (2014). Being an intangible expression of free will, culture is not likely to thrive in an unfree polity where ideas are often censored and criminalized. The CPC states that "cultural exchange is just like a classical principle of modern management: if two people each have an apple and exchange it, they both end up having one apple. Whereas if they each have an idea and exchange it, they both end up having two ideas" (Shen Haixiong 2014). But the CPC strictly polices the free flow of ideas; indeed, many people are in prison in the PRC at this moment for trying to "exchange apples".

Despite all its assertions of innovation and reform in the cultural sphere, the reality is that in the twenty-first century the Chinese party-state continues to ban inconvenient artistic works and persecute critical artists in much the same way it has done since the beginnings of its cultural governance. Under Xi Jinping, the troubled relations between

the CPC and artists and intellectuals have culminated in a massive crackdown on civil society, lawyers, NGOs, ethnic minorities, religious communities, non-political education, and other discontents of the ideational order engineered by the CPC. Ironically, it is often these artists and liberal personages who become globally respected icons and therewith enhance China's cultural soft power. Indeed, the fame of artists like Gao Xingjian, Ai Weiwei, Yan Lianke, and others implies that China's culture can do very well when it is not used as the political instrument of a draconic regime.

In order to deliver on its promise to build a modern state and society, the party must allow for the free flow of ideas but has not done so yet. The use of culture in communication with foreign publics can be hardly effective when it advocates authoritarian ideology and practices. The overall lack of truthfulness in the CPC's statements is perhaps the gravest obstacle to telling China's story in a way that the international audience might find plausible and attractive. This shortcoming, moreover, violates a classical Chinese rule of discourse attributed to Confucius: "if names are incorrect, then what is said cannot be followed; if what is said cannot be followed, then tasks cannot be accomplished" (*ming bu zheng, ze yan bu shun*; *yan bu shun, ze shi bu cheng* 名不正, 則言不訓; 言不訓, 則事不成; Yang Bojun 1993: 144). In other words, if the CPC's international communications are not truthfull, China's unfavorable national image in democratic countries is unlikely to change.

Conclusion

This survey of the ideational and institutional framework of China's cultural diplomacy under Xi Jinping's administration since 2012 shows that central leadership understands cultural governance primarily as a political act of creating an authoritarian ideational order. By extension, it envisions China's cultural diplomacy as a process of external propaganda, which seeks to generate favorable international perceptions and to strengthen the domestic political regime. To achieve domestic and international acceptance, the CPC uses the argument of "specificity" to link the purpoted uniqueness of China's culture and the specificity of China's model of development. The allegedly singular "China's story" told by the CPC has several interrelated narrative lines – Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, authoritarianism, and cultural nationalism.

Geremie Barmé writes that attempts by governments or cultural "… authorities, regardless of whether elected or self-appointed to define or articulate cultural nationhood and boundaries can be deadening" (Barmé 2012). But when culture is coopted by an authoritarian government it can be even more deadening. The credibility of the PRC's cultural diplomacy remains compromised by the authoritarian dimension of the CPC's approach to culture and cultural governance. Regardless of how many resources the CPC invests in its propaganda, the truth remains that contemporary China is not a country where the party-state makes culture thrive. It remains to be seen whether and how the Xi administration's cultural diplomacy will resolve the "contradictions in ambition, rhetoric, and reality" of the PRC's soft power strategy (Rawnsley 2015: 468). As the success of communication depends to a large extent on whether and how the target audience receives the message of communication, foreign publics are unlikely to empa-

thize and accept China's leaders' advocacy of authoritarianism in the way described by Czesław Miłosz. Even a superb marketing campaign is unlikely to help a disreputable peddler sell unattractive goods to well-informed buyers on the global market of ideas in the twenty-first century.

The above survey of the central concept of China's cultural diplomacy also generates follow-up questions for further research. Jian Wang calls for employing Frank Pieke's perspective of party-state as society in looking at China's public diplomacy and contemporary China in general (Wang, ed. 2011: 17; Pieke 2009: 12–15). When it is applied to the above findings, China's cultural diplomacy should not be examined solely as a set of ideational principles enforced in a top-down manner by institutional networks and mechanisms, but also as the actions of individual actors who do not necessarily communicate and project China's culture in accordance with the central vision. The CPC is not a monolithic entity, and therefore observing whether and how particular party groupings, constituencies, and networks envision culture and cultural work, and whether and how these differences resonate in China's outlook on cultural diplomacy, could be interesting. Another question is how the cultural agenda of the ideational system relates to China's commercial, political, and military interests, and whether and how these concerns are taken into consideration by the country's cultural diplomacy actors.

Neither the outline above nor the existing literature on the institutional network of China's cultural diplomacy provide much detail on how the above-described central vision is implemented by particular central actors, for instance, China's diplomatic missions, Confucius Institutes, China Cultural Centers, and other institutions, or on how their printed materials, websites, and other media related to cultural diplomacy are designed. It is also important to observe how China's cultural diplomatic practice varies in a particular regional context, and to what extent this regional variation is reflected on or initiated by central leadership. The role of central authorities is an interesting issue also in looking at cultural diplomacy conducted by China's sub-central and "non-state" actors. An issue with significant overlap is to what extent, based on a particular message and way of conducting cultural diplomacy, sub-central actors can be considered non-state actors. The same probe should apply to individual actors, where the interesting question is to what extent and why are the messages broadcast by individual actors in China's cultural diplomacy different from or the same as those described above in this article.

These issues reflect the fact that the central vision of cultural work is necessarily adapted, shifted, ignored, or even contested in a variety of ways by all actors who conduct China's cultural diplomacy. Fortunately, China's story is told to the world by many narrators besides the primarily politically motivated central leadership of the CPC. Such diversity will likely increase and more contesting narratives of China will emerge. These probable developments will be beneficial to China's cultural life. At the same time, recent developments show that diversification in politics often makes the CPC feel cornered, forcing the party to defend its position by strengthening its hold on a particular issue, as can be seen above in the party tightening its grip on sensitive ideational matters and politically subversive constituencies. Therefore, in the future it will remain important to keep observing central versus non-central dynamics in Chinese culture and cultural diplomacy, as the interplay between contesting visions and actors is likely to continue and become more sophisticated.

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TRIBUTE TO JAROSLAV PRŮŠEK (1906–1980)

UNPACKING PRŮŠEK'S CONCEPTION OF THE "LYRICAL": A TRIBUTE AND SOME INTERCULTURAL REFLECTIONS[1]

LEO OU-FAN LEE

ABSTRACT
The essay was written in commemoration of Jaroslav Průšek (1906–1980) by his former student Leo Ou-fan Lee. The author offers a rereading of Průšek's groundbreaking research on modern Chinese literature assessing his theoretical insights which have made profound impact on the discipline and have remained a constant source of inspiration for Chinese literature studies. It discusses the implications of Průšek's two famous papers – one on individualism and subjectivism, the other on a "confrontation" between traditional Chinese literature and modern European literature – and re-examines their relevance to the study of modern Chinese literature today as cultural history.

Keywords: Jaroslav Průšek; Chinese literature; modernity; individualism and subjectivism; lyricism; methodology of literary studies

On this occasion of the 110th anniversary of Professor Jaroslav Průšek's birth, I have come to Prague to pay tribute to his lasting scholarly impact. With the passing of C. T. Hsia, we are also bemoaning the loss of two scholarly giants who separately (one in Europe and one in the US) and jointly (via their debate) established the field of modern Chinese literature in the West. While Hsia's legacy has received major attention in all parts of the world, it is perhaps fitting to remind ourselves that Průšek's work has also inspired a great number of scholars, myself included.

This belated tribute essay focuses on two seminal papers by Professor Průšek: "Subjectivism and Individualism in Modern Chinese Literature" (1957; hereafter abbreviated as "Subjectivism"); and "A Confrontation of Traditional Oriental Literature with Modern European Literature in the Context of the Chinese Literary Revolution" (1964; hereafter abbreviated as "Confrontation"). Both articles are included in a collection of Průšek's papers edited by myself under the title of *The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature* (Průšek 1980). I consider them to be the crux of Průšek's conception of modern Chinese literature that deserves repeated reading and further elaboration.

[1] A preliminary version of this paper was presented during the Symposium Commemorating the 110th Anniversary of the Birth of Jaroslav Průšek orgaized by the International Sinological Center at Charles University in Prague on June 3, 2016.

The very fact that David Wang, who has enjoyed a long and close relationship with C. T. Hsia, has found in Průšek's concept of the lyrical a model for his new and path-breaking work, *The Lyrical in Epic Time: Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Artists Through the 1949 Crisis* (Wang 2015) is an illustrious example of the sustained impact of Průšek's ideas. The two terms "lyrical" and "epic" in the book's title are obviously Průšek's, but Wang uses them in a most subtle way as a yardstick to describe not only a large corpus of modern Chinese literary texts but also the fate of their authors at the crucial watershed event, the triumph of the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949. Wang extends Průšek's argument by asking the critical question: what is the meaning of Chinese "lyricism" in a new "epic time" of revolution and what choices confronted a whole generation of Chinese writers and artists.

Another young colleague from Hong Kong, Leonard Chan, who has been working on the topic of Chinese lyrical tradition for a long time, has collaborated with Wang in editing a compendium in Chinese: *Shuqing zhi xiandaixing: shuqing chuantong lunshu yu Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* 抒情之現代性：抒情傳統論述與中國文學研究 (The Modernity of Lyricism: Essays on Chinese Lyrical Tradition; Chan and Wang 2014), that includes a translation of Průšek's "Subjectivism" article, which is preceded by a long introductory guide written by Chan. Chan has also written several articles on the work of Průšek as a Sinologist, including one on his conception of the lyrical. My debt to these two scholars is obvious. In some ways the present essay can serve as a supplement to their work.

Literary history vs. literary criticism

Průšek and Hsia epitomize totally different sensibilities and scholarly approaches. Hsia's magnificent book, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (Hsia 1961), is in substance an original work of literary criticism, not strictly speaking a literary history. It contains chapters of brilliant textual readings on the representative works by individual authors linked together by other narrative chapters of political-intellectual-cultural trends. On the other hand, Průšek seldom enters into close textual criticism *per se* – that is, to subject the individual text to rigorous close reading and analysis by using standards drawn from New Criticism as Hsia does. For Průšek, a literary text does not exist by itself, but is always part of a larger context, which it illuminates. He is always aware of the dynamics between literary texts and historical background, particularly that of revolution. His Marxist convictions are inevitably expressed by his commitment to the Chinese Communist Revolution, of which the May Fourth movement formed the intellectual and cultural spearhead. I would venture further to say that in fact Průšek has woven his Marxist beliefs into a complex methodology of literary history that blends literary texts with historical dynamics, and literary form with cultural content. This is the thread I would like to trace, to the best of my knowledge.

As a multilingual scholar, Průšek chooses to write in English, a language in which he does not feel entirely at home. One wonders how he would discuss the same subject in Czech, French, or German? I would like to characterize his English style as somewhat

long-winded, though fluent and elegant in its own way. He tends to use fairly long sentences, which impart a formal academic air, in order to build up his arguments and paint larger frescoes. (This is in sharp contrast to C. T. Hsia's brilliantly concise English.) Above all he employs big concepts like "subjectivism" and "individualism" to characterize a very complex range of literary features which he then proceeds to unpack, but sometimes the issues involved are so complex as to exceed the examples he has chosen to illustrate. Thus, as one of his students and editor of his last volume of scholarly papers I feel it is my duty to continue this task. To do so I must attempt to do a thorough re-reading of the two essays listed above and, wherever appropriate, to make a few comments.

Subjectivism and Lyricism

"Subjectivism and Individualism in Modern Chinese Literature" is perhaps the most quoted work by Průšek, according to his student Marian Gálik (Gálik 1998: 184). With 28 pages in print it is also one of the longest. Průšek declares at the beginning that he wishes to follow "a single complex of features which can be summed up under 'subjectivism and individualism'" (Průšek 1980: 1). His initial definition is as follows: "I understand these terms to cover an emphasis on the creator's personality in art and a concentration of attention on the artist's own life" (*ibid*.). He considers it a feature of modern Chinese literature, because "it is natural that the birth of a modern, free, and self-determining individual was possible only at the price of shattering and discarding these traditional views and customs and the whole social structure on which they were based" (*ibid*.: 2). At first glance, this statement looks like a specimen of standard May Fourth intellectual discourse, but he wishes to apply it to literature and art as well. Průšek then adds a few qualifications: such tendencies when "joined with pessimism and a feeling for the tragedy of life, along with an inclination to revolt and even the tendency to self-destruction, are the most characteristic qualities of Chinese literature from the May Fourth Movement of 1919 to the outbreak of war with Japan" (*ibid*.: 3). This is, to say the least, an all-encompassing generalisation. It brings up a further complication: how can an outlook of life and intellectual value be turned into a literary and artistic mode and stance? Content and form are interrelated, of course, but they are not the same thing. As we read on, a third term is introduced, "lyrical" or "lyricism", which becomes all but interchangeable with "subjectivism" and is contrasted with opposing pair of terms – the "epic" and the "objective", such as the following statement: "We should most certainly find it in the greater emphasis on the lyrical and subjective aspects of literary production as compared with the predominantly epic and objective character of folk literature" (*ibid*.: 9). Here Průšek is referring to classical Chinese literature in which "the lyric occupies the foremost place" (*ibid*.). The crucial issue then becomes: how do the two strains interact with each other not only in traditional Chinese literature but in modern Chinese literature as well, which has inherited both the lyrical and epic legacies? The problematic can be turned into a specific question: if the lyrical tendency is a predominant feature of classical Chinese literature, how can it be transposed to modern Chinese literature, especially since "ground-plan" of May Fourth writers is of the novella and short story which "have their epic origins" and "poetry and literary essay are no longer privileged as in the past" (*ibid*.:

26). Průšek is not unaware of the problem, for he proceeds to delineate this transformation in the rest of the essay by primarily concentrating on some of the prominent literary works produced in the Qing period, in which he detects a certain "loosening of the bonds which the feudal order imposed on the individual" (*ibid.*: 28). Leonard Chan considers this last point "debatable"; it can only be regarded as "a general truth in various phases of literary history", for "there is always a desire for any conscientious writer to quest for freedom against restrictions and confines of any kind" (Chan 2008: 26). I would argue that the issue is also connected with literary genre: since Průšek finds the lyric in the predominant genres of poetry (*shi* 詩), song (*ci* 詞) and rhymed prose (*fu* 賦), he seems to demote the epic form of the popular novel to a lower place of folk literature. How would this implied hierarchy be redressed to reflect the modern tide of emancipation and revolution, which obviously calls for the "epic" forms? Průšek tries to resolve this seeming dilemma in two steps: first, by arguing that some of the subjective elements have sneaked into the traditional tales and short stories, especially in the Ming *huaben* (hence echoing a similar point made by C. T. Hsia in his other book, *The Classic Chinese Novel*); and secondly, by reinforcing the same procedure in some modern novels of epic proportions such as Mao Dun's 茅盾*Midnight* (Ziye 子夜). In other words, he tries to inject a positive and transforming energy into his concept of the lyrical. Still, in my view, the "epic" side seems to have fallen short, but Průšek's "ground-plan" has become a springing board for David Wang's monumental book, *The Lyrical in Epic Time*. With copious examples drawn from a variety of twentieth-century Chinese writers and artists, he has demonstrated that the "lyrical" (*shuqing* 抒情) has indeed become a more active trope in "epic time"—that is, in the new epoch of 20th-century China which is dominated by collective "history".

The Lyrical in Traditional Literature

Let us return to Průšek's initial inquiry as evolved in the "Subjectivism" essay. As mentioned earlier, in his view "the lyrical and subjective aspects of literary production" in traditional Chinese literature belonged to the literary elite whereas "epic in the form of narrative poems, tales and novels scarcely appears in the work of the literati at all" (Průšek 1980: 10). This last statement is, however, subject to debate, since it begs the question: who wrote the epic forms of literature? Some scholars have argued that there are narrative poems of epic scope written by the literary elite and that some historical narratives (such as Sima Qian's 司馬遷 *Shiji* 史記) and historical romances do contain sufficient epic elements. Průšek was certainly aware of this, but his interest lay elsewhere: not the long novels of the 16th century such as The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *The Outlaws of the March*, or *The Journey to the West*, but more recent works of prose produced in the 18th and 19th centuries. Is it because in such works the elite-lyrical and the folk-epic strains were already mixed, thus serving as formal proof that a "loosening of the bonds" had already taken place – or more likely to be expected? In works of the late Qing period, he makes only brief comments on the "strongly personal tendency" in the late Qing works such as *The Travels of Lao Can* (Lao Can youji 老殘遊記) and *Strange Things Seen during Twenty Years* (Ershinain mudu zhi guaixianzhuang 二十年目睹之怪現狀) and *Exposes of Officialdom* (Guanchang xianxingji 官場現形記; or *A Picture of the Pres-*

ent-day Class of Officials in Průšek's translation). But he reserves his highest compliment to the famous collection of ghostly *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (Liaozhai zhiyi 聊齋誌異) by Pu Songling, an early 18th-century writer and frustrated intellectual. He praises Pu Songling as a writer of "the perfect short-story" who was ahead of his time. He considers the "author's preface" as a text of "intense lyricism and pathos" (Průšek 1980: 13). Yet in this article he does not treat the fox-fairy stories in this famous collection at all, but chooses instead to mention Pu's poetic works. One is left with the impression that Průšek prefers non-fictional prose works, particularly the more intimate genres, over the multi-chapter long novels.

In fact, the middle part of this long article is devoted entirely to a lengthy discussion of classical prose works of a personal nature, as included in a collection called *Selection of Diary Literature* (Riji wenxue congxuan 日記文學叢選) edited by Ruan Wuming 阮無名. This seeming digression is intended to gather enough evidence to show the general tendency toward subjectivism in classical Chinese prose. Here Průšek does not distinguish prose and fiction at all because he is interested only in the "penetration of subjective elements into literature in various descriptions of nature, where … the tableau or lyrical picture, striving to evoke the impression of pure and perfect beauty, was always set off by some intimate experience, reminiscence or anecdote" (Průšek 1980: 24). Like Lin Yutang 林語堂 and others, he has a special soft-spot for Shen Fu's 沈復 autobiographical account *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* (Fusheng liuji 浮生六記). Expectedly Průšek lavishes high praise on the author's ability to bring diverse personal materials and intimate experiences into a unified conception so that the whole work becomes "a uniform, one-piece tragedy of human life" (Průšek 1980: 26) – not knowing that at least two of its six chapters proved to be forgeries, which are sandwiched between the more intimate chapters about his beloved wife Yun Niang 芸娘 who dies prematurely of sickness. Whether Průšek was aware of it or not, his central argument about the lyrical nature of this rather unique work remains undamaged. But when he turns to another late Qing work, a "novel" in the form of a travelogue, *The Travels of Lao Can*, his views seem to tilt toward a socio-political, rather than lyrical-subjective, interpretation.

Průšek criticizes the work's traditional structure of chapter breaks and dismisses the most lyrical middle chapters (Chapter 8–10), which in my view evokes a lyrical and allegorical landscape of the protagonist's inner aesthetic world. Průšek faults the entire episode as "medieval wild fantasy… the result of purely artificial architectonics, dictated by aesthetic principles and not by the needs of the story" ("Introduction to Studies in Modern Chinese Literature", in Průšek 1980: 45). If so, don't "aesthetic principles" carry any lyrical weight at all? He has obviously adopted an ideological interpretation of the middle chapters as reactionary and anti-revolutionary (i.e. against Sun Yat-sen's revolution). Nor does he pay sufficient attention to the characterization of the protagonist, Lao Can except to say that he is a projection of the author, Liu E 劉鶚. Yet the hero's problematic position in the whole fictional landscape also deserves attention. I have argued elsewhere that Lao Can is portrayed as an "in-between" figure who is both an inactive traditional scholar-official and a precursor of the self-alienated (from political service) modern intellectual (Lee 1985).[2] On the other hand, another late Qing novel produced

[2] My article was itself inspired by Průšek's idea of lyricism, as Gálik has correctly pointed out.

at the same time (1906), *A short history of civilization* (Wenming xiaoshi 文明小史) by Li Boyuan 李伯元 (Li Baojia 李寶嘉) who also penned *Expose of Officialdom* (Guanchang xianxingji 官場現形記), has all the formal characteristics of a modern "epic" in its objective portrait of Chinese society in a crucial decade (1900–1910) which witnessed the trials of the "New Policies" movement (*xinzheng* 新政) initiated by the Qing regime and the immense waves of social and political ferment before the Republican Revolution. Thus in the same year we find both lyrical and epic works of fiction (*xiaoshuo* 小說). Of course, Průšek's studies of late Qing fiction are not confined to this one article, but can also be found elsewhere, such as "The Changing Role of the Narrator in Chinese Novels at the Beginning of the Twentieth-Century", in which he deals perceptively with a number of late Qing novels, including *Flowers of Retribution* (Niehai hua 孽海花), which can be regarded as a prime example of historical romance and a variant form of the epic. At Harvard, he gave a seminar devoted entirely to a close reading of this work. He may have used this seminar as preparatory ground for a new research project on the "epic" varieties of the late Qing novel, including historical romances. If so, his scholarly plans were sadly cut short. After he returned to his homeland, the political situation changed radically, which made it impossible for him to engage in normal scholarly activities.[3]

Half a century after the event, I now realize how deeply Průšek's legacy has been imbedded in my own work. I started as a young student from a totally different cultural and ideological background. As one of his "guest pupils" (since he was a visiting guest at Harvard), I intentionally challenged his positions, but he always welcomed it with gracious tolerance (see Lee 2006). Only five graduate students took his seminar, who all bore the imprint of his ideas in their subsequent work.[4] My own interest in late Qing literature was the direct product of that seminar. Following Průšek, I wish to relate the forms and subgenres of the late Qing novel to the unprecedented socio-political changes of the period. Moreover, to rephrase David Wang's term of "repressed modernity", I wish to ask anew about the formal features of the late Qing novels and how beneath their seemingly traditional structure there may have lurked new elements (though repressed) which eventually led to the modern literature of the May Fourth period. Like Wang, I tend to seek continuity rather than rupture from the late Qing to May Fourth. Thus my small disagreements should be taken as a kind of "anxiety of influence" under the mantle of a great master.

Renegotiating theory: the Czech connection

One striking feature of Průšek's essays is that although as a Sinologist he is deeply steeped in Chinese literary and aesthetic tradition, his formulation of concepts seems to be underpinned by certain theoretical thinking from European sources. The most

[3] Marian Gálik mentions that when in August 1968 the Soviet army invaded Czechoslovakia, it forced the cancellation of the conference of the European Association for Chinese Studies in Prague devoted to 50th anniversary of the May Fourth movement at which nearly 500 Sinologists would like to participate (Gálik 1998: 159).

[4] Gálik has listed several in his article. I recall only Don Price, Janet Walker, Sue Fawn Chung, and a graduate student from Hong Kong who was doing a dissertation on *Niehai hua*.

relevant are, of course, the Prague School and Russian Formalism. Yet theory is never foregrounded in his essays, nor rigorously applied. Thus it is impossible to trace the exact sources of origin. The following is merely a preliminary inquiry.

I had no clue of Průšek's theoretical background when I took his two courses at Harvard: in his general lecture course, he did mention the Prague School but did not go into any detail (the lecture course was geared toward undergraduates). Recent research by Leonard Chan has now convinced me that indeed Průšek had close connections with the Prague Linguistic Circle: "Most of his working concepts, such as artistic structure, composition, social and aesthetic functions, can be easily traced back to the theory of Jan Mukařovský (1891–1975) and Felix Vodička (1909–1974), two colleague of Průšek's at the Charles University" (Chan 2008).[5]

But Chan did not go into any detail. Lacking any expertise on the Prague School myself, I can only surmise that Průšek may have been influenced by Mukařovský's views on the aesthetic function of language in a work of literary art, be it prose or poetry. The aesthetic structure of a work of art, according to the general principles of the Prague School, has its own intrinsic value and autonomy. Accordingly, its theories of form – be it poetry or prose – must also be based on actual texts. This impression comes from my limited exposure to one of its luminary practitioners, Professor Lubomír Doležel, author of *Major Modes of Czech Fiction* and many other theoretical articles, at a scholarly conference on the modern Chinese short story in Honolulu. I recall that Doležel, together with his then wife, Professor Milena Doleželová, impressed upon me the rule that any literary analysis must stem from the texts themselves and not from the author's background or the historical circumstances of their production (as cultural or literary historians like myself tend to do). I can now openly acknowledge their great impact on my thinking. Still, this does not seem to solve the issue of historical context, especially in view of Průšek's great sympathies with the Chinese Revolution, to which the New Literature contributed a large share. How do we reconcile the formalism of Průšek's method with his historicism? The clue may be found at least in part in his own background of Czech literature.

I suspect that there may be a hidden parallel between Průšek's sympathies to modern Chinese writers and his devotion to modern Czech writers. The few times when he mentioned the name of Mukařovský in class, he invariably invoked a few names of Czech writers, particularly Karel Čapek (1890–1938). This led me to believe that theory and creative writing are closely related in Průšek's mind. He did not specifically mention Vodička, another member of the Prague School who may have been a closer colleague of his at Charles University. Vodička was the author of *Paths and Goals of National Revival Literature* (Cesty a cíle obrozenské literatury),[6] which Průšek may have read. I have not read this book, but believe that it must have contained chapters on the two major modern Czech writers, Čapek and his fellow writer Jaroslav Hašek (1883–1923). Čapek's translations of French poetry further inspired a new generation of Czech poets.[7] Leonard Chan

[5] Gálik also mentioned F. Vodička in his memorial article, a fact confirmed by Dr. Dušan Andrš of Charles University as this Symposium.

[6] I am deeply indebted to Dr. Dušan Andrš who introduced this book to me at the Symposium.

[7] Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. The entry cites the biography of Čapek by Ivan Klíma, a famous contemporary Czech writer.

is the only scholar who has noted this possible connection. In his introduction to the chapter "Distant Voices" in the volume, *The Modernity of Lyricism* (Chan 2014), Chan states succinctly that Průšek's studies of Chinese literature are informed by two Czech legacies: the structuralist method of the Prague School and the Bohemian romantic spirit of the National Revival movement since the end of the 18th century: from the romanticism of Karel Hynek Mácha (1810–1836) to the avant-garde experiment of "Czech Poetism" of the 1920s and 1930s, which "nurtured an emancipatory power". Accordingly, Průšek may have seen a Chinese resonance in the gurgling current of 'lyrical spirit' in the long river of Chinese literature" (Chan and Wang 2014: 309). This is a most valuable finding. In the same vein, we can argue that Hašek's parodistic novel, *Good Soldier Schweik*, is a parallel text to Lu Xun's "The True Story of Ah Q". I would make a further conjecture that the lyrical strain must have been the primary strain in the Czech literary tradition which has freely entered Czech poetry and prose as an active agent.

Another issue is related to Průšek's theoretical knowledge of Marxism. I recall that when I first met Průšek as a graduate student I naively saw him as a Communist. Yet never once did he make any statement in support of Chinese Communism. Rather, in private and with his seminar students he deplored the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. Gradually I came to the realization that he was a humanist with refined tastes who "was very fond of life" rather than a Party apparatchik. He was certainly not a "vulgar Marxist", for never once in class did he cite any Marxist theory of literature, not even Georg Lukács. But he did mention the work of the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky, which provides another clue to Průšek's theoretical background. It seems that for Průšek the two schools were closely connected and that for his studies of Chinese literary history Russian Formalism may be more relevant.

In his paper on "Lu Hsun's 魯迅 'Huai chiu 懷舊': A Precursor of Modern Chinese Literature", he remarks on a notable modern feature in this pioneering story written in the classical *wenyan* language: "Lu Hsün's approach to his plot is one of simplification, a reduction of the plot to simplest components, and an attempt to present his subject without the framework of an explanatory story" (Průšek 1980: 106). He also cites Lu Xun's story "Shizhong 示眾" as another example, in which "the plot has completely disappeared". The basis for this remark is Čapek's "Story without Words", which represents a new literary experiment for a writer who used to excel also in detective fiction (one might also add that Čapek is also a writer of science fiction, and invented the word "robot"). He then remarks that "by the same time the Soviet literary critic V. Shklovsky devoted a whole chapter of his book, *The Theory of Prose* (Czech translation by B. Mathesius, Prague, 1933) to "literature outside the plot"" (*ibid*.: 107). Shklovsky is here dealing with three books by the Russian writer Rozanov.[8] Here I quote a passage from the chapter in English translation:

> "These books are not entirely formless, since we see in them certain constancy in the device used in their formation. For me these books represent a new genre, a genre that

[8] Průšek used the Czech translation by B. Mathesius, Prague, 1933; note here that the Czech translation is done by the same Mathesius who collaborated with Průšek in translation of Tang poetry. (On their collaboration see Lomová and Zádrapová 2016).

> resembles, above all, the parodistic novel, that is, with the weakly expressed framing story (the main plot) and without a comic tinge. Rozanov's work represents a heroic attempt to go beyond the confines of literature, 'to speak without words, without form' and the work has turned out splendidly, because it has given birth to a new literature, a new form" (Shklovsky 1991: 1991).

This is typical Shklovsky, whose theoretical insights stem from his interest in the formal features which are marked by the development of technical "devices". (Chapter I of *Theory of Prose* is titled "Art as Device".) Apparently in Rozanov's works even the "parodistic novel" form is being torn apart by diverse prose materials such as letters, newspaper articles, biographical or autobiographical accounts, even photographs – that fill up Rozanov's fictional canvas. Průšek seizes on this point to bring in Lu Xun's story:

> "This to some extent was what Lu Hsün tried to do: he substituted sketches, reminiscences, lyrical descriptions, etc., for the traditional belletristic forms of China and Europe. These tendencies shared by Lu Hsün and that of modern European prose writers could, I believe, be called the penetration of the epic by the lyric and the breaking up of the traditional epic forms" (Průšek 1980: 107).

He then makes a more daring argument that Lu Xun's innovation should not be considered as being inspired by "the peculiar nature of the old Chinese prose in the classical language, where prose without a plot was predominant". Rather, this Chinese writer was "making use of devices that European prose did not discover until much later. Hence the emergence of modern literature "is not a gradual process involving the adaptation of various foreign elements and the gradual change of the traditional structure, but that it is fundamentally a sudden process" (*ibid.*). This bold argument may agree with his conception of revolution, but does not entirely follow the principles of Russian Formalism. Shklovsky also states that literary development in general "progresses along a broken path" with many ruptures, but this path itself has its own trajectory: "No, the real point is that the legacy that is passed on from one literary generation to the next moves not from father to son but from uncle to nephew" (Shklovsky 1991: 189–190). Applied to the transformation of Chinese literary genres, it means that the canonical genres such as classical poetry and prose may not carry the main legacy in literary development; it is the subsidiary genres, often of a more folk or vernacular origin, such as vernacular tale or novel, that performs the task. "New literary forms are emerging out of the lower stratum of society to replace the old ones. The old forms, no more consciously felt than grammatical forms are in speech, have lost their artistic character to assume an official status that precludes sensation" (Shklovsky 1991: 190).

My own sense of Průšek's citation of Shklovsky' theory is that he uses it to privilege modern Chinese literature, and not vice versa. In stressing the "sudden process" of change, he has made it more difficult to deal with the transition from traditional to modern forms. How can the subjective and lyrical tendencies of belletristic forms of prose be transformed into the "epic" forms of revolutionary fiction, especially since the old epic narratives are both structured and driven by plot? Through another sudden process by another modern writer? Here we must again make a digression to his discussion of Mao Dun's fiction.

Průšek's analysis of Mao Dun's works can be found in his long chapter on "Mao Tun and Yu Ta-fu" 郁達夫 taken from a book *Three Sketches of Chinese Literature* (Průšek 1969). It is full of subtlety and insight because he delves into the problem of narration. Unlike most scholars of Mao Dun who focus only on the author's Marxist ideology as revealed in his work, Průšek chooses first to approach it formalistically by contrasting the roles of the narrator with old Chinese novels – by arguing that his traditional passive role is changed into that of the "modern epic first person" who, though omniscient, is equipped with "a constant shifting viewpoint" (Průšek 1969: 124). Not only that, Mao Dun is also capable of "the subjectivization of the narrative in the sense that it is transmitted through a certain character, is colored by that character's participation and aspect, passes through the prism of that personality… And so modern narration is broken down into a number of sections and 'each of these sections has a different subjective coloring'… The linguistic device employed in this kind of subjectivization is 'mixed speech'… This leads to a 'constant intermingling of inner monologue with narration', which implies a constant confrontation of 'outer' epic reality with the 'inner' spiritual world of the character" (Průšek 1969: 125). This long and elaborate passage with internal citations contains theoretical insights by Lubomír Doležel here quoted by Průšek to bone up his high praise for Mao Dun. (In contrast, C. T. Hsia's evaluation of the same author is much lower.) At least, it clarifies for us what he means by the phrase "the penetration of the epic by the lyric".

It seems to me that Průšek quotes Doležel's theory of mixed speech also to buttress his point about the penetration of the lyrical into Mao Dun's epic form, for the novel is conceived grandly as a modern Chinese epic (which Mao Dun called a "Romance"). In so doing, Průšek seems to have lost sight of the historical totality of the novel's design. In other words, the specter of Lukács nevertheless looms large. As David Wang perceptively noted, both Lukács and Průšek "share the yearning to reinstate the epic world, and to that end, both entertain the Romantic motif of the epic world as one of affective plenitude and semantic immanence. In a peculiar way. Průšek could have cited Chinese lyricism, thanks to its lyrico-epic potential, as a remedy whereas its Western counterpart, in Lukacs's opinion, falls short" (Wang 2015: 34). Wang tactfully fills the lacunae in Průšek's articulation by invoking not only Lukács but Adorno as well:

> "Whereas Adorno looks into the agency of negative dialectics in modernistic lyricism, Průšek tries to revitalize the synthetic power of premodern Chinese lyrical poetry. For him, even if Chinese literature proceeds inevitably toward epic revelation, the lyrical ethos arising therefrom does not serve as its estranged other but rather provides cohesive power, endowing Chinese social subjectivity with a synthetic quality of its own. The mutual implication of the lyrical and the epic can exemplify the 'singular plural socialist vision'" (Wang 2015: 35).

Thus in one grand stroke of theoretical negotiation, Wang has subtly put Průšek's lyricism in a positive light.

But what about the epic in its modern transformation? Does it offer some new features from the old epic form governed by plot? In his Mao Dun chapter Průšek mentions only

three Western authors in the epic category: Zola, Čapek, and John Dos Passos. Of the three perhaps only the last fully qualifies. In introducing this now neglected American novelist, Průšek adds his own comment: "With Dos Passos, it is the endeavor to overstep the tradition of a unified and oversimplified single-rail plot, and also perhaps the striving to render adequately the polyphony of city life, combined with a desire to create a more complex composition" (Průšek 1980: 142) that made his novel *Manhattan Transfer* a great modern epic. This "polyphony" aspect may be the most important feature of the modern novel from Dostoevsky to Passos, if we can stretch Bakhtin's theory to some extent. But what about Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, and for that matter, his earlier masterpiece *Ulysses*? Or the great novelists of the Austro-German lineage: Broch, Musil, and Canetti?

Confrontation or Convergences between East and West?

At this point, we must proceed to Průšek's "Confrontation" essay. It is also a condensed meditation on an issue of the grandest comparative scope. It is much shorter and more succinct than the "Subjectivism" article to which it is related, yet offering us greater insights. Its main thesis is stated near the end:

> "The main literary stream in Old China was that of lyric poetry, and this predilection runs through the new literary production as well, so that subjective feeling dominates and often breaks up the epic forms. A similar wave of lyricism flooded European literature, too, after the first World War, and had the same disintegrating influence on the traditional objective forms, as was particularly evident in the break-up of the form of the classical nineteenth-century novel. Taking the place of the strict epic structure is a free grouping of purely lyrical or lyrico-epic elements. In this point, there was a convergence of the old Chinese tradition with contemporary European moods" (Průšek 1980: 84).

I find these passages to be endlessly fascinating. Several of his usual key words recur but here placed in a context of comparison between Chinese and modern European literature. A new key word also emerges: convergence, or its more dynamic twin, confrontation (as in the title of the article). By convergence Průšek does not necessarily mean that one literature influences the other or vice versa, because the word invariably puts the two literatures on an unequal footing (usually in favor of Europe, but not for him; see later page). What he means is something like a literary "affinity" rather than contrast. I would suggest an additional term, counterpoint (from music), which implies that the traditions and currents in China and the West are different and have different trajectories of developments, yet they can "converge" as parallels on a certain historical time-frame – in this case, the interwar period of 1919–1939, which corresponds with the May Fourth period in China.

Beyond making a grand statement, Průšek does not go into much analytic detail in this grand comparison. If his copious remarks about the penetration of lyrical elements into traditional epic forms in China in his other articles have made the picture somewhat clear, apparently he does not feel the need to do the same with the development of Euro-

pean literature: how did the wave of lyricism that flooded European literature managed to exert a "disintegrating influence" on the "strict epic structure" of the classical 19th-century novel? What are the traditional belletristic forms of Europe? What constitutes the "penetration" and the resulting "breaking up"? Průšek's has left these issues unexplained. After all, as a Sinologist he is not responsible for such an explanation.

Allow me to fill in some small gaps. As David Wang has pointed out, Lukács and Adorno have contrasting views about lyricism, yet both place lyrical poetry at the center of the European crisis: if Lukács "suspects that modern lyricism epitomizes the degeneration of Western civilization," Adorno worries about its power and legitimacy of survival after the Holocaust. Průšek, on the other hand, glorifies its "break-up" potential against tradition, thus assuming the role of a precursor of modernism. In my Foreword to *The Lyrical and the Epic*, I made some reservations about this claim. Leonard Chan comes to Průšek's defense by arguing that if we explore the issue in a broader context, "we might put forward the speculation that the modern European avant-garde movement might, to a certain extent, be initiated or at least inspired by the oriental lyrical art and literature" (Chan 2008: 28). Consequently their affinities should not be considered accidental. For evidence Chan has pointed to the Czech translations of classical Chinese poetry by none other than Průšek himself, which deeply influenced modern Czech poetry and theory. Still, this East-West connection needs further contextualization. If I erred before due to my narrow knowledge by tracing a different genealogy of Western modernism (i.e. from Baudelaire to Eliot), thereby leaving out the German and Central European variations, which indeed put great stress on the lyrical, I now stand corrected.

Still, this does not fully resolve the "internal" issues of Průšek's final argument. In its grand comparative scope, Průšek obviously gives more weight to the power of lyric poetry in Old China than to the wave of modern European avant-garde. Moreover, in Průšek's articles he obviously has a predilection for prose than poetry. In matters concerning prose literature, Průšek does not wish to distinguish prose from fiction or short stories from long novels. Perhaps Shklovsky also obscures the boundary by an all-inclusive generic view of prose. Thus it does not really matter whether Rozanov's three books are fiction or prose – just the contrary, their mixed-up quality is what made it new. More importantly, Průšek has given Lu Xun and Yu Dafu the principal role as carriers of the power of lyricism to break up traditional forms, but ignores the fact of their conscious or unconscious inheritance from the traditional essay form. Reading his articles together, we cannot but have the impression that he favors the "lyrical", which is a more active artistic agent than the "epic", whose "objective structures" look rather static and unchanging.

In fact he has not described the nature of the "objective epic forms" in traditional Chinese literature except to pinpoint their conventional, non-progressive nature. In the "Confrontation" article he mentions as illustration only the attempt of some late Qing writers (Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓 and Li Boyuan in particular) in painting a "broad social fresco" and compare their work with the new realistic novel by Mao Dun, Ding Ling 丁玲, and others (Průšek 1980: 79). His foregone conclusion is made possible by his conviction that "the revolution made a clean sweep of the old stock of literary forms. The more crystallized the form and the more categorical the adherence to it demanded, the more complete was its disappearance". Thus "in poetry practically all the old forms have been

done away with because here norms were enforced most rigidly of all" (*ibid*.: 79). If so why did both Lu Xun and Yu Dafu choose to continue to write poetry in the classical form and did so brilliantly? And how does one account for the emergence of a modern Chinese epic-novel? And on the European side, did the same process take place or not? Was the First World War comparable to a revolution in causing the breakdown of traditional forms? And what about the case of Soviet Russia, which is positioned between the West and the East? The more I am mesmerized by Průšek's grand comparison the more questions come to my mind. To help answer some of the questions, I began to seek more theoretical guidance from new sources. Two books proved helpful:

1. Ralph Freedman's *The Lyrical Novel* is a somewhat theoretical treatise based on a detailed analysis of the works of three major writers – Hermann Hesse, Andre Gide, and Virginia Woolf. At first sight, these writers from three different countries have nothing in common. But Freedman nevertheless finds a common trait, which he defines as "lyrical". According to him, the lyrical novel is a modern genre, a long prose form derived from the 19th-century novel. It has the following key characteristics: it is "plot-less" (thus comparable to Rozanov's works *à la* Shklovsky?); its hero is more passive and pensive; and external action is turned into inward probing. Above all it depicts a world "reduced to a lyrical point of view, the equivalent of the poet's 'I': the lyrical self" (Freedman 1963: 8). Such a technique is originally the formal property of poetry, especially Romantic poetry, but it is used in this special type of fiction which applies the technique of lyrical poetry – its reliance on subjective images and its pictorial qualities – to the narrative framework of the novel. In so doing, it deemphasizes plot in favor of poetic imagery and the temporal narrative is changed into "spatial form" (the term first coined by Joseph Frank). "Lyrical novels… exploit the expectation of narrative by turning it into its opposite: a lyrical process in the workings of the mind and imagination" (*ibid*.: 6). It turns narrative into "a voyage of discovery onto a strange subterranean sea in which the lyrical mood… is acted out in worlds of fiction populated by an imaginary of figures, emblazoned by an imagery of scenes" (*ibid*.: 283). According to Freedman, the lyrical novel as a new genre reached its prominence in the interwar period (hence a part of the lyrical current that flooded the European avant-garde?) and thereafter declined except in Germany.

Freedman's model includes most of the formal features as in Průšek's lyrical scheme, but gives a slightly different shading: the lyrical elements in the creative process seem to be more inward-oriented as it turns the "lyrical self" into self-probing and self-alienation from the outside world. As such it definitely does not have the revolutionary potential to break up traditional norms as Průšek argues in the case of modern Chinese literature.

Does this mean that since lyrical poetry in the European tradition does not carry the positive and "synthetic" power as in Chinese lyricism, hence its decline? Still, Freedman's mode clarifies for us at least one point: the lyrical novel is evolved from the novel, not prose essays or shorter prose forms. It turns the narrative for realism into a more imaginary and symbolic form. As such its lyrical mood runs counter to revolutionary mood of modern Chinese fiction as described by Průšek. I can well imagine Průšek arguing along this line, that this basically German model does not fit China – with the possible exception of Yu Dafu, who openly acknowledged his indebtedness to German literature and in fact used lyrics in the German language in his early story "Moving south" (Nanqian 南遷). In his long discussion of Yu Dafu who is paired with Mao Dun as two

contrasting representatives, Průšek talks about Yu's stories in connection with European romanticism (Průšek 1980: 169). He cites Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (in German), a key Romantic text, and the Czech poet Vítězslav Nezval, but no novelists. He mentions a number of European and Japanese writers, but not Hesse, Gide and Virginia Woolf. Apparently Průšek has in mind a different genealogy of this European "flood of lyricism" whose progenitors consisted more of poets than novelists. Nor does he indicate its future fate, as for instance whether it would degenerate into kitsch. In this regard, I am reminded of a comment on European modernism by Milan Kundera, Průšek's former countryman:

> "What was 'modern art,' that intriguing storm of the first third of the twentieth century? A radical revolt against the aesthetic of the past; that is obvious of course, except that the pasts were not alike. In France modern art… extended the great lyrical rebellion of Baudelaire and Rimbaud. It found its privileged expression in painting and, above all, in poetry, which was its chosen art. The novel, by contrast, was anathematized (most notably by surrealists); it was considered outmoded, forever sealed into its conventional form. In Central Europe the situation was different: opposition to the ecstatic, romantic, sentimental, musical tradition led the modernism of a few geniuses, the most original, toward the art that is the privileged sphere of analysis, lucidity, irony: that is, toward the novel" (Kundera 2006: 49).[9]

It was a pity that Průšek did not have an exchange of ideas with Kundera, since they both shared the Central European background. Yet Kundera's notion of the modern novel in Central Europe – as epitomized by "a few geniuses" such as Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, Hermann Broch, and Witold Gombrowicz – and his demand to concentrate only on the essentials of analysis, lucidity and irony is nowhere to be found in Průšek's article or, for that matter, in modern Chinese literature in general. For Průšek, the modern Chinese novel is inevitably bound with reality and the demand of realism, which unfolds a large socio-political fresco of human action, rather than Kundera's "thinking novels".

2. Franco Moretti's masterful book *Modern Epic* is basically a study of three masterworks: Goethe's *Faust*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Moretti 1996). But it offers nothing less than a theoretical construction of a new "super-genre", the modern epic. The new term is needed because, according to Moretti, the old world was changed forever. This explains Goethe's difficulty and long delay in writing the second part of Faust. The emergent "world system" which arrived in the early 20th century is driven by global capitalism, which the 19th century novel form no longer sufficed to accommodate. Thus in a way Moretti answers the question: what happened when the old epic forms were broken up. Answer: a new kind of modern epic as "world text", a form used in utterly diverse ways by Joyce and García Márquez.

Moretti's method owes much to Russian Formalism but supplements it with his own version of Darwin's theory of evolution as applied to literary history. Thus he considers Joyce's *Ulysses* not so much a lyrical work of stylistic experimentation or inward probing but as an objective "world text" which is filled both with a linguistic polyphony of styles and a plethora of material artifacts – all laid out in the textual surface (something akin to Shklovsky's view of Rozanov's works?). The modern epic is a text that tries to encompass

[9] I am indebted to Guangchen Chen for this reference.

the totality of the contemporary world itself. In Joyce's novel it is mirrored in the city of Dublin, his hometown, which he tries to recapture "polyphonically" much as Dos Passos in *Manhattan Transfer* later seeks to do with New York. The enlarged space of the city is squeezed into a compressed time-frame of a day and a night.

In contrast, Průšek has mentioned Joyce several times, but all in a lyrical vein. Perhaps one could also claim, *à la* Moretti, that Li Boyuan's novel, *Brief History of Civilization* (discussed earlier), can also be regarded as a modern epic, for it seeks to capture a Chinese world of late Qing China across a large territorial span – all in the time-frame contemporaneous with the novel's writing, which is also a feature of Mao Dun's fiction.

One could explore more late Qing fiction texts along this line, if only to argue that their ambitious scope but incomplete structure (as compared to the classic 19th-century European novel) bespeaks the emergence of a new "half-baked" epic form that contains realistic, lyrical, parodistic, and even fantastic elements. It also suggests that the lyrical and the epic can co-exist and sometimes intermix, especially in a period of social turmoil and political transition such as the late Qing, the May Fourth period, and interwar years in Europe. We may also cast our gaze at the present and ask: whether the dialectic between the lyrical and the epic is manifested in contemporary (post-1949) Chinese literature or whether the era of revolutionary epic and epic time is gone forever.

A last tribute

After all that has been said, I still think Průšek – perhaps alone among his generation of European Sinologists – has set a great example of writing literary history. His theoretical insights have opened up new comparative vistas. Whatever quibbles and nit-picking we may still raise, we are forever in his debt.

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